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'The rules by which the [post-modern] work has been constructed can be found, if at all, only *ex post facto*; at the end of the act of creation, but also at the end of reading or examining – since each act of creation is unique and unprecedented, and refers to no antecedents except by citing them, that is, tearing quotations out of their original site and thus ruining, instead of reasserting, their original meaning' (Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, 1997, p. 105).



We are in a new age where messy, uncertain, multivoiced texts, cultural criticism, and new experimental works will become more common, as will more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis, and intertextual representation.

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 26)

The investigator would always be implicated in the product. So why not observe the observer, focus on turning our observation back on ourselves? And why not write more directly, from the source of your own experience? Narratively. Poetically. Evocatively.

(Bochner, as cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 747)

'...an estimated one-third of internet users in Australia access porn sites' (Mackay, *Advance Australia Where*, 2007, p. 103).

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**Art(e)fact**  
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'My argument is that applied grammatology will be characterized by a picto-ideo-phonographic Writing that puts speech back in its place while taking into account the entire scene of writing' (Ulmer, 1985, p. 157).

#### Pre-text

This entry—this *column*—is not a footnote or sub-text. It is not subservient to the other texts found on this page. In fact, this text came before, not after, the texts that surround it. It is one of the many sidetracks and dead-ends explored on this narrative journey. Such is the mess and confusion of 'learning' and 'structuring,' where texts and meanings are constructed from impulses, gut feelings, accidents, and personal and social conventions about what constitutes coherent—or in-coherent—knowledges and narratives. So a new journey begins as one text speaks through (and to) another. This is an example of intertextuality and palimpsest, where different texts and different itineraries make way for alternative possibilities and creative digressions, and where different texts jostle for authority and readership.

This *column* takes its inspiration from the 'double-value' writing and textual 'columns' found in Jacques Derrida's *Glas* (1974/1986). In *Glas*, Derrida uses two columns: a *discursive column* characterised by theoretical and hermeneutic commentaries, and a *figurative column* characterised by creative and heuristic explorations. Each column reads as its own text and forces the reader to leaf through the *whole* 'book' twice (or more) in order to make sense of the *whole* 'text' (if possible).

As a consequence, this *column* has complementary and competing narrative threads. It broadens Derrida's *double-valued—double-columned* writing and adopts what Gregory Ulmer (1985) calls a 'tripartite' script. The tripartite script adds a third band—a pictorial band—to Derrida's double-value writing (something Derrida himself advocates). The three bands can be summarised as: (1) a *discursive commentary* (i.e. a phonographic band); (2) a *literary exchange* (i.e. an ideographic band); and (3) a *non-verbal component* (i.e. a pictographic band), thus forming a *picto-ideo-phonographic* 'writing' (or 'arche-writing') which operates on multiple levels and through multiple modes of representation (Ulmer, 1985). This crudely translates into (1) non-fiction, (2) fiction, and (3) image. All three of my texts use this strategy.

This text (and this *column*) attempts to disturb the linearity of the traditional 'book' *codex* format (i.e. sequential pages) by incorporating hypertextual and multimodal elements. As a hypertext, each *band* and inter-textual *node* links to other bands and nodes to form a *network* of texts that read in isolation and/or unison. The result is a multimodal text that explores various modes of representation simultaneously (visual—verbal—tactile) and which borrows from cyber-textuality and information-technologies to enrich paper-based technologies (i.e. the 'book'). The result is what George E. Marcus (1998) calls a *very messy text*.

## Cunts

### Cunt Conversations

### Cunt-struck

### Common Sense

### Inter-verbality & Word Wars

2

#### Cunts: *speaking about cunts*

1891 *Slang. Cunt-struck, enamoured of women* (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989, p. 130).

'Oh, *Fanny*, you're such a delicious little cunt. I get mushy just looking at you.'

Fanny smiled and then looked perplexed. 'Tell me, Madge: what does the word 'cunt' really mean? You know, behind the scenes? It's like masturbation, nobody ever talks about it.' She sneezed, and then added: 'How did it become so toxic-like? So *un-sayable*?'

'Bless you, dear. Funny you should

ask,' said Madge, visibly delighted. 'I once did a little poking around, as it were, when Harold was alive, just for fun, because he kept calling me his *little grey sunken cunt*, which is a literary reference, I discovered. At the time, mind you, I couldn't tell if it was a term of endearment or a term of ridicule. The slightest inflection in his voice and—*bingo*—it sounded like pillow talk or—*pop*—like slander—'

'I know,' said Fanny, shaking her head. 'Richard always says I'm too dry — a *barren cunt*, he says.'

'Well, dear, it just so happens that I went to the library, in disguise mind you, and did a bit of prodding—'

'Oh, Madge, you're a regular sleuth. What did you find out? Do tell—'

'I will, dear, if you stop interrupting



**Personalising Ethnography:  
On Memory, Evidence, and Subjectivity  
The Writing & Learning Journey**

Objective reality can never be captured.

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 5)

In effect, objective truth about a society or culture cannot be established because there are inevitably going to be conflicting versions of what happened.

(Angrosino, 2005, p. 731)

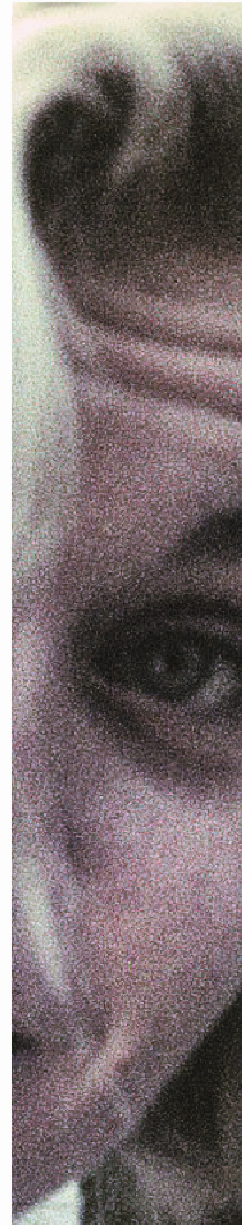
No analysis is neutral – despite research analysts' claims of neutrality. We do not come to our studies uninitiated.

(Charmaz, 2005, p. 510)

*By way of Introduction...*

*And departure...*

There's a lot of me left out of this text, and a lot of me in it. No text is free of its author(s) or completely neutral or objective (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 218; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Some texts, by virtue of academic or journalistic convention, pass themselves off as 'factual' and 'objective' by removing overt traces of human authorship from their outward appearance and by providing data that appears untouched, authoritative, and telling. The citations in this text and at the end of this sentence are examples of this evidence- and



me,' Madge said, with a gentle pat on her friend's arm. 'Well, it just so happens that I spent a good three hours researching—'

'And—?'

'And I memorised several definitions – off by heart – word for word – so I could recite them, you know, deadpan, pastiche-like, whenever he used the term, you know, just to spite him. It worked too! At the first mention of my *sunken grey little cunt*, I blurted: 'CUNT: *noun, coarse slang; ONE: the female genitals, the vulva; TWO: a very unpleasant or stupid person.*'<sup>1</sup> She chuckled and tossed her head back. 'Then,' she said, 'then I blurted: "CUNT, ONE: The female external genital organs; TWO: Applied to a person, especially a woman, as a term of vulgar abuse."<sup>2</sup>

With one hand on her breast and the other over her mouth, Fanny was in stitches. 'You're a menace, Madge, a veritable menace. Is that what killed him?'

'I wish! No – that didn't quite do it. But he stopped. He never mentioned the word cunt again. Seems his big red mouth turned into a little grey cunt – a little puckered asshole. Not a squeak

<sup>1</sup> (*New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: On Historical Principles*, 1993, p. 570)

<sup>2</sup> (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989, p. 130)

out of it. No, he grew positively fearful of the term – as if, in my mouth, the term became infectious, diabolical, like the plague—'

'Serves-him-right. And then what?'

'Well, dear,' and now Madge was beaming with nostalgia. 'I waited until our silver wedding anniversary – you were in Fiji at the time – and I made a little speech.' She paused and raised an eyebrow, barely containing herself. 'The *stir*, Fanny, the *stir*! You should've seen it. I proposed a toast, you see, and thanked everybody cordially, as you do, and then told them, very naively of course, like a choirgirl, how my husband was so *wonderful* and *warm* and that he referred to me as his *little, grey, sunken cunt*—'

'Oh, goody, Madge, what-did-they-do?'

'Nothing, dear, there was stunned silence! And so I gave them an etymology of the word cunt as best I could remember. I said: "CUNT, ONE: The female external genital organs" – very deadpan, of course, very matter-of-fact, before continuing – "first used in the year 1230 as a street name: *Gropecuntelane*" (I said, with emphasis on the cunt); "then again in 1325, 1400, and 1425 to refer to the female genitals" (I said, very casually); "then in 1552 when somebody said (in Old English like), 'First let me lock



In such a world, all meanings are suggestions. (Bauman, 1997)

'We are ending the positivist era and its ideal of a scientific education (grammatology means to assist and hasten this closure) and with it all thinking in terms of ends, of teleology' (Ulmer, 1985, p. 167).

truth-making process (Ellis, 1997, p. 120). It's a ruse to give the appearance of certainty and to bring order to chaos.

Such texts often remove the 'I' and invoke the 'other' through textual detachment, third-person prose, well defined objects, dispassionate observations, and various data (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). They appear to be made by authors who are either 'absent' or 'impervious' to the discourses and practices that shape and define them. Such texts play a game of sorts with readers by pretending that they have written themselves. *That the data came to them, not from them, and was found, not made (mimesis)*. This isn't to say that such texts and such research methods don't offer much to human knowledge and to our understandings of the world—for they do—but simply that there are other texts and other methods that can put the blood and bone back into the inquiry process, thereby illuminating our 'emotional' and 'personal' understandings of what people experience in local and global contexts and how they learn and make meaning in a text-saturated world. Research data and research subjects are simply sourced from different places and viewed through different lenses, although the commitment to discovery and understanding remains (much) the same. Both traditions—positivist and post-positivist—offer different approaches to representation and use different discourses to communicate their findings. Ultimately, however, they are both meaning-making endeavours—equally vital and equally telling—but 'constructions' all the same.

The question is: *Why would I want this text to be completely neutral or objective* (Angrosino, 2005, p. 730)? Why would I want to pretend that this text is author-free? Why would I want to take 'me' out of my views? So much

#### Poststructuralism:

According to Richardson & St. Pierre (2005, p. 961):

*Poststructuralism* is a kind of postmodernist thinking that "links language, subjectivity, social organization, and power. The centre-piece is language. Language does not 'reflect' social reality but rather produces meaning and creates social reality. Different languages and different discourses within a given language divide up the world and give it meaning in ways that are not reducible to one another. Language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where one's sense of self – one's subjectivity – is constructed. Understanding language as competing discourses – competing ways of giving meaning and of organizing the world – makes language a site of exploration and struggle.

<sup>1</sup>Any attempt to set limits to a messy text are attempts at closure' (Low & Palulis, A Letter from Derrida, *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, Spring, 2006, p. 50).

thy cunt, then let me keep the key' or something like that; then in 1585 (I added), and again in 1650 where another yahoo said something about 'catching her by the cunt' or something like that; then again in 1743, 1800, and 1888 when yet another lurch said, 'I sicken with desire, [and] pine for unseen, unknown cunts'; and then" (I kept going – can you imagine it?) "in 1934 when a depraved pervert by the name of Miller said, 'O Tania, where now is that warm cunt of yours?'; and then again" (I went on, like a maniac) "in 1956, in *Malone Dies*, where Beckett wrote: 'His young wife had abandoned all hope of bringing him to heel, by means of her cunt, that trump card of young wives'; and before this, in 1922, in *Ulysses*, where Joyce wrote: 'The grey sunken cunt of the world'<sup>3</sup>, revealing dear old Harold's love poem.' Again she chuckled and again she threw back her head, breathless, but ecstatic.

'But finally, dear,' she resumed, collecting herself, 'I even mentioned that D.H. Lawrence himself, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, in 1928, had written (which I quoted): "If your sister there comes ter me for a bit o' cunt an' tenderness, she knows what she's after", and that *did* do it!' <sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989, p. 130)

'Did what?' said Fanny, startled. 'Killed the silly sod, stone dead, right there, heart attack, all over, and good riddance. DEAD. I drained my champagne and sat down while the mullets called the paramedics.'

'Oh, Madge, right then?'

'Right then. Right there.' Madge clasped Fanny's wrist and shook it. A foreboding look came over her face. 'The word can kill, Fanny; it can kill! The word CUNT can kill!'

'I know, Madge, I know, the same thing happened to Richard last night; but wait...' Fanny opened her purse. 'Sorry, love,' she said to the girl behind the counter, offering her some money. 'Dear, me, Madge, we're holding up the line. Look at all the people.'

And with that both women picked up their groceries and wandered out, arm in arm, sniggering and snorting, in hysterics; while behind them, in the supermarket, a bewildered crowd stood cunt-struck, pretending not to have heard a single word.

Applied Grammatology: 'a writing no longer functioning as a representation of speech, in which the hierarchy of thought, speech, and writing is collapsed [i.e. arche-writing]' (Ulmer, 1985, p. 7).

The 'author' is as intertextual as the text itself. (Snyder, 1998)



**Doxa:** 'that subliminal knowledge, the foundation stone of perception sunk so deep that it seldom if ever rises to the threshold of attention; those thoughts we do not think about, but with' (Bauman, *Society Under Siege*, 2002, p. 52).

would be lost, even if I did naively believe that objectivity and neutrality were achievable and desirable; no, I want this text to reflect me: my idiosyncrasies, my feelings, my subjectivities, my incompleteness, my memories, my adventures, my insights, my energy, and my growth. I want these conflicting aspects of self to be examined and reflected at different times, in different places, from different perspectives, in different moods, using different voices, and with different levels of certainty and confidence. This doesn't make this text any more authentic or reliable than other texts – on the contrary – it does many of the things it accuses 'objective' texts of (not) doing. Rather, this text provides another perspective and another method of inquiry and discovery to the continuum of possibilities. It merely turns the gaze back on itself while still possessing the ability and the impulse to gaze outward and beyond (Neumann, 1996). Importantly, however, this text maintains the belief that subjective, emotional, and evocative 'personal' accounts do have something poignant and passionate to offer our understanding of ourselves and our worlds. It is about acknowledging the art in science, the poetry in prose, the disorder in order, and the adventure in learning. It is about a *picto-ideo-phonographic* writing (Ulmer, 1985) that broadens the scope of research and generates learning on the move.

Here, as Iain Chambers (1995, p. 11) suggests, the ambiguities are left intact; and the 'situational' contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a, p. 3; Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 218; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 962, 964) in which I live, move, engage, and emerge, all have a say in the products and journeys that result. After all, "one's subjectivity is shifting and contradictory" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 962) and to suggest otherwise would be to ignore something (potentially) important. Foundations are con-

'Messy texts always find ways to leak out—as spillage' (Low & Palulis, A Letter from Derrida, *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, Spring, 2006, p. 50).

5

**Situated Knowing:**

**Having a partial, local, and historical knowledge is still knowing. In some ways, 'knowing' is easier, however, because postmodernism recognizes the situational limitations of the knower. Qualitative writers are off the hook, so to speak. They do not have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal and atemporal general knowledge. They can eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961).**

**Doxa:** 'Doxa is a term used by Roland Barthes to indicate common opinion or convention. As a petrified formation of a given society, the doxa threatens the vitality of the artist or critic and must constantly be countered with innovation or paradox (para-doxa). This is a never-ending process, however, because the paradox eventually becomes conventional and must itself then be replaced with another paradox. Thus, for Barthes, the theoretical enterprise is also always undoing or subverting itself, challenging its own doxa' (Childers & Hentzi, *Dictionary of Modern Literary & Cultural Criticism*, 1995, p. 90).

But later:

'What about the *clitoris*, Madge; what does *that* mean?'

'Thought you'd never ask, dear. Let me tell you a story. To begin with you need to slide a hand down over your cunt, like this...'

And so began the etymology of the *clitoris*. ■

- Doxa
- Episteme
- Common Sense
- Habitus

**Cunts: & common sense**

In my day-to-day life, believe it or not, I try not to use the word cunt. In both verbal and written exchanges, I try to avoid the time bomb *that is* cunt. This is my training and socialisation. This is my conditioning by society and language. This is part of the litany of taken-for-granted assumptions that control my thinking and acting below the level of thinking and acting. This is how discourses and practices construct me and work through me. This is how certain ways of being, seeing, acting, thinking, and speaking enter the 'common sense' and become the *default mode* of being; our shared agreement about the wor(l)d and how we engage with it. *Doxa*.

I seldom, for instance, stop to ask how the 'meaning' and 'use' of a term can be controlled *within* me by mechanisms *beyond* me; how wars are waged over the use and meaning of terms such as terrorism, capitalism, sexism, racism, classism, and others. I just accept the existence and disqualification of the word (cunt) without question, without thinking, and even encourage others to do the same.

**Episteme:** 'A term introduced by Michel Foucault (1970). It denotes a historical epoch or, more narrowly, an intellectual era, and the prevailing epistemology (ways of knowing) and criteria that characterize and give this era systematic form' (Brooker, *Glossary of Cultural Theory*, 2003, p. 88).

**Habitus:** 'Bourdieu defines habitus as 'a durable, transportable system of definitions' acquired initially by the young child in the home as a result of the conscious and unconscious practices of her/his family. This comprises the 'primary habitus'. Subsequently this is transformed into a secondary, tertiary or further habitus by the child's passage through different social institutions, principally schooling' (Brooker, 2003, p. 118).

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**Textographies = compulsive writings (*texting*) = logorrhoea-glossolalia**



# Text means Tissue (Barthes).

tingent (Butler, as cited in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 967); observers "affect what they observe" (Angrosino, 2005, p. 729); and "no producers of knowledge are innocent or politically neutral" (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 218). Nothing is certain, everything is changing, and no science [or art] is value-free (Tedlock, 2005, p. 474). "[T]here are no facts, only interpretations" as Nietzsche might say (as cited in Chambers, 1995, p. 25). *And this comforts me.*

Change represents hope, a glimmer of hope on the dark horizon, a militant, soulful, and utopian hope (Denzin, 2005, p. 948), the promise of a homecoming (Chambers, 1995), of redemption, transformation, and social justice in a world dominated by the powerful and struggled through by the powerless. A world that imagines itself otherwise (Denzin, 2005, p. 948; Finley, 2005, p. 692) and yet hardly lifts a finger to tend to its own sickness, to nurture and love itself back to health: a world on the brink of Armageddon. But hope fuels opportunity and change is inevitable, and this is enough to begin with (O'Farrell, 1999, p. 15). *I can set out from here.*

This version of self, the pilgrim, the *flâneur*, so full of courage and faith, has his origins in the world he tacitly and overtly condemns; so the world, and its people, places, texts,<sup>1</sup> teachers, and tyrants, have permitted his existence and contributed to his making. I should thank them for this. I should thank them for who I am today, however fleeting and transient this identity may be, and however brief my sojourn may turn out. I should also thank my many 'selves' for the skills and perspectives they bring to the narrative inquiry process (Chase, 2005).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to Finley (2005, p. 686), "the text is defined [by many arts-based practitioners] in its broadest possible terms and invokes all of the actions in the world that can be 'read'." I subscribe to this view.

<sup>2</sup> According to Chase (2005, p. 657), contemporary narrative inquiry uses five analytical lenses: "First, narrative researchers treat narrative – whether oral or written – as a distinct form of discourse. Narrative is retrospective meaning making – the shaping or ordering of past experience. Narrative is a way of understanding one's own and others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequence of actions and events over time. ... Second, narrative researchers view narratives as verbal action – as doing or accomplishing something ... [such as to] confirm or challenge the status quo. ... Third, narrative researchers view stories as both enabled and constrained by a range of social resources and circumstances. ... Fourth, narrative researchers treat narratives as socially situated interactive performances – as produced in this particular setting, for this particular audience, for these particular purposes. ... In other words, a narrative is a joint production of narrator and listener. ... Fifth, narrative researchers ... view themselves as narrators as they develop interpretations and find ways in which to present or publish their ideas about the

"The experimenting artist acts in the dark, drafting maps for a territory not yet certified to exist and not guaranteed to emerge out of the map now drafted" (Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, 1997, p. 109).

**Text:** The term 'text', as I use the word, is not the book. No more than writing or trace, it is not limited to the paper which you cover with your graphism. It is precisely for strategic reasons ... that I found it necessary to recast the concept text by generalizing it almost without limit...' (Derrida, 'But, beyond...', *Critical Inquiry*, 13, 1986, p. 167).

Sometimes, in complete fury, a moment of madness, it slips out. *Cunt*. My conditioning ruptures, and the anti-conditioning kicks in, a sub-set-conditioning, the conditioning imbued by men for men, that calls for a secret language, a secret fury, a secret misogynistic discourse – one that separates US from THEM (cocks from cunts). *Cunt*. And it's out there, released from the sub-conscious, from the secret, internal sub-text, the internal monologue, the repressed and quarantined depths, to speak of my loyalty to men and to patriarchy (even if I don't *consciously* mean it). My eyes will dart from side to side. I will be alarmed. I will be hoping no-one (*no woman*) has heard me utter the unspeakable. Or, if they have, that the word (*cunt*) has somehow slipped through the gaps and been judged as *contextually legitimate*, an understandable breach. A *nudge-nudge, wink-wink* scenario.

And I wonder how it is that a word, a morpheme, a sound, a small utterance, a split-second communication, can be so volatile, so explosive. How a misplaced hand grenade – like an accidental exclusive remark – can cause so much damage, so much annihilation, to the Self, to the Other, and to the situation at hand. A carefully

crafted social identity, a career, a relationship, can be exploded in one fateful utterance – one word lost on the tongue, slobbered out without a thought, in vomit, in bile. How the ghosts of yesteryear still speak through our mouths, listen through our ears, and see through our eyes. How we are all puppets on the strings of history, at the fingertips of our forbearers, speaking in tongues.

Rather than balk and run from a term that could undermine my ability to communicate and pass as a civilised human being, I will run toward it, headlong, and shout it out with gusto: **CUNT**. And then again and again until it makes no sense: cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt ... until it no longer appears taboo and evil. Until it turns back into four letters, side-by-side, a single word, not even a big word, but a small word, one of millions, found in the depths of C-words, in the dictionary, the English dictionary, but not a school dictionary, a bigger dictionary, a dictionary that includes taboo terms, 26 sections of words, sometimes in several volumes, in the English-speaking world, which isn't the whole world, but just part of the world, out there, beyond me, in the universe.

The same agitation occurs with the

**Grammatology:** the 'science of writing before speech and in speech...' (p. 51). 'When/where does writing begin?' (p. 74). 'Grammatology is about the undoing of logocentrism' and the origins of writing (p. 74).

(Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 1967/1976)

Derrida: 'But a meditation upon the trace should undoubtedly teach us that there is no origin, that is to say simple origin; that the questions of origin carry with them a metaphysics of presence' (p. 74).



'What might be the ideal of an educated person proposed by a poststructuralism that puts in question the very notion of truth, in which the claims of truth to objectivity and neutrality are exposed as effects of an apparatus of power?' (Ulmer, 1985, p. 168).

Ulmer (1985) advocates a double-banded textuality that mixes art and science to form a hybrid discourse and practice that culminates in an 'applied grammatology.' Here, a new type of intellectual art emerges that simultaneously draws upon theory, critical combat, and pleasure (drawing here on Barthes) to revolutionise the grammatological text and classroom.

According to Laurel Richardson (as cited in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 960):

No textual staging is ever innocent. Styles of writing are neither fixed nor neutral but rather reflect the historically shifting domination of particular schools or paradigms. Social scientific writing, like all other forms of writing, is a sociohistorical construction and, therefore, is mutable.

This text has a context—an allegiance. It emerges from the new freedoms, experiments, and ethics taking place in some forms of research. It joins the "rising tide of voices" (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005, p. 1115) and the struggle over representation (Ellis, 1997; Lincoln & Denzin, 2005, p. 1124; Neumann, 1996). It participates in a broader context even if preoccupied with itself. It is this preoccupation, this self-absorption, that allows it to move away from itself (the specific and situational) to explore the general and the abstract (the political, social, and cultural), and to circle back again in an ongoing dialogue with itself and the world (Ellis, 1997; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Jones, 2005; Neumann, 1996). For Arthur Bochner (as cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 748), "the crisis of representation ... necessitates a radical transformation in the goals of our [artistic and social science] work – from description to communication [i.e. from merely recording the 'facts' and describing the 'data' to responding emotionally and cognitively to this experience and sharing it with others]. That's the inspiration for the narrative turn."

The distinctions between 'fact' and 'fiction' and 'true' and 'imagined' have blurred in recent decades (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 960).<sup>3</sup> Mixed genres and intertextualities have proliferated; science and art have met, fought, merged, and informed each other in new and unusual ways. Postmodernism has freed qualitative research (and

narratives they studied." I use all of these analytical lenses at different times.

<sup>3</sup> Oxymoronic genres include creative nonfiction, faction, ethnographic fiction, and true fiction (Richardson, as cited in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961).

**Social Justice:**

"An interest in social justice means attentiveness to ideas and actions concerning fairness, equality, democratic process, status, hierarchy, and individual and collective rights and obligations. It signifies thinking about being human and about creating good societies and a better world. It prompts reassessment of our roles as national and world citizens. It means exploring tensions between complicity and consciousness, choice and constraint, indifference and compassion, inclusion and exclusion, poverty and privilege, and barriers and opportunities. It also means taking a critical stance towards actions, organizations, and social institutions. Social justice studies require looking at both realities and ideals. Thus, contested meanings of 'should' and 'oughts' come into play. Unlike positivists of the past, social justice researchers openly bring their shoulds and oughts into the discourse of inquiry" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 510).

"Traditions do not 'exist' by themselves and independently of what we think and do; they are daily reinvented by our dedication, our selective memory and selective seeing, our behaving 'as if they defined our conduct. The allegedly 'primordial' communities are *postulated*; and the meaning of their being 'real' is that many people, in unison, follow that postulate" (Bauman, *Life in Fragments*, 1995, pp. 276-277).

equally volatile and no less contentious term: God, G-o-d, or **God**, or Allah, or Jesus, or Buddha, or any God (or the same God).

So how is it that a term can become, as Fanny suggests, so *toxic* and *unsayable*: so fragile, powerful, volatile, and loaded, "where civil blood makes civil [mouths] unclean" (*Romeo and Juliet*)? So terrible that their mere utterance can cause all types of violent reactions, from condemnation to exile, to bloodshed and war? Or, in the case of Harold, to seize up and die when Madge, his wife, re-claims the term and puts it back in the mouths of women, and uses it against the tyranny of her husband, to re-claim her body, mind, and agency?

How is this power generated? And would I want to harness it if I could? (Probably.) Could I bear the responsibility? (Yes, no, maybe.) Governments do, politicians do, advertisers do, and tyrants do. John Howard, for instance, claims that market capitalism (*aka* neo-liberalism) isn't ideological and isn't political; rather, it is a natural and neutral process like flowers and honey and climate change.<sup>4</sup> It occurs in the *absence* of humans and the *absence*

<sup>4</sup> Source: a decade of media coverage has given me this impression (current, 2007).

of design, *beyond* politics and *beyond* egos: it's the process of God and Nature and the orbit of the earth around the sun. When it rains, it pours; and when the poor suffer and go hungry the Gods have been unkind, for that is the natural order of the seasons, which toss and spread abundance, wealth, and social capital, or strip them away.

And that's just it: I don't know whether I could live with that kind of power, that kind of deception, and that kind of strategic *mindless blindness* that justifies the atrocities suffered by others in the name of the few, while I live in a castle, a modest castle, but still a castle, in the Capital, not the slums, in the Big End of town, in the privileged suburbs, the wireless districts, and call myself Prime Minister (which is a pseudonym for King). In fact, rather than de-fuse and legitimise the term cunt, all I have done here is quarantine the term further, in a small entry, in a catalogue, to open up the question, which will remain buried, like the term, and closed, in the deep recesses of the commonsense of this text. But at least I know *that I know* that my power over language, over definitions and usage, is limited, and that I too struggle under the weight of orthodoxy and indoctrination. Under the spell of definitions made by other people, earlier people,

Derrida says: "I have only one language, a mother tongue as they say, a mother language, and the language is something one cannot appropriate, it is never mine. A language is structurally the language of the Other" (*Deconstruction Engaged*, 2001, p. 89).



# We are all hypertexts -

'Text means Tissue; but whereas hitherto we have always taken this tissue as a product, a ready-made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth), we are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving...' (Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 1973/1990, p. 64).

## I N T E R-VERBALITY

other discourses and practices) from the burden and delusion of fixed and absolute truths (Angrosino, 2005; O'Farrell, 1999); from objective reality as an entity 'out there' that can be possessed and recorded *in here* (Angrosino, 2005; Charmaz, 2005, p. 509); and from methodological fundamentalism that privileges certain research methods (and certain data and certain texts) while excluding or discounting others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, p. xi); possibly, too, it has sprung us from one prison and left us floating in another, without direction and borders, in a larger, more incomprehensible, (postmodern) void. *And this comforts me too.* No one account can claim it all, no one voice can sing the final hymn, no one map can chart all the territories, and this frees me to explore the most complex and shifting landscape of all, the *self*. It also means that the various artefacts and snippets of information passing as data need not be sourced from one elusive and exclusive 'truth-abulous' place characterised by 'gold standard' randomised field trials (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005, p. 1123) or linear-rational representations. 'Evidence' abounds in the personal and subjective, too. In me (and you). As Richardson (as cited in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 962) notes:

Postmodernism claims that writing is always partial, local, and situational and that our selves are always present no matter how hard we try to suppress them - but only partially present because in our writing we repress parts of our selves as well.<sup>4</sup>

I accept this claim. Parts of me remain hidden in the text while other parts emerge. There are parts that speak and parts that remain silent. And what I 'make' of yesterday is just as relevant as what I 'make' of today; for the voices of the past still converse with the voices of the present; and these reflections, dialogues, and exchanges all help me to

<sup>4</sup> Derrida (2001, p. 116) notes: "I think the situation in literature is analogous, that is, literature is a way of suspending the reference, of not ... being able to say everything. That's why literature is indissociable from democracy: under the name of literature you can, you should be able to publish anything you want, with no restrictions, no censorship, in principle. At the same time you could keep everything secret: that is, while publishing you could hide whatever you want, you don't have to mean something."

Many poststructuralists refer to the 'self as the subject' to emphasise how the self is 'subjected' to the moulding influences of language and culture (i.e. socialisation).

Perhaps the sense of our journey does not lie only in one direction, perhaps there is no terminus at the end of the tracks to justify our insistent movement forward? Perhaps we are riding blinded by a future whose redemption ultimately lies at our backs, in the rubble, misery and confusion that we think we have already overcome?

(Chambers, 1995, p. 30)

dead people, past people, elite people, who are still having their way, and their say, through my mouth, through my thoughts, through my language, through my sentences, through my artefacts, and through inter-textuality and *inter-verbality*, at this very moment.

The gift of language is a very loaded gift. It arrives jam-packed full of meaning, ideology, hegemony, and power. So loaded that it is impossible to (completely) un-pack and reject. And yet where would I be without it?

What all this tells me, as a writer, as an artist, as a text and art producer, as a pragmatic radical,<sup>5</sup> as an artist-researcher, as a teacher, is that I should problematise everything (if I can) and go deeper (if possible) to the very core of the common sense (which may be impossible), and de-stabilise and de-mythologise the very assumptions that I (and possibly you) hold dearest. I'm vomiting these discourses as you read: left-wing perspectives; idealism; social justice; free speech; acts of sedition; challenging the common sense; counter-hegemonic discourses and practices; and so on. I am an ideological machine, like you.

<sup>5</sup> (Boomer, 1988, 1989; Miller, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2007, February 15, 2008)

CUNT. Oh, *fuck*, I said it again. Have you noticed that the term 'fuck' isn't nearly as offensive as it once was, now that many of us use it? Could the word 'cunt' go the same way as the word 'fuck'? Can you imagine a time when the word 'cunt' is as common as the word 'me': *me me me cunt cunt cunt*? And that your child's name is *Mary Cunt Fuck* or *Richard Fuck Cunt*? And that you are just the most wonderful *fuckin cunt* that I know?

Word Wars, it seems, are here to stay, even if you and I are not. ■

Cunt

'The idea of truth belongs to the rhetoric of power' (Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, 1997, p. 112).

made up of codes within a centreless network. (Snyder, 1998)



'The essential point of modern social analyses of education is that education is a device of power and control whose chief purpose is to reproduce the dominant values of society and to legitimize the authority of the state (finally, of the class structure)' (Ulmer, 1985, p. 169).

"Hypertext can ... link all allusions and references in a text, both external ('intertextuality') and internal ('intratextuality')" (Snyder, *Hypertext*, 1998, p. 56).

further understand my 'self' as I am and have been, and the ideas and practices that I accept or dispute along the way. Writing,<sup>5</sup> and writing narratives, and creating and 'performing'<sup>6</sup> (Charmaz, 2005; Denzin, 2005; Finley, 2005; Tedlock, 2005) stories and critiques, "can evoke deeper parts of the self, heal wounds, enhance the sense of self – or even alter one's sense of identity (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 965). Writing is, and becomes, a form of knowing and discovery, a method of inquiry (of personal-cultural-writing—*auto-ethnography*) that enables the inquirer to learn (more) about the self and the research topic (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 959; Sebranek, Kemper, & Meyer, 2001, p. 1, 143). It is also a form of travel and migration—of *touring* and *drifting*—and navigating from here to there. "It means to conceive of dwelling as a mobile habitat" (Chambers, 1995, p. 4), of moving from the personal to the political (Jones, 2005), from the local to the global, in order to unearth clues about my various selves and the worlds I inhabit (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Chambers, 1995). It is also about *heuristics*, *applied grammatology* (Ulmer, 1985), and *affirmative deconstruction* (Derrida, 2001), where historical sedimentations are disturbed, where habits are broken and myths are menaced, and where new ideas and new selves are (re)constructed from the debris.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Actually, I believe that post-modernism is not a trend to be chronologically defined, but, rather, an ideal category—or, better still, a *Kunstwollen*, a way of operating. We can say that every period has its own post-modernism, just as every period would have its own mannerism... (Eco, *Reflections on 'The Name of The Rose'*, 1985, p. 16).

<sup>6</sup> Doyle and Carter (2003, p. 130) write: "We as human beings tend ... to interpret our lives by weaving comprehensive frameworks in which the incidents, people, actions, emotions, ideas, and settings of our experience are brought together, inter-related, and situated. In this process, we sort through our experiences, dividing the pertinent from the extraneous and filling in the gaps as we construct sensible renderings or accounts of our personal histories."

And Chambers (1995, p. 10) writes: "Although allegorical, always speaking of an other, of an elsewhere, and therefore condemned to be dissonant, writing opens up a space that invites movement, migration, a journey. It involves putting a certain distance between ourselves and the contexts that define our identity. To write, therefore, although seemingly an imperialist gesture, for it is engaged in an attempt to establish a path, a trajectory, a, however limited and transitory, territory and dominion of perception, power and knowledge, can also involve a repudiation of domination and be invoked as a transitory trace, the gesture of an offer: a gift, the enigmatic present of language that attempts to reveal an opening in ourselves and the world we inhabit. This is also the paradox in the belly of writing: like the ambiguity of travel, it starts from known materials – a language, a lexicon, a discourse, a series of archives – and yet seeks to extract from the

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Cunts

'Please note that the impossibility of getting 'outside our beliefs and language' is here taken for granted...' (Bauman, *Post-modernity and its Discontents*, 1997, p. 117).