

Applied Derrida:
(Mis)Reading the Work of Mourning in Educational Research

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The century of "Marxism" will have been that of the techno-scientific and effective decentering of the earth, of geopolitics, of the *anthropos* in its onto-theological identity or its genetic properties, of the *ego cogito*--and of the very concept of narcissism whose aporias are. . . the explicit themes of deconstruction. This trauma is endlessly denied by the very movement through which one tries to cushion it, to assimilate it, to interiorize and incorporate it. In this mourning work in process, in this interminable task, the ghost remains that which gives one the most to think about--and to do. Let us insist and spell things out: to do and to make come about, as well as to let come (about). (Derrida, 1994, p. 98)

This essay began as part of a symposium on Marxism today.¹ It moves through a necessarily guilty reading of the reception of the "post" in educational research² and then turns to its primary interest, the uses of deconstruction in thinking about the improvement of educational policy and practice through research, by way of an effort to reinscribe praxis under conditions of postmodernity.

Whatever the meaning of the "post" these days, it is pervasive, elusive and marked by a proliferation of conflicting definitions that refuse to settle into meaning. Efforts to accommodate/incorporate the "post" in educational research have not been easy. In the pages of the Educational Researcher alone, MacLaren and Farahmandpur (2000) warn against "the decline of class politics," textualism, "toothless liberalism and airbrushed insurgency," nihilism, localism and relativism, all wrapped up in "a facile form of culturalism" that paralyzes progressive politics. Constan (1998) offers a typology of the postmodern noteworthy for its use of the very logic that the "post" sets out to undo (St. Pierre, 2000; Pillow, 2000). Howe contrasts "postmodernists" and "transformationists" and worries about "paradigm cliques" (1998, p. 20).

Harold Bloom (1975) has famously argued that all readings are misreadings, given the weight of perspective on what we see and how we see it. This essay adapts Bloom's thesis to read the space of the range of discussion concerning the "post" in educational

¹"Mourning Marxism? Philosophical Explorations in Feminism, Poststructuralism and Education," Mary Leach, Patti Lather, Kate McCoy, Wanda Pillow and Deborah Britzman, American Educational Research Association (AERA), San Diego, April 1998. The question mark is an homage to a 1972 symposium, Nietzsche Today?, where Derrida presented an early version of his Spurs (1979) on questions of Nietzsche and the "truth" of woman. For an update, see Gallop, 1997, where she asks "Derrida Today?"

²"(Mis)Reading Postmodernism: Implications for Educational Research," Elizabeth St. Pierre, Bernadette Baker, Wanda Pillow, Patti Lather, and Kate McCoy, AERA, Seattle, April 2001.

research as symptomatic of the anxieties attendant upon the collapse of foundations and the end of triumphalist versions of science. In order to make the project doable, I concentrate on the reception of Derrida as a "part-for-whole" or synecdoche for the heterogeneous "post" of postmodernism, including deconstruction.

At the risk of a proper reading, my interest is in three gestures of thought at work in the reception of the "post" in much of educational research in what might be said to lead to a mistaken identity. The three gestures of thought are: 1) charges of nihilism/textualism, 2) conflating ideology critique and deconstruction, and 3) compelling understanding too quickly in terms of the uses of deconstruction in educational research. I conclude with an example of "applied Derrida" that troubles the concept of praxis in the context of writing a book about women living with HIV/AIDS.

Nihilism/nothing outside the text

Derrida's "there is nothing outside the text" from *Of Grammatology* (1976:226-27) is, according to John Caputo, "one of the most thoroughly misrepresented utterances in contemporary philosophy" (1997a:78). Rather than some scandal of "'linguisticism'" (Derrida, in Caputo 1997a:104), Derrida means by this that there are no cultural practices that are not defined by frameworks that are "caught up in conflicting networks of power, violence, and domination" (Baker 1995:129). Derrida says "I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language. . . it is, in fact, saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above all else the search for the 'other' and the 'other of language'. . . If deconstruction *really* consisted in saying that everything happens in books, it wouldn't deserve *five* minutes of anybody's attention" (quoted in Baker 1995:16).

Rather than an occlusion of "the real," the deconstructive claim is that there is nothing that is not caught in a network of differences and references that give a textual structure to what we can know of the world. There is a "thereness" that includes the frames, horizons of intelligibility, and socio-political presuppositions of the necessary, irreducible and inescapable epistemic and archival violence that constitute Derridean textuality. This is about the loss of transcendental signifiers and the situating of reference within the differential systems from which making meaning is possible. To quote Derrida, "'Deconstruction starts with the deconstruction of logocentrism, and thus to want to confine it to linguistic phenomena is the most suspect of operations'" (in Brunette and Wills, 1994:15).

Working the failure of the oppositions that assure concepts, deconstruction remains in excess of traditional political agendas. The speculative force of this excess works toward establishing new relational structures with "a greater emphasis on ethics and its relationship to the political" (Spivak 1999:426). "One needs another language besides that of political liberation," Derrida says (in Kearney, 1984:122). In deconstruction, the terms of political struggle shift from class as a subject of history to the cultural constitution of subjectivity via the workings of disciplinary power. Here the complexity of subject formation includes how various axes of power are mutually constitutive,

productive of different local regimes of power and knowledge that locate subjects and require complex negotiations of relations, including the interruption of coherence and complete subordination to the demands of regulatory regimes.³ Engaging the real is not what it used to be. Different ideas about materiality, reality, representations, and truth distinguish different epistemological orientations where reality does not precede representation but is constituted by it. Such a shift from the sociological to the cultural brings textuality, discourse, and representation to the fore. The means of production are less the struggle than "'the nature of social representations'" (Foster, quoted in Altieri 1990:457) with its questions concerning the psyche, subjectivity, and the self as sites of the production of social categories. Calls for "resistance postmodernism" or "left deconstruction" a la Tony Bennett and Terry Eagleton, among others (Bennington 2000:209) offer a "reductively oppositional" (Altieri 1990:475) reading of the post that reinscribes it back into modernist categories of political struggle (e.g., Kincheloe and McLaren 1994; Gabardi 2000). Fekete (1992) terms this a recuperation of postmodernism into a politically intelligible place "in the frame of the already established purposes of the day."

Derrida is clear that we "cannot not be" the heirs of Marx's break with myth, religion and nationalism as ways to think the world and our place in it (1994, p. 91). Derrida's "turn or return to Marx" (p. 32) breaks his silence on Marx in the face of proclamations as to "the end of Marxism" (p. 32). He seeks the Marx outside of "the dogma machine" (p. 13) where the place for justice is "the infinite asymmetry of the relation to the other" (p. 22) as our way into a better future (Spivak, 1994, p. 55). Against charges of the nihilism of deconstruction, Derrida speaks of "a certain configurativity" where "the coming of the other" produces a democracy to come (Sprinkler, 1993, p. 231). In a present marked not by crisis so much as by *structural incompetence*, a "wearing down beyond wear" of the "conceptual phantasms" that have guided us through modernity (Derrida, 1994, p. 80), Derrida sees a moment of contestatory possibilities where more is at stake than philosophy when philosophy is at stake.

Spivak terms this a place for justice, a problematic of a responsibility, "caught between an ungraspable call and a setting-to-work" (1994, p. 23). Other to "inspirational academic heroics" (p. 26), a problematic of responsibility is premised on "the something that must of necessity not go through" (p. 20). Rather than a task of uncovering hidden forces and material structures and a textual(rhetorical)/real(material) binary and oppositional (dialectical) contradictions, this is about working the ruins of Marxism toward an other logic. As delineated in Specters of Marx, this different logic works against the leveling

³ Foucault writes: "Maybe the problem of the self is not to discover what it is in its positivity; maybe the problem is not to discover a positive self or the positive foundation for the self. Maybe our problem now is to discover that the self is nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built in our history. Maybe the problem is to change those technologies. . . to get rid of those technologies, and then, to get rid of the sacrifice which is linked to those technologies. In this case, one of the main political problems nowadays would be, in a strict sense of the word, the politics of ourselves (1997:231).

processes of the dialectic and for the excess, the nonrecuperable remainder, the different, the other/outside of the logic of noncontradiction.

Worries about privileging text over people and narrative over life elide how "the real is no longer real" in a digitalized era that interrupts the "easy real" (Poster 1988:171). How discourse enframes and words the world becomes the issue rather than search for the "beyond" of ideology of "real" social forces and material structures. Instead of the nihilism so frequently evoked by the educational left in its efforts to make sense of the post, this is the yes of the setting to work mode of deconstruction that faces unanswerable questions, "the necessary experience of the impossible" in responding to the call of the wholly other (Spivak 1999:428).

Conflating ideology critique and deconstruction

Understanding the social and historical meanings of representational practices has encountered much resistance from traditional positivist knowledge approaches, but this is a shared project of marxism and the post. There are, however, key differences between ideology critique and deconstruction.

Ideology critique is about uncovering hidden forces and material structures in a discursive field organized by concerns for "truth." It endorses a binary of textual/material in its calls for grounding knowledge in "the crucial facticity of determinant brute economic reality" (Leslie 2000:33). An Enlightenment project, a modernist project, it offers a material real in contrast to the ontological uncertainty of deconstruction. "If such a thing exists," Derrida writes, over and over again, marking that indeterminacy that is the "originary complication" of a deconstruction that is not an unmasking but a keeping open, alive, loose, on guard against itself.

The critique of ideology was the "essence of structuralist cultural studies" in a way that moved from interpreting reality as determined by some assumedly knowable empirical and historical presence to attending to the unconscious, imaginary relations and the construction of subjectivity (Van Loon 2001:275). Experience became an effect of structure in an early version of the decentering of the subject that prepared the way for the linguistic turn that followed Althusserian structuralist marxism. From early semiology through discourse analysis to an increasing attention to deconstruction, troubling language as a transparent medium has undercut universal categories and a romanticized, universalized subject.

Deconstructive destabilization works otherwise. Its interest is in complicit practices and excessive differences rather than unveiling structures and illuminating the forces and relations of production. Purposefully doubled in its necessary implications in what it seeks to trouble, deconstruction works against the critical righteousness of ideology critique where "the materialist critic has an educative role that involves the propagandistic task of eliciting correct consciousness" (Leslie 2000:33). In reading the subject, modes of investment are no longer based on traditional notions of categorical thinking such as false consciousness, on the one hand, or the more idealized model of

intentional agency of reason and will. Indeterminacy and paradox become conditions of affirmative power by undoing fixities and mapping new possibilities for playing out relations between identity and difference, margins and centers. Ways of knowing become "an archive of windows," a study of the histories of enframing that focuses on the staging of truthfulness. Particularly interested in that which works to efface the frame effect, the deconstructive shift is from the real to the production of the reality effect. In this shift, practices dedicated to the disappearance of anything easily identifiable as "the real" are claimed as political work.

Practices of respectful twisting open up to difference and get things moving as practical or praxiological engagements that say yes to turning forms against themselves. This is an immanent critique, a critical intimacy of intervention from within. Quite other to the masterful, totalizing critical distance of ideology critique with its assumptions of an outside, this is Derrida's thesis of necessary complicity. This is the necessity of participating in what is being reinscribed in a way that responds to the call of the wholly other. Perplexed by design, doubled in implication, the practical politics of putting deconstruction to work entail a sort of getting lost as an ethical relationality of non-authoritarian authority to what we know and how we know it.

Applied post: Misreading the work of mourning

In an interview for the 1995 conference, "Appying: To Derrida," Derrida says, "Deconstruction cannot be applied and cannot not be applied. So we have to deal with this aporia, and this is what deconstruction is about" (1996:218). In order to invent the impossible, application is much more about dissemination and proliferation under conditions of responsibility within indeterminacy, "a moment of non-knowledge, a moment beyond the programme" (223) than it is about something technical and neutral, programmable and predictable.

Calls to attend to the real world, "a mobilization of a sense of urgency—an urgency to act, to declare, to represent, to render an account" are situated in the history of the fraught relationship between French and continental philosophy and Anglo-Saxon sociohistorical empiricism (Van Loon 2001:280). Against the "fiddling while Rome burns" characterizations of deconstruction, deconstruction is aimed at provoking fields into new moves and spaces where they hardly recognize themselves in becoming otherwise, the unforeseeable that they are already becoming. Demand that it serve an immediate and evidently useful purpose belies its "exorbitant method" that is loyal to a tradition by keeping it alive while transgressing the horizon of legitimation, a performative within/against where it is what it does in an undecidability that is "never over and done with" (Caputo 1997a:138).

One could talk of a "public or perish" governing mentality of educational research of late, the increased demand for its usefulness in the context of policy and practice (Willinsky 2000). It is tempting to revert to the quick and narrow scientism of the past (e.g., Ladwig, 1996). But the game has changed. Accounting for complexity and contingency without predictability is what now shapes our conversations and expands our idea of science as

cultural practice and practice of culture. My argument is that on the edge educational research will be produced out of and because of the paradoxes of projects that develop a better language to describe a more complicated understanding of what knowledge means and does than by reinscribing the idealized natural science model.⁴ Such a language will be more resonant in doing for the Left what the Right has done with language in shifting common-sense. As Michel Apple asks, “*If the right can do this, why can’t we?*” (2001, p. 194, original emphasis)

Make something new, Derrida says, that is how deconstruction happens. In the final section of this essay, putting deconstruction to work, I use the efforts of my co-researcher, Chris Smithies, and myself to tell the stories of women living with HIV/AIDS to ask hard questions about necessary complicities, inadequate categories, dispersing rather than capturing meanings, and producing bafflements rather than solutions. As what Spivak calls “a practical academic” (1994, p. 27), I will draw on this work not so much to give flesh and blood to abstractions as to evoke what Derrida terms a “ghost effect” of spectral movement where ontology can only be a conjuration, a more demanding ontology of an other logic calling for other concepts.

In Specters of Marx, exploring a logic of mourning and haunting, Derrida enacts an in-between logic, between presence and absence, in order to unlock thinking and help us otherwise. What I have discovered in my reading of this book is that my mourning in relation to Marxism is for a certain praxis characterized by salvation narratives, consciousness-raising, and a romance of the humanist subject and agency. In spite of poststructural critiques of the doctrine of eventual salvation, voluntaristic philosophies of consciousness and vanguard theories of “emancipating” some others implicit in Marxism, I am unable to do without the concept of praxis. It seems to be the space, for me, of the “experience of the promise” of Marxism.

In the distinctions Krell (2000) draws between Freud and Derrida, it is impossible mourning, unsuccessful mourning that is, in Derrida, the very promise of affirmation. As opposed to Freud’s theorized “hyperbolic identifications and narcissistic or anaclitic [libidinal] object choices in the first place” (p. 15), Krell sees the undecidability of Derrida’s mourning as facing that “there never was any *there* there for us” (p. 18). Remaining true to the memory of the other is not about withdrawing affirmation but about being “always a bit lost” (p. 20) to one another, a loss of presence at the heart of being, as opposed to the “too solidly *taken over*” of the orthodox “legitimation by way of Marx” (Derrida, 1994:92).

Mourning work always follows a trauma. Philosophically, the work of mourning is about ontologizing what remains after the rigor of troubling or problematizing a concept. My work in this final section is to use my continued postmarxist haunting by the ghost of praxis to reinscribe praxis in a way that mourns its remainders and irremediable losses. To be postmarxist is not so much to be out of date or surpassed as confronted with

⁴ For a historical survey of the weight of the natural science model on educational research, particularly via a narrowed psychology, see Lagemann 2000.

undecidability, incompleteness and dispersion rather than the comforts of transformation and closure. This calls for a praxis "after the trial of undecidability," a praxis of aporia: "as tentative, contextual, appropriative, interventionist, and unfinished effort to shift the terrain" (Rooney, 1995, p. 195).⁵

Such a move is in, with, for and against the much that must be refused: the privileging of containment over excess, thought over affect, structure over speed, linear causality over complexity, and intention over aggregative capacities (Levinson, 1995). Ontological changes and category slippages mark the exhaustion of received categories of mind/body, nature/culture, organism/machine (Haraway, 1997). The goal is to shape our practice to a future that must remain to come, in excess of our codes but, still, always already: forces already active in the present. Perhaps a transvaluation of praxis means to find ways to participate in the struggle of these forces as we move toward a future which is unforeseeable from the perspective of what is given or even conceivable within our present conceptual frameworks.

Praxis Under Erasure: Between Concepts

Classically, praxis is the self-creative activity through which we make the world, the central concept of a Marxist philosophy that did not want to remain a philosophy, philosophy becoming practical (Bottomore, 1983, p. 386). For the Greeks, *praxis* was the realm of free action of citizens (free men), as distinct from *poiesis*, the servile action of necessity. Marx put together a practice of material transformation that brought these together in a relationship of reciprocity with a theorizing quite other to contemplation, "proposing to philosophy that it view itself in the mirror of practice" (Balibar, 1995, p. 41).

The concept of praxis has long given me much to think about and to do. My earlier articulation of "research as praxis" (Lather, 1986) sought that intersection of material transformation through theory's practice and practice's theory. Reprinted in Getting Smart (1991), the chapter on research as praxis is the most cited part of the book, even though I now see it as full of unproblematized assumptions about the role of "transformative intellectuals," ideology critique, a voluntarist philosophy of consciousness and pretensions toward "emancipating" or "empowering" some others. The failure of most readers to trouble the foundationalism of my concept of "research as praxis" speaks, I think, to the yearning and unsettlement of the academic left, given the demise of humanism and regimes of transcendent generality.

Yearning and unsettled myself, my present reach is toward a praxis thought against the humanist figure of a consciously choosing subject, what Judith Butler refers to as "a fiction of the ego as master of circumstances" (1993, p. 124). I reach also toward what

⁵Rooney is writing about Althusser's reading of Marx as marked by discrepancies, repetitions, hesitations and uncertainties, always beginning again, a doubling between historical situatedness and political interestedness, in short, reading as a necessarily guilty rather than innocent practice.

William Spanos (1993) writes of as the "postmodern theoretical demystification of the discourse of deliverance" (p. 187) that positions narratives of salvage and redemptive agendas as ever deeper places for privilege to hide. Much of this is prefigured in feminist concerns with emancipatory agendas as under suspicion for their coercion, rationalism and universalism,⁶ but deconstruction adds a twist with its central thesis of complicity, its refusal of an innocent position "outside" power networks. Spivak, for example, claims that "deconstruction does not aim at praxis or theoretical practice but lives in the persistent crisis or unease of the moment of *techne* or crafting. . . . It is a negotiation and an acknowledgement of complicity" (1993, p. 121). Rather than trying to legitimate, a deconstructive problematic tries to trouble, to look for dangers, normalizing tendencies, tendencies toward dominance in spite of liberatory intentions (Sawiki, 1988, p. 166).

What does this mean for the concept of praxis? Has what Gramsci (1971) termed "the philosophy of praxis" disappeared or is "the disappeared"⁷ the consolations of humanism given the proliferation of differences that signals the radical impossibility of social totalities? To address these questions, I call on Derrida's practice of *sous rature* or writing under erasure: keeping something visible but crossed out, to avoid universalizing or monumentalizing it, a form of a warning of an irreducibility outside of intentional control in the play of the world, keeping a term as both limit and resource, opening it up to margins. What would be the parameters of a praxis under erasure?

Literary critic, Wlad Godzich postulates that post-Hegelian praxis is about gaps, remains, radical alterities (1994, p. 26), the philosophy of the cry versus the Hegelian philosophy of the concept. Beyond absorption into present frames of intelligibility, such praxis is excessive, diffuse, an exacerbation of the tensions native to concepts that reveals their undecidability, their constitutive exclusions. This sort of category shake-down is evident in Bill Haver's (1996) proposal that the question of how to intervene be grounded in a shift from totalities to non-containment, a principle of excess and infinite proliferation where a rigorous praxis refuses much in an effort to "stop thinking straight." Arguing the limits of our frames of intelligibility which render the world thinkable and knowable, Haver moves toward practices that are in excess of subjects presumed to know about objects presumed to be knowable,

Hence what I am trying to think here is a praxis of the trial of undecidability. In excess of binary or dialectical logic, I seek a form of praxis that disrupts the horizon of an already prescribed intelligibility to address Derrida's question: "What must now be thought and thought otherwise"? (1994, p. 59) The logic of negation as a trial to go through before

⁶See, for example, Stacey (1988), Patai (1991), Opi (1992), and Fine (1992).

⁷Biddick (1993), in speaking of the disappearing of bodies in imperial social science versus the proliferation of bodies in postcolonial studies, evokes other bodies in tracing the concept to the Mothers of the Disappeared in Chile. Quoting anthropologist, Michael Taussig, she notes how the political work of the mothers interrupts public/private distinctions and creates "a new public ritual whose aim is to allow the tremendous moral and magical power of the unquiet dead to flow into the public sphere, empower individuals, and challenge the would-be guardians of the Nation-State. . . ." (p. 37).

restoration of some lost unity breaks down in the face of the challenges of social changes which collapse our categories. Derrida (1994) begins a list: labor, production, unemployment, free market, foreign debt, arms industry, inter-ethnic wars, mafia and drug cartels. All present concepts outdated in their very axiomatics by tele-technic dislocation, rhizomatic spreading and acceleration, and new experiences of frontier and identity. In short, the organization of knowledge ruled by the Hegelian inheritance is radically insufficient in the face of a new set of givens that disrupts the conceptual oppositions that structure traditional thinking.

In the post-enlightenment stirrings and strivings of contemporary theory, the philosophy of the subject, reflection, and praxis are being rethought. Levinson (1995), for example, formulates a "post-dialectical praxis" that is quite different from a Kantian or Hegelian analytic. The modernist metaphysics of presence, assured interiority and subject centered agency, the valorizing of transformative interest in the object, Hegel's affirmative negativity and dialectical overcoming: all are at risk, refused in a way that attempts to signal the size and complexity of the changes involved. Such a praxis is about ontological stammering, concepts with a lower ontological weight, a praxis without guaranteed subjects or objects, oriented toward the as yet incompletely thinkable conditions and potentials of given arrangements (Levinson, 1995). To explore such a concept of praxis, I turn to Chris and my textual practices in Troubling the Angels: Women Living With HIV/AIDS.

Caught Between an Ungraspable Call and a Setting-to-Work: Praxis as a Living On

One makes oneself accountable by an engagement that selects, interprets, and orients. In a practical and performative manner, and by a decision that begins by getting caught up, like a responsibility, in the snares of an injunction that is already multiple, heterogeneous, contradictory, divided. (Derrida, 1994, p. 93)

While Marx questioned the concept, Derrida's interest is "the concept of the concept" (1994, p. 147), a thinking of excess and dissemination against the limiting fixity of conceptualization. To think praxis as a concept of living on where "one must work--practically, actually" (p. 131) while, simultaneously, dislocating the self-presence of the concept as a sort of redemption: this is the logic I am trying to enact. Situating praxis as a ruin made habitable by a fold of the between of presence and absence (p. 187), Chris and my practices in Troubling the Angels are both more and other than an example. As a topology for new tasks toward other places of thinking and putting to work, I wrestle with what I have learned from our construction of this text of responsibility. My interest is a praxis that attends to poststructuralist suspicions of rationality, philosophies of presence and universalizing projects, a praxis that "does not put itself in place of theory; it would be theory itself becoming practical--the opposite of pragmatism" (Tiedemann, 1989, p. 202). In terms of Troubling the Angels, what did Chris and I do to make (and let) come about in terms of a thinking that does its knowing from its doing?

Any research is concrete and complex, a knotted and undecidable situation. Invited in to do the job of getting into general circulation the women's stories of living with HIV/AIDS, Chris and I stumbled into a hypertextual pastiche of split text, angel inter-chapters, and the juxtaposition of various presentations of information, from graphs and charts of demographic variables to participant narratives. Getting lost was one of my methodological goals in my desire to interrupt the reductiveness of restricted economies of representation. Hence Troubling the Angels is organized around and courting of complexities and undecidables.⁸

In making textual decisions, Walter Benjamin served as "an indispensable point of departure" (Holland, 1993, p. 3) in moving toward mosaic, multi-levelled forms of representation. Via a community of quotations, didactics, reflections and images, we intended some clustering that sets up resonances to move readers toward thinking about meaning in history within the crisis of representation. Attempting practices that foster a grasp of the ever-changing logic of the time in which we find ourselves, in this case, of AIDS as a "massive readability" (Derrida, 1993), our effort was toward reading out traces of not only the history of AIDS but also of history itself, of how history happens. Following Benjamin's textual practice of an assemblage of fragments, a methodical, continuous experiment of conjunction, we jammed ideas, texts, traditions and procedures together. Moving among different levels, our practice condenses and juxtaposes "different dimensions, of different registers of space and time, of different levels of existence and experience" (Felman and Laub, p. 262) of a testimony we might prefer not to hear. Facing our own avoidance, we move away from the Marxist dream of "cure, salvation and redemption" (p. 177) and toward our vacillation between knowing and not knowing. Our questions become, "What does it mean to inhabit history as crime, as the space of the annihilation of the Other?" (p. 189) What does it mean to be wretched away from received categories of thought, to acknowledge one's intellectual bewilderment, one's noninnocence in the face of the failure of representation? How can articulating the very inarticulateness of history as a limit-experience performatively create in us the power of a call, "the chance, of our response-ability" (p. 203)? My hope was that the women would react to the book like Derrida did to Geoff Bennington's (1991) writing about him in a split text format where the bottom of each page is Derrida's running commentary, designed to escape, to surprise, the systematization of his work proposed by Bennington in the top 2/3 page. Bennington refers to the "hypertext" dimensions of the text that open it to multiple paths of reading (p. 14). Derrida writes of "what is written 'up' there, beside or above me, on me, but also for me, in my favor, toward me and in my place" (p. 26).

The Epilogue of Troubling the Angels presents the women's reactions to our writing of their lives and it seems we managed, unevenly, to satisfy their desire to have their stories out and available to a reading public well beyond the academy. Key here was positioning the women not as objects of exchange and spectacle, voyeurs or eavesdroppers on a conversation not meant for them, but rather as interlocutors of our storying of their lives.

⁸See Lather, 2002, for an exploration of the ethics and politics of this example as a working the ruins of feminist ethnography.

Chris called them our editorial board. This destabilized our authorial position and disturbed us by situating them not so much as "ours" in some possessive prerogative as us "theirs," those to whom we were accountable, "my personal psychologist" as CR referred to Chris, capable of getting "so much smarter" as Amber referred to me.

Where it gets interesting however, is where, whatever our authorial intentions, we were, as writers, also a registering apparatus, a kind of seismograph, an ensemble, an aggregate of registrations (Holland, 1993, p. 260). Here, quite open to chance, many of which align or resonate with one another, connections are made under contingent circumstances. "What matters is the registration of historical process, and questions as to the degree of consciousness or unconsciousness of an author simply do not arise" (p. 262). Judith Butler (1993b, p. 266), too, speaks of a writing "which precedes and mobilizes the one who writes, connecting the one who writes with a language which 'writes' the one." Chris and I both knew and did not know what we were doing, both intentional agents and vessels of history writing us in ways we did not and do not always understand.

In sum, given that praxis is a concept I cannot seem to do without, the praxis that I want to salvage from Marxism is a praxis with less ontological content, an immanent praxis of conjunction that calls out aggregative capacities from within the play of the forces of history. The task becomes not so much to invent or incite as to use praxis as a material force to identify and amplify what is already begun (Balibar, 1995, p. 122). In the case of Troubling the Angels, to argue for textuality as praxis is a refusal of a textual/material binary toward a practice of living on. This is a non-reductive praxis that calls out a promise, not of a new concept but of practice on a shifting ground that foregrounds the limits of the fixing, locating, defining and confining that is the work of the concept. This is a praxis that can survive the critique of Marxism, a praxis immanent in practices that helps us think not only with but in our actions.

Conclusion

--Can one ever accept working for His Highness Mourning?
--How can one not accept it? That is what mourning is, the history of its refusal, the narrative of your revolution, our rebellion, my angel.
(Derrida, 1991:55)

In this essay, I have risked a "proper reading" of Derrida as endlessly open, enacting a principle of multiplication and dispersion that is neither straightforward continuity nor radical rupture (Bennington 2000, 184). In this, I have echoed Derrida's claim that deconstruction only ever made sense to him as a radicalization of Marx (1994:92).

The ghost of Marx, the work of mourning, the debt to be paid: to return to the quote that begins this essay, perhaps in the interminable task of mourning work in process, the ghost that gives us much to think about and to do is the "will have been" of the century of Marxism. In the decentering of the *anthropos*, the onto-theological, and the *ego cogito* and its narcissism, Derrida offers a "difficult knowledge" (Pitt and Britzman, in press) to

those of us who insist on the worldly engagement of deconstruction. Running with concepts that destroy their own names, we seek an unsuccessful and hence possibly faithful mourning for that which we think we cannot think without. This is mourning not as consolation but as a tracing of loss that doubly affirms: both the loss and the still yet of the yes. This is “affirmation with no ax to grind, affirmation without mastery or mockery, without outcome or end, affirmation without issue. . . affirmation without exit” (Krell 2000:209,212).

What all of this means is perhaps best evoked in Pitt and Britzman’s (in press) attempt to theorize the qualities of difficult knowledge where they distinguish between “lovely knowledge” and difficult knowledge. The former reinforces what we think we want from what we find and the latter is knowledge that induces breakdowns in representing experience. Here accepting loss becomes the very force of learning and what one loves “when lovely knowledge is lost” is the promise of thinking and doing otherwise. Such thinking is within and against Enlightenment categories of voice, identity, agency and experience so troubled by incommensurability, historical trauma and the crisis of representation. In the case of Derrida as difficult knowledge, in spite of, perhaps even because of, the critiques of his work too often being based not on a reading of him but on a received version of his ideas, my argument has been that there is plenty of future for Derrida in educational research.⁹

⁹Some examples of “applied Derrida” in educational research include program evaluation (Stronach and MacLure 1997), philosophy of education (Garrison and Leach, 2001), various feminist poststructural interventions (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000); pedagogy (Trifonas, 2000); and practitioner-oriented research in nursery teaching and math education (Brown and Jones, in press).

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