

There is a notion current in the fashion world that good journalists or editors are defined by their sixth sense for trends in the so-called 'ether'. The fashion journalist who successfully captures and names the 'look' of the moment constitutes her/himself as historian in pop cultural mode: for what secures for any particular temporal instant a place in popular history is its symbolic bonding to a style or 'look' that quintessentially embodies its spirit – from the Empire Look of the early 1980s, to the rich bitch chic of late Thatcherism.

The days are gone when it might have been iconoclastic to draw analogies between popular cultural discourse and cultural theory: cultural studies has seen to that. To draw, then, an academically 'respectable' analogy between fashion journalism and critical cultural analysis: if we write, for example, psychoanalytically of the mechanisms that position fantasies of the threatening Other as supports to authoritarian nationalisms – as does Renata Salecl in this collection – then the categories mobilized in that analysis have a purchase on historical realities across diverse terrains (the Albanian Other to the Serbs is as the Aborigines to white Australians etc.). It lies as much within the capacities of cultural theory, in other words, as of fashion journalism, to elaborate categories that have pertinence across different social, geographical, psychic sites. To put this another way: in a situation of increasing global interdependence, the simultaneity of historical developments across the world is mirrored, it seems, by a parallelism in possible modes of cultural theory and analysis.

The collection of articles that follows is one example of that internationalization of Anglo-Saxon cultural critique. Contributions to this issue of *New Formations* are drawn from far-flung sources nationally and internationally. Renata Salecl, David Morley and Kevin Robins, and Gail Ching-Liang Low base their articles on papers delivered to a day conference on 'The Nation and its Cultural Borders', organized by the Centre for the Study of Language and Cultural Theory at the University of Southampton, in association with *New Formations*, in July 1990. Victor Burgin, Peter Wollen and Elizabeth Grosz offer versions of papers from a conference on 'Displacements, Migrations and Identities', staged at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in March–April 1990. Other articles arrived – solicited and unsolicited – at various moments in the editorial process. Yet despite their diverse origins, the articles presented below share elements of a common critical vocabulary, and a common cultural-political interest in the exploration of the valency of categories of nation, migration and exile for the critical analysis of contemporary cultural developments. David Morley and Kevin Robins, in their discussion of European identities in the wake of *perestroika* and German unification: Renata Salecl, in her reflections on the conservative sexual politics of European nationalism: McKenzie Wark, in his observations on the fall of the Berlin Wall as a moment of crisis for Western symbolic systems and cultural identities: to all these writers, the critical tools of psychoanalysis and materialist

philosophies of language ('discourse theory') offer a rich vocabulary for the critique of national political transformations in a European frame. In different ways, all three writers are concerned with European identities in the wake of Stalinism's collapse, and in the interregnum before the consolidation of the single market of 'Fortress Europe'. Similarly, Peter Middleton makes mention of recent developments in Eastern Europe – more specifically, of media representations of the emotions associated with popular rebellion – though his objective is less to draw on established modes of cultural critique, than to challenge the hegemony of particular terms – 'desire', 'subjectivity', 'identity' – in the analysis of emotion as what he terms a form of 'constitutive social relation'.

Peter Wollen, Victor Burgin and Elizabeth Grosz mobilize a critical vocabulary whose key terms are those of geographical displacement – 'exile', 'migration' – to crystallize common aspects of diverse contemporary cultural experience. Peter Wollen charts some of the effects of the globalisation of markets and communications systems on local forms of cultural production and symbolization – 'tourist art'. Victor Burgin investigates the space of exile as 'psychical, as well as physical space'; his work resonates with Renata Salecl's earlier comments on nationalism and racism which, like Salecl, he suggests might be viewed in part as constructs in the unconscious and fantasy – 'paranoid structures' productive of particularly venomous relations to the Other.

To those explorations of the historical and psychic dimensions of exile, Elizabeth Grosz responds with a discussion of the figure of the Jew in Western culture as exiled Other *par excellence*. What emerges from this and other contributions is a common concern with the formal-textual structures of nationhood and exile as cultural formations, and a parallel focus on the structural dynamics of political and historical development – on paranoia, for example, as a motor of nationalist and racist agitation. In the contributions of Mitra Tabrizian and Gail Ching-Liang Low, by contrast, the issue more centrally considered is that of the possible implications (and limits) of textual and psychoanalytic critique for an understanding of specific histories. Gail Ching-Liang Low turns to Klaus Theweleit's *Male Fantasies* as the source of psychoanalytical insights into the structures of nationalist and militarist masculinities; yet she cautions against too easy an equation between Theweleit's men of the pre-fascist *Freikorps*, and the authoritarian and imperial subjectivities of Victorian men. The writers Low investigates here – Henry Rider Haggard and others – must be seen, she argues, as a 'specific reproduction of the radical culture of the right in Britain at the turn of the century' – not as facsimiles of Theweleit's later generation of German soldier males.

That emphasis on the specificity of national histories is echoed, finally, by Mitra Tabrizian, whose panoramic representation of Iranian history since the 1950s (cover and p. 95) explores the capacities of the photographic image to 'write' a 'history of the present'. Ultimately, then, my cultural critique/fashion journalism analogy above must be discarded as excessively frivolous: for, though concerned, as is the fashion journalist, with simultaneities, formal

homologies and synchrony, the cultural critic must in the end declare an allegiance to an exploration of the relations that embed textuality (the fashionable 'look') and identity ('the 1990s wo/man') in particular local, national and international histories.¹

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- 1 For one version of a more extended elaboration of the historiographical methods appropriate to cultural history, see Meaghan Morris's discussion of 'differential temporality' in 'Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower', *New Formations*, 11 (Summer 1990), 5-18.
- 2 Thanks are due to Tony Crowley, Ken Hirschkop and Bill Marshall of the Centre for the Study of Language and Cultural Theory, University of Southampton, for their work on co-ordinating conference papers for this issue; and to Martin Pumphrey, without whom this and several previous issues of the journal would be non-existent.