SOVEREIGN SELVES

Andrew Thacker

Sean Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, Edinburgh University Press, 1992, £35 cloth, £12.95 paperback.
Simon During, *Foucault and Literature: Towards a Genealogy of Writing*, Routledge, 1992, £35 cloth, £10 paperback.
Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self*, Polity Press, 1992, £39.50 cloth, £10.95 paperback.

In the essay 'The Subject and Power', first published in 1983, Michel Foucault considered the way that his earlier work on the dispersal of power in society had developed into the study of how human beings transform themselves into subjects. The essay is a curious document to read, by turns cryptic yet stimulating, baffling but provocative. It contains in miniature many of the themes that preoccupied Foucault after the publication in 1976 of *The History of Sexuality*: a view of subjectivity in terms of a struggle to be a more freely self-created being; a re-engagement with previously rejected philosophical traditions shown in a fascination with Kant's definition of the Enlightenment; and a call to carry out intellectual work on power and resistance which falls foul neither of the worrisome 'privileges of knowledge', nor of the 'skeptical or relativistic refusal of all verified truth'.[1] In many ways the essay demonstrates how Foucault eludes easy definition as a 'postmodernist' thinker. Foucault ends the first half of the essay by drawing attention to subjectivity and the possible forms of resistance to what he has described as the 'government of individualization'. The object of struggles today, he states, is 'not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are'. This refusal aims for a form of 'liberation' from the dominant 'type of individualization' articulated by modern western states. The message for political projects, concludes Foucault, is that they should 'promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.'[2]

Refusing who you are as a subject is, however, not necessarily linked to the promotion of new forms of subjectivity. One might incessantly challenge the ascription of multifarious subjectivities, in the manner of an anarchistic dance against identity, without ever feeling the need to outline any fresh subject position. For any new form of subjectivity would be prey to the governmental individualising of the state that one had strenuously been occupied in rejecting. Forming oneself as a homosexual dandy may only result in being categorised as a 'homosexual dandy'. In this moment in Foucault's text we glimpse something of the return of the repressed in his own work; that of the human self, which

1. Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p212.

2. Foucault, *ibid.*, p216.

had previously been normalised into the 'docile bodies' of *Discipline and Punish* or, as in the tale told in *The History of Sexuality*, constructed by discourse into a sexual being naively eager to discover both the truth of sex and the way in which sex is the truth of the modern subject. Foucault's advocacy of a refusal of these governmentalities – for the sake of refusal alone since, as many critics have pointed out, he evokes no norms by which to legitimate opposition – was replaced in his later work by a quest for historical instances of the active promotion of new identities. The last two volumes of the history of sexuality – *The Uses of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* – and important essays such as 'What is Enlightenment?' show Foucault's search for more positive examples of subjects being in control of the creation of their own individualities. These are unearthed in the 'technologies of the self' or the 'aesthetics of existence' Foucault reveals to be at play in Greek and Greco-Roman texts upon sexual conduct. Treatises to guide the behaviour of relations between men and boys or man and wife yield, for Foucault, a set of practices where individuals self-fashion their identities according to criteria drawn from aesthetics. In a Wildean gesture one must turn one's life into a work of art. But this is a thoroughly moralised aesthetics, strenuously ascetic, and patrolled by an ethical demeanour which is not that of universal Kantian-style rules but rather is judged by standards of beauty and style. As Foucault commented in an interview in 1984:

> From Antiquity to Christianity, we pass from a morality that was essentially the search for a personal ethics to a morality as obedience to a system of rules. And if 1 was interested in Antiquity it was because, for a whole series of reasons, the idea of morality as obedience to a code of rules is now disappearing, has already disappeared. And to this absence of morality corresponds, must correspond, the search for an aesthetics of existence.[3]

It is thus by this recourse to aesthetics that Foucault can move from the *refusal* of given subjectivities to the *promotion* of new identities. Creating your subjectivity according to an 'aesthetics of existence' entails that you have 'liberated' this new subjectivity from the normalising force of state institutions. Constant and vigilant refusal of what you are is no longer necessary since identity is forged in that imagined free-space of aesthetic autonomy where moral codes or state institutions no longer hold jurisdiction. One of the many curiosities of this later work by Foucault, aside from the problematic valorization of the aesthetic, is the way in which a critic who made us most suspicious of so many accepted categories of the modern world – knowledge, liberation, sexuality – should embrace the 'aesthetic' in so warm-hearted a fashion. Foucault does not seem to pause to consider the institutional formation of contemporary aesthetics in its post-Kantian mode, or the genealogical distance of this notion from that of the Greeks. All three of the books under review discuss Foucault in broad relation to questions of aesthetics. Burke and During consider the questions of authorship and literary

3. Michel Foucault, 'An Aesthetics of Existence', in Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed), *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*, New York and London: Routledge 1988, p49.

criticism as influenced by Foucault, while McNay directly discusses his later work as a possible framework for contemporary feminist theory. None however quite address the problematic position of aesthetics in Foucault's later work.

Sean Burke's account of Foucault is perhaps the least satisfactory chapter of what is a provocative, well-written and scrupulously argued book. Burke's argument is that post-structuralist negations of authorship, as detailed in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida, undermine themselves, almost in the very instance of their utterance (in this respect Burke unknowingly replicates Maud Ellmann's powerful discussion of the subversive role of personality in modernist theories of the impersonality of the author). Declarations of the 'death of the author' in post-structuralist criticism are covert manoeuvres that re-introduce the authorial subject and thus, 'the concept of the author is never more alive than when pronounced dead' (p7). This is because, as Burke argues, one must 'be deeply *auteurist* to call for the Death of the Author' (p27). Post-structuralist criticism overstates the role of the author, creating a tyrannical sovereign scriptor who must then be cut down to size by the overweening critic. Citing Bakhtin, Burke suggests that we can conceive authors in ways other than as omniscient gods. But a more tempered view of authorship would deny the critic the chance to kill the author, in the name of the liberation of the reader or of returning the text to language, and to then occupy the throne of authorship, allowing the critic to ascend to the role of 'creative writer'. So, at bottom, the call for the death of the author is a ploy to privilege the critic, who returns to 'authorship' after earlier denying its validity.

Burke's argument has more than a grain of truth in it, and it certainly indicates with some panache problems that have surrounded post-structuralist work on authorship. However, in a gesture that replicates the sin he attributes to the post-structuralists, Burke has to overstate his case in order for it to stand up. He often seems to miss some of the rhetorical reasons for the opposition to authorship by Barthes et al, reading their texts as straight-forward philosophical arguments, and ignoring the fact that the most forceful part of their critique was directed at the *institutions* of authorship. Foucault, in 'What is an Author?' (which Burke oddly treats in just a few cursory pages), is clear to state that his discussion is about the 'author-function' as it 'is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses ... the universe of discourses'[4] and that the power of the author is as an 'ideological figure' and as a 'functional principle' by which meaning is limited, excluded and chosen.[5]

Burke is best on Barthes, offering an interesting analysis of *Sade Fourier Loyola*, but even here his range of material is perhaps too narrow. All three of the critics Burke discusses are represented by quite a small selection of texts, so that Foucault's position on authorship is almost entirely represented by *The Order of Things*, and Derrida's work is summed by analysing *Of Grammatology*. Consideration of the later Foucault's work would have been useful, partly because it might have strengthened some of Burke's points about the resurgence of a repressed interest in self and subjectivity in post-structuralism.

4. Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in Paul Rabinow (ed), *The Foucault Reader*, London: Penguin 1984, p113.

5. Foucault, *ibid.*, p119.

It would also have tempered Burke's tendency to view Foucault entirely through the lens of Nietzsche, such that he almost accuses Foucault of a form of hero-worship of the German philosopher in order to draw out the conclusion that Foucault really espouses a form of authorship that he is meant to deny (p86-88). This ignores Foucault's re-discovery of Kant and his admission of the value of certain parts of Critical Theory as derived from the Frankfurt school.[6] An examination of the later volumes on the history of sexuality would also have revealed that Burke's claim towards the end of his book that critics kill authors in order to raise their own discourses to the level of creativity is not quite correct in relation to Foucault, even though it holds more truth in connection with the Barthes of *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* or the Derrida of *Glas*. *The Uses of Pleasure* certainly does not elevate its style to that 'pitch of creativity with language' (p160) which distinguishes the traditional literary auteur.

6. Michel Foucault, 'Critical Theory/ Intellectual History', in Kritzman, *op.cit.*, p26.

Simon During's book is the first sustained account of the topic of Foucault and literature, although a little of the discussion of the role of transgressive art in Foucault was covered in David Carroll's *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida* (1987), to which During does not refer. *Foucault and Literature* possesses a depth of analysis and a range of coverage not offered in Burke, but this results in some loss of overall focus. During is very astute as a commentator and the book offers some excellent links between Foucault's work and that of other philosophers such as Kant and Heidegger. He is also good at fleshing out Foucault's arguments with more historical detail, as in the discussion of sexuality and bio-politics in nineteenth century Britain (pp167-170). The discussion of Foucault's influences is always judicious, especially in showing Foucault's trajectory out of phenomenology in his early work on madness. But During's wish to write a comprehensive guide to Foucault's intellectual development sometimes jars with the intention to draw out Foucault's relevance and applicability for literary studies. It is as if there are two books here: the first is an excellent advanced guide to Foucault, the second a more speculative analysis of Foucault's position in contemporary literary studies. Often the application of Foucault to literature appears at the end of detailed explicatory chapters, such as those on *The Birth of the Clinic* or *Discipline and Punish*. These sections are too perfunctory to really make a convincing case for a Foucauldian literary criticism, although the sketches of crime and representation in eighteenth and nineteenth century novels, or medicine in *Middlemarch* and *The Wings of the Dove* are very stimulating.

The last two chapters of During's book venture a more coherent Foucauldian criticism, interrogating the New Historicism of Stephen Greenblatt and the role of authorship in *Hamlet* and Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*. This is in order to outline 'what a genealogy of literature might look like' (p186). These chapters are interesting, especially the sympathetic critique of Greenblatt which draws out with subtlety the difficulty of generalising into a critical method a 'cultural poetics' that tracks down the 'social circulation of energy' in the Shakespearean period. It might have been interesting at this point to consider the selective manner in which other critics, such as Francis Barker in

The Tremulous Private Body or Terry Eagleton in *Literary Theory*, have appropriated elements of Foucault in order to bolster forms of Marxist criticism.

During suggests that the key issue for a genealogy of writing would be a critical analysis of the category of representation. This is because the notion of representation 'legitimates and suffuses that of "literature" ' (p193) and thus enables the use of literary texts, as transmitted by humanist critics like Matthew Arnold, for governmental purposes such as schooling and examinations. For During, 'Individuals invisibly embody and represent the culture; the political sphere represents (groups of) individuals. It is in these terms that one can say that the complex system, within which education, culture (including literature) and politics are interlocked, rests on an acceptance of the efficacy and validity of the notion "representation" ' (p194). This critique of representation is, of course, not just derived from Foucault but is, as Sean Burke also notes, one of the central branches of post-structuralist criticism. In some ways it seems odd that During tries to characterise a nascent Foucauldian criticism in terms of representation rather than of institutions and discursive practices. Although he suggests that Foucault does not discuss the 'institution of literature' because of a scepticism towards the implied continuity of such a category (p186), it is revealing that During calls upon Derrida when arguing for the problematic status of representation. A quizzical attitude towards representation might characterise a literary criticism rooted in the early works of Foucault; it seems less likely that any such approach would necessarily inform a Foucauldian criticism based on his later work, which During only briefly discusses. This is because the critique of representation became, for Foucault, a symptom of the political impasse reached by post-structuralism. Rephrasing During a little, we can say that even a 'non-representational politics' will find it 'difficult to abandon representation as a tool for analyzing culture' (p194). Foucault's discussion of Classical sexual ethics relies upon quite conventional modes of representation and does not try to outline a politics that refuses representation. Rather it tries to discuss the practices that subjects employ in order to represent themselves differently. The inevitability of representation is conceded; the important struggles involve refusing certain representations of subjectivity in order to be at liberty to produce other versions of the self.

The difficulty of a postmodern politics, representational or otherwise, is the starting point of Lois McNay's excellent guide to the rapprochement between Foucault and contemporary feminist theory. The book is a model of clarity and will prove useful as a introduction not only to any possible Foucault-derived feminism, but also as a map of contemporary debates about postmodernism and feminist social theory. The novelty of McNay's book is the serious attention she pays to the later Foucault, a feature lacking in the two previous books on feminism and Foucault (see the essays *Feminism and Foucault*, edited by Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby and the book by Jana Sawicki, *Disciplining Foucault*). McNay is concerned to see how far Foucault's aesthetics of existence might be valuable for recent feminist theories that, while acowledging the force of 'the

post-structuralist deconstruction of unified subjectivity into fragmented subject positions', still wish to see 'individuals as active agents capable of intervening in and transforming their social environment' (p1). In other words, McNay wants to know whether Foucault's theory of the self-fashioning of subjectivity can enable feminism to push beyond 'difference', without reverting to a totalising political narrative, but while still upholding a politics of resistance. It is, of course, a tall order, and it would be somewhat surprising if Michel Foucault could provide the answers to a key problem for recent feminist theory. McNay realises this, and is not about to invest all of the aspirations of feminist politics in a couple of books concerning topics such as the right diet one must follow in order to practise good sex in Ancient Athens. However McNay argues that while Foucault's early work had shown how power so soaks into the pores of all modern societies that it reduces the self to a mere 'docile body', his swerve to subjectivity in his later work resembles some key debates in contemporary feminist theory. McNay thus discusses Foucault's 'ethics of the self' in tandem with such feminist theorists as Carole Gilligan on 'feminine ethics', as derived from Chodorow's 'mothering theory', and Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson on the possibility of a 'postmodern feminism'. McNay remains sceptical about the viability of a feminist postmodernism (p7) and uses Foucault's later commitment to 'games of truth' and the idea of the self as something more than 'the subject in dispersion' (p133) in order to clear the ground for future feminist theory. Foucault's critical work on the self 'converges with the internal feminist critique of essentialism while, at the same time, it retains a notion of agency upon which a politics of resistance could be articulated' (p193).

This is not to say that McNay ignores problems for a feminism influenced by Foucault, and her critique consists of two points. Firstly, Foucault's final texts display 'an unresolved tension between his commitment to emancipatory social change and his refusal to outline the normative assumptions upon which such change should be based' (p8). Secondly, an ethics of the care of the self, though originating in 'an attempt to block institutional regulation of individuality' (p178), leads ultimately to 'a conception of the individual as an isolated entity' (p10) rather than as a self actively constituted in the context of social dialogue. Both points, argues McNay, cause acute problems for any feminism that would seek to use Foucault. More positively, however, McNay suggests that recognising these problems in Foucault's work might help the resolution of similar difficulties in contemporary feminism, especially around how to transcend certain instances of polarized modern/postmodern thinking. These include resolving 'how basic normative standards need not necessarily threaten the autonomy of the individual' (p197) or discovering how a politics of the self can avoid lapsing into privatized individualism.

McNay's book, then, has an open-ended quality which is refreshing to read, and it is interesting to note that Habermas is not wheeled on simply to resolve Foucault's problems. It is curious, however, that in a book that pays serious attention to Foucault's later work, the question of what he means by 'aesthetics' in his account of an 'aesthetics of existence' does not receive prolonged

attention. The differing ways in which the aesthetic operates in postmodern debates is not clearly grasped in the book. For example, McNay suggests at one point that 'the notion of an aesthetics of existence is too rational or intentional a category' to explain certain aspects of sexuality' (p80) and that aesthetics cannot explain how people 'invest in certain discursive positions in a not necessarily conscious or rational way' (p80-1). This is odd, given that one key definition of the aesthetic in post-Romantic thought is that it embodies non-rational, unconscious or affective behaviour. Indeed this kind of definition is used by certain critics to accuse Foucault's 'aesthetics of existence' of introducing a damaging whiff of irrationality into pre-eminently rational realms of debate.[7]

7. See, for example, Richard Wolin, 'Foucault's Aesthetic Decisionism', *Telos*, no.67 (Spring 1986), pp71-110.

Although of the three books McNay pays most serious attention to the later Foucault, she does not fully draw out what the relationship might be between normativity and the aesthetic. Is it the case that, for Foucault, a notion of the aesthetic as an open-ended, self-justifying set of practices enables him to sidestep questions of normativity? Without normative standards, writes McNay, 'it is not possible for the individual to distinguish between an arbitrary stylization of life and the development of genuinely oppositional subject positions' (p147). Foucault might well reply that even with norms one cannot lay down in advance which formations of the self will turn out to be oppositional in any political sense. Only when the self-fashioning is complete can such a judgement be made. An expanded notion of the aesthetic which somehow includes a normative set of criteria might, however, usefully inform this process of self-production. The problem is that of determining how moral, epistemic and aesthetic categories are to be rearranged, given that so much recent theory has demonstrated the unhappy ways in which modernity has mapped the relative positions of these life-worlds. It appears that McNay's difficulty with this issue is no real fault of her book, but rather a symptom of how hard it is to think through rearrangements in the relations between art, morals and knowledge when one writes out a distinctive disciplinary base that requires concentration upon only one of these spheres. Perhaps this demonstrates that refusing who we are – as social scientists, cultural theorists, feminist critics or whatever – is a more difficult task than even Foucault envisaged.

TURNING THE SCREW OF
SENTIMENTAL EDUCATION

Eva D. Bahovec

James Donald, *Sentimental Education*, London Verso 1992, £32.95 cloth, £10.95 paperback.

In the field of education, the lack of theoretical elaboration seems to present a permanent problem. Pedagogical and psychological discourses on schooling remain largely untouched by the broader debates on society and culture, in spite of some stimulating projects (e.g. the journal *Das Argument* in Germany, *Ideology and Consciousness* and *Screen Education* in Britain) which were directly engaged in crossing the lines between the two. Therefore, the need to situate discourses on schooling in contemporary theoretical debates is even more pressing today.

In a famous quotation from 'Analysis terminable and interminable', Freud designates education as one of the three impossible professions, the other two being government and psychoanalysis. The very act of using this famous quotation as a starting point in asking what sort of institution education is could be understood as indicative of a need, even a necessity, to transgress the usual boundaries of pedagogical and psychological discourses on schooling. In Donald's *Sentimental Education* this transgression is twofold: it is polemical, and it develops a coherent theoretical position throughout.

The book could therefore be regarded as an elaborate argument against the widespread conviction that the theory of education is of little theoretical relevance or nothing to be really concerned with. The reference to an 'eclectic intellectual formation' of Althusserian Marxism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, semiotics and Brechtian aesthetics, Gramsci and Bakhtin in the preface is much more than 'a catalogue of intellectual debts'. Contrary to the arbitrarily unified 'theoretical' position of the academic discourses on education, it could be understood as an indication – not a pedagogical red herring, but a clue for detection – of the fragility and instability of boundaries of concepts related to the question of education and its relation to the 'art of government' (p1).

The dangerous liaison between education and government is developed along two lines. The first one concerns an elaboration of the Althusserian idea about the school apparatus as the site of not only transmission of knowledge produced elsewhere, but a site of the very production of national language, literature, culture. The second one derives from the Foucauldian idea about schools as institutions, largely comparable to hospitals, asylums, prisons etc., of the modern age, which, instead of adopting a psychological notion of development or a sociological notion of socialization, are 'better understood as

technologies of government' (p47). Both lines of argument converge in a setting of contours of what might be called a post-Enlightenment interpretation of education in the broadest sense of the word, bringing to the surface its impasses and the sources of its impossibility.

If we proceed along the first line of analysis, the instability of boundaries proves to be one of the reasons why the 'impossible professions' are not only so difficult to perform, but even to define. What constitutes relevant knowledge and ensures its transmission? How is subjectivity shaped in the process of this transmission? The instability of boundaries becomes intelligible through the process of delimitation by which the basic categories are produced as distinct entities. In this process, formation of the outside (the outside of the Negative to Positive, Low to High, Them to Us) becomes constitutive for the formation of 'the inside'. It is created by the expulsion of 'what does not belong to', or, in Edward Said's words, is 'not at home in a place.'

In the chapter on popular literature and national culture, for example, this process comes to light in drawing the 'boundary between what is and what is not Literature' (p49). National literature, national culture, nation-people etc., all these categories are not a pre-given object of analysis (as in pedagogical discourses on schooling). Along the lines of Althusserian perspectives on the formation of national language and national literature as an academic discipline and a school subject, the reverse perspective opens up: cultural apparatuses and technologies (education, publishing, broadcasting, mass media etc.) produce these categories as an *effect* of culture, not its origin. And, to make a further important step in the polemic, 'what is produced is neither an identity nor a single consciousness'; it is a heterogeneity, 'given a certain fixity as "the nation" differentiates it from other cultures by marking its boundaries' (p51).

These two initial steps in defining the 'boundaries' and 'identities' have an important impact on the political meaning of all the diverse effects of culture as a whole. The political dimension is not a fixed one and cannot be determined in advance: 'there is nothing necessarily progressive about the popular, nor inherently reactionary about the national' (p57). It depends on the inner articulation of the elements in open, always unfinished signifying practices. Following the formation of such a *bricolage* of recombination of discourses (in juxtaposing education and popular culture, communities, political concerns, broadcasting), the regulation of the semantic field could be seen 'as one aspect of the policing of a population.' Literacy and literature as the core of the school curriculum form 'the symbolic mode through which the pedagogies and disciplines of schooling ... are enacted' (*Ibid*).

The questioning about what sort of institution education is brings us to the other intellectual source, introduced in the chapter on the state as educator. The analysis of the process of installing compulsory schooling in nineteenth century Britain focuses on several lines of investigation: educational ideologies, apparatuses of knowledge, regimes of surveillance, pastoral technologies of self-monitoring, gathering information about each child etc. What they reveal

is 'an emerging conception of popular education as a technique of government close to Foucault's notion of bio-politics or Jacques Donzelot's policing of families' (p29).

Perhaps the most influential 'discipline and punish' Foucauldian perspective on schools displays the subtle mechanisms through which power is exercised: regimes of surveillance, inspection and regulation in the daily routines of the schools. In the nineteenth century English school, the fantasy of transparency was built into the very architecture of the classrooms, making all the pupils visible to the master and enforcing them to focus their attention on him alone; the same goes for the rest of the organization of school life, which could not but fascinate the founder of the Panopticon, Jeremy Bentham (p32). This fundamental fantasy, so closely linked to the very idea of education, was complemented by the institutional written and photographic records and reports gathering all kinds of information about each child, 'doubtless modelled on the files kept by the police and by prisons' (p42). In contemporary schools similar regimes of surveillance persist in a less obvious way, though not a 'hidden' one (as the notion of 'hidden curriculum', taken from the new sociology of education, might suggest).

How does all this machinery of government, exercised in schools of the modern age, affect the child's psychic reality? The transformation of the social into the psychic is neither reducible to the process of immediate reflection of the external, nor is it produced by a clean cut operation with no remnant; there is always a misfit caused by 'translation, displacement, repression and transgression' (p47).

In other words, 'these are stories not just about reason and intentionality,' as already pointed out in the introductory chapter, 'but especially about the messy dynamics of desire, fantasy and transgression' (p16). In Donald's analysis, as opposed to the 'post-Foucauldian orientation' of Ian Hunter and Nikolas Rose, the relation between power and body is mediated through consciousness and transformed through the formations of the unconscious. What prevents the achievement of the pedagogically prescribed goals, e.g. to educate a virtuous individual in a good society (and what, on the other hand, also prevents the possibility of total surveillance), is the intermediate space which forms an obstacle to transparency. It plays a crucial role in the relation of the self to itself, not as a simplified notion of the relation of the inside to the outside, but as the spatiality of the 'extimate' (p94), based on a paradoxical crossing of two distinctly separated surfaces, the external and the internal, which gradually slide into each other. This entails a far-reaching model of 're-spatialization' of the outside and the inside, the social and the psychic, the public and the private.

The theoretical interlude about the ways in which the social enters the individual psyche paves the way to a further conceptual issue, that of the question about how governmental technologies produce the individual as citizen (p135) and how the overlapping cultural apparatuses and technologies of education affect their selves. If the problem of becoming human proves to

be such a difficult one in the context of the 'self' and its 'socialization', could the impossible task of education be better pursued through the idea of the formation of (virtuous) citizens?

In the inter-war period, education, aiming at such a goal, was the main target of the discourses on broadcasting of the time. Authors like Herbert Read and his *Education through Art*, the journal *Scrutiny* and its editor F.R. Leavis, the first director general of BBC John Reith, the founder of the British documentary cinema John Grierson, all had in common the idea of using cultural, symbolic authority as a means for 'policing' a democratic population. As the analysis of installing compulsory schooling has shown, education could be used as a counterpart to the threat of popular culture as well as against illiteracy or bad taste. However, in our century, this relationship became more ambivalent. It was meant to be an instrument of struggle against totalitarianism, the threats of fascism or bolshevism, but at the same time it offered mechanisms of control over the circulation of knowledge and public opinion. Returning once again to the polemical dimension of the book, such exposure of ambivalence and inner tensions, even contradictions, could be regarded as another point to be made in 'a consciously anti-ideological explanation', precluding the danger of functionalism in interpreting the school too simply as an ideological state apparatus.[1]

It is this ambiguity which is put at the centre of interest in the chapter on the re-regulation of broadcasting and education. The elaborate analysis of Thatcherism reflects upon the combination of neo-liberal 'rolling back' of the state with the neo-conservative espousal of cultural identity, authority and 'standards'. The alternative is sought for through the questions of what should be the limits of political power, and what should constitute a radical, democratic citizenship.[2] The answer could be said to lie in the absence of any straightforward answer: in an impossibility to define, plan or control the former as well as the latter. Namely, at the very heart of the logic of democracy, there is, as Claude Lefort put it, indeterminacy, and at the very heart of forming a democratic public and educating democratic subjects, there is a paradox because such an idea is not simply congruent with the concept of democracy itself. (Even the idea of teaching independence of mind is in a way paradoxical, since it can actually mean thinking 'as I tell you'.) Finally, this brings us back to the two initial steps in defining what sort of institution education is through the process of installing 'boundaries' and 'identities': 'Lefort's conclusion that 'the quest for identity cannot be separated from the experience of division' is clearly at odds with the Reithian vision of broadcasting as the integrating force in a mass society which could address, and thus institute, a divided population as the One of the nation-people' (p137-8).

Where, on the level of the individual, we have to deal with the displacement, transgression and misfit caused by the existence of a realm which is intermediate to body and power, there is, on the level of 'the art of government', a basic indeterminacy, an empty place, constitutive of its very functioning.

1. In relation to the theory of education, the exposure of ambiguities and inner contradiction (in the interplay of the cultural, the political and the economic) has an important polemical impact on more 'post-Althusserian' oriented analysis of schooling as well, specially in the world of M.W. Apple (*Ideology and Curriculum*, 1979, *Education and Power*, 1984, *Teachers and Texts*, 1988, *The Politics of Official Knowledge*, 1993; all by Routledge).

2. The problem with the claims for educating citizens is that they fail to see how 'governmental techniques produce the individual as citizen' (p135), how citizenship is constituted through discipline and pastoral technologies.

What is then the use of universal education? As discourses on higher education (J.H. Newman, F.R. Leavis) indicate, it seems to be impossible to avoid the eternal, even 'sclerotic' antinomy of liberal education vs. vocationalism with its particular narrow ends. Quite similarly, it seems to be out of the educationalists' reach to conceive the central issue of schooling, literacy and literary education as a path to consensual citizenship: though figuring as a means of social mobility, the latter still seems to be embedded in the logic of exclusion.[3] The ambivalent power of literacy, therefore, has to be acknowledged, keeping in mind that even the choice between different languages and dialects is always a political act, as Gramsci pointed out.

What hinders the embodiment of democracy and human rights in education is not merely deviation from an ideal; inequalities, conflicts and incommensurabilities are rather indicative of an inner impossibility, 'an index of corruption' (p134), inherent in the process of education. This impossibility could be said to be twofold, related to the indeterminacy of democracy (the empty place of democratic government) as well as to the issue of how identifications operate within institutions – fantasmatic scenarios allowing the institutions to persist, a place in the paradoxical space of the psychic reality where the machinery of power can be anchored.

Therefore, after broadening the object of analysis from schooling to broadcasting, the product of the theory of subjectivity as developed in the 'brief theoretical interlude', i.e. the product of the process of re-spatialization, has to be put at the centre of interest. This could be described as an entity of what is left out, and is at the same time constitutive of the very inside: the abject. The concept of the abject, indicated also by the Lacanian *objet petit a*, is elaborated further in the chapter on 'the pedagogy of monsters'. Here, the act of expulsion is counterbalanced by the production in the real of fantasy.

Though never explicitly mentioned in the text, the idea of this 'beyond' (beyond language, beyond identities and agencies, construed in and through discourses) could be said to form an underlying presence and the *leitmotif* of the book. This is the dimension which disturbs 'identity', 'system' and 'order', forcing it into endless metonymical sliding of the symbolic, into an ever-open dynamics of delimitation and expulsion. And this is how ultimately, in such a re-spatialization of the cultural and the subjective, all the roads lead to Rome: diverse detective clues meet in the difficulty to cope with what could be called 'the other side of the Enlightenment' – with the dimension, in other words, from which the impossibility of Freud's 'impossible professions' derives.

In *Sentimental Education*, this 'other side' is most explicitly approached through the history of popular fears and fantasies, opening a new perspective on 'the popular' as well. Here again, the explanation of the tales about vampires, doubles, cyborgs, monsters as the 'dominant ideology' (as what has been repressed or oppressed in our civilization) brings about 'a certain reductionism' (p101) which has to be opposed and denounced. But it does not suffice either to say that the images of the monstrous are the images of the Other as a threat to identity, or to point out the mobility of 'identification'.

3. In the very subtitle of Hirsch's influential *Cultural Literacy* – 'What every American needs to know' – there is already an implication that 'those who do not know all this are in some sense *not* American' (p154).

What is at stake is the transgression of boundaries between the 'I' and the 'not-I', the human and the automaton, the live and the dead, the inside and the outside; it is the coming together of the radically different, of otherness, not 'being at home in a place', with the 'old and long familiar', but repressed (p106). This is the point of Freud's analysis of the uncanny which provides a common denominator of different approaches to the monstrous (Moretti, Wood, Todorov, Penley, Cixous).

The nature of ambiguity connects the uncanny to the notion of the sublime, as opposed to the beautiful, and, already in Kant, as what resists the tendency towards a closed, definitive system. Making a detour around the 'complex history' of the sublime (from Kant to Nietzsche), Donald traces his 'other history of the sublime', the one which proceeds from the Gothic novel with its principal themes of death and the supernatural as 'what cannot be represented', to melodrama as the 'vulgar sublime'. Here, the 'unreality, the excess and the irrationality' (as a counterpart to the familiar and the normal that erupts into the everyday world), 'are functional: they enable us to conceive the unpresentable' (p111).

This bringing together of the concept of the sublime and the concept of the popular is related to 'the modern sublime' of Kristeva, centered upon the representation of the unpresentable through a nondiscursive language with the notion of the abject (p113), and to Lyotard and his analysis of the postmodern as the refusal to domesticate the sublime. It is of particular importance for defining what kind of institution education is that, in Lyotard, the sublime has an aesthetic as well as a political dimension. The latter opens up with Lyotard's 'politics that would respect both the desire for justice and the desire for the unknown' (p114) which leads to a new conception of political pluralism and radical democracy, beyond and away from the projection of an ideal, either a particular form of community or a particular image of a supposedly universal good citizen (whether in the form of 'all round', 'whole' personality or in less totalitarian pleas for educating 'active and involved', 'psychologically balanced', 'critical' citizens).

What is finally at stake then, apart from the misfit in the formation of the psychic through the process of socialization and education, and apart from the indeterminacy of 'the art of government', is a fundamental impossibility, imminent to the goals of education themselves: not the the distance between the ideal and the possibility of its realization, but the inner crack of the idea itself, from the very outset.

It is in this post-Enlightenment perspective that the double relation of education and government to psychoanalysis becomes accessible to further theoretical elaboration. Let us therefore go back to the basic theoretical context as outlined in the introductory and the closing chapters of the book.

The impossible task of educating could be tracked back to yet another reference to Freud, to his idea of 'civilization and its discontents'. In this context, the process of knowledge accumulation and transmission reveals the impasses of the Enlightenment, exposing the impossibility of a clear division

between the authority of reason and its other side (present also in Foucault, 'as inhabited by figures of madness, sexuality, death and the diabolical', p112). Negativity does not come from the outside and cannot be done away with – this could be said to be the ultimate clue for detection. It lies at the very core of psychic reality and of the progress of reason.

In a way, one can see that even the very Enlightenment idea which constitutes the foundation of education, Rousseau's notorious 'nature', is in incessant danger of turning into its opposite, into 'perversion'. It is because of this basic insight that all kinds of surveillance techniques, ensnared in the fantasy of transparency, had to be developed. Émile is not supposed to make a move on his own, a move not previously intended or anticipated by his tutor. The principle, in a peculiar way quite close to Bentham's panopticism, is developed to its utmost limits: the tutor must be in a state of perpetual vigilance, he must literallly see everything and know everything. Émile is never to be left alone, day or night: 'Look thus very carefully after the young man; he is able to get all the rest by himself, but this care has to be provided by you alone.'[4] However, in spite of all the efforts education does not seem to be able to avoid an ultimate failure, even a disaster.[5]

If the *Bildungsroman* could be read as an indication of the importance of education in western modernity, and Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, by deconstructing the narrative of self-formation, as its irony, another recourse to literary tradition might perhaps be added at the very end to demonstrate the impossibility and the failure of education – the utterly ambiguous Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*.

Here, the dimension of the fantastic and horrifying (described by Donald in 'the brief theoretical interlude'), as gradually deployed in the relationship between the governess and the children, derives from the ambiguity related to the uncertain boundaries between the perceptual delusion (at a certain point even the looming madness of the governess) and the transgression of the limit between the real and the unreal. However, the post-Enlightenment perspective adds another twist: because of the respatialization of the inside and the outside, the social and the psychic, nature and culture, education runs into a basic impossibility of positing a limit towards the evil, the perversion coming from the outside and the one stemming from the inside.[6] The fragile boundary is just the one of 'turning the screw', by which the natural becomes unnatural and supernatural, the virtuous becomes totally perverted, the well-intended and prescribed by the goals of education reveals an inner crack which cannot be resolved.

If we go back to the sources of the Enlightenment, this line of investigation could bring together Rousseau and Wollstonecraft (apart from reading Kant, who was the first to expose the impossible task of education and governing, with Sade and his pornographic pedagogy, as pointed out in the introductory chapter), and add another point to the discussion about the theoretical relevance of the theory of education. Both were 'adversaries of the Enlightenment', if we may say so; they did not fit into its mainstream and were

4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'éducation, Oeuvres complètes*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade: Paris, Gallimard 1964, p633.

5. Cf. N.J.H. Dent, *The Rousseau Dictionary*, Basil Blackwell: Oxford 1992, p111.

6. In James's short story, the former is related to the supposed corruption of children by the servants, and the latter to the dubious voice of the child's nature itself, due to the paradoxical coincidence of nature with its extreme counterpart, perversion. I have developed the argument in more detail in my paper

particularly sensitive to its 'other side', and both were also the most engaged in rethinking the concept of education. Here again, in interpreting their ambivalence toward the perverse image of sexuality, of unclean and decadent sexuality, structured round an irreducible negativity in its core, the 'third position' (along the lines of Donald's analysis), has to be pursued. Beyond too simple an alternative between the prohibition or renunciation of desire, and its straightforward, even wild liberation, it could perhaps be best summarized with Lacan's *Ne pas céder sur son désir*, not to give way to one's desire.

And is this not, ultimately, the site where the interpretation of 'sentimental education' should proceed?

In exposing some of the main topics of contemporary theoretical debates and their close connection to the 'art of education,' Donald's book is an excellent example of 'defining' not only what kind of institution education is through 'transgressing the usual boundaries' of educational discourses. Speaking about education as one of the impossible professions, it develops a conceptual apparatus to define the very nature of this impossibility. It could be said, therefore, that *Sentimental Education* is of utmost importance for a fresh approach to the theory of education, clearing the ground for its new foundations. Along the way, it also provides an important contribution to the development of basic theoretical concepts as such.