UNBINDING THE STRUCTURES OF NARRATIVE AGENCY: INTERNARRATIVE SUBJECTIVITY AND THE CLASSICAL AESTHETIC FOUNDATION OF RICOEUREAN IDENTITY

by

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While contemporary inquiries into the nature of the "self" are inclined to allow previously marginalized groups to assert their status as subjects and their stories as narratives, the postmodern denial of authorship and deconstruction of the self as a linguistic construction throws this entire inquiry into question. But while deconstruction calls autobiography into question by problematizing the authority and source of any utterance, others point out that the postmodern deconstruction of subjectivity is a luxury of the privileged. As one philosopher puts it, "in order to announce the death of the subject one must have gained the right to speak as one."

Paul Ricoeur sees his work as providing a solution to the recent debates

concerning the status of the subject. Ricoeur's is a narrative solution. Aristotelian *muthos* becomes the imaginative technique whereby an otherwise fractured and fluctuating subject constitutes herself.

But I argue that this exclusive focus on Aristotelian emplotment causes a marginalization of narratives based on other constructions of experience. Aristotelian *muthos* is a process of making the intelligible out of the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary from the episodic. But there are different kinds of narrative practice which represents subjectivity that is disjunctive and non-linear. This type of narrative practice is aligned with the postmodern suspicion of identity, and yet it recognizes the imperative for situating an already marginal subject. While canonical Western narratives associate identity with formal integrity, I argue that textual discontinuity results from experienced nonlinearity and that these textual qualities are deliberate strategies to subvert authoritarian modes of self-representation.

I propose an alternative to Narrative Identity Theory, a theory I call Internarrative Identity Theory, which involves a more inclusive notion of plot. To unbind classical structure is to maximize agency in determining, and re-determining, who one is in a way that is truly imaginative.

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DEDICATION

For my parents:

Dr. Shivcharan Singh Maan and Ranjit Kaur Maan,
whose lives are the embodiment of the
ideas advanced here

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

While contemporary inquiries into the nature of the "self" are inclined to allow previously marginalized groups to assert their status as subjects, and their stories as narratives, the postmodern denial of authorship and deconstruction of the self as a linguistic construction throws this entire inquiry into question. Roland Barthes[1] has proclaimed "The Death of the Author" arguing that the first-person "I" is nothing more than "an instance of saying I" and the author is nothing more than an instance of writing. And Foucault undermines the identification of the author with the text, by asking, "What matter who is speaking?"[2] But for some of us, the question of who is speaking is of crucial importance. While deconstruction calls autobiography into question by problematizing the authority and source of any utterance, others point out that postmodern deconstruction of subjectivity is a luxury of the privileged. As Rosi Braidotti puts it, "in order to announce the death of the subject one must have gained the right to speak as one."[3]

Paul Ricoeur sees himself as providing a solution to the recent debates concerning the status of the subject. His solution is to distinguish two senses of "identity:" "*idem*" from "*ipse*." Contemporary theories of subjectivity, Ricoeur argues, consider identity in only one of its forms - *idem* - or identity as distinguishing characteristics which remain the same over time. This is the form assumed by the liberal notion of personal identity which has been deconstructed by the postmodern practitioner. But what postmodern critique has overlooked, according to Ricoeur, is another sense of identity. This is a sense of identity which is developed as a result of the narrative mediation between *idem*-identity assumed by the modernist, and *ipse* or self-identity. (*Ipse* is the type of intentional self-consistency

exemplified by the act of keeping a promise in spite of changes in values or circumstances.) The third type of identity created in the process of mediating *Ipse* and *Idem* is Narrative Identity. The narrative mediation between *idem* and *ipse* is Ricoeur's answer to the postmodern assault on the subject. This type of identity has an ethical dimension. It is a product of will and intention as much as it is a product of culture, and it is relatively stable.

Ricoeur's narrative strategy works to solve St. Augustine's problem with the discordance of experienced time, by imposing an Aristotelian *muthos* to synthesize discordant experience. Poetic emplotment becomes the imaginative technique whereby an otherwise fractured and fluctuating subject constitutes herself. The authorial desire of the self-constituting subject affects the way in which the involuntary conditions of the plot are understood. Narrating is the transformative element. So even when a subject cannot alter the involuntary aspects of her situation, she can re-figure the way she understands them. One can provide the involuntary with alternative meanings.

I agree with Ricoeur that focusing exclusively on a self-as-same subject model seems misguided, but I will argue that his exclusive focus on Aristotelian plot structure has caused a marginalization of narratives based on other constructions of experience. Rather than assimilating difference into a unitary concept of identity, we should allow theoretical room for what Ricoeur calls the "insurmountable fissures" of experience *and* the connections made and re-made. Ricoeur is convinced that if we don't structure our lives/stories/experiences in the traditional form, we will not be able to reflect upon and give meaning to the bulk of our experiences taken together. That is to say that narrative is a method whereby the experiences of a life time can be provided with meaning by tying them together in a certain "culturally sanctioned"[4] structure.

But it seems to me that as a narrator I have more than two choices. The first choice is the classical one in which the meaning assigned to experiences and events depends on their place in the meta-narrative. The second choice is the one postmodernism has been

held accountable for -- a narrative which is a dis-connected litany of experiences. But I think that we as narrators can view our lives retrospectively and narrate in a way that takes all or most of our experiences into account in any particular telling of any part of the story. We can consider the entire story in the telling of any particular part of the story. We can see connections between causes and effects, and repeating patterns, without narrating in the form Ricoeur insists one must in order to have any form of coherent rational personal identity.

Aristotelian *muthos*, or emplotment, is a process of making the intelligible out of the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary from the episodic.[5] But there are different kinds of narrative practice -- practice that represents disjunctive and nonlinear subjectivity. This type of narrative practice is aligned with the postmodern suspicion of identity, and yet it recognizes the imperative for situating an already marginal subject. This is a technique whereby even a subaltern subject can simultaneously assume subjectivity *and* maintain the disruptive potential that her standpoint guarantees.

While canonical Western narratives associate identity with formal integrity, it has been noted that women's narratives often seem formless and may be disconnected and fragmentary, rather than being traditionally ordered. While the canonical autobiography relates the imposition of order on the flux of existence, women's stories have embraced and represented the flux.[6] Alicia Ostriker observes that another characteristic of women's personal stories is the elimination of distance between past and present.[7] Rachel DuPlessis defines a female aesthetic as fluid, non-linear, decentralized, multi-voiced, non-hierarchic.[8] And Elaine Showalter has argued that the unique character of women's writing results from drawing on female bodily images, using a "woman's language," and reflects women's complex cultural position.[9] Nadya Aisenberg insists that texts centered around a linear quest fail to authenticate experience like hers and that "coherent stories simply do not correspond to our experience of life."[10] But, to the contrary, Walter Pater has argued that

traditional masculine aesthetics are superior in form because the masculine aesthetic is defined by "the maintenance of a standard," which, "follows a spirit of construction as opposed to what is literally incoherent or ready to fall to pieces, and in opposition to what is hysteric or works at random."[11]

The precise nature of a female aesthetic, if there is one, is a matter of continuing controversy, fraught with charges of essentialism. Even so, I am interested in a central goal of feminist criticism which continues to be the deconstruction of the normative masculine formal requirements which consider women's writing incohesive and indeterminate. I will argue, in chapters which follow, that textual discontinuity results from experienced nonlinearity and that these textual qualities are deliberate strategies to subvert authoritarian modes of self-representation.

The following chapters will identify and problematize the narrative criteria within which Ricoeurean identity is constructed. These criteria would exclude, on the basis of structural deviation, alterative forms of self-narration. The problem is that on Ricoeur's model, it is not just the configurational competence of the narrator which is in question, but the intelligibility, rationality, the very identity of the narrator.

I will argue that the aesthetic foundation of Paul Ricoeur's Narrative Identity Theory results in a particular conception of personal identity which is problematic. While embracing the central thesis of Narrative Identity Theory, I argue that the exclusionary aesthetic (an aesthetic which relegates a non-unified narrative to the status of non-narrative) in Ricoeur's conception of "plot" is at the root of his linking of identity with consistency over time. As a result, too much experience has to be left out of a unified plot. The experience that cannot be assimilated by the unified plot structure is silenced, suppressed, or trivialized. Experience is dichotomized as meaningful/trivial, anomaly/pattern, concordant/discordant. Narrative identity theory will be invigorated by a

more inclusive notion of plot. I envision a form of subjectivity co-constructed as much by fissure and disjuncture as by intentional self consistency.

Because Narrative Identity is so compelling as a theory of personal identity, and because the theory is grounded in a Aristotelean *muthos* (imparted with temporal orientation), I argue that Ricoeur's conception of "plot" be expanded to include other structural forms. Doing so would produce two results.

First, subjects would have optimal narrative choice. Not only could a narrator tell a variety of stories; a narrator could tell a story in a variety of ways. I am not suggesting abandoning Ricoeur's version of Aristotelian plot. It should be one among many narrative styles, but I *am* critical of it because it restricts the assignment of meaning to experience, and limits retrospective re-tellings of personal narratives as well as present experience, and future action. I think Rebecca Goldstein is right on the mark when she says, "The aesthetic preference for wholeness will often lead us to actions we would not otherwise undertake."[12] It is precisely because I agree with Ricoeur that plot is a central feature of narrative identity, that I argue that liberalizing plot structure is an essential aspect of maximizing agency. My thesis enlivens the sense in which narrative is self-constitutive. Narration becomes a method of extending agency.

Second, Ricoeur's conception of identity would be altered with the introduction of structural forms that do not privilege unity and cohesion. For Ricoeur identity ends up being made of all the experience which is assimilated by the narrative. It is all that which hangs together. His answer to the question "who am I?" turns out to be: I am the self who is at least unintentionally consistent (*idem*) and at best intentionally consistent (*ipse).* A more compelling answer to the question "who am I?" would be: I am the one that provides meaning for my experiences.

An alternative subjectivity locates the co-authorship of herself in the act, the meaning-giving act, of narration. I will ask myself what this sort of subjectivity looks like

and I will locate an example in Meena Alexander's memoir, Fault Lines.[13] As the title indicates, Alexander narratively constructs herself around the places of rupture in her experience. This will prove to be not only an example of the extended subject of narrative identity (the subject formed in relation to the plot as described by Ricoeur but who chooses the principles by which she structures her story) but also an example of a narrative choice which locates personal identity in precisely the last place Ricoeur would locate it.

I will begin by providing, in the first chapter, an account of the philosophical problems which necessitate the solution that narrative identity represents for Ricoeur. In the end, Narrative Identity Theory is much more, its implications reach much further, than a theory of personal identity. It is ultimately Ricoeur's solution to the free will/determinism question. It is a theory of time consciousness, a solution to the aporias of the discordant experience of time raised by St. Augustine. The first chapter will account for the ways in which the type of alteration in aesthetic criteria that I am suggesting will affect the rest of Ricoeur's elaborately worked out system of understanding the world. My method is to trace Ricoeur's early account of the free will/determinism problem which he phrases as a question about the extent to which one can voluntarily appropriate involuntary conditions like culture, linguistic community, economic status. He is interested in the specific ways in which self-construction maintains a sustained negotiation with the involuntary. The first chapter will also demonstrate how the connection between temporal experience and poetic activity is established thereby laying the ground work for what I will argue is a problematic linking of personal identity and consistency over time.

The second chapter is two-fold. First I will describe what, precisely, Ricoeurean Narrative Identity is, and its three major features of subject construction. Then I will expose the classical aesthetic foundation of this type of identity and show how this foundation determines the structure of identity. I consider Ricoeurean criteria problematic because identity becomes dependent upon the creation of structural unity.

The notion of discordant concordance is introduced as a characteristic, according to Ricoeur, of all narrative composition; it is the synthesis of the heterogeneous. The art of narrative composition is to "configure" discordant experience into a concordant structure. While a state of complete concordance is never reached, it is the continuing function of the narrative subject to strive for concordance. Narration describes what were once discordant events as a necessary stage in the advancing plot. So, the primary difference between description and narrative lies in the status of events. In other words, narrative bestows meaning on what were previously discordant events. The problem with this idea is that the meaning that events are assigned will depend on the plot one is involved with and since the plot has a very specific structure, the meaning assigned to events will depend upon structural requirements.

Ricoeur is very explicit about what narrative should *not* be. First, a plot should *not* imitate reality in the sense of duplicating it. Character, thought, or action should *not* be privileged over plot structure. A narrative *should not* be polyphonic. And narrative structure must be closed-ended, whole, and unified. These criteria exclude the work of several of the founders of the English novel, and the work of Goethe, Schiller, Dostoevski, Virginia Woolf, and, I will argue, the work of a particular type of narrator. *That* type of narrator, the narrator whose story these criteria hit the hardest, tend to be female narrators, narrators with multiple linguistic backgrounds, and narrators whose experiential discordance is not limited to the temporal but is complicated by repeated cultural upheaval.

The third chapter introduces the memoir Fault Lines, by Meena Alexander as an example of a problematic case of identity within the Ricoeurean system. Meena Alexander's life experience is too radically fractured to fit easily into classical structure. Ricoeurean structural requirements demand more from a form of life like hers than from other forms of life because the more discontinuous one's experience is, the more difficult

the configurational task. The extent to which narrative can provide experience with meaning is limited by the very thing that is required of Ricoeurean narrative -- its structure. The work of Gayatri Spivak, Nita Kumar, Judith Butler, and Rosi Braidotti will provide the theoretical backdrop for Alexander's alternative practice.

The fourth chapter provides a comparative textual analysis of Fault Lines and Ricoeurean narrative structure in order to demonstrate precisely how Fault Lines *fails* to meet Ricoeur's aesthetic critiera -- "unity," "completeness," "univocity," and "temporal orientation." My argument will be that Alexander has a coherent narrative identity, not *in spite of* her structural choices, but *because* of them.

The fifth chapter asks what, *within* Ricoeur's system, Alexander's aesthetic failure means for her personal identity. I will show how the non-adherence to structural requirements makes the narrator's identity appear incoherent, irrational, and unethical. Ricoeurean identity is not just emplotted; it is emplotted in a very specific narrative structure. I will argue that the identity of the narrator is determined as much by the structure of the narrative as by the content of the narrative. And I will argue that Fault Lines is a "narrative" nonetheless since it satisfies what I will argue is the only sufficient condition for narrative -- holding the fragments of life together and assigning them temporary and provisional meaning in relation to one another. This assigning, or association, I argue, *is* an act of structuring. In this chapter I propose an alternative to Ricoeur's model of narrative identity which I call "Internarrative Identity."

Then I will look beyond the example provided by Fault Lines to argue, in the sixth chapter, that Ricoeurean aesthetic requirements actually require a psychological process of repression. The stories we tell, the identity we form, the way we understand events in our lives (the way we give them meaning) and our future actions, are in large part determined by a tacitly assumed aesthetic. Even narrators without Meena Alexander's experiential upheaval have trouble fitting their lives into this inherited structure, and fitting our lives

into this structure requires negation, repression. The rationality of a Ricoeurean narrator lies in configurational competence; it is evidenced by proficiency in the homogenizing operation of Aristotelian *muthos*. I call this homogenizing operation, when applied to one's life experiences, repression. Then I will contextualize the claims of the preceeding chapters within contemporary Ricoeur scholarship, and argue that Ricoeur scholars who are interested in identity have overlooked the significance of the connection between the *function* of Aristotlelean structure in Time and Narrative, and the *assumption* of that structure in identity formation in Oneself As Another.

My project as a whole is not simply to make an arguement which legitimizes alternative narratives but rather to suggest that alternative narrative *structures* are in order. I agree with the basic ideas of Narrative Identity Theory: our actions make sense only in the context of our stories, that we re-create ourselves through the stories we tell, and that narrative is a way to give meaning to or appropriate the involuntary. But I will argue that narrative can function in these capacities without homogenizing experience.

Ricoeur's Narrative Identity is his solution to the status of the unstable postmodern subject. His claim is that narrative is the element which holds together the fractured self. And if narrative were not structured in Aristotelian form it would simply imitate, repeat, experiences of flux, and contingency. But I am suggesting that there is spacious middle ground between a mere chronology of disconnected events, and Ricoeurean structure.

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6. Estelle C. Jelinek, ed., Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 17-19.

7. Alicia Ostriker, "Thieves of Language: Female Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking," Signs 8 (1982): 72.

8. Rachel DuPlessis, "For the Etruscans," The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 271-291.

9. Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 243-70.

10. Nadya Aisenberg, Ordinary Heroines (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1994).

11. Walter Patel, Appreciations: With an Essay on Style (New York: MacMillan, 1901).

12. Rebecca Goldstein, The Late-Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1989) 57.

13. Meena Alexander, Fault Lines (New York: Feminist Press, 1993).

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

In this chapter I will provide an account of the philosophical problems surrounding the concept of self identity that give rise to Ricoeur's view of narrative identity. The discussion will take place in three parts. First, I will consider the ideas that Ricoeur was concerned with in his early work noting the initial grounding of key concepts. Second, I explain the reasons for the shift in Ricoeur's method and interest from existential phenomenology to hermeneutics. Then I will concentrate on Ricoeur's mature work, specifically Freud and Philosophy, The Rule of Metaphor, and Time and Narrative, in order to set the context for his theory of narrative identity. Particular attention will be paid throughout to the development of concepts central to his most recent understanding of subjectivity. These key concepts are: the nature of symbolic reference, the structure and function of narrative, and the appropriation of the text by the reader. Focusing on these central concepts will allow me to demonstrate precisely how Ricoeur develops a system in which personal identity ultimately depends upon the invention of narrative unity.

Early Works

I begin with a description of the pertinent aspects of two early works: Freedom and Nature,[1] and The Symbolism of Evil,[2] prior to his shift to hermeneutics. These three works are particularly important to Ricoeur's development of narrative identity theory for several reasons. First, Freedom and Nature is the beginning of Ricoeur's attempt to account for the "situatedness" of the construction of subjectivity. He wants to account for social/political/linguistic culture, which he likens to plot, in the formation of the subject.

This discussion is not framed around narrative. However, when Ricoeur works out his narrative identity theory much later in Oneself as Another, he re-structures this older discussion about the interplay of freedom and nature, and the voluntary and the involuntary, in terms of narrative plot structure, plots, characters, and roles. Freedom and Nature examines the extent to which one can author one's existence. The leading question is how the subject can appropriate the extremely involuntary aspects of life situations by voluntarily integrating and accounting for them. Fallible Man is important because it initiates the shift from existential phenomenology to hermeneutics that is necessitated by the treatment of symbols that Ricoeur gives here and develops in Symbolism of Evil.

Freedom and Nature might just as well be called "Free will and Determinism" or "Social Construction and Autonomous Individualism" or by its subtitle, "The Voluntary and the Involuntary." Ricoeur's thesis is that these concepts have a reciprocal relationship, that is, one part of the dichotomy makes the other part necessary and meaningful. Ricoeur argues that dicotomizing these concepts has led to a suspect understanding of both sides of the dichotomy. It is important to note that in Freedom and Nature the notion of consent is introduced as a way of understanding the involuntary in terms of the will. In consent lies the reconciliation of freedom and nature because consent, as Ricoeur understands it, is the ultimate act of will whereby one does not simply accept accidents of necessity but actively integrates these conditions and accounts for them in voluntary actions. Consent becomes a type of voluntary appropriation of the involuntary aspects of existence. Later this concept is developed specifically into narrative appropriation. Ricoeur's interest is in describing and diagnosing the ways in which the subject becomes actual in the world, more specifically, the ways in which subjects create themselves around the extremely involuntary aspects of existence. The interplay of the relationship between the voluntary and involuntary is something Ricoeur begins to explore in Freedom and Nature and works

and re-works, with various results, until he arrives, in Oneself as Another,[3] at a theory of subjectivity as co-authored by contexts as well as by imaginative action.

The shift in focus between the first and second volumes of Guilt and Finitude (1960), Fallible Man and The Symbolism of Evil, represents a change in Ricoeur's focus and methodology from phenomenology to hermeneutics. The shift in his earlier to his later work involves a change in methodological approach away from the deconstruction of concepts (in this case, sin) toward hermeneutics. In the later work he becomes interested in describing how human freedom involves sustained negotiations with necessity rather than consisting of Sartrean moments of transcendent choice.

The Symbolism of Evil, is a hermeneutic inquiry into the re-enactment of confession. It is concerned with the existential reality of evil as it finds expression in myth and symbol. That is to say that in the attempt to examine evil, Ricoeur found that reference to evil was metaphoric, second order reference, and also that primary symbols of evil occur only within narratives. So a theory of interpretation was in order. The initiative of the hermeneutic theory developed in The Symbolism of Evil was to examine the extent to which one can be free while co-existing with evil. But as I will show in Part III, this hermeneutic theory would, withstanding considerable alteration, have a more direct baring on the free will/determinism problem than Ricoeur imagined when he was writing The Symbolism of Evil; in fact, it would later have a direct effect on subject formation. In the first part of The Symbolism of Evil metaphor and symbol receive extended semantic analysis but there is never a complete theory of interpretation given. The interest in evil and guilt drew Ricoeur to the structure of the language of psychoanalysis and its focus on the interpretation of indirect symbolic language.

Ricoeur argues against the ideas that language is a closed system of signs, that signs refer only to other elements in the text rather than to a world outside the text, that texts say nothing about the world, and that texts refer only to themselves internally without

connections to an intending author or an interpreting reader. While interpretation must follow the "injunction of the text," what should be interpreted is what the text says, what it speaks about, the picture it presents, the kind of world it opens up or discloses. Ricoeur's reformulation of the hermeneutical process does not begin with the intersubjective link between the author and reader. Rather, he identifies a link between two discourses - the discourse of the text and the discourse of the interpretation: "The final act of 'appropriation' is less the projection of one's own prejudices into the text than the 'fusion of horizons'... which occurs when the world of the reader and the world of the text merge into one another."[4] This fusion of horizons is what will later be called Mimesis 3, the re-figuration occurring in the world of the reader as a result of contact with the text.

While he finds Structuralism inadequate in itself, it plays an important role in Ricoeur's hermeneutic shift from what he calls a "romanticist trend" toward a more "objective" trend. The romanticist trend would proceed from the intersubjective linking of the subjectivity of the author with the subjectivity of the reader. The objectivist view begins with the recognition of an objective meaning in the text distinct from the subjective intention of the author, on the assumption that the text has objective meaning distinct from authorial intention or subjective appropriation.

Ricoeur disagrees with some of the main tentets of Structuralism, for example, the idea that language is a closed system of signs which refer only to each other, to other elements within the system. Ricoeur rejects the Structuralist claim that the text makes sense only in the context of the world of the text because this idea excludes the way in which the text says something about the world outside it. The reference of the text is what it says about the world. And while Structuralism rejects any notion of an intending author or an interpreting reader as subjectivism or psychologism, these notions are of primary interest to Ricoeur. Ricoeur's most important challenge to Structuralism is his articulation of the notion of polysemy of meaning. Polysemy implies the architecture of meaning - multiple

meaning or double meaning.[5] The very nature of polysemy is to show while concealing. While scientific discourse and ordinary language attempt to reduce polysemy, it is the essential component of poetic language.

Even having considered the challenges that Ricoeur posed, the influence of French Structuralism is evident. The epistemological model underlying Structuralism is that language, before being a process or an event, is a system. And this system is not established at the level of the speaker's consciousness, but at a lower level, that of a structural unconscious. The rules of the cultural system are tacitly assumed. As a result the structural model has "radical consequences which directly affect the presuppositions of existentialism."[6] The existentialist views the human predicament as if there is a freely willing desiring subject on one side and the objective world on the other. The change in focus from the subject's intentions to determining linguistic structures has radical consequences for the existential subject because even the subject's choice or intention become understood as subject to linguistic determinants.

Methodological Shift

At a lecture at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago in May of 1971[7] Ricoeur told the audience that in 1961, the year he published Fallible Man and The Symbolism of Evil, he was concerned with the problem of how one could introduce experiences like guilt, slavery, and alienation into a framework of a philosophy of will. The problem was to distinguish between finitude and guilt. Ricoeur had the conviction that these two terms tended to be conflated in classical existentialism at the cost of both experiences, "guilt becoming a particular case of finitude and for that reason beyond cure and forgiveness, and finitude...being affected by a kind of diffused sense of sadness and despair through guilt..."[8]

Ricoeur reformulated the old free will/determinism question from a Christian perspective. For him the question is, to what extent can one be free when there is evil in the world? But the problem of evil brought with it some linguistic perplexities which had not come up before. These perplexities have to do with the nature of symbolic language.

> The fact is that we have a direct language to say purpose, motive, and 'I can', but we speak of evil by means of metaphors such as estrangement, errance, burden, and bondage. Moreover, these primary symbols do not occur unless they are embedded within intricate narratives of myth which tell the story of how evil began.[9]

Ricoeur argues that because the language of evil involves symbols and is therefore indirect, a fundamental change in the method of description was required. Phenomenological methodology would be replaced by a hermeneutic method aimed at uncovering hidden meaning. So Ricoeur introduced a hermeneutical dimension to his theory of the structure of reflective thought: "I could speak of purposive action without symbolic language, but I could not speak of bad will or of evil without a hermeneutic."[10] In most of Symbolism of Evil the hermeneutic problem was limited to the interpretation of symbolic language, of revealing latent meanings in symbolic and mythical expressions, but in the last chapter of The Symbolism of Evil and in the first part of Freud and Philosophy the hermeneutic field is opened up as a result of a new understanding of meaning as developed in the act of interpreting rather than in the act of excavating. Understand hermeneutics as the act of creating meaning has consequences for self-understanding. One has no direct unmediated access to oneself. Thinking about oneself is indirect and interpretive. Now hermeneutics is not limited to the discovery of hidden meanings in symbolic language. It is no longer a Structuralist uncovering. Meaning is not fixed nor is it independent from spectators. Instead hermeneutics is linked to the problem of language and texts in general.[11]

One might summarize Ricoeur's reasons for this methodological shift[12] by saying that initially he was interested in a philosophy of will rather than a philosophy of language but the problem of how to consider evil within a structure of the will led him to analyze

symbolism and myth, which in turn led to hermeneutics. In his early thought Ricoeur limited hermeneutic practice to the uncovering of latent meaning in symbolic and mythical expressions. But in his later thought, as I will show in the third section, ongoing hermeneutic practice becomes very important to his project of explaining the possibility of self construction in the face of the extremely involuntary aspects of experience. Hermeneutics is eventually considered an activity through which an otherwise fractured self constitutes itself through a series of acts of interpretation.

Mature Works

Hermeneutics becomes increasingly important to Ricoeur, as we shall see by examining three of his mature works. Recall that the thesis of Symbolism of Evil was that we have no direct, unmediated introspective access to the 'self'. The conscious subject has access to and can achieve understanding of itself only through the mediation of symbols. This means that if it did not exist in culture there would be no subject. Hermeneutics is initially important to Ricoeurean subjectivity because direct reflection on oneself cannot get very far without having to interpret symbols, for example, symbols of guilt. The hermeneutic technique is important because reflective analysis of the self is indirect and interpretive. The necessity of a hermeneutics in the interpretation of self led Ricoeur to assume that there must be a hermeneutic dimension to the structure of reflective thought itself. The subject has access to her own existence only through the texts, signs, and symbols that express the subject's desire to exist. The "nature" of the subject is totally mediated. It is rather a linguistic subject; it can know itself only through symbols. Ricoeur later posits the subject as a narrating subject that exists to the extent that it affirms itself. The subject creates meaning by appropriating what is received externally in the form of cultural symbols. Hermeneutics changes from being the interpretation of symbolic

language, to the hermeneutics of appropriation. Appropriation so far is the "translation of objective meaning of written language into the personal act of speaking."[13]

The hermeneutics of self understanding is the subject of three of Ricoeur's mature works, Freud and Philosophy[14], Rule of Metaphor[15], and Time and Narrative.[16] In these three works Ricoeur pursues the earlier theme of symbolism and self understanding, expanding and deepening his conception of hermeneutics as the key to this process of self-interpretation.

Freud and Philosophy

Freud and Philosophy begins by asking, "What self is it which thus comes to self-understanding?" He is specifically interested in how Freud treats the mediation between desire and language and he wonders whether the oneiric, or dream-related part of the unconscious is constructed by rational interpretation. Psychoanalysis contributes to the philosophy of language by attempting to uncover why and how certain desires achieve expression in speech, while other desires do not.

There are three problems worked out in Freud and Philosophy. First, what is interpretation in psychoanalysis? Second, how is the interpretation of the signs of human beings related to the economic explanation that claims to get at the root of desire? Third, what self-understanding comes out of this interpretation, and what self is it that comes to this understanding? Ricoeur wonders whether Freudian interpretation excludes other interpretations, and if not, is there a rule of thought which can "coordinate" it with other interpretations, since it is a hermeneutic field of potential conflict where double meanings, symbols, and interpretive methods confront one another?[17]

Beginning with Freud and Philosophy hermeneutic practice is extended from the exercise of uncovering latent meanings in symbolic expression to the essential task of subject self co-construction. Two hermeneutic traditions are opposed: that of suspicion

and that of faith. The task is to analyze these two poles of hermeneutic styles. It is here, in Freud and Philosophy, that Ricoeur first uses the phrase "disharmony of interpretation." At one end, hermeneutics is understood as the manifestation and restoration of meaning. By "faith" Ricoeur means post-critical faith, faith which has undergone criticism.[18]

This confidence is exactly what is contested by the reductive hermeneutics, also called the "hermeneutics of suspicion," which involves a "tearing off of masks, an interpretation that reduces disguises." The three masters of suspicion - Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx - share a view of consciousness as primarily false consciousness. The "masters of suspicion" represent the most radical opposition to a hermeneutics understood as the recollection of meaning. Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche introduced a new sense of what it is to interpret. Reductive hermeneutics attempts to reduce (reveal the power which influences) the meaning of symbolic expressions or texts to something not accessed by the subject's conscience understanding. Examples are unconscience drives, the will to power, or economic determinants. This type of reductive hermeneutic aims at demystifying symbols or texts by revealing the powers that motivate them. The masters of suspicion represent the most radical opposition to a hermeneutics understood as the recollection of meaning because they challenge, even deny, the type of imagination which recognizes the word as revelatory.[19]

Ricoeur is critical of the methodological disillusionment of the hermeneutics of suspicion which he thinks has dominated contemporary thought, because it lacks regard for word as revelation, as the locus of multiple meanings. The recollective method aims at recollection or retrieval, of Foucaultean archeology, of the meaning of a symbol: "Self knowledge is striving for truth by means of this inner contest between reductive and recollective interpretation."[20] Because knowledge of the self is an interpretation the process of self understanding requires a double movement of recovery of meaning and demythification. Ricoeur is not arguing for recovery at the expense of the reductive

method. Rather he argues that the method of suspicion has been privileged at the expense of the recollective method. Interpretation requires both processes. A balance is being promoted.

Ricoeur defines and limits the notions of symbol and interpretation through one another. "Thus a symbol is a double-meaning linguistic expression that requires an interpretation, and interpretation is the work of understanding that aims at deciphering symbols."[21] The primary example of symbol is metaphor. It explains something by referring to something else. Double-meaning expressions are those which literally refer to things in the world and also refer to previously established meaning. There is reference to both the literal and the metaphorical. The symbol designates the cultural instruments, such as language, art, religion, and science, of our apprehension of reality. In order to give consistency and unity to the manifestations of the symbol, it is defined by the semantic structure that these manifestations have in common, the structure of double meaning. Symbols exist when multiple meanings in linguistic expression require interpretation and interpretation has an intentional "structure which consists not in the relation of meaning to thing, but in an architecture of meaning , in a relation of meaning to meaning."[22] That is to say that symbols are that which occur when language produces meaning which is not assigned to a particular thing but to some previously established meaning. Multiple meaning expressions are those in which there is reference to the literal and the metaphorical and other metaphorical connections. The "conflict of interpretations" is the result of a clash of interpretive strategies of two traditions - reductive and recollective.

The conflict of interpretations is the result of two discordant traditions, two interpretive strategies. One is Aristotelian and the other is rooted in Biblical exegesis. Aristotle's conception deals not just with particular significations but with signification itself, discourse in general. Interpretation happens when expression is endowed with significance. But Ricoeur argues that to say something about an expression is too long or

broad a definition of interpretation. In Aristotle, Ricoeur insists, "The task of a founding theory of interpretation, conceived as an *understanding* of plurivocal meanings, has not yet been accomplished." This is because Aristotle's notion of signification requires univocity of meaning and univocity of meaning is grounded in essence. This would mean that communication would be possible only if words have one meaning. The second tradition, that of Biblical exegesis, will bring us closer to the goal. Metaphor is important in this tradition because it opens up a text beyond the literal toward a multiplicity of meanings. In this tradition hermeneutics is the science of rules of exegesis - a particular interpretation of a text. But again this tradition is limited by its reference to an authority. Moreover, "it is limited by being applied to a literary text: exegesis is a science of writing". And yet this second tradition is a good starting point for Ricoeur's project because the notion of text is broader than scripture or of writing. Even an account of a dream, for example, is text.

Rule of Metaphor

The hermeneutic concerns that Ricoeur develops in Freud and Philosophy are taken further in Rule of Metaphor. The studies that make up The Rule of Metaphor move from Aristotelian rhetoric to semeiotics and semantics to hermeneutics. In Aristotle metaphor is located at the level of single words. Ricoeur argues that we must go beyond single word transfer to metaphor as located at the level of statements and even whole discourses. The argument is one that Ricoeur has made before - we should cease considering the imagination as a function of the image. It consists rather as 'seeing as' - seeing the similar in the dissimilar.

Ricoeur argues that metaphor should be conceived not at the level of single words, but rather as metaphorical predication at the level of statements. But this extension brings with it new problems. The "reference" of metaphorical statements is the power to re-describe reality. While sense refers to internal organization, reference is the power to refer

to a reality outside of language.[23] Ricoeur increasingly becomes less concerned with the form of metaphor and more interested in the reference of metaphor - its power to redescribe reality. Metaphor is a strategy of discourse that preserves and develops the creative power of language. The question is how poetic discourse says something about reality when it often seems non-referential. The answer is that in a metaphorical statement the suspension of literal reference is the condition for the release of a power of second-degree reference; this is poetic reference,[24] or metaphorical reference.[25] The task of hermeneutics is to elaborate the design of the world opened up by suspending descriptive reference. An example is referring to somebody as a "snake." It is not the intention of the speaker to literally describe the other as long and in possession of scales rather than skin. This literal reference to "snake" is suspended and yet a communication is taking place. In order for a new, second order, reference to be opened up, first-order descriptive reference must be suspended. The "suspension of the 'real' reference is the condition of access to the virtual mode of reference."[26] This second order reference is poetic reference which does not refer to any one thing but refers to other poetic images. By referring to each other poetic images evoke a mood. Ricoeur thinks of this type of mood (mood evoked by poetic images in reference to one another) as a manner of being or a state of the soul.

It will be useful to examine Ricoeur's side of his dialogue with Derrida, which takes place in study eight of The Rule of Metaphor, in order to illustrate the re-descriptive capacity of second order reference. Ricoeur is troubled by Derrida's inadequate distinction between metaphor and metaphysics and he argues that this conflation is the result of treating words rather than sentences as metaphorical. Recall that for Ricoeur, meaning at the semantic level has to do with the formation of sentences. Metaphor is extended from discrete lexical units to the semantic context of the sentence, and metaphorical meaning can only be grasped in its extended context. Derrida's treatment of metaphor in "White Mythology" is the subject of this particular study, and Ricoeur's treatment of Derrida's

treatment of metaphor is the subject of Derrida's "The Retrait of Metaphor."[27] For Derrida language is ultimately a closed system of signs. It cannot transcend itself to make new meaning. This is not so for Ricoeur. The crucial distinction between Ricoeur and Derrida concerning metaphor is that the quality of language that allows for multiple meanings is something that Ricoeur sees as a strength and Derrida sees as a weakness - a place to begin deconstructing. Ricoeur has created a rule of metaphor, within a hermeneutic method, which engenders a methodological creativity of building rather than deconstructing. He insists that it is only within Derrida's circular logic that his notion of an infinite process of displacement, in which one metaphor is described by reference to another metaphor, can take place.

Derrida's idea is that all truth is forgotten metaphor. While his project is not to try to work backward to a pre-metaphysical state, he wants to decipher the traces - in the margins and the white ink - of a pre-metaphysical language. Pre-metaphysical language is metaphorical. For Derrida, liberation lies in recognizing the arbitrary nature of metaphysical language, but it consists in no more than endless "play" with the language that binds us. His method of deconstruction is set with the task of showing that our metaphysical paradigms are not based on truth nor do they get us any closer to it, in fact, just the opposite. He wants to show us the fragility of all meaning and the ambiguities of language.

Ricoeur wants to explore the same ambiguities but in a creative rather than deconstructive way. His claim is that metaphor is far too complex and diverse to be analyzed in a oppositional format that Derrida promotes. Ricoeur resists Derrida's most basic claims, arguing that Derrida's initial mistake is the conflation of two words and their meanings. The Aristotelian usage of the word "idiom" in Topics means the proper meaning of a word. "Kurion" in the Rhetoric and Poetics is used to designate the currently accepted meaning of the word. Ricoeur insists that in conflating these two words, Derrida has read

"idiom" as the original meaning of a word rather than the proper meaning. Proper meaning for Ricoeur means the normally accepted meaning rather than ultimate meaning.

Ricoeur raises the issue of the "rejuvenation of dead metaphors" because they represent an innovation in meaning rather than an unmasking of a concept. "The reanimation of dead metaphor...amounts to a new production of metaphor and, therefore, of metaphorical meaning."[28] But it is the "live metaphor" that is really exciting because it is here that new language emerges. Language has the capacity to change the world (the world of the reader, the reader's existential situation) because the ultimate referent of the metaphor is the world-view of the reader: "...poetic texts speak about the world. But not in a descriptive way."[29] *Mimesis* is not simple imitation. It does not refer to a concrete particular. It is rather a type of metaphoric reference to an ontology.[30] There is a re-constitutive element here. Ricoeur argues that Aristotle's conception of poiesis is properly understood as a result of the connection between *muthos* and *mimesis*, between emplotment and imitation. *Mimesis 3,* refiguration, speaks to the effect the text has on the state of being of the reader. *Mimesis 3* takes place in the reader's world:

> Metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality...From this conduction of fiction and redescription I conclude that the 'place' of metaphor, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula of the verb to be.[31]

We will see Ricoeur develop this connection between "seeing-as" and "being-as" further in Time and Narrative and more completely in Oneself As Another. But let me summarize this far the establishment of the link between the understanding of signs and self-understanding. The hermeneutic task is to proliferate the symbolic language of self understanding. This is not the deconstructive task of Derrida, Nietzsche, Marx or Freud. Ricoeurean hermeneutics moves through reductive interpretation (deconstruction) to a second naivete', or faith, in the power of poetic language to change the state of being of the interpreter in the act of appropriation. The reader or interpreter first has false

consciousness, first naivete', then through corrective critique moves from misunderstanding to understanding. But the corrective technique, and reflection in general, is polysemic. This is not bad news for Ricoeur because he is interested what this type of hermeneutic reflection has to offer about the conditions of possibility, not the possibility of an objective nature but the conditions for appropriation. This is to say that he is interested in the teleology of the subject rather than an archeology of the subject. The teleology is constituted by the movement of interpretation which understands one thing through the other. For Ricoeur, existence becomes meaningful only through continual exegesis of all signification. Existence becomes "self" only by appropriating meaning. So Ricoeur's ontology is inseparable from interpretation. There is a relationship between the work of interpretation and the interpreting being. What about the conflicts that arise with interpretation? Ricoeur's answer is that various interpretations remain language games until an interpretation is shown to be grounded in a particular existential function.

At the end of Rule of Metaphor Ricoeur brings in three issues which will receive critical focus in Time and Narrative and Oneself as Another. First he begins a re-reading of Aristotle's *mimesis* which will be the subject of most of the second volume of Time and Narrative. Ricoeur regards *mimesis* as reformulation, refiguration, and redescription[32] rather than simple imitation. Second, he brings in an ontology of action, viewing "things as actions," and "Being as Act" which will become the center of his focus in From Text to Action[33] and the second half of Oneself an Another. And third, emplotment is aligned with re-description. Ultimately Ricoeur's ontology of action focuses on the acts of *mimesis* and emplotment as self-constituting.

Time and Narrative

Ricoeur begins the project which comprises the three volumes of Time and Narrative by explaining that he strayed from his original concentration on phenomenology

because it is an "inconclusive rumination to which narrative activity alone can respond."[34] Phenomenology, he found, produced more aporias, concerning the experience of time, than it solved. It is only narrative composition that adequately responds to these aporias. The three volumes of Time and Narrative are broken into four books. The first describes the mutual construction of narrative and temporality, the second concerns itself with the epistemological status of historical discourse, the third begins with a detour through phenomenology and becomes an analysis of the way fiction can order time, and the fourth is an attempt to synthesize phenomenology and fiction/history. I will provide a very brief sketch of the content of each book but the focus will be on volume two. Volume two is important because it contains Ricoeur's most thoroughly developed aesthetic theory. By focusing on these ideas I want to lay the groundwork for my argument that one of Ricoeur's aesthetic assumptions problematically links identity with consistency over time. This assumption, in fact insistence, is that narrative composition does not qualify as an art form unless it is emplotted, and the form of the plot, its structure, must be Aristotelian. Narrative identity hinges on an inherited plot structure in such a way that identity is created in the attempt to develop structural unity.

Let me explain how Ricoeur gets to this position. Time and Narrative is Ricoeur's attempt to provide a solution to Augustine's experience of the discordance of temporal existence. The problem with Augustine's notion of the three-fold present (simultaneously holding together in the mind experiences of the past and present and expectations for the future) is that it is difficult to do. The practice of keeping the past, present, and future "present" is made extremely difficult by the sheer multitude of experiences of a lifetime. Ricoeur provides a solution to Augustine's problem by invoking Aristotelian conceptions of *mimesis* and *muthos* and introducing a temporal dimension to both concepts. The reader is provided with a detailed interpretation of the ontology of time, the capacity of language to speak of time, and the way in which the past and the future are contained in

the present. But it is the importance of the Augustinian account of the triple presence of time which is central. While Augustine problematized the experiential discordance (and the existential burden created by it) that Ricoeur is interested in, Aristotle discerned in poetic art a method of synthesizing discordance which makes possible a connection between poetic activity and temporal experience.

Let me explain. Augustine differs from the Aristotelian and Kantian traditions, as well as from scientific discourse after Newton, in that he describes time as subjectively created rather than movement in the universe. The argument is that the human mind creates its own temporality centered around place. And Ricoeur agrees with Augustine that time and space are organized together, synchronized. The problem is first set up as the being or non-being of time. If the past exists, where is it? Augustine argues that since time is measured, it must exist. A non-existent thing, cannot be measured. The solution to this first aporia concerning the existence or non-existence of time, is his notion of the three-fold present: the mind simultaneously holds together memories of the past, expectations for the future, and present experience. The past and present must be intellectually present. Everything that happens leaves an impression on the mind and it is that impression which is measured. The passing of time has nothing to do with external motion. Now, there is a problem which is generated by the idea of a three-fold present is that this mind-work has to struggle against the "discordance" and "slippage" of experience. In other words, the mind must constantly hold together the flux, contingency, and discordance of experience. The potential for experiencing life as a discontinuous and meaningless series of events is the type of experiential discordance that Ricoeur attempts to solve. The method of holding flux and contingency together in the mind is to emplot it. The poetic task becomes to triumph over disorder.

Ricoeur proposes to solve this Augustinian problematic of the discordant experience of time, with an extended version of Aristotelian *muthos*. He discerns in

Aristotle's act of composition a method of emplotting discordance.[35] The Aristotelian conception of discordant concordance, the synthesis of the heterogeneous, is taken beyond its particular instantiation in specific genres (tragedy and comedy), "allowing it to be transposed without precautions from literature to history."[36] Ricoeur proposes to extend this new model of emplotment to "every composition we call narrative."[37] This new model of emplotment has a temporal as well as logical character, it treats the character of the plot as its co-author, and it treats the action of synthesizing heterogeneous experience as the most essential aspect of the action of emplotment.

A correlation is being drawn between narrating one's story and the temporal character of human experience. Time is human to the extent it is narrated and narrative attains its full meaning when it is a condition of temporal experience. This is a poetic solution to Augustine's existential burden of discordance because the reference of narrative is time. Time and narrative, Ricoeur argues, constitute each other. Narrative is a manifestation of the human experience of time; it is the primary human method of dealing with time. Narrative is structured, configured, into a unified whole by the narrator; and the reader structures the narrative in the act of reading.

Muthos is Ricoeur's poetic solution to the discordant experience of time. But this is not precisely an Aristotelian solution since Aristotle's *muthos* does not have a temporal character. Ricoeur draws out speculative temporal characteristics of a new model of *muthos* in connection with a new reading of Aristotelian *mimesis*. He argues that we should understand *mimesis* as Aristotle intended it, that is, more than simple imitation of pre-existing reality. In fact, *mimesis* is "completely contrary" to simple imitation: it is "creative imitation."[38] So this is not Platonic *mimesis* of making a duplicate of a particular. Aristotelian *mimesis* leaves room for fiction. Ricoeur wants to maintain the Aristotelian characteristics of concordance as completeness, wholeness, and appropriate magnitude; it is to the definition of wholeness that he wants to add a temporal element not

present in the Aristotelian understanding of wholeness. Aristotle's notion of plot is not fixed on temporal character but instead on the logical character of the organization of events. So Aristotle understands the beginning, middle, and end of a story as imposed by poetic composition. The beginning, middle, and end are not taken from experience; they are not features of some real action but are the effect of ordering, composing. Minor events of the world are excluded from the composition. As Ricoeur puts it, "We do not ask what the hero did between two events that would have separated his life."[39]

While Ricoeur says he wants to test the capacity of plot to go beyond the Poetics, the test comes in the form of re-reading, re-interpreting Aristotle, not from an extension of application. The "Broadening, radicalizing, enriching, and opening up to the outside"[40] of the Aristotelian plot is accomplished by demonstrating how "games with time" contribute to the configuring operation. Ricoeur wants to give emplotment "a broader and a more fundamental understanding than that conveyed by Aristotle's muthos."[41] The key to this is the temporalizing of plot, so that it is no longer merely static plot structure, but instead a dynamic act of emplotment in time. The idea of discordant concordance as "the temporal synthesis of the heterogeneous" carries Aristotelian formal principles of emplotment beyond its intended meaning. Plot becomes exceedingly important as it brings chance and involuntary conditions together with will and desire. Plot becomes Ricoeur's solution to the problem initially raised in Freedom and Nature concerning the reconciliation of involuntary conditions with the will of the self constituting subject. Emplotting is a method of giving meaning to experience. Like a character in a plot, a subject in her context may not be able to radically alter her circumstances (for example Moll Flanders cannot escape her situation by jumping on a lear jet) but she can appropriate the given. She can choose the meaning that her experiences will have. Plot brings goals, causes, and chance together within the temporal unity of the whole and complete action.

The ideas of suspended reference and refiguration which are brought out at the end of Rule of Metaphor are taken, in Time and Narrative, from sentence to entire text. The capacity of poetic composition to refigure temporal experience resides in the referential function of plot. This happens when literal reference is suspended in order to allow for new meaning, multiple meanings, richer possibilities. Narrative temporally refigures our experience of the world: "Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence."[42]

As was stated earlier, *mimesis* is not understood as precise copy or exact replica. *Mimesis* is defined by *muthos (emplotment)*, and action is the correlative of the *mimetic* activity "governed by the organization of events (into a system)."[43] For *mimesis* to be complete there must be three "moments." The first moment, *mimesis* 1 is the prefigured basis of narrative itself. *Mimesis* 2 is configuration or the mediating function of organizing the text. And *mimesis* 3 is the refiguration of the world by the text. Let me explain the three parts of *mimesis*.

The first, *mimesis*1, involves the pre-narrative structure of our experience itself (this is not a Structuralist claim; Ricoeur is relying on Heidegger's Being in Time). The composition of a plot is grounded an understanding of meaningful structures, symbolic resources, and temporality. To represent action the poet and the audience must have a pre-understanding of human acting, its semantics, symbolic system, and its temporality.

The second "moment," *mimesis* 2, is the rule-governed composition by the author. This is the Aristotelian *muthos* or organization of events. Ricoeur wants to expand *mimesis* 2 beyond the configuring activity as Aristotle saw it by adding a temporal structure. *Mimesis* 2 serves a mediating function between *mimesis*1 and *mimesis* 3. Emplotment is the narrative configuration and the assignment of meaning to the pre-figured temporal aspects of experience. *Mimesis* 2 is particularly important to this project

because this is dynamic emplotment. Plot makes a configuration out of a succession of events; it brings together chance and the involuntary, together with goals and agents. Plot is the poetic solution to Augustine's paradox of time. By emploting, the agent does not have to hold all of life's experiences together at once, but the agent has only to carry her or his story with her or him - a story which has all the temporal elements of Augustine's account. The sense-making function that the subject engages in becomes less a constant intellectual holding together, and more an on-going attempt at homogenizing experience to fit into the plot, more specifically, the structure of the plot.

Mimesis 2 is the configurational act of the narrator and *Mimesis* 3 is the act of re-figuration on the part of reader that results from contact with the text. *Mimesis* 3 marks the intersection between the world of the text and the world of the reader. This is re-figuration of experience. It is the world of the text appropriated by the reader. In the third moment of *mimesis*, in the act of reading the reader completes the circle of *mimesis* by refiguring her or his temporal experience as a result of contact with the narrative. That is to say, we may not be able to refigure the empirical world, but we can restructure the way we understand it and the ways we give it meaning.

It is during this third mimetic moment that a correlation is established between "seeing-as" and "being-as." An example of this third type of *mimesis*, refiguration, is the narrative identity that is created through psychoanalysis, a re-described past, or a re-described subject. But poetic discourse does even more. It brings a quality of reality to language which lacks access to directly descriptive language. Metaphorical "seeing-as" can reveal ontological "being-as." This connection is established through what linguists call meta-linguistic functioning. Meta-linguistic functioning is the reflective capacity of language to consider itself and to engage in speculative discourse. As Ricoeur says, "language becomes aware of itself in the self-articulation of the being which it is about."[44] The reflective capacity of language allows us to consider what is brought to language by

articulating a state of being, and what is brought to a state of being by the articulation of it. "The reference of metaphorical utterance brings being as actuality and as potentiality into play."[45] Ricoeur insists that the "polysemy of being" (the Aristotelian distinction between being as potentiality and being as actuality in Metaphysics)[46] signifies that the reference of poetic discourse is articulated in speculative discourse and that the semantic aim of metaphorical utterance intersects with the aim of ontological discourse. This is the intersection of the poetic and the ontological. Poetic discourse speculates about the ontological. It is precisely the capacity for re-figuration that enables the subject to re-create herself. And it is this concept of re-figuration that becomes very important to narrative identity as worked out in Oneself As Another. Through imaginatively re-telling, appropriating, re-figuring the involuntary aspects of experience we give the involuntary alternative meaning. One becomes oneself through the act of imaginative narration. But as I will show in the next chapter, re-figuration involves organizational unity. Imagination works to unify experience and this is problematic as I will argue in chapter six. .

Ultimately, Ricoeur constitutes the relationship between time and narrative by constructing a relationship between the three mimetic modes. In other words, in order to demonstrate a connection between time and narrative, emplotment is brought in to play a mediating role between practical experience and subjective construction of time. Ricoeur connects time and narrative by demonstrating the mediating role that emplotment has in the mimetic process. "Praxis" means both creating structure and acting in the world. Pre-figured practical temporal experience is re-figured by the configured time of narrative. This, then, is "Pre-figured time that becomes a refigured time through the mediation of a configured time."[47] The aporia resulting from Augustine's meditation on time, is resolved by insisting on the facility of narrative to refigure time, our experience of time, through mimesis 3 - refiguration.

On the formal level, plot is defined as a structure that integrates a variety of incidents into a unified and complete story. Ricoeur insists that simply imitating the chaos of temporality reduces *mimesis* to its lowest function. He traces the tradition of literature imitating life to the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century and its attempt to be faithful to reality which resulted in the equation of art and life. This new genre was designed to establish the most exact correspondence of a literary work to the reality it imitates. Ricoeur argues that the eighteenth century novel misunderstands the formal principle of emplotment which has resulted in stories in which the characters are more important than the plot. He is concerned about the literary practice of privileging action, character, or thought, over structural composition and complains about the social sphere in which the action unfolds, "the invasion of literature by ordinary people," and the episodic form which results from "interactions arising out of a much more differentiated social fabric." Samuel Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa are given as examples. Ricoeur also worries about novels that expand character at the expense of plot. The theme of self-awakening is primarily to blame. The works of Goethe and Schiller are examples.

Ricoeur then laments the way the twentieth century stream-of-consciousness novel emphasizes thought over plot. Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway is an example. In a note concerning the prioritizing of character, action, or consciousness at the expense of plot, Ricoeur says, "One corollary of this will to be faithful to experience is the abandonment of traditional plots, drawn from the storehouse of mythology, history, or earlier literature, along with the invention of characters without a legendary past and stories without previous tradition."[48] He claims that novels before the nineteenth century were fragmented and inconsistent due to social complexity, but contemporary narrative "fragmentation" is the result of something different. "Today it is the presumed incoherence of reality that requires abandoning every paradigm. But then literature, by reduplicating the chaos of reality by that of fiction, returns mimesis to its weakest function - that of

replicating what is real by copying it."[49] His brand of the art of narrative lies not in reflecting the multiplicity of experience, but rather, in ordering it.

Another structure that undermines Ricoeur's conception of emplotment is the polyphonic novel. Polyphonic novels have multiple narrative voices, the opposite of which is the monological novel with the master-voice of the singular and unified author/narrator. The unified authorial consciousness is left out of a polyphonic novel. Instead, there is a plurality and even multiplicity of centers of consciousness. Dostoevski began the form of the polyphonic novel, which is the beginning of the end of plot as Ricoeur understands it. The polyphonic novel breaks with the tradition of the monologic principle of the European novel which has a single dominant voice, that of the narrator/author, which establishes itself as the primary voice among others. The point of view of the dominant voice is one principle of composition.[50] It is Ricoeur's view that the polyphonic novel undermines the organizing role of emplotment because dialogue is a radically different structuring principle. The polyphonic novel is no longer *mimesis* of action, but of characters and even their thoughts, feelings, and language. He says that there is a "factor of incompleteness, of remaining unfinished, that effects not only the characters and their world-view but the composition itself, condemned, it seems, to remain 'open-ended', if not 'endless.'"[51]

The project is to search out the "deep" rules of structure that are manifest in the concrete narrative configurations on the surface of the narrative. To this end, Ricoeur does a structural analysis of the perennial narrative paradigms. The analysis is motivated by the "ambition to ground this perenniality of the narrative function on rules not dependent upon history."[52] He wants to pass from history to structure by means of a methodological revolution that will impose a "logical type of rationality" on the production of narrative. The methodological revolution is characterized by three features: it is a deductive procedure, it is modeled on linguistics, and the whole has priority over parts. The deductive approach is necessary simply because induction is impractical due to the huge

variety of narrative expressions. Second, the method should be modeled on linguistics in order to separate the code from the message. The code has a systematic organization which is "mastered" to the extent that one can reduce a system's signs and establish a set of rules for the relations of these signs, "a structure may be defined as a closed set of internal relations between a finite number of units."[53] The priority of the whole over the parts is, according to Ricoeur, the most important feature as it corresponds to the configuring operation.

Recall that in the Poetics *muthos* is defined as "the organization of events"[54] and poetics is "the art of composing plot."[55] Ricoeur wants to extend the paradigm of order, characteristic of tragedy, to the entire narrative field. "The plot must be typical,"[56] that is, the connections between events must be intelligible. The act of "grasping together" must be achieved by conceiving of casual connections. To make a plot is to make the intelligible out of the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary from the episodic.[57] The art of composition is to make discordance (the unexpectedly tragic for example) appear concordant (necessary). Plot transforms variety into a unified and complete story. Ricoeur says that his work in volume two of Time and Narrative served "to confirm the universal character of the formal principle of narrative configuration...the temporal synthesis of the heterogeneous."[58] This is not homogeneity, but rather a synthesis - a holding together. This does not deny or completely eliminate the discordance, rather, it is an on-going attempt to make the heterogeneous concordant. *Muthos* makes discordant events (in "particular unexpected changes in fortune oriented toward unhappiness") seem necessary because events and experiences are endowed with meaning only as a part of a larger context or story. It is through poetic imposition, then, that the involuntary is given meaning and even considered necessary.

One of Ricoeur's projects in Time and Narrative is to move from the privatized Heideggerean being toward death to a social level. He wants to examine the power of

narrative "to disclose and transform the actual world of action" in the "life-world" of the reader.[59] A life examined in this way is a changed life."[60] The pleasurable activity of the text for the reader is in "learning, concluding, recognizing the form."[61] The reader "intuitively apprehends the work as a unified totality."[62] It is the task of hermeneutics to "reconstruct the set of operations by which a work lifts itself above the opaque depths of living, acting, and suffering to be given by an author to readers who receive it and thereby change their acting."[63] For this reason hermeneutics becomes extremely important to Ricoeur's mature conception of subjectivity based on narrative identity. Moving beyond hermeneutics of symbolic language, hermeneutic method is being applied to the process of *mimesis 3,* refiguration on the part of the reader. Now, the ethical aspect of narrative lies in its function to form the "yet untold stories of our lives."[64] Plot-making is life-making, and because both are often unconscious or involuntary, psychoanalysis is one way to form a narrative identity; it is a "quest for the personal identity that assures the continuity between the potential or inchoate story and the actual story we assume responsibility for."[65] This idea will be developed more fully in Oneself as Another.

In volume two of Time and Narrative Ricoeur says something very important to the thesis of the following chapter. He says that traditionally "identity" and "difference" are inextricably mixed together. The argument is that it is the conflation of these two concepts within the tradition that engenders narrative variations which "threaten (the tradition's) identity of style to the point of announcing its death."[66] These narrative variations alter style, and logical structure along with it. But Ricoeur insists that style and logical structure should be kept separate; and style may be altered without changing the necessary logical structure. The problem that Ricoeur articulates in Time and Narrative as the conflation of identity and difference (which he claims results in the death of narrative art itself) becomes the problem of conflating idem with ipse, resulting in the death of the subject, which is the primary focus of Oneself as Another.

Summary

In summary, the initial problem of how to consider the involuntary in a structure of the will led Ricoeur to a structural linguistic analysis of symbolism and myth. But structural linguistics does not have an adequate vocabulary to discuss new semantic pertinence achieved through lexical mutation; it omits the imaginative moment when metaphor violates the language code. So a new type of hermeneutics was required, one that would go beyond deciphering meanings to look at symbols and myths in their natural environments in narratives. A "hermeneutics of faith" is promoted which regards discourse as a locus of multiple meaning; and a theory of semantic innovation is developed which locates the creative power of language in poetic reference. The original problem of how to integrate the involuntary with the will is solved by the introduction of plot. To emplot is to appropriate or to give meaning to the involuntary aspects of experience. The problem, as I will argue in the chapters which follow, is that Ricoeur's conception of "plot" implies a very restrictive notion of plot structure. And the meaning we assign experience and the way we can appropriate the involuntary is limited by a conservative understanding of what it is to emplot.

While Ricoeur announces that his "leaving behind of Hegelianism...signifies renouncing the attempt to decipher the supreme plot,"[67] he does this grudgingly: "the reader will have recognized, dissimulated at several places in the text,...the echoes of the semipaternal elegy, the lyrical figure of lament."[68] There seems to be tension between his leaving behind the notion of a master plot, and his insistence that narrative configuration should have the Aristotelian structure of unity and wholeness, should be closed-ended, should have a single dominant authorial voice, and should synthesize heterogeneous experience into discordant/concordance. He simultaneously admits that "narrative consonance imposed upon temporal dissonance" is the result of a "violence of

interpretation,"[69] and that texts which have "a plurality of centers of consciousness" and are "irreducible to a common denominator" refuse to be subject to "the organizing role of emplotment."[70]

Ricoeur's conservative conception of plot structure becomes a problem of personal identity because narrative identity is dependent, not just upon plot, but upon plot structure. Identity becomes dependent upon the creation of structural unity. The Ricoeurean insight, that plot brings together the voluntary with the involuntary, is limited to the extent that the voluntary is restricted by an assumed structure. One's story can be emploted in a limited way. In Time and Narrative to narrate beyond Ricoeur's structural limitations (polyphonic form or open-endedness for example) disqualifies ones story from the realm of narrative. As we will see, in Oneself as Another, narrative constitutes subjectivity and these aesthetic principles are problematic because they limit the form that personal narrative and therefore subjectivity can take. To pass beyond these structural limits is to push one's narrative not just beyond the realm of art, but, as I will show in the next chapter, it is to disqualify one's personal story from the category of narrative altogether. In the next chapter I will demonstrate how these problems re-occur more problematically in Oneself as Another, which focuses in on an assertion made at the beginning of Time and Narrative, that "it is by trying to put order on our past, by telling and recounting what has been, that we acquire an identity."[71] I will demonstrate how transcending classical narrative structure is ultimately to jeopardize Ricoeurean personal identity.

Notes

1. Paul Ricoeur, Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary, trans., Erazim V. Kohak (Northwestern University Press, 1966).

2. Ibid., 318.

3. Paul Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, trans., Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

4. Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, 319.

5. These terms are used interchangeably. See The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, ed. Charles Reagan and David Stewart (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978) 97.

6. Ibid.

7. Reprinted in Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language, trans., Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975).

8. Ibid., 315.

9. Ibid., 316.

10. Ibid., 316.

11. Ibid., 317.

12. In addition to the reasons for the methodological shift that are noted in the main body of the paper, there are several other, more general, reasons for the shift from the structure of the will to language. The first reason is Ricoeur's interest in psychoanalytic theory. Second is the current trend in France of privileging Structuralism over existentialism and phenomenology. The third reason is his continuing interest in religious language and fourth is his increasing interest in the British and American school of ordinary language philosophy. This last interest focuses on what he sees as the strength of ordinary language philosophy, namely, it responds to the "excesses of Structuralism" and renews phenomenology. So the contribution of ordinary language philosophy is two-fold. It shows that ordinary language "does not, cannot, and must not function according to the model of ideal language constructed by logicians and mathematicians" and second, it works as a conservatory of expressions "which have preserved the highest descriptive power as regards human experience, particularly in the realms of action and feelings." See Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, 321-22.

13. Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, 320.

14. Paul Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation, trans., Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

15. Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language, trans., Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

16. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 3 vols., trans., Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

17. Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, 8.

18. Ibid., 28.

19. Ibid., 35.

20. Ibid., 319.

21. Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, 318.

22. Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, 9.

23. Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, 6.

24. Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, 6.

25. Ibid., 221.

26. Ibid., 229.

27. Jacques Derrida, "The Retrait of Metaphor," Enclitic 2 (1978): 5-33.

28. Ibid., 291.

29. Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory, 37.

30. Ibid., 245.

31. Ibid., 7.

32. Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, 247-84.

33. Paul Ricoeur, From Text to Action.

34. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 1:6.

35. Ricoeur argues that there are three limitations in Aristotle's Poetics. First, he thinks that Aristotle confuses mimetic activity and plot-making. Second, Aristotelian poetic activity does not have any temporal character. Aristotle deals with time in the Physics but in the Poetics the logic of emplotment prohibits the inclusion of experienced time. Third, Ricoeur wants to discard the Aristotelian distinction between the author of

action and the actor, the distinction between the authors of representation and the characters.

36. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:157.

37. Ibid., 1:35.

38. Ibid., 2:45.

39. Ibid., 1:39.

40. Ibid., 2:4.

41. Ibid., 2:157.

42. Ibid., 1:57.

43. Ibid., 1:34.

44. Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, 304.

45. Ibid., 307.

46. Aristotle, Metaphysics 7, 1017a:35-39.

47. Ibid., 1:53-54.

48. Ibid., 2:163.

49. Ibid., 2:14.

50. Ibid., 2:96.

51. Ibid., 2:296-97.

52. Ibid., 2:29.

53. Ibid., 2:30.

54. Aristotle, Poetics, 50a:15.

55. Ibid., 47a:2.

56. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:41.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 2:158.

59. Ibid., 2:160.

60. Ibid., 3:158.

61. Ibid., 1:40.

62. Ibid., 3:162.

63. Ibid., 1:53.

64. Ibid., 1:7.

65. Ibid., 1:74.

66. Ibid., 2:20.

67. Ibid., 3:206.

68. Ibid., 3:273.

69. Ibid., 1:72.

70. Ibid., 2:97.

71. Ibid., 1:77.

CHAPTER III

NARRATIVE IDENTITY

One implication of Ricoeur's philosophy of the subject, narrative identity theory, is that the narration of life stories is guided by the principles of classical aesthetics. This means several things. It means that the meaning assigned to present experience, narrations of past experience, and future action, will conform to certain principles of emplotment. And, if Ricoeur is right, and I think he is, it means that personal identity will be developed in accordance with those same aesthetic principles.

In the previous chapter I attempted to describe the philosophical problems that gave rise to the solution which is narrative identity theory. In this chapter I will explore all the aspects of narrative identity as it is brought to completion in Oneself as Another,[1] Ricoeur's most recent work. In the first part of this chapter I examine, in three sections, the three major features of the hermeneutics of self. The first section will establish reflective mediation as a primary aspect of the immediate positioning of the subject. In the second section I analyze Ricoeur's two senses of identity. And in the third section I will explore the role of otherness in the constitution of the self.

In the second part of this chapter I argue that the structural criteria for "narrative" that Ricoeur outlines in Time and Narrative is imported into a theory of personal identity in Oneself As Another. Recall that the project of Time and Narrative was to solve St. Augustine's problem of the experiential discordance of time, with the imposition of an extension of Aristotelian *muthos*. In Time and Narrative Ricoeur argued that human beings understand time by emplotting it. The emphasis on unity and wholeness as it concerns personal identity in Oneself As Another is a result of his understanding of

"narrative" in Time and Narrative. In this earlier work Ricoeur is very clear about what kinds of structures are included in the category "narrative" and which kinds of structures are excluded. To understand what Ricoeur means by the "narrative" part of narrative identity one must go back to the earlier work. I believe, as I argue in chapter seven, that Ricoeur scholars have not problematized Ricoeur's conception of narrative upon which narrative identity theory is founded. Ricoeurean aesthetic criteria ultimately result in a conception of personal identity as it is constructed in the process of "homogenizing" experience to fit a classical aesthetic. Narrating is at bottom a process of endowing experience with meaning, but this process is determined by tacitly assumed aesthetic principles. So, in the second part of this chapter, labeled "Aesthetic Criteria," I will argue that: 1) Ricoeur's conception of narrative rests on classical aesthetic principles, 2) that he both explicitly argues for this and implicitly assumes it, and 3) that Ricoeur marginalizes alternative narrative constructions.

Part One: Hermeneutics of Self

Section One

Ricoeur's entire hermeneutic is led by the question "who?" Who is speaking, acting, narrating? Who is the subject? The answer to this question is located between the philosophy of language and the philosophy of action. The focus is on speech acts about action in which the speaker is also the agent of action. He asks "What does action teach about its agent? And to what extent can what is learned in this way contribute to clarifying the difference between *ipse* and *idem*?"[2] The conflation of these two senses of identity (characteristic sameness over time and intentional commitment to remain the same over time in spite of changes in circumstance) has been responsible for contemporary discussions about the life or death of the modern subject.[3] He argues that the postmodern

attack on modern subjectivity actually only attacks one part or aspect of selfhood. It attacks the idea of an autonomous self with a fixed nature. This is the part of self-identity which is demonstrated by characteristic sameness over time. But, Ricoeur argues, there is another type of identity and this second type is connected to ethical intention. This is the ethical intention to remain the same in the face of change and to "safeguard the institution of language" within which promises are made. However, it is a third type of identity that Ricoeur is interested in, narrative identity, which connects the previous two senses of identity. It is this third type of identity that will be the focus of this chapter, but let us work our way into the problematic the way Ricoeur does.

Oneself as Another begins with a linguistic approach to the problem of identity which concentrates on reference. A self turns out to be one of those types of things which "we can distinguish by means of identifying reference."[4] Ricoeur begins with the Strawsonian view that there are two types of things - physical objects and people. Physical objects are primary particulars because they have spatio-temporal location, while people are referents for two kinds of predicates - physical and psychological. The linguistic acts which individuate with reference to the speaker include: proper names, descriptions, pronouns, demonstratives, adverbs of place and time, and verb tenses. Another linguistic approach, following the lead of Austin and Searle, focuses on speech acts. The distinction between performatives and constatives is stressed; the latter designates a state of affairs while the former accomplishes the very thing stated by virtue of being stated. Performatives are particularly important. Ricoeur's example of a performative is making a promise. One commits oneself in the very act of promising. This example will eventually play an important role in Ricoeur's account of the determination of ethical subjectivity. Ethical subjectivity will be tied to a certain type of intention (the intention to challenge the changes that occur over time) which is articulated with conviction.

Ricoeur insists that the problem with analytic philosophy of action is that it focuses exclusively on connecting *what* will count as an action with *why* an action is taken, in order to distinguish between an event and an action.[5] An event simply happens and actions are what makes things happen. But this connection is made at the expense of the notion of agency. Let me clarify. Ricoeur is critical of the way "intention" is treated by analytic philosophy of action. Focusing only on reasons and causes leaves out the agent who acts. This is a conceptual linking of action and motive on one side and event and cause on the other. There is a difference between the "language games" of action and event, and one of the implications of this difference is that motives become conceptually distinct from causes. As Ricoeur puts it, "our motives for acting can in no way be assimilated to the causes by which we explain natural events."[6]

In psychoanalysis, which "completely challenges the separation of the domains of action and movement, along with the dichotomy between motive and cause, Ricoeur finds an exception to this conceptual split between action and event."[7] Psychoanalytic explanation brings into view motives that are causes.[8] For example, unconscious feelings are causally relevant. And analytic philosophy of action marginalizes the particular sense of "intention" as 'presently intending to do something in the future.' Ricoeur blames the Davidsonian ontology of events and the Strawsonian ontology of things in general for the lack of enduring analysis of the relations between action and agent in contemporary action theory. "In my opinion, it is the exclusive concern with the truth of the description that tends to overshadow any interest in assigning the action to its agent. Assigning the action to an agent poses a problem of veracity and no longer a problem of truth..."[9] The problem is that the "truth" of an intention claim depends upon the non-verifiable statement of the agent. For example, my promise to keep a friends' secret is an attestation, an avowal, as to my intent. But the kind of truth-claim one can make about an intention is different than a truth-claim one can make about, say, a description of an event. We don't speak in terms of

my intention being "true" but it may be regarded as sincere or insincere. What is needed then is a theory of ethical subjectivity that can accommodate "intending to in the future." It is here that attestation comes in.

"Attestation" concerns "certainty" - certainty appropriate to reflection and analysis. Attestation is testimony that has a type of credence which invokes trust rather than suspicion. The example is again making a promise. The performative act of making a promise is attestation. It is a "veritative" mode; it is fundamentally "attestation of the self."[10] It is a type of "being true" in an ontological sense of selfhood, an ontological commitment, "the assurance - the credence and the trust - of existing in the mode of self-hood."[11] The opposite is the notion of episteme, of science, in the sense of ultimate and self-founding knowledge.[12] Attestation lends itself to a truth of another order than the test of verification and falsification.[13] The question of veracity, distinct from questions of truth, stems from attestation and attestation is better suited to questions of selfhood than descriptions of self. The criterion of truth that applies to description does not apply to the veracity of a declaration of intention or sincerity of intention which is attestation. One attests to one's intentional aim.

Section Two

The second major feature of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of self is the separation of two distinct senses of identity - *idem* from *ipse*. One of the most central questions in Oneself as Another is, "Is there a form of permanence in time which can be connected to the question 'who?'"[14] In other words, is there a sense of self which is permanent in time? Though there is a zone of overlapping, *idem* (sameness) and *ipse* (self) are not synonymous. Ricoeur lists four types of sameness (*idem*): numerical identity, extreme resemblance, uninterrupted continuity, and permanence over time. As we shall see later, it is this last type of sameness, permanence over time, that houses the intersection between *idem* and *ipse*. Let me first

briefly describe what is meant by these types of sameness. 1. Numerical identity means that the number of times something happens does not affect its identity. An example is that a cup is the same cup no matter how many times I use it. The opposite of numerical identity is plurality. 2. Extreme resemblance simply means extreme similarity. Twins are an example. The opposite of extreme resemblance is difference. 3. Uninterrupted continuity means that although a thing may change over time it is the same being by virtue of the continuity among its successive states. In this sense a tree is the same tree all the while it goes through the cycles of the four seasons. The implication is that although a thing may be altered with time, the change is pre-determined by the thing itself. The opposite of uninterrupted continuity is discontinuity. 4. Permanence in time means that even though aspects of the thing have changed, the thing remains itself. Ricoeur's example is that of the structure of a tool that has had all its parts replaced. The structure is favored over the event. The structure of the tool is the same even if all the parts are different from the original parts. While these four senses of sameness apply to the notion of personal identity, they cannot be considered alone. *Ipse* must also be considered.

Now, Ricoeur wants to distinguish these four senses or uses of sameness (*idem*) from identity as self (*ipse*). The distinction between *idem* and *ipse* is important because it enables a subjectivity that is permanent in time. It is in the process of narrative mediation of these two senses of identity that narrative identity is created. Ricoeur asks his readers to conceptualize the following diagram:

Idem <---------- NARRATIVE IDENTITY ----------> *Ipse*

same self

character promise

Under the pole on the left are the words "same," "*idem*," and "character." Under the pole on the right are "self," "*ipse*," and "promise."

There are two models with which to answer the question that began the discussion of narrative identity: "Is there a form of permanence in time which is a reply to the question 'who am I?'"[15] The two models are represented by "character" and "promise." Character is identity as sameness or identity as permanent defining characteristics. This is not the common usage of character in the sense that there is no ethical content here. And the second model is defined by the act of keeping a promise, which is a very different sense of sameness over time. The model that consistency of commitment over time evidences, assumes that one's convictions or projects have been challenged by the passing of time but that a person with this sense of identity decides to honor her commitments nonetheless.

Let me explain. At one pole there is character which includes all the qualities of sameness listed before (numerical identity, extreme similarity, uninterrupted development and permanence in time). "By character I understand the distinctive marks which permit the re-identification of a human individual as being the same."[16] Character designates the set of lasting dispositions by which a person is recognized. The specific lasting dispositions that character designates are habit and acquired definitions. Each habit formed and sedimented constitutes a character trait (a distinctive sign by which a person is recognized), "character being nothing other than the set of these distinctive signs."[17] By "acquired definitions" Ricoeur means recognizing oneself in values and norms.

So, character as Ricoeur defines it means sameness as a result of not changing essentially. His conception of keeping a promise is different. The example of keeping a promise assumes that the values, priorities, and projects of a person may have changed but - and this is an important distinction - the person decides to honor the promise, in spite of the changes, for ethical reasons. What ethical reasons? We are told at once that they are self evident and that two of the reasons are "the obligation to safeguard the institution of

language" and "to respond to the trust that others put in my faithfulness."[18] Ricoeur puts a lot of weight on this point. Keeping a promise "does indeed appear to stand as a challenge to time, a denial of change."[19]

So, Ricoeur wants to argue that there is a difference between character as defined above and the constancy of self evidenced by the act of keeping a promise. And this difference is an ethical one. The ethical difference gives rise to a type of consistent identity, an identity which has a permanence in time different from the permanence of "character" (lasting dispositions).

> ...keeping one's promise...does indeed appear to stand as a challenge to time, a denial of change: even if my desire wereto change my opinion or inclination, 'I will hold firm'...The properly ethical justification of the promise suffices of itself, a justification which can be derived from the obligation to safeguard the institution of language and to respond to the trust that the other places in my faithfulness.[20]

The person who keeps a promise has a different type of identity than the person with "character," because the person who has character has unintentionally remained the same over time and has therefore maintained the same (*idem*) identity over time, while the promise keeper has intentionally decided to remain the same (*ipse*), in some important sense, even though she has undergone change. These are not mutually exclusive categories but they are different senses of identity. The *ethical* decision that results from the challenge to the identity of the promise keeper (the challenge posed by shifts in values and commitments) is a decision to favor consistency over flux. The difference in ethical quality between *ipse* and *idem,* between the act of keeping a promise and "character," is the intentional element. "By constructing a polar opposition between self-consistency and character, I wanted to highlight the properly ethical dimension of selfhood, irrespective of the perpetuation of character...narrative identity makes the two ends of the chain link up with one another: the permanence in time of character and that of self-constancy."[21]

Section Three

The first half of Oneself as Another asked the question "who?" Who is speaking? Who is acting? Who is telling her story? The second part of the project introduces a new question, who is the moral subject? The moral subject turns out to be the one who has ethical intention.

Ricoeur defines "ethical intention" as "aiming at the 'good life,' with and for others, in just institutions."[22] Let me explain these three components in turn. The first component of ethical intention is aiming at the good life. To this end, "Life-plans" are developed which stem from moving back and forth between abstract ideals and the weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of a life-plan on the level of practice. "Action-configurations" occur as one considers and acts upon various particulars that are one part of the whole life plan. It is a specific and particular action that aims at something larger. It aims at a life-plan. The concept of the life plan enables Ricoeur to establish an answer to the old question, how can we simultaneously maintain that each act should be an "end in itself" and also that each act tends toward an "ultimate end"? An action-figuration is an end in itself *and* because action-figurations stem from life-plans taken together, they tend toward the large life-plan or "ultimate end." While the notion of the life-plan accentuates the voluntary, even willful, side of the existential project, the notion of narrative unity accentuates the organization of causes and chance with intention and desire. From the onset the person is the subject of suffering as much as acting. Narrating is a technique of appropriation. Narrative unity is concordant discordance; it is a technique for holding together (more accurately, juggling) voluntary and involuntary conditions and events together in a way that "makes sense."

The re-introduction of the hermeneutical point of view is necessitated by the "back-and-forth motion" between the ideal of the good life and particular life choices. This

relationship is like a reader's relationship to a text in which the whole and parts are to be understood in terms of each other. The good life is that life in which actions are both ends in themselves and are also directed toward actualizing particular ideals. The process of mediating what is best for one's life as a whole and particular preferences and practices requires ongoing acts of interpretation - interpretation of the self and interpretation of action.

Of course, the process of making practical judgements often provokes a conflict of interpretations. One associated problem is that the process of mediating between practical decisions and the ideal of the good life is not subject to observational verification. One must make practical decisions in the present which bring one closer to the ideal. But in practice this is not easy. It becomes the problem of seeing the forest through the trees. "The adequation of interpretation involves an exercise of judgement which, at best, can aspire to plausibility in the eyes of others..."[23] It is here that attestation comes in. Recall that attestation is a type of testimony which has credence and invokes trust from the listener. The trust it invokes has to do with the sincerity of the speaker. Attestation is testimony based on conviction that one is existing, being in an ontological mode, that is "true to oneself." From this ontological mode one is able to make decisions that are both ends in themselves and lead to an ideal. So the good life is what happens when, "when the certainty of being the author of one's own discourse and of one's own acts becomes the conviction of judging well and acting well in a momentary and provisional approximation of living well."[24]

Now how does the second part of the ethical aim, what Ricoeur calls "solicitude," link up with the first part? Recall that the ethical aim was defined as "aiming at the good life with and for others in just institutions." Solicitude is the second aspect - "with and for others." Solicitude is the mutual exchange of self esteem.[25] It, "unfolds the dialogic dimension of self-esteem." By "unfolding" Ricoeur means "a break in life and in discourse

that creates the conditions for a second-order continuity, such that self-esteem and solicitude cannot be experienced or reflected upon one without the other."[26] The self is worthy of esteem, not by reason of accomplishments, but by reason of its capacities. This is capacity in the sense of Merleau-Ponty's "I can" extended from the physical to the ethical. I am that being who can evaluate her actions as good or bad and the one who assesses practical decisions in relation to my vision of the good life. The "I can" of being-able-to-do corresponds on the ethical plane to being-able-to-judge.

But others play a mediating role between capacities and realization. Ricoeur returns to Aristotle's conception of friendship and its role as a transition between the solitary virtue of the aim of the good life and a virtue belonging to the political sphere - justice. For Aristotle, friendship is not simply a feeling of affection or attachment to others, it is an ethical activity. Friendship is a virtue. Of the distinctions between three types of friendship: friendship for the sake of good, for the sake of utility, or for pleasure, the first type of friendship is preferred because it implies mutual generosity and reciprocity. According to the ideal of mutuality each loves the other for what she is rather than for advantage or pleasure. When self-esteem is granted to another, and the other responds by returning the esteem, together they achieve the second part of the ethical aim. Solicitude is the exchange of self-esteem among friends. This mutual reciprocal exchange of self-esteems is the way other persons enter into the aim of the good life. "Being-as" should be constitutive of this kind of mutuality,

> that which in oneself is the most lasting, the most stable, the least vulnerable to changes in humors or desires as well as to the accidents of fortune...It is to the stability of the best part of oneself that we owe the beautiful expression that holds the friend to be 'another self'.[27]

The third component of the ethical intention ("... just institutions") involves a modality of obligation, of responsibility. Ricoeur is interested in grounding the third part of the good life (institutional environment) in something other than the idea of justice. He

argues that the autonomy of the self develops dialogically as a result of obligations, by showing that the norm of respect owed to other persons is connected to the ethical aim. The respect owed to persons is to autonomy, on the moral plane, as solicitude is to the aim of the good life, on the ethical plane.[28]

The dialogic structure referred to above is a result of the fact that there are at least two people involved in the act of making and keeping a promise. Ricoeur argues that there is more at stake in one's fidelity to a promise made than personal integrity which results from inter-personal reciprocity. In fact, "...the false promise is a figure of the evil of violence in the use of language."[29] Recall that for Ricoeur "self-constancy through time (is) the highest expression of identity of *ipse* in contrast to that of *idem*, that is, in opposition to the mere permanence or perseverance of things (a permanence that is found on the plane of selfhood only in character)."[30] To apply the principle of being faithful to one's word is to apply the rule of reciprocity to language acts.

Now consider the ethical weight Ricoeur puts on the act of keeping a promise as contrasted with character, i.e. the distinction between *ipse* and *idem*. The morality of obligation is of interest as a type of "being in the self" distinguished earlier from a type of selfhood associated with character. Ricoeur goes on at some length to discuss the evil of promises not kept. His argument is that the individual becomes human only under conditions of certain institutions, in this case linguistic institutions. And the obligation to serve these institutions "is itself a condition for the human agent to continue to develop."[31]

Ricoeur then extends the notion of solicitude as concerned with respect for the "otherness of persons" to *critical solicitude.* Critical solicitude is solicitude that has passed through the double test of moral conditions of respect and the conflicts generated by respect. This is an advanced stage of morality having to do with conflicts that arise on the way from moral rule to moral judgement in a particular situation. Having passed this test,

critical solicitude is ultimately a form of practical wisdom appropriate to the arena of interpersonal relations.[32]

Part Two: Aesthetic Criteria

Three issues will be addressed in this part of this chapter. First, I will argue that Ricoeur adopts and privileges a conception of narrative that assumes principles of classical aesthetics. Second, I will argue that the Aristotelean-based narrative theory Ricoeur develops in the three volumes of Time and Narrative is imported into his theory of narrative identity as conceived in Oneself As Another. This is to say that Ricoeur's understanding of identity is informed by his aesthetic preference. I will address the extent to which Ricoeur explicitly argues for these aesthetic principles in his theory of personal identity and the extent to which they are implicitly assumed. Third, I will argue that Ricoeur marginalizes alternative forms of narrative and identity, namely those structured around alternative principles.

The primary project of Oneself As Another is to show "how the identity of the character, is constructed in connection with that of the plot."[33] Ricoeur begins his discussion of narrative identity in Oneself As Another, reviewing what he means by 'emplotment' in Time and Narrative. He reminds readers that "By concordance, I mean the principle of order that presides over what Aristotle call 'the arrangment of facts.'" And discordance is the same that it was in Time and Narrative, "the reversals of fortune that make the plot an ordered transformation from an initial situation to a terminal situation." And configuration is the "art of composition which mediates between concordance and discordance."[34]

Recall from the discussion of Time and Narrative in the previous chapter that Ricoeur proposes to solve the "experiential discordance" articulated by Augustine by bringing in the structural rules of Aristotelian composition. The connection between poetic

activity and temporal experience allows for a synthesizing of discordant experience. Aristotelian emplotment becomes the method of maintaining Augustine's three-fold present. Then Ricoeur wants to extend Aristotle's rules for the composition of tragedies (embellished with a temporal element) to the entire narrative field. The larger project of all three volumes of Time and Narrative is to "confirm the universal character of the formal principle of narrative configuration...the temporal synthesis of the heterogeneous."[35] And this classical model for holding together discontinuous fragmentary events should be the standard for "every composition we call narrative."[36] This configurational operation is "transhistorical but not atemporal."[37]

The Aristotelian requirements of unity/ wholeness, and that the imitation (understood by Ricoeur as *mimesis*$_2$) should be of actions rather than character or consciousness, are the basis for Ricoeur's understanding of discordant concordance and his insistence that narrative should have a singular dominant authorial voice. As regards the first requirement, that of unity and wholeness, Ricoeur says,

> ...the one formal feature of the Aristotelian notion of *muthos* that has to be preserved, beyond its successive instantiations in genres (for example, tragedy or the novel) and types (for example, Elizabethan tragedy or the nineteenth-century novel) is the criterion of unity and completeness.[38]

And that which is "whole" and "complete" must have

> ...a beginning, a middle, and an end; that is, if the beginning introduces the middle, if the middle with its reversal and recognition scenes leads to the end, and if the end concludes the middle. Then the configuration wins out over the episodic form, concordance overcomes discordance.[39]

The "anti-closure" of a narrative "reaches the threshold beyond which we must exclude the work from the domain of art."[40] The other unacceptable narrative structure is "polyphonic" narrative which is opposed to monological (or homophonic) narrative. Narratives without a "single and unified authorial consciousness"[41] mark a "limit placed on composition in terms of levels, a limit beyond which any starting point in the notion of plot becomes unrecognizable."[42] "In the monological novel the voice of the narrator-

author establishes itself as a single voice at the summit of the pyramid of voices."[43] Earlier on Ricoeur says, "I am calling narrative exactly what Aristotle calls *muthos,* the organization of events."[44] Configuration is the "art of composition which mediates between concordance and discordance."[45] This is a type of synthetic unity.

Recall also from the previous chapter the aesthetic criteria for narrative structure and the philosophical problems that narrative identity theory is supposed to solve. Structural unity and completeness are necessary but not sufficient conditions for Ricoeurean narration. Sufficient conditions are: temporal organization, homophony, monological structure, and the privileging of plot over character, actions or thoughts.

> It is indeed in the story recounted, with its qualities of unity, internal structure, and completeness which are conferred by emplotment, that the character preserves throughout the story an identity correlative to that of the story itself...the identity of the character is comprehensible through the transfer to the character of the operation of emplotment, first applied to the action recounted; characters, we will say, are themselves plots.[46]

Identity of a character makes sense only in relation to plot, more specifically, in relation to the wholeness and unity of the plot. In this way actions have meaning in relation to structure. Identity is possible only within the limits set by the plot. The characters internalize the plot; they are thereby "emplotted" to use Ricoeur's terms. A character's identity is dynamic only to the extent, and in the manner, consistent with the narrative.[47]

The function of narration is to artificially order discordant experience by emplotting it. Narrative is the concordant structure within which discordant events are assimilated. The primary difference between narrative configuration and the sort of connectedness claimed by impersonal description rests in the status of events. Description tells of discordant events. But in the narrative model, the event is discordant to the extent that it "springs up." However, once it is assimilated narratively it becomes another stage in the advancing plot. Narration ties events together. "If my life cannot be grasped as a singular totality, I could never hope it to be successful, complete."[48] As always in Ricoeur,

the reciprocal constitution of action and the self is assumed, "by narrating a life of which I am not author as to existence, I make myself co-author as to its meaning."[49]

The answer to the question which guides this inquiry, the question "who?," rests on Ricoeur's conception of narrative identity. Narrative identity is his solution to the problem of consistent subjectivity in the face of flux. It is the answer to the question "In what sense am I the same person that I was years ago when my values, projects, and goals were completely different?" The changes which take place in the subject are accounted for, and controlled by, the plot. We act and intend in accordance with plot and in this sense we each have narrative identities. In light of this assertion, it is significant that Ricoeur insists that only certain particular types of constructions are properly termed "plots." The answer to the question, Who is the subject?, has to do with identifying reference. The primary ontological implication of the hermeneutics of self, on the linguistic level, is "attestation," which is introduced as a strategy or technique of self. The "I" is partially established by self-designation, attestation. The postmodern announcement of the death of the subject is, for Ricoeur, a result of the confusion about what should be two different senses of identity. Consistent identity in the face of flux and contingency is possible through attested narrative by a subject who is ethically committed to remaining consistent.

Ricoeurean criteria for structural form exclude from the category of narrative any story that lacks a whole and unified configuration; a story must have a beginning which leads to a middle, and a middle with recognitions and reversals which necessitates a conclusion. A narrative must not be open-ended. The "anti-closure" of a narrative is enough to have it excluded from the realm of art, according to Ricoeur.[50] And a narrative must have a Master-voice and Master-consciousness, "The co-existence of dominant voices," Ricoeur insists, "cannot form the structure of a narration."[51] Dialogical form, for example, violates the criterion of Master-voice. Narratives which are dialogic, "designate a limit placed on composition...beyond which my starting point in the notion of plot

becomes unrecognizable."[52] Ricoeur stresses the "unified viewpoint" unproblematically. Texts which have a "plurality of centers of consciousness irreducible to a common denominator" refuse to be subject to "the organizing role of emplotment."[53]

If one's personal story were told in a form that does not fit these criteria (unity, wholeness, singular dominant authorial voice, monological structure) it would be considered description rather than narrative. Ricoeur distinguishes description from narration by saying that description simply articulates a chronology of events while narration, *mimesis*$_2$, organizes events temporally in order to give events meaning. In the previous chapter the three stages of *mimesis* were described as: *mimesis*$_1$ pre-figuration; *mimesis*$_2$ configuration; and *mimesis*$_3$ refiguration. *Mimesis*$_2$ is the type of *mimesis* that concerns us here; it is narrative configuration. It is at this stage of *mimesis* that the narrator re-figures events and actions. Recall also that in Time and Narrative Ricoeur's criticism of literary works which aim to establish the most exact correspondence to the reality they imitate is that these works are the result of a simple understanding of *mimesis*. This is a result of considering *mimesis* only in its crudest form, its first stage, its lowest function, description. "By reduplicating the chaos of reality by that of fiction, returns *mimesis* to its weakest function - that of replicating what is real by copying it."[54] *Mimesis*$_2$ is concordant discordance; it is a structural operation which synthesizes a variety of incidents into a unified and whole story. The art of configuration, composition, *mimesis*$_2$, is to grasp together incidences and events and represent them as causally connected, even necessary. Plot is the narrative structure that integrates and orders the multiplicity of experience. For Ricoeur, "the universal character of the formal principle of narrative configuration (is) the temporal synthesis of the heterogeneous."[55]

If one's personal story does not fit the aesthetic criteria of Time and Narrative[56] it would not be "narrative" and the narrative identity described in Oneself As Another would be impossible if there were no "narrative" for it to correspond to. One's narrative identity is

formed in the process or attempt to synthesize discordant experience into this traditional form.

What does the identity of the narrator of a life-story told in an alternative structure look like from the Ricoeurean point of view? It looks precisely like the "dead" modern subject. In fact, Ricoeur clings so tightly to his aesthetic criteria precisely because he sees them as a solution to the postmodern denial of subjectivity in modern understanding. His claim is that narrative connection ties together the fractured self. And if it were not for the imposition of this structure on narrative, there would be nothing to differentiate it from the experiences of multiplicity, flux, and contingency. So, in order for narrative to serve its function it must do more than merely describe events (described earlier as a naive understanding of *mimesis*) or merely articulate a stream of thoughts as they happen.

Ricoeur seems to be afraid that if narratives are not structured in the way he mandates, then narratives will fall into a description of a chaotic mess of unrelated and meaningless experiences. But I am suggesting that there is a spacious middle ground between Ricoeurean narrative structure and a mere chronology of events. It is my thesis that there are narratives which do not fit either of these extreme categories and yet they serve the imperative identity functions - they privilege attestation or avowal, they provide a sense of the distinction between sameness and selfhood, and most importantly they assign meaning to experiences and actions and events.

Fault Lines[57], a memoir by Meena Alexander, provides an example of an identity aware of re-creating itself in the process of narrating. The identity of the narrator of Fault Lines is consistent with the plot she creates but this plot structure permits radical cultural change, contextual upheaval, and anomalous experience to become part of the narrative. As I will show, Fault Lines violates the classical aesthetic criteria of structural unity and completeness and yet it has what I consider the singular necessary criterion for narrative; it provides experience with meaning.

Ricoeur laments the loss of the identity that corresponds to the crisis of traditional narrative configuration. Particularly troubling are some "unsettling cases" of contemporary novels which he terms "fictions of the loss of identity." These are narratives which deviate from the principles of Aristotelean aesthetics. These narratives do not aspire to the norm of unity, and the further they are from Ricoeur's ideal structure, the less coherent, intelligible, and ethical. Novels of this type "expose selfhood by taking away the support of sameness,"[58] so that the hero can no longer be identified with a set of lasting dispositions or commitments. Narrative identity, again, comes about during the process of mediation between two poles of "identity" - that of *ipse* and *idem*. It mediates between these two poles by "imaginative variations" - "thought experiments." Literature, in the form of the novel in particular, experiments with and draws out the differences between the two meanings of permanence in time by varying the relations between them. This distinction, explored in literature, is so important because it is rarely recognized in everyday experience.

In the following chapters I will argue that the explanatory power of Narrative Identity Theory would be enriched by a more inclusive conception of "plot." I am not simply making the argument, popular in contemporary feminist literary theory, that alternative narratives are in order (content); I am arguing that an alternative narrative structure is in order (form). I agree with Ricoeur that our actions make sense only in the context of our stories, that we re-create ourselves through the stories we tell, and that narrative is a way to give meaning to or appropriate involuntary experience. But narrative can function in these capacities without simultaneously functioning as a synthesizer of discordant experience. There are narrative structures which admit discordance, flux, change, anomalies, without necessarily associating them with pre-determined narrative material.

To counter Ricoeur in his own terms, I will argue that not only can a narrative concern itself with what the hero does between events,[59] alternative structures are

valuable because they play with the very status of the "events" of traditional narratives and there is critical engagement with experiences that traditional narratives skip over. The liberalizing of narrative structure opens up richer possibilities for the re-association of meaning. I agree with Ricoeur that the structural function narrative serves is an intrinsic part of its unique capacity to construct meaning, but a broader and richer narrative structure than Ricoeur imagines would engender endless possibilities for meaning construction.

I will argue that narrative would still retain its strength in accounting for and creating identity without relying on a model which bases identity on a type of consistency over time. Narrative identity theory can retain its emphasis on linguistic attestation, and the distinction between selfhood and sameness, without aligning selfhood with the ethical commitment to challenge change. Ricoeur's attachment of the act of keeping a promise to both subjectivity in general and ethical subjectivity in particular, leaves no room for the change in self resulting from Ricoeur's own description of "second naivete" which follows critical reflection. The theoretical weight placed on intentional self consistency is incongruent with the kind of agency in which the results of critical reflection are manifest.

Ricoeur's account of *ipse,* particularly the ethical associations, is problematic on several counts. First, it leaves no room for changes in commitment or changes in self resulting from changes in commitment. For example, Ricoeur says, "even if my desire were to change, even if I were to change my opinion or inclination, 'I will hold firm.' It is not necessary for the promise to be meaningful to keep one's word..."[60] Second, Ricoeur insists that not only ethical selfhood but any sense of self is achieved by the commitment to honor one's past commitments *because* the commitment to honor one's commitments (a type of sincerity) is a denial of change. "Keeping one's promise does appear to stand as a challenge to time, a denial of change."[61] And this sincerity in denying changes brought by time is the crucial aspect of *ipse* selfhood. This is the opposite of sameness over time

resulting from change *not* having occurred. This (*ipse*) is sameness over time resulting from the constant, and intentional ethical commitment to remain the same over time is an achievement in selfhood. Third, Ricoeur makes no mention, in this theory of narrative identity, of potential changes in commitment or actions that may result from gaining new information or from changes in external circumstances. In fact, it is this kind of external flux that consistency of self, evidenced by keeping a promise, is meant to combat.

The difficulty of locating a self that is permanent in time leads Ricoeur to the solution that is narrative identity theory. One's narrative is created in the narrative rendering of the relationship between *ipse* and *idem*. His solution is that the self is that which is consistent with plot. The self is the same self who narrates a unified and whole narrative, with one dominant authorial voice and consciousness, over time. A self in this sense (*ipse*) may appear to have changed in the eyes of another, but if the other is cognizant of the narrative that the self is a part of, the other will acknowledge that the self changed only in accordance with the demands of plot.

But it seems to me to remain true that one's actions make sense only in the context of one's story even if the story is *not* structured in the Ricoeurean style. To tell one's story is to assign meaning to events and experiences; and re-telling one's story is a way to creatively re-assign meaning to experience after critical reflection. Our modern understanding of self-narrative since Rousseau has been that to narrate one's story is to co-author the very self doing the narrating; redescription involves a reconstitution of self. I am claiming that narrating *is itself* a process of structuring experience; to narrate is to structure.

In the third and fourth chapters of this dissertation I will examine one example of an alternative emplotment. In the fifth and sixth chapters I will argue that alternative narratives are at least as effective as traditional narratives in providing experience with meaning, in appropriating the involuntary. In fact, it is Ricoeur's conservative aesthetic

which leaves his theory of personal identity incomplete in such a way that certain conceptions of self are not recognized. I will argue that these alternative narratives, and the selves they engender, are as complete and ethical as those Ricoeur identifies.

I assume along with Ricoeur that refiguration occurs in the life and actions of the emplotted subject. But beyond theory, I wonder what results alternative structures could have on future actions of emplotted subjects. Our reading of fiction has made narrative beginnings and endings familiar to us so that we should be able to "stabilize" them in real life. For decades many feminist literary critics have assumed a narrative identity theory similar to Ricoeur's and have argued that traditionally assumed "universal" plots, the "quest plot" for example, are not universal but male plots[62] and that women must both retrieve and reinterpret old plots and create new ones.[63] Women have long been encouraged to abandon "the marriage plot"[64] or the "victim plot"[65] or the "Freudian master-plot"[66] in favor of alternative plots, but I am arguing something further: assuming that narrative structure affects action and identity, narrative choice should include not only alternative plots in terms of content but also alternative formal structures. This means that narrative agency can take on entirely new meaning if not only the content of stories is altered but the form in which they are told is also altered.

Ricoeur would agree with the narrator who says that we live our lives by telling stories and that these internal re-constructions determine action, and that,

> were a complete inventory to be undertaken I think that we would find that our entire stock of story forms is quite manageably small, countable in single digits...our human creativity is...exercised not in the production of new forms but rather in the finding of ways to force our material into the finite available few. We trim off and discard into forgetfulness the incoherent bits that won't go into any kind of story we can tell ourselves - incoherent *because* they won't go in; that is, if we notice them at all.[67]

There is something further that Ricoeur does not account for - something that will be the focus of chapter five. If, as he suggests, narrative will form the "yet untold stories of our lives,"[68] the problem is that "The aesthetic preference for wholeness will often lead us to

actions we would not otherwise undertake." (Rebecca Goldstein, The Late Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind.)[69]

Notes

1. Paul Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, trans., Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

2. Ibid., 56.

3. Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity," Philosophy Today (spring 1991): 76.

4. Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, 27.

5. Ibid., 61.

6. The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work, ed. Charles Degan and David Steward (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 199.

7. Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, 200.

8. Here Ricoeur borrows from, and is in complete agreement with, Michael Sherwood, Logic of Explanation in Psychoanalysis (New York: Academic Press, 1969).

9. Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, 72.

10. Ibid., 22.

11. Ibid., 302.

12. Ibid., 21.

13. Ibid., 129.

14. Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, 118.

15. Ibid., 118.

16. Ibid., 119.

17. Ibid., 121.

18. Ibid., 124.

19. Ibid., 124.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., 165-66.

22. Ibid., 172.

23. Ibid., 180.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 221.

26. Ibid., 180.

27. Ibid., 184-85.

28. Ricoeur restricts his use of the notion of "ethics" to the societal or institutional. And he uses "moral" for interpersonal contexts.

29. Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, 266.

30. Ibid., 267.

31. Ibid., 254-55.

32. Ibid., 273.

33. Ibid., 141.

34. Ibid.

35. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:158.

36. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 1:35.

37. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:159.

38. Ibid., 20.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 22.

41. Ibid., 96-97.

42. Ibid., 96.

43. Ibid.

44. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 1:36.

45. Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, 141.

46. Ibid., 143.

47. Ibid., 147-48.

48. Ricoeur, Oneself as Another, 158-59.

49. Ibid., 162.

50. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:22.

51. Ibid., 97.

52. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, vol. 2, trans., Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 96.

53. Ibid., 97.

54. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:14.

55. Ibid., 158.

56. Primarily the second volume.

57. Meena Alexander, Fault Lines (New York: The Feminist Press, City University of New York, 1993).

58. Ibid., 148-49.

59. Ricoeur insists that narratives do not concern themselves with what "the hero did between events..." Time and Narrative, 1:39.

60. Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, 124.

61. Ibid.

62. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

63. Elaine Showalter, "Toward a Feminist Poetics," The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 125-143; Nancy A. Walker, Feminist Alternatives: Irony and Fantasy in the Contemporary Novel by Women (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1990).

64. Rachel M. Brownstein, Becoming a Heroine (New York: Penguin, 1984).

65. Susan Gubar, "Mother, Maiden, Marriage of Death," The New Feminist Criticism, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).

66. Nancy K. Miller, "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," The New Feminist Criticisim, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 339-360; Susan Gubar, "'The Blank Page' and Issues of Female Creativity," The New Feminist Criticism, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985);

Marianne Hirsh, The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis and Feminism (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989).

67. Rebecca Goldstein, The Late Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984), 56.

68. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 1:76.

69. Ibid., 57.

CHAPTER IV

FAULT LINES

> In our treatment of narrative identity, we observed that it is the virtue of the narrative to join together agents and patients in the entangling of multiple life histories. But we must go further and take into account more deeply concealed forms of suffering: the incapacity to tell a story, the refusal to recount, the insistence of the untellable - phenomena that go beyond mishaps and adventures, which can always be made meaningful through the strategy of emplotment.[1]

The problem with what Ricoeur says here is that the extent to which narrative makes these phenomena meaningful is limited by the structure of the very thing that performs this sense-making function; potentially meaningful experience will be left out of a unified and whole plot structure if it is anomalous or if it cannot be synthesized. Experience becomes dichotomized as meaningful or trivial, anomaly or pattern, and then is either synthesized or silenced. But even experience that is silenced or repressed is potentially meaningful in a plot that is not unified and whole.

The discordant/concordant feature of Ricoeurean narratives deals with anomalous experience, or experience between "events," in one of two ways. Either the experience is forgotten, repressed, trivilized, so that it does not enter into the narrative (As Ricoeur says in Time and Narrative, "we do not ask what the hero did between episodes"[2]) or such experiences can *become* the narrative. An example of the first method is that we do not know when Oedipus brushed his teeth. Even Aristotle's own example of the most well-laid plot, Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, does not allow just any experience to enter the narrative. All the experiences that take place between events, anomalous experience, and the breaks in continuous experience, are discordant or heterogeneous, according to Ricoeur. These types

of experiences are "synthesized" to fit Aristotelian formal structure. For Ricoeur, narrative *is* the "synthesis of the heterogeneous."

In regard to the second method, a reader may ask: Doesn't the Ricoeurean model allow for experiential rupture to be the content of the story? Cannot one's experience of fracture and discontinuity be what the story is *about,* or part of what the story is about*?* In other words, isn't making a story in which change is interpreted as continuity a Ricoeurean move? My reply is that on the Ricoeurean model, a story about these types of experiences would still be structured like the whole/unified Aristotelian plot. This means that these experiences would be synthesized by its structure. Even such a story (a story with change interpreted as continuity) must be transformed into Aristotelian formal structure in order to be a "narrative" according to Ricoeur's model.

One way narrative can synthesize discordant experience is by constructing causal connections. For example, let us say that one's narrative was about the quest to become a great composer, and then a sudden illness results in deafness, and even then this narrator goes on to become a great composer. One way to make sense of the senselessness of this debilitating illness is to narrate it as the *cause* of the success as a composer. In order to make sense of the senseless, the anomalous, the accidental, or the involuntary, a Ricoeurean narrator will either drop events from the narrative (as Sophocles did) or the narrator will synthesize the material and one method of synthesis is the construction of causal connections. Ricoeur's point is exactly this: an accident, or anomaly, or rupture in continuous experience, would be understood differently if it were assimilated. Assimilation is a sense-making function.

But Meena Alexander in her memoir Fault Lines, addresses this point and raises an interesting and important objection. If she told a story that made change and discontinuity what the story was *about* she would become *only* those experiences of rupture because all else would be synthesized by classical structure. Those experiences of radical cultural

dislocation, for example, would *be* the story. Then she would have a "narrative" according to Ricoeur, but Alexander wants her narrative, her identity, to be more than a collection of fault lines, "more than a crack in the earth marking boundaries." Further, some types of experience are more difficult to synthesize than others and some people have more of these types of experiences than others. Cross-cultural experience, for example, is more difficult to synthesize.

How does one synthesize culturally incommensurable stories? An eighty-year-old widow in India will experience, perhaps for the first time in her life, a degree of self-direction after her husband's death. This may well be the first time she makes decisions for herself, the first time she chooses how to spend her time. This is a time of life that Indian women often look forward to. At this age a woman is the most powerful figure in the family. She can choose the careers of her children and grandchildren. She will determine rituals around the home; she will decide everything from when the family eats to when they go to sleep. Previously all these things would have been determined by her husband or before that by *his* mother. The story of an eight-year-old widow in America is quite different. The elderly American woman will probably have less, not more, self-direction and influence and connectedness with her family. In America age is fended off; it is not something one looks forward to. Now for an elderly woman who lives in *both* cultures to tell a unified narrative would be very structurally demanding. It would require more negation of experience than it would of an elderly woman who lives in one culture or the other. It is in this sense that inter-cultural narrative conflict will be more structurally demanding than intra-cultural conflict.

There is another problem; the way in which Ricoeurean narrative theory makes sense of the "unsayable" is not adequately theorized. In fact, the quote from Ricoeur with which I began this chapter is the only place where there is any reference at all to the incapacity to tell a story, refusal to recount, or insistence on the untellable. My claim is

that the incapacity to tell a story may well be the *result* of the requirement to tell the story in a certain way. The "unsayable" is that which is silenced, repressed, marginalized by Ricoeur's aesthetic requirements. In other words, Ricoeur's structural requirements make certain stories difficult to tell.

My argument is that it is precisely these aesthetic criteria, that inform Ricoeur's conception of identity, that *create* narrative difficulty. Since Ricoeur does not address this issue, but rather insists on the universality of Aristotelian plot structure, one is left to assume that "deeper forms of suffering" will be subjected to the same authoritarian regulatory practices. The aesthetic criteria for the form in which the story is told do not take into account the "incapacity to tell a story." The "untellable" is not theoretically connected to emplotment, far less, "made meaningful" by strategic emplotment. In fact, as I will argue in the fifth and sixth chapters, these aesthetic criteria *contribute* to the "incapacity to tell a story."

The life of Meena Alexander, a contemporary poet, exemplifies these problems. She experiences more than just the garden variety narrative conflict theorized so completely by Western feminist theorists.[3] She embodies the conflict of radically different cultural traditions. Her struggles begin with trying to find a decolonized voice in which to narrate. Then the Ricoeurean practice of synthesizing heterogeneous experience is particularly difficult for her because her experiences are culturally and linguistically heterogeneous. And Alexander is not the only one with this type of problem. She is a member of an increasingly large group of theorists who focus on the issues of cross-cultural conflict, physical dislocation, and experiential rupture, in the formation of subjectivity.

In this chapter I hope to accomplish two tasks. In the first section, I will take a brief detour through the theoretical home of Alexander's narrative practice, by looking at some aspects of the work of Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler, Nita Kumar, and Rosi Braidotti. I choose to concentrate on these particular theorists for very specific reasons.

Each of these theorists provides a sketch, a figuration, of a form of subjectivity which is an alternative to the modern Western conception of the Enlightenment subject (epitomized by the Locke, Descartes, and Kant) which focuses on reason as a central human capacity while marginalizing non-rational (for example unconscious) aspects of subjectivity.[4] Nor are these the "dead" or "fractured" postmodern subjects of Barthes or Foucault. Moreover, these subjectivities are not even modeled on the classical aesthetic of Ricoeur's subject. These figurations are alternative to what Ricoeur considers his solution, or mediation of the gulf between the Enlightenment view of subjectivity and the postmodern denial of it. I call these alternative figurations of subjectivity the "theoretical home of Alexander's narrative practice" because each of these figurations comes about as a result of cultural dislocation and the subversion of regulatory or colonial discursive practices. Gayatri Spivak has offered the post-colonial subject, Judith Butler performative subjectivity, Nita Kumar the South Asian anti-colonial subalternist subject, and Rosi Braidotti the nomadic subject. I would like to look to these four conceptions of subjectivity. Specifically, I will look to the *practices* of these types of subjects.

The second part of this chapter will move away from the theoretical to an illustrative example of the problems of identity associated with narrating within the limits of Ricoeurean structure, by focusing on the narrative of Meena Alexander's memoir Fault Lines. Fault Lines presents a narrative solution, a practical solution, to the problems associated with constant identity in the face of flux, contingency, and dislocation - a solution with an alternative to Ricoeur's structure.

Part One: Alternative Subjectivities

The construction of Gayatri Spivak's collective subject begins with the "unlearning" of "authoritarian fictions" of the self. She responds to the regulatory function of such fictions in the assignment of meaning to experience by "unlearning." "Unlearning"

is the beginning, a preliminary conceptual step which involves understanding one's privilege as one's loss. In other words, the slave has certain knowledge that the master does not. Understanding this means understanding that one's privileged position makes other knowledge inaccessible. Other knowledge in this sense means marginalized knowledge, for example, subaltern knowledges. Subalterns may, for example, develop subtle nuanced methods of self-expression which are undetectable by those with power as undetectability may be a requirement of survival. Authoritarian fictions are fictions which narrate ethical and political conflict metaphysically. This means representing ethical or political values and motives as "natural" or just "the way things are." Unlearning involves recognizing the repressive construction of what presents itself as obvious, free, or natural.

Spivak is interested in uncovering the strategies that authoritarian fictions use to "solve" conflicts by the imposition of power. This is the second step, the deconstructive step. She insists that deconstruction is not so much the exposing of error as it is the constant and persistent questioning of the production of truths, and she takes from Derrida the idea that interruption of text disrupts the "so-called" unity of voice and intention. The interest here is in focusing on the itinerary of authoritarian fictions so as to call into question the "complacent apathy of self-centralization."[5] She wants to think of the decolonialized autobiographical subject as a communal subject. The identity of the subject is consistent with the identity of the place/space/culture in which it exists. Identity is completely contextualized. Rather than individuation, a central aspect of identity as Spivak understands it is its embeddedness in a time, a place, a context. Spivak maintains that one of the most essential tasks of the critical reader is to ask "what subject-effects were systematically effaced and trained to efface themselves so that a canonic norm might emerge?"[6]

Now, Spivak's next question is how can one narrate one's life while speaking the language of the colonizer? In order to answer this question she explores the nature of the

relationship between autobiographical "identity" and the autobiography which is (to the extent that it can be) decolonized. As one might expect, Spivak aligns the autobiographical identity formed in authoritative fictions with the canon, with the learned, powerful, and effacing. Decolonized autobiography comes about as a result of a learned (or unlearned) perspective. This is a narrative which begins by unlearning privilege, then deconstructs normative values in search of the power structures which support them, and then engages in "new narrativations of older scripts."[7]

Spivak's comparison of the Latin *idem* and Sanskrit *idam* (both mean "same") and the Latin *ipse* and the Sanskrit *aham* will prove important to an alternative understanding of identity. (This is more precisely *idamvada* and *ahamvada).* Recall that in Ricoeur's reading *idem* is demonstrated by distinguishing characteristics over time. *Idem* is Ricoeur's "character" as opposed to the self-sameness demonstrated by keeping a promise (*ipse*). But the Sanskrit *idam* is not understood as sameness in the same sense. *Idam* does not denote unique characteristics which make the thing (the person or the object) the same thing over time; rather, it has to do with what is *not* unique.[8] *Idam* means sameness in multiplicity, "in the sense of multitudes or repetitions."[9] In other words, this *idam* is not associated with personal identity, as is *idem*, but is rather the opposite. It is not unique personal identity but an identity of like things.

Spivak considers her job as a deconstructionist to be to "shake the stakes" of egoism (*ipse* or *aham*) so as to reveal *idam.*[10] This distinction is crucial to understanding Spivak's conception of identity. She insists that we should cease thinking of ourselves and our opinions as at the center of our own self-possession: "alternative storytelling doesn't give you an identity if you think of identity as something intimately personal which lets you know who you are. It gives you a whole field of representation within which something like an 'identity' can be represented as a basis for agency."[11]

Spivak's embodied subject is neither essential nor biologically determined. Embodied subjectivity has to do with one's situation, location, in the world.[12] Spivak is Ricoeurean when she insists that, "what we call experience is a staging of experience"[13] and that the job of intellectuals is to offer accounts of the mechanisms of staging.[14] This "staging" is what Ricoeur calls the "synthetic" nature of experience. And one of the primary mechanisms of that staging is emplotment in the classical structure. But while Ricoeur promotes proficiency in these mechanisms so as to better stage, or synthesize, experience, Spivak suggests that we know these mechanisms well enough. In fact, we know them so well that authoritarian modes of holding experience together seem natural to us rather than artificial. Ricoeur's foundational aesthetic privileges an authoritarian fiction of precisely the type that Spivak suggests should be unlearned. The chapters which follow will not only answer Spivak's question about who is "systematically effaced and trained to efface themselves so that a canonical norm might emerge?" they will also inquire into the mechanisms of this effacement.

Judith Butler[15] is also interested in these mechanisms or what she terms "regulatory practices" which constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, the self-identical status of a person. Like Spivak, Butler asks, "To what extent is unity a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience?"[16] While Ricoeur's account, and many accounts of personal identity, focus on internal elements of a person that are continuous and establish the self-identity of a person over time (like distinguishing characteristics or commitment not to change) Butler argues that the "coherence" and "continuity" of the "person" are not intrinsic features of personhood, but rather socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility.[17] And that "political construction of the subject proceeds with certain legitimizing and exclusionary aims."[18] Identity is an effect of power relations and Butler and Spivak both insist that a central question that must be asked is, who is excluded from identity categories and how is the exclusion maintained?

Butler calls the nature of identity "fictive" in the sense that it is created by practices rather than being a thing that exists independent of those practices. Identity is the effect of the repetition of regulatory practices and discourses like synthesizing discordant experiences to fit Aristotelian plot structure. But Butler calls for de-regulation, insisting that if repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities, then the crucial question is, "What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself."[19] An example of one of Butler's answers to that question is the repetition of so-called heterosexual conventions in homosexual contexts. The performance of "butch" and "femme" roles, for example, parody performances of these roles in heterosexual contexts and expose the "utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus gay is to straight *not* as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy."[20]

What Spivak calls "authoritarian fictions," Butler calls "regulatory fictions" of identity. These fictions are the place to begin disruption, and she looks to psychoanalytic accounts for critical strategies and sources of subversion.

In Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Butler exposes the coercive and limiting consequences of identity categories and destablizes identity constructions by exposing their normative regulative functions. The first step is to become aware of the ways in which we repeat and perform our identities. The second step is the deconstructive one. Then she reconceptualizes identity and thinks of it instead as performance. Identity is performance as it is produced and re-produced by the regulatory practices of coherence. It is created in the process of performing it. Identity is performative in the sense that it constitutes the identity it is purported to be: "Identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' of gender said to be its result."[21] So, for example, identity categories of gender are constructed by repetitive practices which are often thought of as the *results* of these categories. This repetitive performance not only constructs but

also regulates other performances. Because this regulated repetition of gender categories is bound to persist, Butler promotes the subversive practice of parodic repetition.

Butler is interested in proliferating the possibilities for identity performance. Acknowledgement of various types of identity will involve the acknowledgement that there are different identities at different points in time. Certain *practices* create local and temporally particular identities and these practices, like the identities they create, are situated and contingent. Butler says, "My argument is that there need not be a 'doer behind the deed,' but that the 'doer' is variably constructed in and through the deed."[22]

This is not an existential theory of self as constituted through acts, rather, "It is precisely the discursively variable construction of each (self and acts) in and through the other"[23] that interests Butler. So, it follows that rather than trying to posit a primary identity as a foundation for political action, Butler thinks feminist theory should instead concern itself with the political possibilities that are a consequence of a radical critique of identity. In other words, there does not have to be an identity in place before its interests can be elaborated and in order for political action to be taken on the basis of those interests. In fact, the attempt to locate a common identity as the foundation for feminist politics precludes a radical critique of the political construction and regulation of identity.

Ricoeur agrees with Butler that the coherence and continuity of the subject are not features of experience, but are rather "socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility." But while Ricoeur's account of personal identity emphasizes sameness through time, continuity, and commitment to challenge change, Butler undermines the very practices that constitute internal coherence. Ricoeurean "rule-governed identity"[24] is the type of identity that "relies on the consistent and repeated invocation of rules that condition and restrict culturally intelligible practices of identity."[25] Butler's project is very *un*Ricoeurean since,

> the very notion of "the person" is called into question by the cultural emergence of those 'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined...The specters of discontinuity and incoherence... are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection...[26]

"Intelligible" gender identities, for example, are those which in some way maintain continuity between sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire. "Unintelligible" gender identities do not maintain this continuity.

Butler is interested in exploring a type of agency that is not completely determined by culture and discourse. And in so doing she argues against two common faulty assumptions. First is the assumption that identity can only be established by recourse to a previously established "I." Second is the mistaken assumption that to be constituted by discourse is to be determined by discourse, where determination makes agency impossible.[27] Butler argues that the subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated. The issue of agency is reformulated as a question of how signification and re-signification work. Identity is an *effect* of signification and there are rules concerning signification which restrict culturally intelligible practices of identity. "Intelligible" subjects are the effects of rule-based signifying practices and these rules operate through repetition. But signifying rules and practices conceal their own workings and naturalize their effects.

> because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition...'agency,' then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition...it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible.[28]

The reconceptualization of identity as an effect, as produced and generated, opens up new possibilities for agency, possibilities that are closed by positions that consider identity fixed and foundational. For identity to be an effect means that it is neither determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary: "construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency..The critical task is...to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those

constructions."[29] Butler's inquiry attempts to locate the political in the very signifying practices that construct identity; she reformulates the question of agency as a question of how signification and resignification work.

Good examples of subversive signifying practices that construct identity are to be found in Nita Kumar's Women as Subjects.[30] This is a collection of the empirical data of field work in India. The studies are anthropological, sociological, historical, and there is also discursive textual analysis. Kumar is interested in finding out about the ways in which South Asian, postcolonial, female subjects can provide alternative paradigms for the process of constructing lives. Her method is to look at the hidden subversive ways in which these women "exercise agency even while outwardly part of a repressive normative order"[31] by uncovering subversive discourses, deviant practices, hidden uses of symbols, as subaltern methods of struggle toward the construction of identity in radical yet little recognized ways. The protest of the subjects in these studies does not take the recognized form; rather, it appears in activities of daily life. It appears in evasive tactics like counter-cultures of language, myths with double entendres, and diary writing. The essays show how subjectivity gets constituted by the articulation of alternative perspectives.

Several essays in Kumar's collection focus their analysis on alternative discourses expressed through song and story. "The subject that emerges is one that resists by fashioning her own discourse."[32] One article suggests that subjects existing between different social/cultural backgrounds and historical identities, exist in a space, a fault line, between two authoritarian influences, within which they can assert agency in co-constructing the self. These subjects are "discontinuous and apparently contradictory, not consistent, unified, or freely choosing, but a palimpsest of identities, constituted and reconstituted, constantly in flux."[33] The subject that emerges from Kumar's account is one which, like Butler's figuration, is fashioned by discourse, but is not a passive recipient of it, "even when the terms of discourse seem unchanged, the slight displacement of a

symbol from its conventional positioning is enough to codify completely different, opposing meanings for the subject."[34] Obviously a sensitivity to the use of symbols is imperative in considering the manifestation of this type of discursive and metaphorical agency.

Kumar is not interested in positing a female subject that would replace the modern male subject. She does not want to resurrect the Cartesian subject or reconceptualize it; hers is a radical departure from it. Her approach is anti-colonial, subalternist, and South Asian at once. She prefers the term anti-colonial to "postcolonialism" as the later posits a system in which the inequity of power relations creates a totally passive object. Her approach is subalternist in the sense that it seeks to reinstate people without apparent power. And her approach is South Asian in the sense that before she goes about questioning the masculine subjectivity of the Enlightenment or overthrowing hierarchical dichotomies, she asks prior questions - questions about South Asian reality. For example, she asks if there has been a Modernism in South Asia comparable to the European one? Is the normative of South Asian history clearly masculine? And is masculinity itself characterized by rationality, independence, freedom, and action, as it is in the West? She looks to the empirical data of anthropological field work, and to myths, folktales, literature, and psychoanalytic data, all of which suggest that the dichotomies such as body/spirit, mind/matter, inside/outside, male/female, are "less rigorously constructed than in the West."[35] She finds a radically un-Cartesian assumption governing much Indian thought - that the world is fundamentally one. And she finds that there is not such a clearly delineated normative male subject and that the unitary qualities of Western man's rationality are not privileged. Nor do masculinity or femininity bear the same characteristics as they do in the West, nor do they have the same relationship to one another.

Unlike Ricoeur's conception of a narrative subject who constructs herself by organizing her experience in accordance with the tacitly assumed principles of classical aesthetics, the subjects of these field studies construct themselves in the process of subverting authoritarian modes of self-representation. The identities of these subjects are not inscribed by a text; their agency is exercised in the margins and the fault lines between dominant discourses.

Another alternative form of subjectivity with a strong linguistic dimension is Rosi Braidotti's "figuration" of the nomadic subject. The "nomad" practices an aesthetic style which reflects the arbitrary nature of the "identity" she deals with. Writing for the nomadic subject is,

> a process of undoing the illusory stability of fixed identities, bursting open the bubble of ontological security that comes with familiarity with one linguistic site...Writing in this mode is about disengaging the sedentary nature of words, destabilizing commonsensical meanings, deconstructing established forms of consciousness.[36]

Braidotti's nomadism is akin to Foucault's "countermemory." It is a form of resisting assimilation into dominant ways of representing the self.[37] "Nomadic shifts designate...a creative sort of becoming; a performative metaphor that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of interaction of experience and knowledge."[38] Responding to contemporary theories of subjectivity like Ricoeur's, she suggests developing nomadic consciousness which requires the possession of a sense of identity that rests not on fixity but on contingency. It denies "authentic" identities or original sites of identity. Nomadic consciousness combines coherence with mobility. "It aims to rethink the unity of the subject"[39] that Ricoeur insists upon. Her work attempts to deconstruct what Ricoeur calls the "configurational competence" of the narrator.

> I am struck by the violence of the gesture that binds a fractured self to the performative illusion of unity... I am amazed by the terrifying stupidity of the illusion of unity, and by its incomprehensible force.[40]

Nomadism refers to a kind of critical consciousness which subverts set conventions. It requires what Braidotti calls the "philosophy of what-if," which is much like Ricoeur's "seeing-as." Both "what ifing" and "seeing as" are re-associative practices connected to the ontological. One does not simply practice association, one *is in* a re-associative state. An example of this type of performative nomadism is Laurie Anderson's performance art. Anderson represents a constant flow of experience, a continuum of different levels of experience, in order to reveal conceptual paradoxes. ("It is not the bullet that kills you but the hole.") Events, experiences, and concepts are reversed or in some way re-associated. "What-ifing" both requires and engenders alternative forms of agency; "the practice of "as-if" is a technique of strategic re-location and it can be utilized to "rescue what we need of the past in order to trace paths of transformation of our lives here and now."[41]

Braidotti finds that there is no adequate conceptual representation of a state she experiences intimately as her own way of being:

> a nomad's identity is a map of where s/he has already been; s/he can always reconstruct it a posteriori, as a set of steps in an itinerary. But there is no triumphant *cogito* supervising the contingency of the self...the nomad's identity is an inventory of traces.[42]

Nomadic practice involves several elements. First, there is extensive borrowing from various disciplines; it is inter-disciplinary. Second, it involves deliberately using concepts out of context, derouted from their initial purpose, destablizing commonsensical meanings and deconstructing established norms of association. Third, the stand point of the nomad in-between languages constitutes a unique and privileged perspective for both deconstruction and re-association. Fourth, nomadic practice involves mixing voices, combining a mixture of dry theoretical language with the lyrical or poetic. And fifth, it appropriates Spivak's technique of "the principle of quotations citations,"[43] which is a practice in the "dethroning of the 'transcendental narcissism' of the philosophizing 'I.'"[44]

In other words, letting the voices of others into one's text is a way of "actualizing the noncentrality of the "I" in the project of thinking," and recognizing theorizing as a collective project. Spivak's own critical work does not attempt to explain the words of others. She simply lets them speak, at length, for themselves. In this way she does not appropriate their words, rather, she joins in with what they are claiming thereby creating a sense of solidarity of subject position.

In Western thought the classical notion of the subject is defined in terms of sameness, that is, it remains one and the same in all its variety of qualifications and attributes, but Braidotti wants to redefine consciousness in terms of multiple layers of experience which do not privilege rationality as the organizing principle. She wants to pull apart the modern presumption of a connection between the subject and consciousness, the notion of the subject *as* consciousness, and looks instead to the unconscious as a creative field. The "key" to understanding multiple identity is unconscious process.

While some feminist theorists have argued that the postmodern denial of unified identity and the critique of metanarratives has undermined women's political agency,[45] Braidotti argues that political agency "has to do with the capacity to expose the illusion of ontological foundations." In fact what is political is the "active quest for possibilities of resistance to hegemonic formations."[46] Braidotti agrees with Butler when Butler says, "the task is to interrogate what the theoretical move that establishes foundations authorizes, and what precisely it excludes or forecloses."[47]

Like Ricoeur, the four theorists I have examined above (Spivak, Butler, Kumar, and Braidotti) all recognize the artificial nature of the "unity" of the subject. That is to say that each of these theorists recognizes that the internal coherence of the subject is a socially instituted ideal rather than a natural phenomenon. But these four theorists deconstruct the regulatory practices, the legitimizing and exclusionary practices for identity formation that Ricoeurean structural criteria represent. All four theorists are interested in critical

strategies and sources of subversion for resisting assimilation into traditional ways of representing the self. Beginning with the assumption of the self as a discursive formation, they each contribute techniques for representational subversion. I will show, in the chapters that follow, that these techniques are put into practice in Fault Lines.

Meena Alexander's memoir, Fault Lines, is an example of a practice in self-narrative which engages and unlearns the tradition of unified narrative. It subverts discursive and identity-forming practices by engaging in precisely the types of de-regulatory practices that Spivak, Butler, Kumar, and Braidotti are interested in. Further, Alexander's memoir not only illustrates the subversive language play that these four feminists theorize, this memoir destablizes traditional identity constructions by exposing their homogenizing functions. Fault Lines represents a critical consciousness in a re-associative state of being.

Part Two: Fault Lines

As an introduction to her memoir, Meena Alexander enumerates the difficulties for a woman like herself to tell her life story. They include: 1. the problems of consistent identity associated with dislocation, 2. the difficulty of writing in one's own voice when one has not one, but multiple voices resulting from experiences in a multitude of places and in various languages, and, 3. the difficulty of writing as a woman when one's cultural tradition associates women and language with shame.

One of the richest sections of the memoir, "Stone-Eating Girl," focuses on a particular incident that epitomizes her problem. Once, when the narrator was a child, her reaction to her own sense of dislocation and resulting "unfixed identity," was to swallow a stone. Travel, existing in between places, was a large part of her childhood experience and the feeling of having no identity when dislocated from place demonstrates the need for the corporeal in a theory of identity. She wondered, "What was I when I was not quite in one

place, nor another, just in mid-stream? Was I unfit to see?" And then she picked up a round pebble and swallowed it along with the confusion that the previous question had caused: "Swallowing that stone gave me a sense of comfort, of power even...I felt I was a child who could sustain something hard and solid inside her."[48] The very next day, she saw a young girl in the marketplace sitting under a tree swallowing stones. This image will become a central image for Alexander - it is both an image of shamelessness and of strength.

She, the stone-eater, was sitting under a tree with a mouth full of stones. Making an exhibit of herself in this way, she was considered shameless: "The Malayalam word for shameless, *Perachathe*, as in shameless-mad, as in mad-dog, bitch, bitches being rabid, rabid dogs being known as bitches."[49] It seemed to her that the price for being *Perachathe* - shameless - was to have one's mouth filled with stones, "choosing stones, filling one's mouth with them, ejecting them through the miraculous gut we call the imagination."[50] And three decades after seeing the stone-eating girl, she is still a type of heroine:

> She taught herself whatever skills she had, learnt to use them in her own way, and set herself up as her own authority so that in her unmitigated gluttony... she became a female icon, creator of a stern discipline, perfecter of an art.[51]

Alexander goes on to narrate her own pre-occupation with, and talent in, developing the art of stone-eating. Her problem is like St. Augustine's experiential discordance but her problem is more acute due to dislocation. Her *solution* is different from the one Ricoeur proposes because, in part, her solution to consistent identity in the face of flux is found by grounding the body in *place* while Ricoeur's solution has to do with *intention* to remain the same in the face of change.

A conflicting image that haunts Alexander's childhood is one that goes hand in hand with the image of the stone-eating girl. The image is that of women jumping into wells, killing themselves out of shame: "The image of women jumping into wells was

constantly with me in my childhood." Something tells her, "You come from a long line of well-jumped women."[52] She eventually comes to the realization that the kind of strength displayed by the stone-eating girl requires the same type of silence that a well-jumper epitomizes, even though the latter is shameful and the prior is shameless. It is the strength associated with silence that she had to unlearn in order to write herself "into being."

How does one with broken geography, one with fragmented experience, one who is multi-lingual and multi-cultural, tell a traditionally structured personal narrative while speaking in her own voice? She asks, "How would I map this all in a book of days? After all, my life did not fall into the narratives I had been taught to honor, tales that closed back on themselves, as a snake might, swallowing its own ending..."[53] She is a woman "cracked by multiple migrations," uprooted so many times she can "connect nothing with nothing."[54] And she says "there is a real problem for me. What parts of my past can I hold onto when I enter this life? Must I dump it all?[55] Recall that in a Ricoeurean narrative, discontinuities are either homogenized or they are simply omitted.

Alexander is not unaware of the traditional requirements of narrative unity; the problem is that her experience is too radically fractured to fit into this traditional structure. It is clear that this memoir is an attempt to consciously, narratively, structure an alternative identity. This is not simply a description or a recounting or recalling; this is a creative act. Alexander narrates herself into being, or, in the Ricoeurean sense, she creates herself as she performs her story. But she does something further; in a very un-Ricoeurean move; she plays with the very structure of unity and wholeness of traditional narrative. Plotting is still an act of bestowing meaning. But the meaning of experience has to do with the context of those experiences and contexts are not only temporal; they are also spatial. The temporal orientation of traditional plot structure does not fully determine the meaning of Alexander's experiences. In other words, the meaning of experience is not determined by where it fits into an Aristotelian narrative. This is not the homogenized ordered narrative

of a unified subject, and the meaning that is determined by her narrative structure is not stable. Events and experiences are arranged and re-arranged in order to multiply the possibilities for meaning. This is a narrative which represents a subject in a re-associative state and her narrative structure reflects that state.

For Ricoeur particular experiences have meaning to the extent to which they contribute to the plot. And because the master plot structure is an Aristotelian-based one, the meaning of experiences becomes determined by the manner in which it contributes to the assumed structure of the whole story. For example, in the personal memoir which is the focus of this chapter, the narrator describes the feeling of having lived many lives, which together would be incohesive, incommensurable. She wonders where she should begin a narrative; at the beginning of which life? This narrator has experienced many beginnings, but Ricoeurean structure would either omit these experiences or would have what she experiences as "beginnings" assimilated as another part of the narrative. These experiences would be assigned different meaning in a Ricoeurean narrative structure. There can be only one beginning, and beginning material cannot just pop up anywhere in Aristotelian plot structure. But the narrative structure Alexander employs is determined by something other than the internalized form of the traditional plot. It is determined by the ontological state Ricoeur calls "being-as" and what Rosi Braidotti calls "as-ifing." More about this later.

Early in her memoir Alexander explains not only the inadequacy of traditional Western narrative structure for her narrative identity, but also the fact that her own tradition provides only partial assistance. The traditional Indian sense of identity is completely bound up with family, with social place, with ancestral site. But this narrator has been physically dislocated from ancestral site, family, and social place, so that this sense of identity is not completely accessible to her. She is forced to look beyond either tradition and yet neither tradition is completely left behind.

Tradition enters in even if only as a target of attack. Radical dislocation has forced Alexander to "fabricate" links to place, to"weave tales" between traditions. An example of this type of imaginative fabrication is that while the narrator does not accept the female role her mother would impose, she does not completely reject it either. She uses each of the conflicting narratives as part of her narrative material because these conflicts are part of what makes her who she is. This is what Spivak refers to as new narrations of older scripts.[56] In this way history is not denied; it is imbued with various alternative meanings. It is in this sense that Alexander exercises creative option:

> In my dreams, I am haunted by thought of a homeland I will never find. So I have tuned my lines to a different aesthetic, one that I build up out of all the stuff around me, improvising as I go along.[57]

Radical dislocation, the lack of any ancestral figure with whom she can identify, and her unashamed use and manipulation of language, make the traditional Indian sense of self inaccessible to her.

The narrator says that she has always experienced tension between multiple worlds, multiple languages, multiple selves. But through the manipulation of traditional paradigms she is able to structure a story which can encompass the conflict. And again, the notion of place plays an important role,

> For me, poems made real places. They had to, my life was so torn up into bits and pieces of the actual that I depended on the poems, irruptions of the imaginary to make an internal history for me.[58]

In a chapter called "Language and Shame," Alexander echos what the subjects of Kumar's studies have shown, and what Braidotti and Spivak both suggest, that to move between cultures and languages and traditions with incommensurable world views allows for an extended sense of agency. Alexander makes a connection between how she came to language and what it means to be dislocated.[59] She speaks English, Hindi, Arabic, French, and Malayalam, but her first poems were written in French as she does not read or write Malayalam, her mother tongue. She feels that this inability has allowed her to

maintain an immediacy to sound, which in turn enabled her to partially dissolve the canonical burden of British English. A form of linguistic decolonization, which had to do with her sense of femaleness, took place:

> I set the hierarchies, the scripts aside, and let the treasured orality flow over me. After all, that is how Malayalam had first come to me: in chants, in spoken voices that held a community together.[60]

Narrative structure required by one with experiences such as hers must be more inclusive than Ricoeur's. Alexander needs a narrative structure that accommodates anomalous discontinuous cross-cultural experiences without making these experiences *the* story. Ricoeur would refigure a life like Alexander's by telling it in such a way that change and discontinuity is narrated as the constant, that is, change would *be* the continuity. But Alexander insists that she is more than a collection of fault lines, more than *just* the ruptures in her experience, more than an entity between two locations. Alexander wants to tell her personal narrative in a way that includes the parts of her past, the parts of her experiences, the parts of her way of being that *she* has determined the meaning of. She needs a narrative structure that will accommodate the meaning she has assigned her experiences rather than a structure which will determine the meaning of her experiences. Her narrative still makes sense of things retrospectively but it also encompasses multiple and even conflicting voices: "I needed others, multiple voices, a plot however simple, a form from which history could not be torn out..."[61] Only structural expansion, which I delineate in the following chapter, can accommodate the demands of competing stories and conflicting voices.

Alexander uses a metaphor of hand stitching to describe the traditional model of self narration:

> fix it tightly in place...make the stitches as evenly as possible, tight and hard, so the silk could blend into the fabric and the frayed bit turn invisible in the well groomed sheen of the skirt or blouse.[62]

And she knows that she is living in worlds in which this kind of stitching will not do: "I needed my stitching to be like my writing to show its seams, its baste lines, its labor." The identities Alexander experiences intimately as her own are made up from the experiences in between the "events" of traditional narrative. If she told her narrative in the traditional structure the experiences in the fault lines would either be precluded from the narrative or they would be distorted. Alexander practices what Spivak insists upon - that the writer should always explicitly state her subject position. By clearly delineating one's subject position, one implies the non-universality of the theory or claim or observation. This practice demonstrates that a claim or representation cannot be separated from the cultural/linguistic construction of the subject making the claim or representation. In this sense the theory or claim or representation is not the product of a unique autonomous "I," but rather a product of a point of intersection between a maze of cultural and linguistic influences. Alexander offers a figuration of subjectivity that has no pretense to universality, transglobalism, or a-historical status. And the representation of her subjectivity does not aim at fluidity or unity or wholeness. Instead, Alexander's self-representation not only reflects the fabricated nature of her narrative identity, but also implicit in this aesthetic choice is a critque of any attempt to represent a self as whole and unified. Her narrative construction does not build itself upon received paradigms. It is improvised and temporary and its structure reflects its status as a work-in-progress,

> There is no ideal poise in its construction, just the basting together of bits. Sometimes bits burst open, split apart, and one does not quite know how to go on. Still, how to construct a provisional self to live by how to make up memory?[63]

Ultimately she asks, "Who are we? What selves can we construct to live by? How shall we mark out space?"[64] She sees herself as a fissured thing, "homeless, shelterless, with no fixed place to belong, and a babbler of multiple tongues." Alexander calls herself a "nowhere creature," a "body crossed by fault lines."[65] Her narrative must necessarily

"invoke a chaos," which reflects her experience. Not simple *mimesis*, but re-figured chaos. Narratively, one can "Map out a provisional self." But traditional whole/unified narrative structure is inadequate for the narration of her life story. She insists that:

> talk of wholeness...really doesn't make sense, or if it does only as a trope for the mind that casts back where-ever it is and whenever for a beforeness that is integral in precisely the ways that only a past can be.[66]

In this chapter I have attempted to explain what in Ricoeurean narrative identity is problematic for a life like Meena Alexander's. The structural requirements turn out to demand more from some forms of life than others. The more discontinuous experience is, the more difficult the narrative task. Physical dislocation, cultural incompatibility, and the struggle for narrative voice, are structurally challenging experiences and in Ricoeur's system they heighten the distortion requirement. In Ricoeurean terms, the more discordant the experience, the more violent the interpretation.

Notes

1. Paul Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, trans., Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 320.

2. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, vol. 2, trans., Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 39.

3. See Mary Mason, "The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers," and Doris Sommer, "Not Just a Personal Story: Women's *Testimonios* and the Plural Self," both in Life Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography, ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988); Nancy Miller, Feminist Alternatives (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1990); Leigh Gilmore, Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994); Marianne Hirch, The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

4. See Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" Philosophical Writings, trans., Lewis White Beck, ed. Ernst Behler (New York: Continuum, 1986); Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans., John Cummings (New York: Seabury Press, 1972); Gianni Vattimo, The End of Modernity (Baltimore: John's Hopkins University Press, 1988).

5. The Spivak Reader, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (New York: Routledge, 1996), 101.

6. Ibid., 110.

7. Spivak, Reader, 27.

8. Gayatri Spivak, "Acting Bits/Identity Talk," Critical Inquiry 18, no. 4 (summer 1992): 774.

9. Ibid.

10. It should be noted that even though this is a crucial aspect of Spivak's understanding of identity, she strongly cautions against using this idea of identity to further notions of group identity, political identity, or national identity.

11. Gayatri Spivak, "Bonding in Difference," interview with Alfred Arteaga, The Spivak Reader, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (New York: Rutledge, 1996), 26.

12. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Acting Bits/ Identity Talk," Critical Inquiry 18, no. 4 (summer 1992): 770.

13. Ibid.

14. For a critique of Spivak's practice of citing her subject position and interests in the deconstructive process, see Sangeeta Ray, "Shifting Subjects Shifting Ground: The Names and Spaces of the Post-Colonial," Hypatia 7, no. 2 (spring 1992): 188-199.

15. Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990).

16. Ibid., 16.

17. Ibid., 17.

18. Ibid., 4.

19. Ibid., 32.

20. Ibid., 31.

21. Ibid., 25.

22. Ibid., 142.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 144.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 17.

27. Ibid., 143.

28. Ibid., 145.

29. Ibid., 147.

30. Nita Kumar, ed., Women as Subjects: South Asian Histories (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994).

31. Ibid., 4.

32. Ibid., 17.

33. Ibid., 20.

34. Ibid., 21.

35. Ibid., 11.

36. Ibid., 15.

37. Ibid., 25.

38. Ibid., 6.

39. Ibid., 310.

40. Ibid., 12.

41. Ibid., 6.

42. Ibid., 14.

43. Gayatri Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Jacques Derrida's Of Grammatology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), ix-xxxvii.

44. Ibid., 38.

45. Rosi Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

46. Ibid., 35.

47. Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'," Feminists Theorize the Political, ed. Judith butler and Joan Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

48. Meena Alexander, Fault Lines (New York: The Feminist Press, City University of New York, 1993), 2.

49. Ibid., 80.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., 85.

52. Ibid., 107.

53. Meena Alexander, Fault Lines (New York: The Feminist Press, City University of New York, 1993), 2.

54. Ibid., 3.

55. Ibid., 198.

56. Spivak, The Spivak Reader, 27.

57. Ibid., 127.

58. Alexander, Fault Lines, 25.

59. Ibid., 111.

60. Ibid., 119.

61. Ibid., 120.

62. Ibid., 125.

63. Ibid., 177.

64. Ibid., 174.

65. Ibid., 182.

66. Ibid., 202.

CHAPTER V

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The previous chapter described the problems associated with narrating within traditional structure. This chapter will provide a comparative analysis of Fault Lines and Ricoeurean aesthetic criteria in order to show that Fault Lines does not meet Ricoeurean structural requirements of unified/whole plot structure nor that of concordance. This project will require three steps. First I will remind the reader of Ricoeurean structural criteria. Then these criteria will be applied to the narrative structure of Fault Lines in order to provide a type of conceptual overlay so the reader can see precisely where and how these structures differ. The third step will be to argue that while Fault Lines does not meet Ricoeurean criteria it nonetheless provides experience with structure, and it *functions* in the manner essential to any conception of narrative identity - identity is created in the process of telling its story.

The first consequence of an alternative structure results from the way Alexander makes sense of time. This alternative structure narratively "configures" human temporal experience, but it does so differently than Ricoeur would have it. There will be more about this in the next chapter. The second consequence of Alexander's alternative plot structure is that personal identity is predicated upon features of experience entirely different from those required for Ricoeurean narrative identity. Of the two primary consequences of Alexander's plot, the second one is the one that interests me in this chapter.

Part One: Ricoeurean Structural Criteria

Recall that the project of Time and Narrative was to provide a solution to Augustine's problem with time via an extension of Aristotelian poetic theory. In Aristotle's concept of emplotment (*muthos*) Ricoeur finds the answer to Augustine's problem with the existential burden of discordance. But the problem with Aristotle, according to Ricoeur, is that he confuses *mimesis* with *muthos* - imitation with emplotment. Moreover, there is no mention in Aristotle of the connection between poetic activity and temporal experience. It is here that Ricoeur wants to contribute.

A plot meets the Ricoeurean criteria of *wholeness/completeness* and *unity* if it has a beginning, middle, and end, each necessitated by what precedes or follows it. Aristotle explains these criteria as follows:

> Now a whole is that which has a beginning, middle, and end. A beginning is that which is not itself necessarily after any-thing else, and which has naturally something else after it; an end is that which is naturally after something itself, either as its necessary or usual consequent, and with nothing else after it; and a middle, that is by nature after one thing and has also another after it. A well constructed plot, therefore, cannot either begin or end at any point one likes; beginning and end in it must be of the forms just described.[1]

The beginning, middle, and end are not features of experience, they are the effects of an ordering plot. And *mimesis* should be understood, not as imitation of some pre-existing reality, but rather as creative imitation. This kind of *mimesis* is not Platonic imitation in the sense of re-duplication of a particular. Aristotelian *mimesis* implies poetic re-figuration. As Ricoeur sees it, "we have to understand something completely contrary to a copy of some preexisting reality and speak instead of creative imitation...Artisans who work with words produce not things but quasi-things; they invent the as-if."[2]

While Ricoeur wants to preserve the Aristotelian sense of *muthos* and *mimesis* as operations, as activities[3], he wants to "broaden, radicalize, and enrich" the Aristotelian notion of *muthos*, emplotment, and he also wants to contribute to the notion of time

handed down by Augustine. He does this by exploring the resources of narrative configuration. On the formal level, plot is defined as *concordance*: "an integrating dynamism that draws a unified and complete story from a variety of incidents...transforms this variety into a unified and complete story."[4] Plot is called "a new congruence in the organization of events."[5] It "grasps together and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematizing the intelligible signification attached to the narrative taken as a whole."[6]

It is in the second volume of Time and Narrative, which deals with the configurational operations of *mimesis 2,* that we find Ricoeur's most succinct description of what sorts of structures can properly be called plots and how they should function. He begins with the Aristotelian formal requirements:

> ...an integrating dynamism that draws a unified and complete story from a variety of incidences...(plot) transforms this variety into a unified and complete story.[7]

Then the Aristotelian notion of *muthos* is extended, thereby "broadening, enriching, and opening up to the outside the notion of emplotment."[8] The results of this broadening are:

> rule governed transformations worthy of being called plots so long as we can discern temporal wholes bringing about a synthesis of the heterogeneous...[9]

The configuring act of emplotment is a "judicative act, involving grasping together"[10] which requires a type of reflective judgement. This is reflective judgement in the Kantian aesthetic sense. In narrative terms, reflective judgement involves retrospective reflection over lots of experiences in search of a unifying theme. And there must be one dominant narrative voice, a Master-voice. There is no room for what Ricoeur calls the "polyphonic."[11]

In the preface to the first volume of Time and Narrative we are told that metaphor and narrative are alike in the sense that they are both phenomena of semantic innovation; they involve linguistic synthesis of the heterogeneous. The semantic innovation of

metaphor lies in its production of new semantic pertinence through displacement. The semantic innovation of narrative lies in its creating a synthesis, in the form of a plot. "By means of plot, goals, causes, and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of the whole and complete action."[12]

Unity, wholeness, and concordance are all essential features of Ricoeurean plot. The imitation of action ordered in this way will have the effect of re-constituting our subjective experience of time: "I see in the plots we invent the privileged means by which we re-configure our confused, unformed, and at the limit mute temporal existence." He insists that "what is ultimately at stake in the case of the structural identity of the narrative function as well as in that of the truth claim of every narrative work, is the temporal character of human experience."[13]

So, *unity/wholeness* and *concordance* are the structural criteria, and the *re-constitution of temoral experience* is one of the effects of Ricoeurean plot. The other effect is the *synthesis of experience.* Ricoeur's normative ideal of narrative unity and the resulting identity of the self marginalizes less prototypical forms of narrative, exemplified by Fault Lines, as less coherent and, by implication of his emphasis on *ipse,* less ethical.

Part Two: Comparative Analysis

Meena Alexander engages traditional narrative construction in the Aristotelian model but ultimately she deconstructs it and constructs a self based on a poetic re-construction of intense past experiences. Her narrative is not unified/whole and does not function as a synthesizer of experience. It does not have a single beginning, but multiple beginnings. And it remains open-ended. Not only does it leave room for re-figuration on the part of the reader, the text doesn't end itself. It does not gather similar experiences and artificially string them together.

Any potential for textual linearity is interrupted by poems or the re-creation of remembered feeling. Poetry surfaces at crucial moments - moments of transfer, fissure, disjuncture. The many starts of Fault Lines reflect the effort to make sense of experienced time with regard to measured time. The narrative denies a beginning by giving several false starts. It gives instead a plethora of traditional "beginnings" so that there is not one but many beginnings. The text refuses to give us a grounding initial event, a beginning episode. There are intense moments followed by rupture and breaks. For example, Alexander's story about being denied tenure is immediately followed the narration of a childhood memory. The reader is taken from an American university to the cashew and mango trees of India. The reader enters the narrative in present tense, *in media res*, setting the stage for the narrator's reflections on the past. This is a common enough device. But then the reader is taken back, not to the birth of the narrator and main character, but to the multiple births of her grandparents and parents. This differs from the technique of beginning *in media res* in traditional structure because it does not begin *in media res* and then go back to the beginning. There is not one particular beginning to go back to. There are multiple beginnings, multiple births. The representation of multiple beginnings is not an attempt to contextualize her narrative within a larger structure in the traditional manner; rather, she includes these multiple births as a part of her own narrative. This narrator feels that she has been born in many times in many places. Certain aspects of traditional Indian identity are imported as Alexander emphasizes the location of her grandparents' and parents' births as well as the "pattern of naming." The introductory pages of Fault Lines, pages that traditionally tell the beginning of the story, tell of place. Alexander's narrative begins with her significant place - the ancestral home.

The first half of the second chapter is as close as this narrative comes to any resemblance of traditional beginning. But even then,

> Multiple birth dates ripple, sing inside me, as if a long stretch of silk were passing through my fingers. I think of the lives I have known for forty years, the lives unknown, the shining geographies that feed into the substance of any possible story I might have. As I make up a katha, a story of my life, the lives before me, around me, weave into a net without which I would drop ceaselessly. They keep me within range of difficult truths, the exhilarating dangers of memory.[14]

Then an image of the narrator's grandmother is associated with contemporary life in New York. But abruptly, in the middle of the second chapter, the narrative begins again: "My earliest years flow back: skin, cotton, wall, mattress, and quilt"[15] The story of the early years is full of sensual images. A second beginning [16] precedes a break - referred to as a "fault line." This interruption is immediately followed by an abrupt return to the present [17] which is followed by a jump to the near distant past which sounds like the beginning of another story, "Lying on the bed all alone one summer afternoon..."[18] This image begins a memory/dream concerned with place and time. And this memory/dream is followed by yet another narrative beginning, the story of the narrator's birth.

Now, Ricoeur would understand all of these jumps and breaks relative to a larger narrative that is being constructed as the narrator encounters each of these incidents. Ricoeur himself admits that the tacitly assumed narrative structure will determine the way we understand breaks and ruptures in continuous experience. The problem for Alexander is that these types of experiential ruptures are a primary part of her life experience and to assimilate them in a Ricoeurean narrative would be to silence precisely the types of experiences that Alexander claims are important to her own sense of self. But Aristotelian poetic structure is tacitly assumed, how is Alexander able to avoid it? If the way we understand experience is pre-figured, how can we experience our experience any other way?

The answer to this question lies in the very aspect of Alexander's narrative that makes it less prototypical: she exists in the fault lines between the conceptual systems of several cultures. Alexander is a nomad. She is a linguistic polyglot, in the Braidottian sense, who travels between worlds, languages, and conceptual schemes. This form of

existence enables a form of postcolonial narrative agency that undermines traditional associations, regulatory discursive practices, and structures of self-representation.

Alexander is aware of how traditional narratives begin but, for her, "multiple birth dates ripple." Her observations shift from childhood memories to images of contemporary New York to dreams in adolescence to "imaged" role models. Then about one-fourth of the way through the memoir the story of her birth is re-created:

> I was born out of my mother, and out of her mother before her, and her mother, and her mother, and hers. Womb blood and womb tissue flowing, gleaming, no stopping. I was born in Allahabad, in Uttar Pradesh, in the plains of northern India the great city of God, where two rivers meet, the Ganga and the Jamuna[19]

This passage works to contextualize her narrative; it is a type of narrative embedding, but this passage does more. By appearing one-fourth of the way through the memoir, it disrupts potential linearity. By including ancestral place it incorporates part of a traditional Indian sense of self. Alexander goes on to re-create a story of her arrival at home, as a new born, complete with details like a muslin covered mattress and cheeks puffed from sucking. Recollection here is an imaginative act. The past is re-created by re-association of events and experiences. It is not that Alexander does not structure her experiences; she does. But in contrast with Ricoeur, Alexander does not synthesize heterogeneous experience. Instead, she opens up the field of association and loosens the grip of traditional chronological linking. She says, "The literal is always discrepant, a sharp otherness to what the imagination conjures up as it blends time."[20] Time, for Alexander, is not fluid or whole. Her past is full of ghosts, and the past that haunts her is often an imaginary past. This narrative moves ahead by moving back - back to important events, recollections, dreams. Ordinary daily events, like riding the subway, or cooking, are combined with ideas and thoughts and dreams so that there is a sense of internal life mixed with experience of the external world.

The story of her birth is a good example of the way in which three consistent themes of the memoir are presented - dislocation, imagination, and identity. This birth story is an imaginatively re-created beginning; it is an example of an alternative to Ricoeur's "figuration" involving organizational unity. This "figuration," in the Braidottian sense, is a re-created image (in this case birth story as the traditional beginning) which functions to imaginatively structure (in the sense of give meaning to) an event, a past, in a distant place. Alexander's birth story does not serve as the "beginning" of the narrative. In fact, the ambiguities surrounding her birth contribute to the sense of a displaced "beginning" episode. There is not one but many birth stories. The purpose of these stories is not to "ground" the narrative in a beginning episode nor is it the purpose of the birth story to introduce a "middle." The birth stories function to represent a type of experience that this narrator feels more intimately than a birth she can't remember or details that don't seem to matter. Alexander's multiple birth stories represent what she experiences as being born many times in many places.

Alexander repeats several times that there is uncertainty concerning the time of her physical birth. "I do not know who cut my umbilical cord. Or how it was cut. Did he use scissors? Perhaps it was a harassed doctor. Perhaps a nurse held me, all slippery and mussed, my head a purplish cone with the pressure of entry."[21] No one will tell her the exact time of her birth, but as regards place, the tone is much more certain,

> Though I was born there, Allahabad is not my home. It is far from Tiruvella, about a thousand miles due north. Nadu is the Malayalam word for home, for homeland. Tiruvella, where my mother's home, Kuruchiethu House, stands, and Kozencheri, where appa's home, Kannadical House, stands, together compose my nadu, the dark soil of self. I was taught that what I am is bound up always with a particular ancestral site.[22]

Let me pause for a moment to summarize. Alexander's memoir has multiple beginnings recurring repeatedly throughout the narrative. Even the final chapter contains a re-telling of a beginning. These beginnings do not lead to a middle. There is no middle that

leads to a resolved ending. There is a girlhood in the narrative but girlhood is not represented as an intermediate stage between childhood and adulthood. It does not function to connect the two. It is not in the "middle" of the narrative. What would be the material of the middle of the traditional narrative is scattered from start to finish. Then at the beginning of the end of the memoir, the narrator tells the story of her mother's marriage, thereby presenting both an image of "the feminine form of transportation" (moving to the husband's ancestral home), and the ritual of what, in India, is typically considered the "beginning" of a woman's life. This is not the first time, or the second or third time, that this particular Katha (life story) has been told. It has been re-told and re-constructed several times in the course of the memoir. The point is *not* that Alexander cannot fit these multiple beginnings into a coherent and unified narrative. The point is that to do so would be to tell a colonized narrative. It would preclude some of Alexander's experience and distort the rest of it. Ricoeur's narrative criteria exclude most of the experiences that Alexander values, but it also imposes a narrative structure that obscures and even denies ways in which the stories of non-dominant groups, nomads, border dwellers, differ from dominant groups. Above I have shown, for example, what Alexander experiences as multiple beginnings would be understood or configured differently, if they were included at all, in a Ricoeurean narrative. Allowing an inherited structure to determine the meaning one assigns to one's experience is a practice in what Spivak terms trained self-effacement. Alexander wants to exercise her narrative agency in a different way.

The telling and re-telling of multiple imagined beginnings is not an attempt to ground herself in a narrative beginning, nor to serve as a signal to the reader that the narrative has begun; rather this is an experiment with different and various "modes of being toward the past." It is an attempt to account for the effect of past experiences on present identity. The question is, to what degree, and in what manner, if at all, can the past

account for who one is? This is the question continually re-worked in the narration of beginnings. One might expect that this narrative would have multiple endings but in fact it has no ending, that is, it remains open-ended, "there is no ideal poise in its construction, just the basting together of bits. Sometimes bits burst open, split apart."[23] This alternative to traditional modes of self-representation is not just a method of subverting conventions of representing unified subjectivity; it is a method of creating new forms of decentered subjectivity.

Fault Lines is not monological; it allows for multiple narrative voices. For example, the narrator tells of an imaginary conversation she had with an imaginary friend. The conversation is her way of recalling the past, and of making sense of the disjuncture and abrupt interruptions of experience by telling herself a story. In this inner dialogue between herself and an imagined other she tells her story as she would tell it to another. But the story isn't designed to link events together temporally; her experiences are too radically ruptured. Alexander does not make sense of, or give meaning to, events by linking them together chronologically. Rather, from her re-associative mode of being, past events, dreams, imagined figurations, images, other modes of being, are linked together. This is imaginative linking, metaphorical association. This association is not completely free-floating; anything is not just linked with anything else. But this re-association *is* less restricted than Ricoeur's. For example, particular experiences and events may be narrated together because the meaning she assigns them are associated, not because they occurred at the same time. So, this "birth" may be like that "birth" even if they occur twenty years apart. Or experiences in the past may be associated with poetic reconstructions of past experiences. The logic of this linking is poetic association. Stylistically the narrative devices match the abrupt change brought by air travel, the failure of memory, and the grace of imagination. Events are not ordered sequentially, and memories, dreams, a "made up past," imagined speech, all roll in together. The "mapping of the provisional self" occurs in

bits of this and pieces of that assembled according to no conventional rules. Experience is recalled and fabricated and dismantled and reassembled in the interest of constructing a provisional self.

So instead of temporal structuring, this narrative linking is more free-floating. Readers are taken from one place to another and from distant past to the present, then back to the near past, and on and on. This organization is open to change as are the meanings assigned to experience. Meanings will be re-assigned and past events will be re-organized. It is in this sense that agent- determined meaning determines the structure of the narrative rather than narrative structure determining meaning, as Ricoeur would have it. Ricoeur insists that, "We do not ask what the hero did between two events that would have been separated in his life."[24] But Alexander narratively creates essential elements of identity by including some of the experiences that traditional narrative skips or represses, such as the experiences in between "events" and places. Ricoeurean *mimesis* of action does not concern itself with what the hero did between episodes of action, but Fault Lines is full of experiences and consciousness between the "events" and "actions" that make up traditional narratives. It is full of borders, rupture, the chaos between events. For example, in describing her move from Hydrabad to New York City, the narrative material consists of neither of these two places, but the consciousness of being in-between. "My two worlds, present and past, were torn apart, and I was the fault line, the crack that marked the dislocation."[25] She refers to fault lines as "fissures in the ground...caused by the shifting of underground plates..."[26] But it is imperative to understand that Alexander's narrative does not consist *only* of the experiences between events. She:

> wanted to become more than (a)...thing that marked out the boundaries between worlds. More than a mere line in the dry earth. I wanted to give voice to my flesh, to learn to live as a woman. To do this, I had to spit out the stones that were in my mouth. I had to become a ghost, enter my own flesh.[27]

In a section called "Crossing Borders," Alexander links dislocation and imagination. Imagination serves an essential meaning-making function for the extremely displaced narrator. She describes the many moves over her lifetime, her utter sense of dislocation, which is epitomized by imagery of her first ocean voyage across the Arabian Sea,

> That first ocean voyage obsesses me. I think of it as a figuration of death. Losing sense, being blotted out, thrown irretrievably across a border. But it also provoked the imagery. I am forced to fabricate, trust to the maquillage of words, weave tales.[28]

The second chapter is closed with the image of crossing borders, travel, exile. It is the recurring image of her first ocean voyage: "my days changed utterly and I became a child of a different type. My life shattered into little bits and pieces."[29]

Part Three: Structural Function

Several aspects of Ricoeur's narrative theory are troubling; for example, Ricoeur's vision of catharsis, and what he calls "the question of confidence" of the reader, and what seems to be simply an aesthetic distaste for alternative narrative structures. But I have not argued these points. Nor will I argue for the precise opposite of what Ricoeur clings to - formlessness. What I am interested in is alternative narrative structures - plots which provide reflection with a way to assign value to discordant experience without synthesizing it.

Ricoeur's Aristotelian solution to Augustine's time problem is too conservative, and what is required is a more encompassing conception of plot. Meena Alexander's narrative treatment of space, place, and time provides an example of an alternative structure and resulting identity.

It has been my thesis that Ricoeur's notion of the identity of the subject as narratively produced is on the right track but his aesthetic preference for wholeness is

problematic. While he claims to denounce any notion of meta-narrative, Ricoeur's conception of narrative is completely paradigmatic. There is no discernible difference between what he calls "paradigms" ("paradigms...furnish the rules for a subsequent experimentation"[30]) and what is renounced as meta-narrative, ("Rule-governed deformation constitutes the axis around which the various changes of paradigm through application are arranged").[31] Remember that for Ricoeur, narrative is still the "paradigm of order" wherein "configuration wins out over the episodic form, concordance overcomes discordance."[32] He insists on narrative wholeness, resolved endings, and he claims that polyphonic novels (stories with multiple narrative voices) are non-art. Although Ricoeur announces his alliance with the postmodern position against meta-narrative, ("The leaving behind of Hegeleanism signifies renouncing the attempt to decipher the supreme plot"), he seems to be afraid of where the critique of meta-narrative leaves narrative. His fear is that without the imposition of his particular brand of order, story-telling will have no place: "I shall ask whether this contestation (of the formal paradigm of discordant concordance)... does not signify the death of the narrative form itself."[33] He fears, "Nothing...excludes the possibility that the metamorphosis of the plot will encounter somewhere a boundary beyond which we can no longer recognize the formal principle of temporal configuration that makes a story a whole and complete story. And yet...and yet..."[34] And yet Ricoeur has hope. His hope is that new narrative forms will be created for which we have no names yet, which will metamorphize the narrative function without allowing it to die. It is precisely this hope that Fault Lines exemplifies.

Meena Alexander possesses a type of narrative identity she calls "the poetic self" which is structured upon her "kathas" (life stories), but the structure of her narrative does not function to synthesize or unify her experience or her reflections upon her experience with a "sedimented" "paradigm." Rather, she is involved in the ever-changing process of reflectively assigning and re-assigning meaning and value to experience. This memoir

retains the best features of narrative identity without its central feature - discordant concordance. The narrative activity is more imaginative than what is required by discordant/concordance because traditional associations are deconstructed and creative "play" establishes new, provisional and temporary, associations.

Alexander's plot does not represent a temporal whole which brings about a synthesis of heterogeneous experience as Ricoeur would have it, nor is it singularly *mimesis* of action. And, contrary to another Ricoeurean criterion, Fault Lines is polyphonic. But Alexander's narrative does not do what Ricoeur fears is *mimesis* at its worst - imitate the chaos of reality. This narrative act *is* an act of structuring accomplished through assigning meaning to experience retrospectively. But this structure does not meet Ricoeur's requirements for narrative. Alexander plays with the organization to explore new ways to give experience meaning, more precisely, to attach new meaning to experience. In this way Alexander extends Ricoeur's idea that by narrating one appropriates. To narrate is to exert agency, even over the involuntary, by assigning it meaning in relation to other events and experiences in our lives. One extends narrative agency by extending the field of association. Experiences are not necessarily grouped together with other similar experiences; often times they are associated with very heterogeneous experiences, with dreams, poems, utopian visions.

According to Ricoeur, the sufficient conditions for narrative are: (1) temporal orientation, (2) unity, (3) wholeness, (4) univocity, (5) discordant/concordance, and (6) *mimesis* of action rather than of consciousness, or character. My claim is that a sufficient condition for "narrative" is (non-permanent) representation of agent-determined meaning. This does not mean that a subject "makes up" meaning, because the subject's imagination is limited to re-association. It is thereby imperative that this associative process be liberalized.

Although Alexander's plot does not function as concordant discordance in the Ricoeurean sense, her narrative has the same type of relationship to personal identity that contemporary theories of narrative identity elucidate. This memoir plays games with time but does not meet requirements for unity and wholeness. Nor does Fault Lines replicate the chaos of the narrator's lived experience; that chaos is communicated but not imitated. This memoir is Alexander's attempt to reflect upon what her past has to do with the selves she is now. It is both an attempt to provide past experiences with meaning derived from the present and an attempt to gather for the present self useful material for identity construction from the past. Fault Lines represents a creative attempt to re-organize the narration of past experience as part of a method of identity construction. Alexander is always aware of her writing as a method of self-creation: "I think I have to write myself into being...to evade the names they have given me..."[35]

While there is action in the memoir (the literal crossing of borders, passages, voyages, transit) the weight of the memoir involves types of "figurations" of consciousness which require a different type of configuring act. Alexander's memoir is neither simple imitation nor a method for ordering discordant experience; it is an imaginative rendering of agent-assigned meaning to past and present experience. In four respects Alexander's memoir fails Ricoeur's test for narrative art because her memoir favors, 1. creative representation over concordant discordance, 2. representation of consciousness over imitation of action, 3. the inclusion of multiple voices, and 4. a non-unified plot structure. But despite its being an aesthetic failure on Ricoeurean grounds, Fault Lines achieves the central task of narrative according to my theory of narrative subjectivity: it provides experience with provisional and contingent meaning. Fault Lines does not replicate discordant experience and yet "vivid multiplicity prevails." Experience is ordered, bestowed with meaning, and then re-ordered and given a different meaning. The re-ordering, re-telling, is a continuing process.

In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate precisely how Alexander's memoir does *not* fit the traditional unified plot structure but more importantly, and consequently, Alexander's narrative does not function as concordance. Her narrative retains the most interesting features for narrative identity theory without the traditional structure. Her structure does not silence anomalous experience. Not only does Alexander create a narrative identity based on rupture rather than unity, but she also constructs her own temporal experience. This is an alternative "figuration" with a sense of identity related to contingency rather than consistency.

Ricoeur asks, "What is the critical threshold beyond which the most extreme deviations from this style of traditionality force upon us the hypothesis not only of a schism in relation to the narrative tradition but the death of the narrative function itself?"[36] What I have proposed in this chapter is that Alexander's memoir is an example of a narrative which *does* represent a schism in relation to the narrative tradition Ricoeur represents, but it *does not* imply the death of the narrative function; in fact, it serves as a model of a broader and richer conception of *muthos* than Ricoeur envisions.

Notes

1. Aristotle, Poetics, trans., Richard Janko (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis, 1987), 7:26-33.

2. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, vol. 1, trans., Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 45.

3. Ibid., 33.

4. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, vol. 2, trans., Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1985), 8.

5. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 1:preface.

6. Ibid., x.

7. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:8.

8. Ibid., 4.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 61.

11. The other option is "carnivalistic." See 96-98.

12. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 1:ix.

13. Ibid., 3.

14. Alexander, Fault Lines, 5.

15. Meena Alexander, Fault Lines (New York: Feminist Press, City University of New York, 1993), 16.

16. Ibid., 16-18.

17. Ibid., 19-20.

18. Ibid., 20.

19. Ibid., 21.

20. Ibid., 31.

21. Ibid., 26.

22. Ibid., 22-23.

23. Ibid., 177.

24. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, I:39.

25. Ibid., 15.

26. Ibid., 18.

27. Ibid., 16.

28. Ibid., 65.

29. Ibid., 26-27.

30. Ibid., 69.

31. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 1:70.

32. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:20.

33. Ibid., 2:70.

34. Ibid., 2:28.

35. Alexander, Fault Lines, 73.

36. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:4.

CHAPTER VI

IDENTITY

The previous chapter sought to establish Fault Lines as a challenge to Ricoeur's narrative criteria, particularly, discordant concordance and unified/whole plot structure. This chapter will explore precisely what, on the Ricourean model, the results of the narrator's aesthetic failure are for her identity. I will demonstrate how the narrative identity of the subject is determined as much by the structure of the narrative as by the content of the story. And I will describe how a more encompassing plot structure engenders an alternative form of subjectivity.

Ricoeur's normative ideal of narrative unity and the resulting unified self marginalizes not only other narrative forms but other voices, other selves, other ways of being. Our understanding of agency is enriched if we take narrative control not only over the stories we tell about ourselves but also over the ways in which we tell them. I think Ricoeur is right in insisting that we make ourselves who we are by making our experiences meaningful. Events and experiences do not have meaning in themselves and meaning is not created out of nothing. Meaning is determined by association.[1] But in the Ricoeurean system how we can make meaning is limited by restrictive principles of association. An alternative structure is based upon poetic *re*-association.

For Ricoeur the meaning of an event or experience is determined by its temporal orientation in the plot. That is to say meaning is determined by temporal association. An alternative structure implies alternative associations. In the example of Fault Lines the alternative associations have to do with *space* and *place* rather than temporality.

The structure of association between places in Fault Lines is poetic; it is imaginative. Poetry surfaces at places of fissure and disjuncture - in the fault lines. There are moments of acutely felt dislocation, of narrative disjuncture, "My two worlds, past and present, were torn apart, and I was the fault line, the crack in the earth that marked the dislocation."[2] But in crucial moments of narrative shift Alexander associates cross-culturally, inter-narratively.

This re-associative method is also a method of dealing with temporal discordance, an alternative to Ricoeur's solution to Augustine's problem. One can bring the past and the future, imaginatively, into the present. An example of this type of spatial temporal re-orientation follows:

> What would it be like if grandmother Kunju were alive, intact in all her simplicity and elegance, and I, a dusty tattered thing, ran into her on 113th Street. How would we possibly recognize each other, we who have never met in the flesh? Or if we were to meet each other over tea and sweetmeats, what could we say? Would she be ashamed of me, a woman with no fixed place, a creature struggling to make herself up in a new world? Or would her grace extend to me, the granddaughter she has never seen, who has inherited her slim, slightly arthritic fingers, and labors at this electronic machine, typing out fitful amber letters. What would she say to me, a woman turned forty in the last decade of this century, writing of the world that comes to me in bits and pieces? Bits and pieces, I ponder the phrase. My mind moves to stones - broken and whole - pebbles, slabs of granite, pink boulders. Lines from the Egyptian Book of the Dead I first read in Khartoum repeat in my head...[3]

The narrator goes on to tell about her experiences of Egypt, and then the narrative is abruptly back in Manhattan where she is recalling words from the Egyptian Book of the Dead about birth place. There is almost no limit to the sensual associations, images, smells, and sounds. But these associations are not random. The sensual associations are always associated with place and may provide a link between narratives of various places.

Experience is still made meaningful by narrating it but "narrative" is not understood as a synthesizing of experience into a unified structure but as manipulating and re-associating experience. The narrator extends her agency by extending her field of

association. For Ricoeur the association is limited by a classical Western aesthetic and for Alexander it is not. As I argued in the third chapter, Alexander's repeated dislocations make narration in the Ricoeurean model very challenging for her. On the other hand, life in the fault lines has provided this narrator, like the subjects of Kumar's studies, a unique perspective and capacity for subversion of traditional associations. Her alternative to the temporal structure that Ricoeur argues for in Time and Narrative is a spatial narrative structure.

Alexander's memoir is not one narrative; it is a collection of incommensurable narratives. Incommensurable in the sense that even though there are cross-cultural associations, she is part of different narratives in different places. Even though the narratives are incompatible they are not mutually exclusive. And narrative voice shifts from place to place so that the memoir is what Ricoeur objects to as "polyphonic" and does not meet the requirement of a "homophonic" or "monological" voice.

Postcolonial agency[4] is exercised in undermining traditional associations, identity practices, and structures of self-representation. Alexander engages in subversive identity performance, she reverses concepts, and she parodies the Master-voice. Her method is poetic re-association, cross-culturally, across languages and conceptual systems. So, meaning is still determined narratively but the meaning of an event or experience is not determined by its temporal orientation in a linear plot; the meaning of an event or experience is determined by its narrative association with other events, experiences, images, spatial orientations, and then it is re-determined in the same way over and over again. Meaning is not fixed or stable, it is constantly re-worked; it is derived from this narrative play.

While Ricoeur asks, "In what sense am I the same person that I was years ago?" Alexander asks herself a question which goes further than Ricoeur's. She asks in what sense is she the same person she was years ago *in different places.*[5] Her answer, like

Ricoeur's, is a narrative one. But, I will argue, her identity is created in the process of narratively mediating conceptions of "self" and "sameness" which are richer than Ricoeur's conceptions and more appropriate for the extended form of agency that I am interested in.

The basic principle of narrative identity theory is that personal identity is correlative to plot, that the only sense in which a self can be identified is in relation to the stories one sees oneself as a part of. The problem with this conception is that identity is not simply emplotted, it is emplotted in a very particular type of narrative structure - one that admits only a particular type of assimilated experiential material. The experiential disjunctures which figure so prominently in Meena Alexander's memoir are precisely the experiences that Ricoeurean plot structure excludes. Given Ricoeur's criteria for plot structure, the narrator of Fault Lines does not have an ethical identity, in fact, the very existence of any "coherent" identity at all is questionable. Narrative identity theory goes further than conceptualizing identity as consistent with plot. It understands identity as correlative to the *structure* of the plot. And the structure of the plot is on this conception, Aristotelian.

Recall the diagram in chapter two with a pole drawn on the left side and a pole on the right side. Under the pole on the right side the words "self," "*ipse*," and "promise" appear. Under the pole on the left the words "same," "*idem*," and "character" appear. Ricoeur argues that although there is a zone of overlapping, sameness and self are not only *not* the same, they are "polar opposites."[6] These two opposite models are both answers to the question "Is there a type of permanence in time which is an answer to the question 'Who am I?'" Identity as sameness (*idem*) is demonstrated by "character" which is exemplified by remaining the same over time, "the distinctive marks which permit the re-identification of a human individual as being the same."[7] Identity as "self" (*ipse)* is demonstrated by the ethical commitment to remain the same in the face of change. An example of this type of self is evidenced in the act of keeping a promise, which serves as a

"challenge to time, a denial of change," especially if change which challenges that commitment has taken place. The ethical self evidenced by the act of honoring past commitments over time is "a modality of permanence in time capable of standing as polar opposite to the permanence of character."[8] Identity is created in the continuing process of mediating between selfhood and sameness narratively.

Also recall Ricoeur's basic account of *idem*. Four types of sameness are identified: numerical identity, extreme resemblance, uninterrupted continuity, and permanence over time. It is this last type of sameness in which Ricoeur is most interested, specifically, how permanence over time is connected to selfhood. This sense of "permanence in time" means that even though aspects of a thing have changed, the overall thing remains what it was before. For example, a tool is the same tool even if all the parts have been replaced. In narrative terms, the structure is privileged over the content. To his original question, "Is there a type of permanence in time that is an answer to the question 'Who am I?'" (the formulation of the question itself being a determining gesture), Ricoeur develops the answer of narrative identity - "I" am developed in dialectic between my lasting dispositions and my commitment to honor the commitments I made in the past. On this model ethical selfhood results from intentional consistency. The honoring of past commitments takes on tremendous importance. Why is the act of keeping a promise, of honoring one's commitments, an ethical act? It is not just because it is an example of "keeping your word" or "walking your talk," it is because keeping a promise is "a denial of change, a challenge to time." Why does change or the passing of time necessitate an ethical challenge? The implication is that to be uncommitted to permanence in time is to privilege the experiences of flux, multiplicity, radical disjuncture. The imposition of a traditionally western model of structural order is posited as an ethical move.

Now, consider the manner in which a Ricoeurean narrator, responding to the request to tell about her life, could deal with the interruptions in unified experience. Her

narrative could take this form: "I was born there, raised here and there, moved there, then moved again, and now I'm here." It would be a little more exciting than that; reaching "here" would be configured as the culminating event resulting from the overcoming of obstacles which developed from the original starting point (usually the narrator's birth). This is what Mark Johnson calls the "source-path-goal" structure of proto-typical narratives.[9] But what if, in the course of telling about herself, the narrator repeats the story of her birth five or six times? What if each time she tells about her birth, she tells it differently, so that it is a different story each time? The aesthetic assumption which becomes the foundation for Ricoeur's theory of personal identity would lead one to view such an account as a type of narrative chaos. It would be considered dissassociative[10] at best. But this narrator does not suffer from multiple personality disorder. She is *re*-associative, although this type of reassociation is not a function of a tacitly assumed structure. It is a function of a deliberately alternative structure.

Ricoeur's insight, in response to the Postmodern proclamation of the death of the subject, is to distinguish between identity that is given and that which is created, sameness from selfhood, *idem* from *ipse*. His oversight, I think, is to link selfhood with consistency to an overly conservative conception of plot. And being too closely wedded to this view blinds one to alternatives.

A Ricoeurean-structured narrative of Alexander's life would synthesize her experience retrospectively. Moving and traveling would be the constant, the theme, and because it is what she does in and between every culture, experience would be synthesized around this central theme -- TRAVELING. Recall how adamantly Ricoeur insists that "the universal character of the formal principle of narrative configuration (is) the temporal synthesis of the heterogeneous,"[11] and that "every composition we call narrative" should be organized this way.[12] The conditions of plot are: temporal organization, homophony, priority of plot over character and actions over thoughts. Ricoeur seems to be afraid that if

narrative is not structured in the Aristotelian manner, then it will be the description, the simple imitation, of a chaotic mess of meaningless and unrelated events. But Alexander's narrative does not fall to this extreme. Her plot does all the same things that Ricoeur's plot structure does and more because she does not limit herself to a whole and unified structure.

Meena Alexander engages in what has been described as the dialectic between selfhood and sameness, but the terms are understood differently. On Ricoeur's model the words "self", "*ipse*," and "promise" appear together under one pole, and "same," "*idem*," and "character" appear together under the other pole. One's narrative identity is located somewhere mediating between these two poles. An alternative conception of self, based on our example, can be similarly schematized. Consider once again the two poles, one drawn on the left and the other on the right side of a piece of paper.

Ricoeur		My alternative	
self <---narrative identity--->	same	self <--- inter-narrative identity --->	same
ipse	*idem*	*aham*	*idam*
keeping a promise	"character"	narrating	body

As in Ricour's model the words "self" appears under one pole and the word "same" under the other pole. But on my alternative model, unlike Ricoeur's model, "keeping a promise" is not linked with "self" and "*ipse*." Self-consistency is not founded upon challenging changes that happen in time, but rather, by bringing a sense of the past into the present by being consciously aware of past and future in the present moment. Rather than challenging the changes brought by time, the changes challenge Alexander to re-arrange, re-create, another narrative. The new narrative will integrate past experiences and new perceptions, insights and associations as a "present" part of the narrative.[13]

Further, a diagram of my alternative conception of identity, inter-narrative identity, would replace the Latin *ipse* with the Sanskrit *aham* and the Latin *idem* with the Sanskrit *idam*. While *idem* and *idam* both denote "sameness" the type of sameness is significantly different. Ricoeur understands *idem* as undiminishingly self-same. It is the sameness of lasting dispositions. It is the type of sameness which makes an individual recognizable as the same individual over time. But the sameness of the Sanskrit *idam* is *shared* sameness. It is sameness with others. This substitution is a radical one because in my alternative model of identity sameness is not individual sameness, it is not a uniqueness that remains consistent. Instead, sameness is communal rather than individual. It has to do with commonality rather than uniqueness.[14] The consequence of this substitution is that identity is created in the process of narratively mediating the poles of self-centralization and sameness *with others* rather than mediating between the ethical commitment to deny change and defining characteristics which remain the same over time.

It has been observed that individuation seems to be the most crucial aspect of the Western autobiographical endeavor.[15] The hero of a traditional narrative is defined by exclusionary means, by separation, by uniqueness. There is also tradition of self-construction in the West which equates agency with control and power with mastery. But in Alexander's narrative the emphasis is less on individuality and more on community; that is to say, there is identification through relationship rather than through individuation. The subject is a collective subject. In Fault Lines familial relations, ancestral ties, and hereditary place are extremely important to identity formation: "I was taught that what I am is bound up always with ancestral site."[16] And Alexander says:

> I think of the lives I have known for forty years, the lives unknown, the shining geographies that feed into the substance of any possible story I might have. As I make up a katha, a story of my life, the lives before me, around me, weave into a net without which I would drop ceaselessly.[17]

Still further, my alternative model has replaced Ricoeur's "character" with "body." The body represents the fourth type of permanence over time. Like Ricoeur's "tool," even though aspects of it can change, it is basically the same thing it was before the changes. "The body" replaces Ricoeur's "character" but, again, the way Ricoeur uses "character" is not the way the term is commonly understood. For him character indicates "a lasting set of dispositions" or "distinguishing characteristics" which permit the recognition of the subject as the same subject over time:

> By "character" I understand the set of distinctive marks which permit the reidentification of a human individual as being the same. By the descriptive features that will be given, the individual compounds numerical identity and qualitative identity, uninterrupted continuity, and permanence in time. In this way, the sameness of the person is designated emblematically.[18]

But there is no ethical weight to Ricoeur's understanding of "character." Character does not involve choice: choice is found under the other pole and is associated with *ipse*. Any sense of consistent identity for Alexander is bound up with embodiment, which, like "character" for Ricoeur, is only one end of identity. The other end is narration.

Let me first explain why "the body" is a more suitable component for my conception of identity than Ricoeur's "character," then I will address narration. Ricoeur is led to narrative identity theory by his search for a sense of self that is permanent in time. Meena Alexander has even more of a problem; she is searching for a sense of self that remains in various *places*. She experiences the same temporal discordance that Augustine and Ricoeur do, but her experiential discordance is further complicated by *spatial* discontinuity. The only constant she can find is the body. The body, like Ricoeur's tool, is the same even through changes in its parts. Alexander does not have an over-riding narrative which unifies her experiences. There are multiple narratives which differ from place to place, but they are all housed in one body. The body does more work for Alexander than Ricoeur's idea of character does for his account of narrative identity as the

body is not only a locus of permanence in time because of its enduring overall structure; it is the locus of a type of permanence in time because it is the locus of memory,

> ... the memory was opened up by the complications of lived space, ... the "now" of recollection permitted internal time to unfold, a moment, constantly shifting, constantly returned to, much as the opening note of a piece of music held always at the brink of consciousness, guaranteed by the fragile, living body."[19]

Past(s) and future are held together within the present, not as past remembered or future anticipated, but rather as temporally distinct moments bound together via shared place in the present. Experiences which fracture continuous experience co-exist in memory. One need not be dependent upon narrative "wholeness" and "unity" because embodied memory holds together disparate temporal experiences,

> The structures of human memory bear with them the imprint of the spatial existence of the lived body through which alone they have been generated. Thus the need to spatialize the linearity of recollected time and imbue it with the order of a *place* where the disparate temporal elements can co-exist is itself made more comprehensible. One approaches the need of St. Augustine, so full of wonder at the workings of memory, to talk about the "field" of the self.[20]

Let me explain. Precisely like Ricoeur, Alexander approaches the problems associated with subjective experience of time by beginning with Augustine's formulation of a theory of time based on subjective experience of it, and a theory of self based on memory. Augustine's three-fold present (the present of past things, a present of present things, and a present of future things) is such that past is perceived by memory, present by direct perception, and future things by expectation. Augustine's theory of time is also a theory of selfhood according to which the self is dependent upon memory. (The continuation of consciousness is assumed). Alexander takes from Augustine this idea that memory is essential to selfhood,

> human memory can achieve some measure of wholeness, construct an order of selfhood where the lived past enters into an enriching harmony both with time present and the time to come.[21]

But the past/present/future conceptualization does not necessarily carry the narrative linearly.

St. Augustine's problem of experiential discordance of time is, as Alexander puts it, how to make sense of the past in terms of the present, how to make sense of the lives lived before?[22] Ricoeur's solution is "narrative," but Ricoeur's understanding of narrative is, as I have shown in the previous chapters, very selective and very loaded. While Ricoeur solves this problem with the imposition of Aristotelian plot structure, Alexander has her own narrative solution to St. Augustine's problem. Her solution is a narrative variation on the three-fold present. The past is held in present consciousness, not as the past of the narrative present, but as *part of* the narrative present. For example, the narrator asks her self what it would be like to meet the Indian grandmother that she has never seen, a woman from another time and another place, on the corner of 113th Street in Manhattan. She imagines catching sight of her grandmother in the distance; she wonders what her grandmother would look like and what she, Meena, would look like through her grandmother's eyes. What would her grandmother think of her and her way of life, a half a world away from her ancestral site? And this imagining becomes part of the narrative material. It is in this way, imaginatively holding together elements of the past, and more than one narrative tradition, that culturally incompatible narratives cross over. And it is in this way that recollections from the past and anticipations about the future are held together on the "brink" of present consciousness.

The narrative identity of my alternative subject is developed in the dialectic between embodiment and narrative acts. In Ricoeur's diagram one's narrative identity is created in the process of dialectical mediation between *ipse* and *idem*, selfhood through commitment to permanence in time and the sameness of lasting dispositions. In my alternative diagram, one's inter-narrative identity is created in the dialectical mediation between the sameness of the body and imaginative possibilities.

For Ricoeur a whole and unified narrative is necessary for a whole and unified identity. But Alexander has not one narrative but several narratives (which are not mutually exclusive). She consequently has multiple selves (which are also not mutually exclusive). But she thinks of her "self," her contingent narrative identity, as created in the narrative cross-over, in the cross over from one narrative to another. That is to say that Alexander does not identify herself with this or that narrative exclusively. Her identity is created more from the experience in margins, the fault lines, of traditional narratives, than it is by the narratives themselves. For example, in imagining her grandmother in contemporary N.Y. she is not *as* concerned about the two distinct narratives clashing, as she about the ways in which they come together.

If it is the case that there are two clearly defined structures of consciousness in the East and the West and that they are intrinsically antithical to each other, this antithesis is reflected most clearly in what is assumed to be the object of knowledge. The fundamental Western dualism between subject and object is such that conceptualization is directed at discovering, or creating, unity behind diverse phenomena. The goal is to master or control the object while not fundamentally changing the subject. In an Eastern context, knowledge is traditionally sought with the aim of altering subjective consciousness rather than controlling the external world. In the wake of Western imperialism, research into the adaptive strategies of subjects in postcolonial India found "contextualization" as a strategy of dealing with colonial cultural impositions.[23] "Contextualization" is the cognitive separation of activities in which physical separation is symbolic of cultural difference. For example, Western influence has been responsible for creating a rift between the place where one works and the place where one "lives" so that modes of being at work and at home are very different. So in adapting, or "contextualizing," someone might dress for work in Western style garments, speak English, and disregard intercaste rules of association, while at home strictly observing all the traditional social codes, without any conflict. These

compartmentalized ways of being are at odds with Western consciousness which aims at universalistic principles of behavior and could potentially cause considerable cognitive dissonance in a western subject. The Western assumption of the ego-ideal of self and identity that is overwhelmingly oriented toward inner integration and consistency, can cause problems in situations of narrative conflict. Eastern subjects often express a structuring of the self that is contextualized and highly relational so that this type of inconsistency is not a threat to "oneself."

Returning again to my alternative diagram, "narrating" takes the place of "keeping a promise." But here "narrative" does not imply structural unity and wholeness. Let us look again to our example. Like Ricoeur, Alexander wonders about the sense in which the involuntary can be made meaningful through emplotment; she wonders about the boundaries of self-authorship. And to this end she looks back to her tradition to retrieve a narrative style, a "katha," with which she can imaginatively construct an identity which incorporates a past.

The Malayalam word for life-story is "*katha*" and *katha,* which is often recited in a song-like formal narration done in a standing position, differs from the Western conception of life-story in several particular ways: First, in terms of "truth value," the story is understood as a mixture of non-fiction and fabrication. Second, the role of creativity is different. The associations are more free-floating. This is poetic association. Third, they differ in the *intent* of narrating. The purpose of a katha is *not* to make sense of a life by arranging it in a pre-determined form. *Kathas* are a way of remembering; they are a way of incorporating past experiences (not just of oneself but of others as well) into one's present identity. A *katha* may, for example, establish a pattern between events that were previously unconnected. And it may, in the same recitation, sever these associations and create new ones. Fourth, *kathas* differ in the requirement of structural unity. *Kathas* do not necessarily assume Aristotelian structural requirements.

In a section of Fault Lines called "*Katha*" Alexander tells of being "torn apart" by two opposing yet not mutually exclusive ways of being toward the past. One way is to view the past as a place from where she came, "lives embedded in lives, rooms within rooms." The other way to regard the past is to view it as a history of existential choices. An example of a *katha* from Alexander's past which is particularly pertinent to the discussion about the link between identity, narrative unity, and dislocation, is what Alexander calls the "recognition tale." The recognition tale is not a particular story, but a series of spontaneously created stories by her father about recognizing her at various times in various places around the world.

An example of one of these types of recognition tales is one that her father tells about standing waiting on the roof of the Red Sea Hotel in order to see her ship arrive from India. The narrative describes, in intricate detail, sighting the ship in the far distance, seeing someone on deck, and recognizing it as Meena. As a child, being recognized by another as the same Meena she was before, in the previous place, saved her from a sense of utter selflessness resulting from repeated cultural dislocation. The recognition tale is not descriptive; the details are fabricated by weaving together -- reassociating -- recollections, experiences, events. Nor is it a unified story in the conventional sense. Without the burden of operating as concordance, a *katha* allows the teller the creative option to omit, to fabricate, to remain open-ended and continuous. In this way the meaning of an event is not dependent upon its place in the master-plot. The meaning of an event is determined by its provisional association with other events, experiences, embodied memories, kinesthetic associations.

Let me emphasize that recognition by another is not being suggested as a solution to the requirement of consistent identity, as proof of what Ricoeur terms "lasting dispositions," but rather this particular childhood *katha* is included in the memoir in order to articulate the problem and provide a solution. The *problem* is that this narrator cannot

rely on any inherited sense of self bound up with the ancestral site, and the western tradition of narrative unity, as I have argued in the two previous chapters, requires too much experiential negation. The *solution* is that new and different *kathas* are created and re-created repeatedly throughout her childhood moves in order to establish a provisional self which still accounts for the past, for other lives lived. This is the opposite of an over-riding master narrative.

The crucial point is that identity does not depend upon unified narrative structure for its coherence. A subject is the "same" (*idam*) to the extent that she is embodied and has memory. And narrative retains its strength as a technique through which the subject can author herself by re-figuring the given, the involuntary.

Consistent with Ricoeur's model, Alexander's memoir represents the holding together of experience, but contrary to Ricoeur's model Alexander's narrative does not hold experience together by placing it chronologically before some experience and after some other experience. In other words Alexander's narrative does not prioritize temporal chronology as an organizing structure. This shift in structural priority enables the non-temporally ordered association of experiences. By "non-temporally ordered" I do not mean that there is no reference to time in Fault Lines (there are references to seasons, cycles, stages) but temporality is not the organizing structure. There *is* a characteristic principle of association in each of Alexander's narratives which has to do with *space* and *place*. While these stories, or *kathas*, may or may not have a temporal orientation, they are all spatially oriented.

The "self" represented in Fault Lines is not only more fully embodied than Ricoeur's conception of self, the space around the body becomes very important: "the body gives us the spatial index."[24] Alexander argues that reflection requires the correlative re-creation of space in which the experience happened,[25] "The construction of the poetic self depends on the interpreted order of a personal space."[26] Subjectivity does not exist in

despatialized time. "Thus the need to spatialize the linearity of recollected time and imbue it with the order of a *place"* is essential. For example, Alexander's narrative is less concerned with *when* she was in India, and whether she was there before or after some other move, and more concerned with the experiences themselves. In other words, she is more concerned with *where* she has been than *when* she was there. By making *place* her structural principle Alexander avoids Ricoeur's temporal structure which would synthesize her experience into the theme: Traveling.

I have a friend who hates to go "home" to her parent's house at the other end of the country. She says that when she goes home she "becomes another person." When she is at her parent's home, she says she can't remember what is generally important to her. Certain aspects of herself just do not fit in there. She has the experience of reverting back to the little girl she was when she lived in her parent's home. This is commonly thought of as "time standing still" in a certain place, often our childhood homes. I am suggesting that ways of being are powerfully connected to place. Temporality is one of the *least* significant orientations in my friend's experience because as a grown woman she *experiences* her childhood home the same way she did when she was a little girl. Her associations with *place* are so powerful that in a certain sense, she *becomes* that little girl again. For her to narrate her story in a de-regulated or decolonized way, *place* might be an important organizing principle while temporality would be less structurally important because whether my friend was twelve or twenty or thirty-five, her experience in a significant *place* has remained constant.

Meena Alexander cannot be the same person in Manhattan, New York, as she is in New Delhi, India, anymore than my friend can stop from being another self when she goes home. And not only are ways of being are intricately connected to place, narrative voice changes with the location of the narrator. The woman Alexander is in various places will not fit into a unified narrative structure and to synthesize her experiences in other places

would be to silence the selves she is in those other places. Again, while Alexander's multiple narratives are incommensurable (this is why Ricoeurean structure does not work) they are not autonomous, unconnected narratives either. Alexander's project is to make connections between the lives lived in other places, with her present ways of being; this is a type of narrative memory. Her method of making connections between otherwise incommensurable narratives is to make cross-cultural narrative associations thereby enriching the field of association. It is in this same way that she brings the past into the present. An example, given earlier, is the way she imagines her grandmother (a woman from another time and place that she has never seen before) in her own time and place - on 113th Street in Manhattan.

In summary, Alexander's identity is consistent with a context-specific narrative plot, but her plot structures permit radical cultural change and contextual upheaval to become part of the narrative. Her stories are culturally incommensurable, however, *place* as a structuring principle allows for some cross-cultural association. In this way she engages experiences and memories that traditional narratives skip over. This alternative structure opens up richer possibilities for the re-association of meaning, or in Ricoeurean terms, a hermeneutics of faith.[27]

Meena Alexander's plot structure reflects the content of the memoir; it reflects the manner in which she gives meaning to her experiences. What is "plot" for Alexander? First let me re-state what it is *not*. Plot is *not* a synthesizing, unifying structure. Alexander's brand of emplotment involves imaginatively rendering experience by ordering and re-arranging images and memories. The experience that she privledges is usually somehow correlative to some tradition's sense of identity, for example, experience of the ancestral home which is correlative to the traditional Indian sense of self, and experiences of rupture which are correlated, negatively, to contemporary American narrative identity theory. There *is* a constraint on these renderings in the sense that these images and memories are

not created from nothing; they are fabricated with the threads of various experiences, kinesthetic memories, and spatial impressions. The associations Alexander makes are not completely fixed and they are not completely random. She intends to break customary and habitual associations, to evoke a "metamorphosis of imagery." Her principles of association are as diverse as resemblance and contrast. Narrative associations may be made between things that look alike, sound alike, or smell alike. For example, the smell of burning garbage in New York may remind her of the smell of a New Delhi slum and the smell provides an embodied narrative link from place to place. Often Alexander links a visual image with another similar image or even an opposing image. For example, the image of water is associated with reflection, illusion, mirage, surface reflection. It represents the danger of illusion, "consider what is involved in seeing water where there is none."[28] But the water imagery is also associated with its opposite - desert imagery. So sometimes a poetic image is associated with other similar images and other times an image evokes its opposite. But Alexander's images are always associated with place.

The spatially oriented structure of Fault Lines is an on-going creative ordering which resists assimilating that which it orders. The "figurations" are imaginative renderings of states of being - states of consciousness. The narrator has collected little fragments, examples, not complete models,"That (whole) picture I spoke of earlier? It's all shattered, into tiny little bits. It doesn't work any more, not even as a backdrop."[29] She collects images and bastes them together arranging and re-arranging them, sometimes altering their content. Fragments of the "actual" are stitched together with creative figurations. The image of her grandmother is an example, "I was filled with a longing for an ancestral figure who would allow my mouth to open, permit me to speak. I skipped a whole ring of life and made up a grandmother figure, part ghost, part flesh...I imagined her a woman who had a tradition, and a history - precisely what I lacked."[30]

Fault Lines is a creative attempt to avoid the restrictions of traditional plot and correlative identity structure, and equally, to avoid the simple imitation of fractured experience in the sense that Ricoeur suggests is *mimesis* in its weakest form. This, the radically unformed, or complete lack of plot, is what Alexander describes as the pitfall of the contemporary American sense of the present. It is the notion that "that each thing counts as much as anything else, that you pull off your sari and put on your jeans... and that's that. That's not that."[31] The narrator of Fault Lines successfully avoids this opposite extreme of Ricoeurean narrative structure. The interest in telling an inclusive story does not leave this narrator litinizing every experience she has ever had, or every thought that enters her mind in stream-of-consciousness style. This narrator *does* marginalize some experiences, and multiple voices are variously amplified and silenced. But this marginalizing and silencing is not the result of the imposition of the canonical narrative structure. It is the result of an attempt to transcend the boundaries of traditional narrative agency.

Notes

1. See Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language, trans., Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975).

2. Meena Alexander, Fault Lines, 15.

3. Ibid.

4. Gayatri Spivak, "More On Power/Knowledge," The Spivak Reader, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (New York: Routledge, 1996), 162-4.

5. Alexander tells her readers in Fault Lines that the concern with the role of phenomenological aesthetics in subject formation led her to early English romanticism and the centrality of the body in Romantic ideology. The problem of human time, specifically the way in which it is "inextricably bound up with both the living bodily 'I' and the poetic self" is the focus of the study of her The Poetics of Self: Toward a Phenomenology of Romanticism which follows the structures of Romantic self-consciousness into the refined articulations of internal time-consciousness.

Alexander is interested in the ways specific women writers during the Romantic period challenged, undermined, and even re-structured certain claims of Romantic subjectivity which assume an authority of self consciousness marked by deep feeling. In contrast, these women developed what is termed a "back-up-against-the-wall-aesthetic" forged by daily life and the values of a communal existence.

"Writing Fragments" is of particular interest because it describes Dorothy Wordsworth's notes in her travelogue ("Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland") in which she describes the layout of Scottish farmland as a patchwork garment. She labels the design "A Woman's Illustration." The metaphor of a patchwork design made of irregular pieces of fabric is one that Alexander takes with her; this image re-appears in her poetic verse, House of a Thousand Doors, and again in Fault Lines as a metaphor for the structure of her personal narrative. The patchwork image "stands in direct contrast to the seamless creations which so often seem to emerge in authorial self-representation." For Dorothy Wordsworth, described as a great walker, walking becomes a metaphor for displacement. The claim is that consciousness is not housed in a central self when one is displaced so the central hold of subjectivity is negated. "Lacking a durable place in which to be...becomes an aspect of the flux she celebrates..." Finally Alexander finds in Wordsworth the development of the idea that,

> The homeless female mind finds its most potent images, not in the firmness of a dwelling place made with hands, but in the flux that underlies all existence....Loss underpins it, and the fragment must stand as its surest foundation.

These two metaphors, patchwork for narrative structure and travel for displacement, reappear repeatedly in Fault Lines.

Ultimately, Alexander arrives at a type of narrative identity she calls "the only possible locus for a human self." This is what Merleau-Ponty calls the "ambiguous mode of existing" (both as a physical thing that takes up space and as consciousness.) The body is the place where consciousness endures in time. The temporal aspects of narrative are not as important to Alexander's conception of identity as they are to Ricoeur's. For her the relationship between external space and subjective time is united in the lived body.

"The poetic self" is located between Hume's "Idea of a Self" as represented in A Treatise on Human Nature, and the Postmodern fractured subject *a la* Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault. Hume's view of the self as a fiction results from denying memory its power of re-creation, of interpretation, of the ability to forge subjective coherence from the multitude of fragments of consciousness and perceptions, and this marks, for Alexander, the beginning of the disintegration of self. Subjective meaning has no place in a world where interpretation is impossible. Hume reduced the life of consciousness to fragmentation by denying the interpretive capacities of consciousness to create meaningful unity, and further, argued that consciousness cannot recall the space of enactment of past perceptions.

For Alexander though, "The construction of the poetic self depends upon the interpreted order of personal space." But it is precisely the establishment of personal space in this sense that Sartre satirizes in Nausea. Recall the character of Anny who is interested in the arrangement of "perfect moments" which serve to construct the past as fiction. Alexander argues that while Sartre is deeply critical of Anny's "escapism," (her fictive recreation of time present, the contrived nature of her existence, her unwillingness to live in the present) the character of Roquentin provides the reader with no viable alternative. Roquentin is unable to name, to interpret things he encounters. Narratively, he represents complete formlessness. If Anny's existence is consciously contrived, Roquentin's existence is overcome by the sheer multitude of things and his experiences of them.

With the potential for imaginative interpretation completely annihilated, "existence has no memory, it retains nothing of what has disappeared." Ultimately there is nothing left with which a self would be constructed. There is no memory, no connection with the past one has lived. There is only a consciousness of consciousness. The irony that Alexander points out is that the consciousness left at the end is haunted by a need which is at least as great as Anny's need,

> This annihilation of a personalized inner time and its interpretive capacities which seemed so necessary to Sartre, underlies the negation of the order of selfhood. Without the inwardness and subjective memory in which its unity resides, the human self-image cannot be constructed.

Roquentin represents Ricoeur's existential situation quite well. And he represents Ricoeur's initial inclination; his fear of multiplicity and even his desire to connect the unconnected and to "purify" experience. The reader will recognize by now that Roquentin's aesthetic preference for concordance is shared by Ricoeur,

> ...behind all these attempts which seemed unconnected, I find the same desire: ... to empty the moments of their fat, to wring them dry, to dry them, to purify myself, to produce in short the sharp precise sound of a saxophone note.

Sartre does not provide a solution to the dilemma presented by Roquentin and Anny but he artfully represents the problem. And Alexander leans decidedly in Anny's direction. Without interpretive capacity Roquentin is unable to construct a subjectivity which encompasses a past. Part of the poetic solution rests on the capacity of memory to contain the multiplicity of experience, but this retention requires a hermeneutics that is directly related to internal time and *space* consciousness.

The ways in which Meena Alexander's life story resists dominant narrative structure marks a place of agency. Like Braidotti's nomadic subject, and the subjects of Kumar's study, Alexander exists between worlds. She exists in the intersection of more than one community. And it is precisely her existence in the fault lines between authoritarian traditions that enables her to subvert the regulatory practices of traditional identity construction. Butler, Spivak, Braidotti, and Kumar are all interested in strategies for subversion and resisting assimilation into dominant ways of representing the self. Each of these theorists asks us to be aware of who is excluded from identity categories and who is included. Alexander sees herself as among the excluded and she performs types of self-representation that these theorists imagine.

In the sense that Spivak insists upon, Alexander has unlearned western authoritarian fictions. She constantly questions the normative values of "identity" and goes in search of the power structures which underlie them. She utilizes some of the methods Butler advocates like linguistic and conceptual re-association and a mixing of voices. She engages in ironic re-description and concerns herself with interruptions, resistance, and discursive contradictions, as strategies of self-formation. One of the narrative strategies Alexander implements to challenge the coherence of subjectivity and the coherence of subjective time is the continual re-working of time, going back and forth between present and past, resulting in the interruption of coherent subjectivity in the Ricoeurean sense. The structure of Fault Lines reflects its content. And both its form and content are contrary not only to Ricoeur's conception of ethical identity but to personal identity itself; first, personal identity resulting from emplotment, and second, ethical identity resulting from intentional self-consistency.

6. Paul Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, trans., Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 124.

7. Ibid., 119.

8. Ibid., 124.

9. Mark Johnson, Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

10. See American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C., 1980), 253.

11. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:159.

12. Ibid., 1:35.

13. Altering Ricoeur's category of "narrative" has implications beyond identity; it also effects the way one would make sense of time. Meena Alexander does not have a linear conception of time.

14. This is an extension of Spivak's understanding of *idam* and *aham,* and the substitution of the Sanskrit terms for the Latin ones addresses the narcissism that Spivak insists is the "touchstone of western imperial masculine identities." See "Echo" in The Spivak Reader (New York: Routledge, 1996), 175-202.

15. James Olney, ed., Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980).

16. Alexander, Fault Lines, 23.

17. Ibid., 5.

18. Ricoeur, Oneself as Another, 119.

19. Ibid., 143.

20. Meena Alexander, The Poetic Self: Towards A Phenomenology of Romanticism (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979), 20.

21. Ibid., 63-4.

22. Meena Alexander, The Poetic Self (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980).

23. Alan Roland, In Search of the Self in India and Japan: Toward a Cross-Cultural Psychology (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 10.

24. Ibid., 13.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 16.

27. Recall from the first chapters discussion of The Rule of Metaphor that the exciting aspect of metaphor, for Ricoeur, is it's power to create new meanings through re-association. My alternative model of internarrative associations does not transcend the claims of The Rule of Metaphor, it liberalizes it while staying within the theoretical framework. Internarrative association, the creation of a plethora of new meaning, can be understood as a Ricoeurean project.

Ricoeur's account of linguistic innovation rests upon the re-descriptive power of metaphor. Deconstruction, or what Ricoeur calls the hermeneutics of suspicion, does a useful thing; it reminds us of the arbitrary nature of the relationship between the signifier and the signified, but it stops there. Ricoeur thinks we should go further than Deconstruction toward what he terms a hermeneutics of faith. This is faith in the re-descriptive power of language. Rather than reducing reference, we should multiple reference. This is what I intend through internarrative associations.

28. Alexander, Fault Lines, 69.

29. Ibid., 200-201.

30. Ibid., 15.

31. Ibid., 202.

CHAPTER VII

REPRESSION

> The very goal of the whole process of the cure...is to substitute for the bits and pieces of stories that are unintelligible as well as unbearable, a coherent and acceptable story...
>
> Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative volume III

> We trim off and discard into forgetfulness the incoherent bits that won't go into any kind of story we can tell ourselves - incoherent *because* they won't go in; that is if we notice them at all.
>
> Rebecca Goldstein,
> The Late Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind

> As a child I survived by forgetting. Later, the amnesia became a problem as large as the one it was meant to conceal.
>
> Sylvia Fraser, My Father's House

> Ideally, analysis brings it about that this concordant and discordant chorus of voices is no longer obliterated or muted by repression...
>
> Roy Schafer, Retelling a Life

At this point one might conclude that I have demonstrated the need for alternative narrative structure only for those individuals whose identity is intimately marked by more than one culture, but that I have not demonstrated any need to revise the Ricoeurean model for subjects whose identity is framed by one culture, particularly if that culture is Western. In this chapter I will argue that the need for alternative narrative structure is stronger, also impacting the lives of those subjects whose identity arises from Western culture. I will argue that the narrative requirements of unity and wholeness foster and sustain psychological repression. This sort of repression will be exemplified by the literary character of Eva Mueller. And I will refer to psychologist Roy Schafer's work on narrative in psychoanalytic settings. Then I will provide examples of narrative solutions to the sort of repression I am claiming that unified structure maintains.

First, I would like to provide an example of the type of repression that traditional unified/whole narrative structure can, and I think regularly does, promote and maintain. The example is found in Rebecca Goldstein's The Late Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind.

The major character of the novel is Eva Mueller, a forty-seven-year-old philosophy professor who values abstraction, transcendence, and what she has convinced herself is, "Friendliness, not fervor. Detachment, not desire." Eva lives in her head, among the universals of Plato and Spinoza. Even her aesthetic sensibilities are not sensual, for example, her preference is for the beauty of music so harmonious that it has no sound. She is physically emaciated, and disgusted with womanhood and its "viscous pool of feelings and sensations, with nothing firm and ungiving to get a grip on."[1] Eva has not given herself over to "that insidious spread of triviality claiming the lives of most women...specks of pettiness, the dreary details of eating, dressing, housekeeping, shopping...the soggy substance of lost paludal lives."[2]

Eva Mueller is convinced that what she is engaged in is "actively seeking one's Beauty...reconstructing the unifying vision."[3] But the narrator calls what Eva engages in self- deception. In fact, the novel opens with the words: "We are all masters of self deception." Eva has engaged in a long and arduous process of self deception which has required what she considers an "ethics of detachment,"

> For there is salvation in the liberation of the self from the self. Sink one's sight in what is - austere and remote - and one's attachment to the particular - the personal and the petty - will wither away. This is the attitude of high-mindedness, the ethics of detachment.[4]

The dominant narrative (along with the fact that the author's previous novel was entitled, and concerned, The Mind Body Problem) suggests that the protagonist's denial of the body and everything associated with it (the specific, passions, contingency, the passing of time) is the result of the unconscious presence of guilt for her father's involvement with

the Nazis. The repression of the horrors of war that she witnessed, and feels partially responsible for, has required that Eva shut down that part of herself with which she feels - her body. The Eva Mueller we meet at the beginning of the novel, *in media res*, is a middle-aged philosophy professor who has no memory of the faces of the Jewish children she watched being loaded in the trains headed for the camps. And as the novel unfolds we learn that during her years in graduate school her unconscious guilt impelled her into a relationship with a sadistic Jewish man, an experience she also represses. But in the "present" of the novel Eva Mueller is not the same person she was in graduate school nor is she her father's daughter. She is, "different, in the most fundamental sense possible, from the vast majority of others. From her own past self. This distinction had been her very end."[5] But the problem is that the intentional disassociation of her past selves from the self she has created anew, has left Eva nearly past-less and close to disembodied.

What is the salvation of Eva Mueller? The novel's dominant narrative seems to answer, "love." Love induces a release of the physical and all that is associated with it; and the integration of the mind and the previously repressed body enables the release of memories. As in Fault Lines, embodied memory is represented as the place where the past resides. When Eva falls in love, with someone who is interested in both Spinoza and rock and roll, she becomes much more sensually attuned. For example, she begins to appreciate music that is audible. And suddenly her perceptions are not limited to the cognitive. She develops a friendship with a woman sociology professor who she used to find repulsive. Eva had always been uncomfortably aware of this woman's femininity, earthiness, and sense of humor, but suddenly in tandem with conscious embodiment, she realized something she hadn't before - this woman is Jewish.

The novel ends with a physical joining of Eva and the man she loves, and simultaneous with this consummation is a flood of memories, memories that are drastically inconsistent with the ones she had previously allowed herself. She suddenly remembers her

father's face. But it was not the kind wise face she was so familiar with, it was an ugly face that was hard and bitter when he spoke about the ones he hated. She remembers her father's words, which "dripped with poison"..."the words of a bad man."[6]

But I would like to suggest a more nuanced reading than the "solution" of the novel's dominant narrative. Mine is an alternative to the interpretation which describes what Eva Mueller has as a mind/body problem, which is alleviated by the integration of the two, enabled by love. I am suggesting that Eva's salvation will be achieved when she voices the selves and experiences that had been silenced by an assumed narrative structure. The way I read it, Eva's repression is not primarily physical. The repression of the body is simply, or not so simply, her chosen *method* of repression of the multiplicity of who she has been and what she has done. The narrator herself provides another way to read Eva's story, an alternative to the Master-narrative, when she says,

> We live our lives by telling ourselves stories...our human creativity is, for the most part, exercised not in the production of new forms but rather in the finding of ways to force our material into the finite available few. We trim off and discard into forgetfulness the incoherent bits that won't go into any kind of story we can tell ourselves - incoherent *because* they won't go in; that is if we notice them at all.[7]

Now to further my argument that the achievement of narrative unity is an achievement in psychological repression I would like to make use of the contributions of narrative psychologist Roy Schafer. Then I will return to the example of Eva Mueller. Schafer provides a theoretical model of discordance-inclusive stories and subjects which counters Ricoeur's conception of coherent intelligible subjectivity. His work describes the problems associated with representing a singular self in a unified narrative.

Like Ricoeur, or most any narrative identity theorist, Schafer assumes that "the self is always a narrative construction," that identity is dependent upon the storyline one sees oneself as a part of, and that how a life story is told depends upon the contexts and interests of the narrator. He assumes that we are at least partial authors of our lives, "an

author of existence is someone who constructs experience. Experience is something that is made or fashioned; it is not encountered, discovered, or observed except on secondary reflection."[8]

> The so-called self may be considered to be a set of narrative strategies or storylines each person follows in trying to develop an emotionally coherent account of his or her life among people. We organize our past and present experiences narratively.[9]

Narrative is not an alternative to truth or reality; it is the mode in which truth and reality are presented. There are only versions, and narratively unmediated truth or reality is impossible. In the psychoanalytic setting, Schafer says, the analyst must constantly ask herself "of what story or stories is this a part, and for what constructive purpose is it being re-told?" But then Schafer concerns himself with something Ricoeur doesn't.

Schafer is interested in describing the problems that occur when the multiplicity of narrated selves is diminished and reduced in order to represent a singular self which can fit a unified culturally imposed story line. On this account, similar to Ricoeur's and Alexander's account, the psychoanalytic telling is not a process through which the self is uncovered, but a process in which self is constructed. And the requirement for narrative unity is identified as the basis for repression of discordant experience. What Schafer calls a "storyline" is what I call an assumed narrative structure. It is a "set of guidelines and constraints for telling a story that conveys what convention would certify as having a certain general kind of content...and through reduction, to create faithful repetitions of these versions out of apparently diverse narrative materials."[10]

While Ricoeur equates selfhood with agency and a unified narrative, Schafer equates psychologically healthy selfhood with the expression of multiple voices, selves, and discordant experiences,

> the crucial analytic versions tell of a multitude of voices rising from his or her own imagined inner world...Ideally, analysis brings it about that this concordant and discordant chorus of voices is no longer obliterated or muted by repression...[11]

Schafer opposes the Ricoeurean view of self which establishes a narrative of basic mental unity. On that very Ricoeurean model, the model of mental unity,

> this entity (the self) is presented as retaining its identity over time and even though every one of its elements may change, and it is supposedly capable of regaining its mature identity after it has lost it through stress-induced regression.[12]

What Schafer is attacking is precisely that which Ricoeur promotes as a model of ethical selfhood (*ipse*) which is evidenced by the act of keeping a promise in spite of changes in conditions. It is the type of self is created through its "challenge to time...denial of change."[13]

When Ricoeur illustrates his concept of narrative identity by returning to the experience of psychoanalysis in which the analysand creates herself in the process of telling her story, he emphasizes the parallel between the manipulation of the narrative component in psychoanalytic telling, and poetic composition, "the very goal of the whole process of the cure...is to substitute for the bits and pieces of stories that are unintelligible as well as unbearable, a coherent and acceptable story..."[14] And recall that homophony is one of the requirements of an "acceptable" and "coherent" narrative identity. But Schafer argues that, "those analysts who insist that there is only a single self...do not recognize that they are making a narrative choice."[15] While the Ricoeurean view of the self has been the dominant psychological narrative, Schafer favors the type of stories which do not silence experiences which do not fit a unified structure, ultimately insisting that,

> self-deception is but one instance of a set of problematic ideas that are introduced by self theorists or grand self narratives. It is advantageous to regard self-deception as a story that people tell in order to present themselves or make a psychoanalytic interpretation...it is a story that 'works': It communicates effectively and it helps construct experience. But it is only one version.[16]

In order for Eva Mueller to achieve the construction of a unified identity, she had to repress, to "discard," that experiential material that did not "fit" into the whole/unified narrative structure. She strives for a pure vision, like her aesthetic sensibility, a unified

story. Eva has repressed lots of potential narrative material and her past selves and experiences have little to do with who she is now. Her narrative achievement has been an achievement in psychological repression.

The narrator comments on the consequences of applying a classical aesthetic principle to our personal stories when she observes that, "The aesthetic preference for wholeness will often lead us to actions we would not otherwise undertake..."[17] These are not only the "actions" of narrating a story in accordance with the rules, but the "actions" are also those which are a *result* of the "aesthetic preference for wholeness." This is the aesthetic preference which led Eva Mueller to involve herself in a relationship with a sadistic Jewish man who engages in semi-unconscious revenge against her for what his family has suffered. As the narrator says, "It's these internal reconstructions that *determine their actions,* which is why the narrative mode is more suited for the explanation of human behavior than some more straightforwardly causal account."And, she says, "One has to recapture the agent's telling in order to grasp the significance of his or her action; that is, to provide the matrix for saying what, in fact, the action was."[18] There are, "underlying stories generating the actions."[19] The first time Eva met Martin Weltbaum, "She had known even without hearing the name that he was probably Jewish...It had amazed her as a child when, sometimes, as her mother and she were walking in the city, they would pass someone and her mother would whisper, "Jew." How could she always tell?" But Eva, the graduate student in philosophy knew, like her mother, the first time she laid eyes on Martin Weltbaum. Something in her head whispered, "Jew."

Armed with her aesthetic convictions, Eva sets out on a quest for unity, assumes classical plot structure and goes about repressing certain experiences, and privileging and creating stories around other experiences. As the narrator says,

> There are some general rules we employ in going about making up the stories we tell about ourselves...principles of aesthetics...for we are, none of us, completely indifferent to the claims of Beauty in the telling of our tales.

> Take, for example, the profound pleasure we derive in the apprehension of a whole, which is, as Aristotle tells us in the *Poetics,* with staggering simplicity, 'what has a beginning, a middle, and an end.'"[20]

What kind of story can the guilt-ridden daughter of a Nazi tell herself? The story that Eva told for a long time synthesized an initial familial harmony, with tension and conflict in the middle, a concluding reconciliation in the form of a union between a Nazi's daughter and a survivor's son, and the restoration of initial balance with the birth of their child to stabilize the ending. What Goldstein calls an aesthetic preference for wholeness, and what I call a tacitly assumed aesthetic structure, leads Eva Mueller into this relationship and then provides her with reasons to stay. Other experiences in Eva's life drop away, as maintaining her story, and its implied structure, become the most important activity she engages in. When eventually she becomes pregnant, she feels that the child was "meant to be" and in a proto-typical-narrative it would be. As Ricoeur says:

> Because of the concordant-discordant synthesis, the contingency of an event contributes to the necessity, retroactive so to speak, of a history of a life, to which is equated the identity of the character. Thus chance is transmuted to fate. And the identity of the character so emplotted, so to speak, can only be understood in terms of this dialectic.[21]

But the problem is that while Eva has been participating in one story, the man she is involved with is telling himself a different story and he does not share her aesthetic preference. The shattering realization of the part she played in *his* story is the catalyst which changed Eva into the person she is now.

> Eva had constructed a very good tale indeed about her relationship with Martin Weltbaum, fraught with moral import, as are all the best narratives - for the aesthetic sensibility has a great affinity with the moral. And then she had caught the drift of *his* version.[22]

She caught the drift of his version when she told him that she was pregnant with his child. His reaction was extremely violent and before leaving her he screamed out *his* version. The story he had been telling himself was one of revenge. According to him, they were not Eva and Martin involved in a relationship, they were a Nazi's daughter and a Jew. Since the

shock of hearing his version of the story, she has become the other Eva, the detached abstract Eva Mueller we meet at the beginning of the novel. And since then Eva has had to create another story.

But Eva's crucial mistake, I think, is an aesthetic one. Her failing is to create another story while maintaining the same old structure. Now the task of creating a whole/unified plot has become even more demanding as the narrative material has become increasingly diverse. Eva no longer sees herself as part of that past story, but how can she tell a unified/whole narrative which accounts for her past and yet adequately represents her current situation?

Eva's imagination fails her and she complies with classical structural demands and once again represses the parts of her experience that won't fit into any "coherent" story she can tell about herself. The crucial moment for change was the moment of narrative conflict, the moment when she realized the part she played in *his* story. This was one of those jarring, potentially life-changing moments, internal earthquakes, which may cause one to reflect over who one is and what one has done. To see the story she is involved in through the eyes of *another* was shock enough to make Eva want to extricate herself from this story completely. But this jolting insight had the potential to be so much more for Eva. This narrative conflict was an opportunity to uncover what she had repressed, but Eva didn't even ask herself how she ended up in a situation like this. There was no attempt to glean any larger insight. She simply wanted to end that story and start another one, and the narrative tradition she had inherited provided her with the means to do that. Quite the opposite of enabling her to make sense of the events of her life, traditional structure has enabled, and helps maintain, Eva's repression. To argue this is not to argue that there is a direct causal connection between classical structural requirements and repression, but there *is* a symbiotic relationship between the two. Eva's aesthetic preference, a preference shared by her culture, assists, fosters, and maintains her repression.

Much like Meena Alexander, Eva Mueller experiences narrative conflict but her conflict is not cross-cultural; it is the conflict of her narrative *with the narrative of another.* Her solution is simply to "trim off," to"discard" the selves she has been and the experiences she has had that won't fit into any *unified* story she can tell about herself.

In the previous chapter I advocated an alternative narrative model, one that would engender an alternative subjectivity. My alternative model involves not one but multiple narratives, not one but multiple voices. And it involves what I have termed "inter-narrative associations." Eva's internarrative identity, on my model, would be created in the process of mediating self and sameness, *aham* and *idam*, and the body with self representation. This alternative narrative model would enable Eva Mueller to integrate her pasts with her present. But "integrate" as I use it here, does not imply unification or synthesis. It means that Eva could *variously* include parts of her past in her present narrative. It means that the pieces of her life that won't fit into a unified narrative *can* be narrated in a story which is not unified. My alternative model would not require Eva to repress but it would allow her to consciously decide to include or exclude, privilege or marginalize, any part that she chooses to, in any particular telling.

The narrative solution for Eva Mueller would have been to do what Meena Alexander has done. Eva should begin by allowing all her voices to speak. She should let the Nazi's daughter speak; she should let the masochistic graduate student speak. The detached disembodied professor Eva Mueller should also be voiced. She should narrate all the selves she has been in various places at various times. *And then she should associate inter-narratively.* This would be a never-ending process. It is this on-going process of narratively mediating her self-centralization and her sameness with others, of mediating the involuntary (the body) with agency (self-representation) that she will create her ever-changing narrative identity. This narrative mediation, of course, is not structured in the same old way. Each of the multiple narratives will have some structure, if structure means

the on-going process of giving meaning to experience by associating with other experiences. It is my claim that in this process of creating inter-narrative associations something like a narrative identity is created.

Consider again my alternative trans-narrative model:

self <--- inter-narrative identity --->	same
aham	*idam*
narrating	body

In this model, the consistency of the self does not depend upon a unified narrative structure for its coherence. The subject is the "same" subject as a result of memory and embodiment, *not* as a result of commitment to stay the same as Ricoeur would have it. Eva's narratives are all housed in one body. The body is the constant; it remains. It has, like Ricoeur's tool, an "enduring overall structure" *and* it is the locus of another type of permanence in time because it houses kinesthetic memory. Remember Alexander's insistence that "The structures of human memory bear with them the imprint of the spatial existence of the lived body through which alone they have been generated,"[23] such that the burden of holding together discordant experience need not be shouldered by a unified narrative structure, because embodied memory holds them together. In the same sense embodied memory and narrative unity seem almost anthical. Ricoeur thinks that we need a method for making sense of experience in its multiplicity. Unified narrative structure is his method of "synthesizing discordant experience" but as I have argued with the example of Fault Lines this method requires the silencing of types of experience which may otherwise be central to one's story. And this silencing or repression becomes a problem itself as we see in the example of Eva Mueller. Eva Mueller's repression is important because without

it she would be unable to achieve an over-riding narrative which unifies her experience, a narrative which creates the appearance of sameness from the beginning to the end.

The alternative to a unified and whole structure is the narration of multiple narratives and imaginatively creating trans-narrative associations. Similar to Alexander's imagining her grandmother in contemporary New York, Eva Mueller could imagine, for example, the "self" she was in graduate school meeting the "self" she was as her father's daughter. She could imagine Eva the graduate student catching sight of Eva the little girl, in the distance. What would Eva the little girl look like through the eyes of Eva the graduate student? Would she see the guilt, humiliation, confusion? And how would Eva the graduate student seem through the eyes of Eva the little girl? It is in this way, imaginatively holding together and re-associating elements of the past selves, that narratives cross over. *And* it is in the way that memory is kept on the "brink" of present consciousness, *and* it is in this way that meaning is re-configured.

Contemporary discussions concerning narrative identity among Ricoeur scholars have not accounted for the aesthetic criteria that I am claiming is at the foundation of Ricoeurean personal identity. In order to argue this point I will look to the work of Ricoeur scholar Morny Joy because the assumptions she makes are representative of the aesthetic oversight I am claiming is prevalent in Ricoeur scholarship,[24] and because this oversight has important implications.[25]

Joy is interesting to me because she finds in Ricoeur the solution to her attempts to locate a form of feminist subjectivity, which is neither the fractured subject a' la postmodernism, nor the Enlightenment's autonomous individual. But Joy makes some crucially mistaken assumptions that I would like to uncover as they underscore my thesis.

In "Writing as Repossession"[26] Morny Joy is interested in demonstrating the "artifices of idealization and impartiality" of what she describes as the predominantly male approach to personal narration, and yet she is not interested in the other

extreme - complete fragmentation. Joy resonates with Kristeva's idea of a "polymorphous perversity that delights in its own indeterminacy," and yet she finds that the position Kristeva endorses leaves women in a purely reactionary position. Women's marginal status is potentially disruptive and destablizing, but Joy worries that, on Kristeva's view, one's marginal position can register protest but not effect change.[27] Shari Benstock's view[28] is more constructive but still "suspicious." Instead of indulging in the disjuncture that Kristeva advocates, Benstock explores the reasons for the disjuncture. Her awareness of the self as a construct does not lead to relativism but to an awareness of the details that create the construct. In her search for a middle ground, between postmodern fragmentation and the modernist self, Joy looks to Ricoeur and finds a solution in his conception of narrative identity.

What appeals to Joy about Ricoeurean narrative identity is the attention to the nuances of the interplay between *idem* and *ipse*, the emphasis on the specific or contextually dependent sense of self, and the manner in which narrative mediation allows one to name and claim aspects of one's life. Joy is interested in Ricoeur's insistence on the capacity of narrative to account for the contexts within which identity has meaning. Equally compelling is the idea of narrative as technique or as agency. But Joy looks to Ricoeur to find a sense of identity that an already marginal female subject can access, without adequate consideration of the structural dimension of this form of identity. This oversight leaves her solution partial. While I agree that narrative identity does provide a solution to the problem Joy is working on, I want to argue that if the category of narrative were liberalized, the solution Joy finds in Ricoeur would be complete.

Joy is disturbed by the postmodern declaration of the displacement of self just when women were assuming some form of autonomy and taking responsibility for self definition. She voices the common feminist concerns with delineating a place and space from which a woman can speak and with the notion of responsibility in light of social

constructivist theories of subjectivity. Joy wonders about the options left for a woman who seeks to tell her life story: "What sense of self can she claim if she is not to succumb to the temptations of either an idealized univocal self or to any number of heterogeneous guises in the name of an unstable postmodern subject?"[29] She looks to narrative identity as a way out of this impasse. But almost immediately after importing Ricoeur to solve her problem she apologizes for the "past associations narrative seems to have with predominantly linear and logical procedures" and offers the term "strategic" in its place. Thereafter narrative identity and strategic identity are used interchangeably. Joy "would prefer to use the term strategic identity, but the process is the same. This term alludes to the fact that to narrate ones life is always an interpretation, situated at the confluence of many influences." But her conception of strategic identity and Ricoeur's conception of narrative identity are not interchangeable. The associations that narrative has with "linear and logical procedures" are an essential aspect of Ricoeur's conception of "narrative." In fact, as I've argued in preceding chapters, Ricoeur intentionally and methodically remains faithful to the these procedures as they are essential for Ricoeur's connection between time and narrative.[30] The substitution of terms, however, evidences the discomfort with the narrative structure that Ricoeur as insists upon. And it is for sound reason that Joy is uncomfortable. Her thesis is that a female subject can narratively appropriate the involuntary aspects of experience, but within Ricoeur's model, this thesis can work only if Joy substitutes her own terms and aesthetic requirements. While I share the inclination to broaden the Ricoeurean conception of emplotment, the type of substitution Joy engages in is not unproblematic.

Joy misinterprets Ricoeur's saying that: "We learn to become the narrator of our own story without becoming the author of our life" as a statement about a type of perspective which enables one to think of identity as a construct that allows for change as a result of critical self-awareness. She reads Ricoeur's statement as a rejection of Master-

plot or Master-narrative, "At any one time...I could be trying to grasp or make sense of a particular episode that has affected my life, in relation to other plots, rather than writing an all-embracing panorama that incorporates every aspect of my existence."[31] But this statement is not interpreted in the context of Ricoeur's larger project. When he says "we learn to become the narrator of our own story without becoming the author of our life" Ricoeur means that narrative identity mediates between social construction and self determination. Narrative is a method of taking control of what one is given. Narrative identity is Ricoeur's solution to the problems initially raised in Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary which were discussed in the first chapter of this work. A plot operates as glue between the flux of experiences that threaten to overwhelm us. To emplot oneself is to thematize events; it is to make sense of the involuntary. It is also the manner in which will can be exerted over the determined.[32] It is the voluntary means by which the involuntary can be made meaningful. The notion of "authoring" one's existence does not adequately account for the social/cultural/contextual aspects of identity formation, but to *re*-tell, to "*co*-author," the given is to appropriate the involuntary.

To further her argument Joy investigates the narratives of three women, all three are incest survivors. The three works are: Don't: A Woman's Word by Elly Danica,[33] Daddy's Girl by Charlotte Vale Allen,[34] and My Father's House by Sylvia Fraser.[35] Joy's argument is that Ricoeur's conception of narrative identity is a solution to the violations these women have suffered in the past. By re-telling the involuntary, by assigning alternative meaning to it, they exert some measure of agency. But, as I will demonstrate, at least two of these three narratives go further than Joy accounts for. And the reason that they are successful is that they *do not* comply with Ricoeurean aesthetic demands. These stories are not unified or whole. They are not monological. And yet they are not fragmentary or dissassociative. The narratives are an attempt to *integrate* past experiences with present ways of being.

I point to Joy's oversight in order to better flesh out my problem with, and solution to, Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity. The problem is the restrictive definition of narrative, and the solution, the solution executed by at least two of these narrators, is to radicalize an inherited sense of narrative. Their's are still narrative identities even though they are not singular, unified, nor whole. What Joy wants to dispense with, "the linearity and logical procedures" of narrative, are, for Ricoeur, essential features of narrative intelligibility and its correlative coherent identity. The structuring procedure (*muthos*) is the Aristotelian one.[36]

Let me go further in focusing on the problem and the solution these narratives provide. Joy observes that in all three of these narratives, the focus is on a particular trauma to the exclusion of all else.[37] And this exclusion makes incest the dominant narrative. These women are attempting, narratively, to come to terms with, and exert some control over, their pasts. But I think there is more. These narrators seem to want to integrate the experiences that have been repressed with the rest of their consciously remembered past. For example, Fraser says,

> My life was structured on the uncovering of a mystery. As a child I survived by forgetting. Later, the amnesia became a problem as large as the one it was meant to conceal.[38]

And Allen tells of feeling herself split into what she terms "the one" and "the other." The extreme split between the private self and public self is something she was unable to integrate until she narrated her stories. Their writing has enabled these women to recuperate "a part of their lives that was lost or relegated to an inaccessible file."[39] It has enabled them to attempt an integration between the stories they have been telling themselves and others (the public), and the experiences they have repressed (the private). Narrating their lives is an enabler *because* these women transform traditional structure.

The previously unified stories these women told were enabled by the repression required by traditional structure. The "coherent" story had required the repression that I

have claimed the whole/unified structure demands. But this repression, which Frazer addresses directly, has itself become a problem. Subverting traditional structure is their attempt to allow repressed experience back into consciousness and into the stories they tell about themselves.

I find Joy's reading of Frazer and Danica problematic because she overlooks the narrative agency these women have taken; she does not seem to grasp the technique that makes their narratives work. For example, Danica's story is not temporally organized, nor is it homophonic, continuous or whole. In fact, the narrative is made up of paragraphs numbered from 1.1 to, fifty-two pages later, 13.6. The narrative does not go from childhood forward. It does not begin *en media res*. The entries are not chronologically arranged. Sometimes seasons are mentioned but these seasons are not cyclical; they do not function as the temporal string that holds the pieces of narrative together. Let me provide a sample of this writing style. The first words with which this narrative begins are:

> 1.1 DON'T. I only know this word. This is the only word I have ever learned. Don't. I can not write with only this word. A woman's vocabulary: Don't.
>
> 1.2 Don't tell. Don't think. Don't, whatever you do, don't feel. If you feel pain the pain will be there again. Don't.

And so the narrative goes on. The last words are these:

> 13.6 Survival. Dreaming with a pen in my hand. Writing. Writing. Writing. Who will hear me?

This narrative is not at all incoherent although it is not temporally organized nor unified nor whole.

All three of these women experience the narrative conflict they describe as the conflict between private and public selves, the private selves having been previously repressed. But the narratives that Joy examines are narratives of cross-over, they are inter-narratives between public and private selves. These narratives involve both spheres variously incorporated. These women create their provisional identities by narratively

mediating the sameness of their embodied selves and memories with the agency of self representation. The public self had previously been a unified representation and the private self had been previously repressed as it, the private, was the discordant experience. By liberalizing the structures of their narratives they are able to tell a story about themselves which is inclusive of even the discordant experience so that these narratives represent the cross-over of the public narrative and the previously repressed private narrative. What I am suggesting is that the act of radicalizing inherited structure has enabled these women, Frazer and Danica, to tell narratives that are inclusive of all the experiences that will not fit into any "coherent" story they can tell about themselves. Narrating has been the transformative element for these women and non-adherence to structural codes has enabled them to narrate without silencing discordant experience. In fact, voicing the private experience, discordant experience, is what makes these narratives work. It is precisely what makes these narratives self-constitutive. Structural liberalization allows these narratives to include what the prototypical structure would synthesize, or silence.

I agree with Joy's thesis that "neither a theory of ideal types nor one of totally dislocated subjects is appropriate,"[40] but in Ricoeur she finds a solution to the feminism/postmodernism debate which is itself problematic. I locate a solution in an *extension* of Ricoeur's narrative identity theory, in what I call "trans-narrative identity."

In another more recent article, "Feminism and the Self,"[41] Joy blames Derridean deconstruction and the Foucaultean reduction of the subject to a function of discourse for the status of the subject in contemporary thought, and she looks toward French feminists for an alternative way to view the subject. While she finds Kristeva's continued dispersion and Irigaray's jouissance initially seductive, Joy voices a concern common among feminists, that when theory comes to practice, these ideas are somewhat wanting.[42] Kristeva's identification of postmodern dislocation with women's marginal status and Irigaray's idea of evoking feminine sensuousness and linguistic extravagances are viewed

by Joy as theoretically self-indulgent and an evasion of practical responsibility. Irigaray is charged with essentialism because she comes dangerously close to identifying women with their bodies and with their pleasures alone. "Womenspeak" is Irigaray's term for the identification of women with their bodies and the self description that comes from this embodiment. But Joy worries that "women's sex and texts are so identified that this supposedly free-ranging female risks being confined to a specific ambience of rhetorical posturing where her activity is virtually circumscribed by traditional "feminine" limitations."[43] Kristeva suggests, in her re-formulation of Lacan's model, that poetic and associative expressions will consistently undermine the symbolic order. For Kristeva the "feminine" is gender-neutral, but it is always a marginal category. On this model, women can be subversive within the semiotic ambience of maternity but in this case the subversive mother is the only model for women to contest their status.

Joy compares and contrasts North American and French feminist theory on the issue of identity. She wonders whether a woman's marginal status actually serves to put her in a privileged position for subversion, as Kristeva suggests? Does Irigaray's identification of women with their bodies and pleasures create an essentalism? Does a woman's standpoint make her superior in her insights into social reality as Hartsock insists? The result of a survey of recent scholarship on subjectivity including an overview of Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, Irigaray, Gilligan, Hartsock, bell hooks, and Biddy Martin, is a return to Ricoeur for a way out of the current feminist debate concerning the possibility for female subjectivity. Joy wants to incorporate a hermeneutic practice which she sees as an example of a contextual way of knowing. She wants to extend the hermeneutic exercise from a textual exercise to a *con*textual exercise. Joy thinks, given the contemporary dilemmas, that narrative identity as a hermeneutic exercise is particularly appropriate. Her thesis is that a narrative self representation can include ambiguities and discordance without being ambiguous and discordant itself:

> a feminist writer can mirror the conflicts involved, (in self-representation) but this does not mean that the resultant delineation need be confused, that the self be beset by antagonistic impulses, or overwhelmed by conditions beyond one's control. Such a compromise bespeaks continual adherence to a male model of normative diagnosis - whether modern or postmodern.[44]

The quality that distinguishes a feminist autobiography is that it will always be marked by critical engagement with those structures which operate to contain her story.

In "Feminism and the Self" Joy does not read Ricoeur as envisioning a life composed of many plots as she did in "Repossession." In the more recent article she reads his statement about being the narrator of one's life without being the author of one's existence, the way I do. Her reading has changed considerably from the earlier reading as she now wants to "expand Ricoeur's notion of a single plot to a composite of many plots." In "Repossession" I think the reason for her misreading of Ricoeur is that she does not consider his work on identity in the context of his larger project. But in her later work she amends what she argued previously and as a result of this changed understanding, she wants to "expand" his notion. But, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, to "expand" Ricoeur in the manner she suggests is to completely undermine the aesthetic conviction which is the basis of his narrative identity. Joy's impulse is similar to my own but she does not follow through on examining the results of such an expansion for narrative identity. Ricoeur's project is larger than a theory of identity. It starts out being a problem of free will or determinism. Then the project becomes a solution to Augustine's problem of temporal discordance with the imposition of Aristotelian compostional structure (*muthos*). And the solution turns out to be much more. Joy feels Ricoeur's model "has insights to offer about how we might begin to formulate notions of self-understanding in the contemporary feminist debate."[45] But, as I have said before, there is tension between Ricoeur's claims to have renounced any notion of the Supreme or Master-plot, and his hermeneutic practices. However, even if one is generous with Ricoeur and reads him as assuming multiple plots rather than a Master plot (this is Joy's original reading

which she amends in more recent articles) my argument about *structure* is applicable even to the generous reading. Even the structure of each one of the supposed multiple plots is Aristotelian in form.[46]

The result of overlooking the structural requirements of Ricoeurean "narrative" has been to undermine Joy's understanding of the ways in which the subjects of her study have asserted their agency by subverting Ricoeurean exclusionary requirements.

In summary, I have attempted to argue that the achievement of narrative unity, the fulfillment of classical aesthetic requirements for narrative form upon which coherent identity rests, fosters and maintains a process of psychological repression. The distinction between imaginative personal narratives and irrational or incoherent narratives, *is a structural distinction.*

Ricoeur argues that if we hope to make sense of our lives at all, if our lives are to be more than a series of disconnected atomic events, there must be narrative synthesis. On this model, the unifying synthesizing mechanism of traditional plot structure is the basis for rational coherent subjectivity. But I have attempted to problematize this mechanism and I have traced the requirement of narrative unity as the foundation for personal identity to a classic aesthetic principle.

Following Ricoeur, I've argued that who one is and what one will do will be determined by the story one sees oneself as a part of. Going further than Ricoeur, I have suggested that a genuinely imaginative theory of narrative identity would be inclusive of alternatively structured narratives. And I have argued that the assumed classical narrative structure is responsible for repression of certain *types* of experience. I used the character of Eva Mueller as a example of how the "aesthetic preference for wholeness will lead us to actions we would not otherwise undertake" and as an example of subjectivity that narrative unity produces. This is a subjectivity that requires repression for its intelligibility, rationality, coherence. Then, I introduced the psychoanalytic perspective of Roy Schafer

because he is uncomfortable with the same aspect of narrative identity theory that I am concerned with - that is - the repression required in order to represent a singular self in a unified narrative. Morny Joy's work was introduced for two reasons. First, because among contemporary Ricoeur scholars her work comes closest to aspects of Ricoeurean identity that I am interested in; and second, because her oversights are representative of the prevailing understanding of Ricour's narrative identity.

Narrative identity theory claims that narrative will determine what our experience is, how we tell our stories, who we are, and to a large extent, what we will do. Because I agree, I want to add that the way in which the content is told, the structure of the narrative, is an essential aspect of the narrative function. The *structure* of our stories will determine what our experience is, how we tell our stories, who we are, and what our future actions may be. But meaningful narrative agency is limited by an inherited sense of narrative form. To unbind that structure is to assert agency in determining, and re-determining, who we are and what we will do, in a way that is truly imaginative.

Notes

1. Rebecca Goldstein, The Late-Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989), 18.

2. Ibid., 134.

3. Ibid., 48.

4. Ibid., 172.

5. Ibid., 148.

6. Ibid., 260.

7. Ibid., 55.

8. Roy Schafer, Retelling a Life: Narration and Dialogue in Psychoanalysis (New York: Basic Books, Harper Collins, 1992), 23.

9. Ibid., 34.

10. Ibid., 30.

11. Ibid., 160.

12. Ibid., 50.

13. Paul Ricoeur, Oneself As Another, trans., Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 124.

14. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, vol. 3, trans., Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 246.

15. Schafer, Retelling A Life, 50.

16. Ibid., 52.

17. Ibid., 57.

18. Ibid., 56.

19. Ibid., 57.

20. Ibid., 57.

21. Ricoeur, Oneself as Another, 147.

22. Ibid., 58.

23. Meena Alexander, The Poetic Self: Toward a Phenomenology of Romanticism (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.,: Humanities Press, 1980), 20.

24. Kathleen Blamey,"A Philosophical Itinerary From Ego to I to Self," The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 571-603.

The translator of the three volumes of Time and Narrative, Kathleen Blamey, is interested in following and describing the complex route of the development of the notion of subjectivity in Ricoeur's work from "ego to I to self." There is no argument being made here. Hers is simply a "Philosophical Itinerary." But, again, her work is representative of recent Ricoeur scholarship. Let me explain.

She begins not with existential Phenomenology but with Ricoeur's mature "option for language." And she traces the development of the idea of a connection between language and subjective experience of time, to the conception of the self as a subject of action, as agent, as author. Blamey traces Ricoeur as he moves away from the vantage point of his Freudian investigations, and rather than viewing the ego in the position of master-consciousness, prefers to think of "I" as the subject of action. She describes his interest in narrative against the backdrop of a prior interest in language, against a hermeneutical tradition. Ricoeur is not so interested in the hermeneutics of suspicion (the reductive hermeneutic described in the first chapter) but rather in a hermeneutics of trust which focuses on polysomy and the overdetermination of linguistic expressions. And Blamey accounts for the way in which Ricoeur's interest in language is bound up with the problem of time. But while Blamey underscores muthos as action she overlooks the very specific structure within which action can happen.

The author of the itinerary rightly points out that for Ricoeur narrative brings time to expression; it articulates an enigma of human experience. But when she makes a list of all the ways narrative can look (fairy tales, epics, drama, modern novel, chronicals and itineraries) she undervalues the structural form these narratives must take. What makes an itinerary narrative, for example, is its structure. There are three aporias that remain at the end of Time and Narrative. Listed in reverse, they are, first, the aporia of the "inscrutability of time." This refers both to that quality of time that remains inaccessible to conceptualization and the vestiges of the conception of time as something we find ourselves "in." The unrepresentability of time has led to fragmentary representations of time. The second aporia is one of totality and totalization which expresses the difficulty of reconciling the past, present, and future. This is the feeling that time is collective and singular. The third aporia is the split between phenomenological and cosmological time. This is the sense in which our lived experience of time is unable to account for physical time so that cosmological time (the time of physical nature and its units of measurement) cannot integrate subjective experience of time. Now, between these two types of time, Ricoeur attempts to create a third type of time, one which acts as a bridge between the time of the physical world and the time of our experiences. Things like clocks and calendars serve as a link because they mark cosmological time and human beings use them to place experience. Narrative identity involves the type of connection, this third sense of time.

Since Ricoeur's mature conception of self draws its intelligibility from a model of narrative theory, Blamey wants to delineate the narrative framework within which identity has meaning. But her account of the narrative framework in which identity-as-authorship is constituted, emphasizes Ricoeurs reliance on Aristotle's notion of *muthos* as action. She correctly notices that this sense of *muthos*, of structuring, is the "putting-into-the-form-of-a-plot (emplotment)" and mentions the imperative Aristotelian plot structure. Blamey is impressed by the way that, on Ricoeur's model, identity is revealed not in the description

of events (and thus identity has little to do with the involuntary) but rather on creative re-description, *mimesis 2*. But the extent to which re-description is possible is limited to the assumed structure of the narrative. To liberalize structural requirements would be to enrich the notion of redescription.

As I have just stated the focus of Blamey's understanding of *muthos*, is on *muthos* as action and she undervalues the compositional requirement. *Muthos* is not the act of just any kind of emplotment; the action of *muthos* is limited by Aristotelian aesthetic requirements. The result is that Blamey understates the structural restrictions of self-formation. Blamey's account of Ricoeurean "self" focuses exclusively on the conception of self as the subject of action. She focuses singularly on social and political circumstances as the limit within which a self can act. But Ricoeur envisions the narrative self as emploted not only in involuntary circumstances but also in narrative configuration. This itinerary does not record the detour of the ego through formal requirements in the process of self creation. In her description of the connection between subjectivity and time consciousness and narrative she hints at the structural requirement in saying that "forming a whole" is linked with a narrative model of comprehension. And the narrative function of bringing time to expression structures identity. The fact that the proto-typical narrative structure serves as model of intelligibility is represented as unproblematic. When she calls "configurational competence characteristic of narrative composition" by "configurational competence" she means several things (muthos as action, text as basic unit, etc.) but what she assumes but does not focus on is the whole/unified structure as the primary feature of Ricoeurean narrative. "Configurational competence" for Blamey means acting, practicing, emplotting, situating, contexualizing, narrating. In a more general sense, contextualizing ones life narratively. She does not focus on the ordering of discordant experience. Blamey sees identity as a "category of practice." What she does not focus on, what she barely even mentions, is the structural requirement. I am not arguing that Blamey misreads Ricoeur or makes any kind of crude mistake. I am pointing out that even though Blamey assumes the structural requirement of Ricoeurean narrative, she focuses on the functions of narrative over its features and therefore focuses on narrative as an act and identity as a process. She overlooks the manner in which assumed structure of narrative structures identity.

25. Bernard Dauenhauer, "Ricoeur and Political Identity," Philosophy Today (spring 1995): 47-55.

Bernard Dauenhauer has come up with the interesting project of extending Ricoeur's conception of personal identity to the political realm - to political identity. Dauenhauer's pragmatic inclination is to distrust most claims to political identity. He wonders about a basis for discriminating between defensible and indefensible political identities, and finds in Ricoeur's account of personal identity conditions which are applicable to a defendable political identity. In fact, he insists that the only appropriate kind of political identity would be an extension of Ricoeurean personal identity. But he makes two mistakes. First, while he is interested in narratives which constitute political identity, he does not take into account the aesthetic criteria for narrative and therefore overlooks determining structure. He mistakenly argues that "...the narratives relevant to the constitution of personal identity are always partial." This oversight, along with the second mistake, the mis-reading of *ipse*, lead him to the conclusion that a Ricoeurean political identity would be based on a "partial" narrative which allows for a change in commitments. Dauenhauer thinks that narratives of political identity which satisfy this requirement encourage societies members not to give unqualified allegiance to any concrete state of their political society, "My Ricoeurean proposal...provides considerable insurance against adopting or countancing political identities that are tyrannical." This conclusion is questionable at best. But I would like to address the second problem first.

Dauenhaur finds a troubling part of political identity, as commonly understood, its over-reliance on its unique characteristics (*idem*) and its de-valuing of *ipse*. He is not inclined toward political identity defined by the groups distinguishing characteristics (*idem*) and thinks that the only kind of defensible political identity is one which is developed through common commitment. But I don't think Dauenhaur's reading of *ipse* captures its essence or all its implications. One with *ipse*-identity would honor a political commitment even if ones values have changed. For Ricoeur, keeping one's promise even if one's values, convictions, and projects have changed, "does indeed appear to stand as a challenge to time, a denial of change: even if my desire were to change"(emphasis is mine). This means that, "even if I were to change my opinion or inclination, I will hold firm." "*Ipse*" involves keeping a promise in spite of changes in convictions. This is precisely the opposite of the way Dauenhauer understands *ipse*. Actually the aspect of political identity which he is critical of (lack of interest in the reform of commitments) would be supported by Ricouer's understanding of *ipse*.

Secondly, Dauenhauer overlooks the aesthetic requirements for narrative structure. He insists that the "narratives relevant to the constitution of personal identity are always partial." Then Dauenhaur lists the ways in which he thinks Ricoeurean narratives are open-ended. First, he says, Ricoeurean narratives exclude some experience that they could include. Second, these narratives make "contestable distributions of emphasis" among the items they do include. And third, there are always alternative versions which could be told and these alternative versions could have a different emphasis and could be inclusive of other types of experience. The argument is that Ricoeurean narratives are partial in these three ways and this is important because the stories this type of theory can yield are in inexhaustible supply. But these elements of partiality are effects of the discordance of experience that Ricoeurean emplotment attempts to suppress. I am not arguing that these three elements of partiality, defined as they are, are not present in Ricoeurean narrative, but they are present in spite of emplotment. The three aspects of partiality listed above seem to me to actually be three objections to Ricoeurean narrative rather than three features of it. For example: the first element (that narrative excludes some experience it could include) is precisely the element that makes narrative whole, according to Ricoeur. This is the desired result of concordance.

Ultimately in order for political identity to be defensible on Dauenhaur's account, its narratives must have several features: 1, They must be partial. 2,The narratives must admit that every political society impinges upon other societies. 3, A defensible narrative must admit that its society might become obsolete. 4, The narrative must not claim to possess the definitive word about its own defensibility. The job of political narrative is to help a society to recognize these features of its situation. Only the first of these four requirements is Ricoeurean. Ricoer does not concern himself too much with the content of narratives and the second through fourth narrative requirements are requirements about content. And Dauenhaur does not claim that these requirements are Ricoeurean, just that the "partial" structure, and the emphasis on changing commitment, are taken from Ricoeur. But I do not think that even these two requirements can be attributed to Ricoeurean narrative theory or personal identity theory. By "partial" Dauenhaur means structurally (his first feature) and content-wise. I object only to the first sense. Recall from previous chapters how adamantly Ricoeur insists upon unified and whole structure. According to Ricoeur, a partial structure would be excluded from the realm of narrative altogether. Though the last stage of *mimesis, mimesis3,* takes place in the reader, the internal structure of the work itself must be closed. That is to say that a narrative should be internally closed (have an ending) while retaining an open-ended involvement with the reader's world. This is *mimesis* 3. Any narrative which does not conform to the formal features of Aristotelian muthos, the criteria of unity and completeness, represents for

Ricoeur, the end of the paradigmatic tradition of emplotment. And the end of this tradition is something that he laments. Ricoeur is interested in the "deep structure" which manifests in concrete narrative configuration on the surface of the narrative. The structural analysis of perennial narrative paradigms is motivated by the "ambition to ground the narrative function on structural rules" and to impose a "logical type of rationality" on the production of narrative. This reduction is characterized by three features. First, it is a deductive procedure. This means that because there are such a variety of narrative expressions, there should be a hypothetical "model". Secondly, It should be modeled upon linguistics in the sense that the code should be separated from the message. And systematic organization should be "mastered" by the act of structuring, which is defined as "a closed set of internal relations between a finite number of units." Third, there should be a priority of the whole over the parts. This, Ricoeur says, is the most important of the three features.

On my reading of Ricoeurean personal identity, the extension of personal identity to political identity, would involve a process wherein political identity is created in the narrative process of the mediation between permanent defining characteristics of the group, and the commitment of the group to remain faithful to its commitments in spite of changing values. These elements are precisely what Dauenhaur does not want in his notion of political identity.

26. Morny Joy, "Writing as Repossession," in print, Narrative Texts and Contrasting Contexts: The Impact of the Work of Paul Ricoeur (Clagary: University of Calgary Press).

27. Julia Kristeva, In the Beginning There Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith, trans., A. Golhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1887), 8.

28. Shari Benstock, "Authorizing the Autobiographical," The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

29. Joy, "Repossession," 4.

30. See Time and Narrative, 2:20-32, and Oneself as Another, 143, 148-57.

31. Joy, "Repossession," 4.

32. See Paul Ricoeur, Freedom and Nature: the Voluntary and the Involuntary, trans., Erazim V. Kohak (Northwestern University Press, 1966).

33. Elly Danica, Don't: A Woman's Word (Dublin: Attic Press, 1988).

34. Charlotte Vale Allen, Daddy's Girl (New York: Wyndam Books, 1980).

35. Sylvia Frazer, My Father's House: A Memoir of Incest and Healing (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1988).

36. Aristotle, Poetics, vii, 27-30.

37. Joy, "Repossession," 6.

38. Frazer, 250.

39. Joy. "Repossession," 9.

40. Joy, "Repossession," 11.

41. Morny Joy, "Feminism and the Self," Theory and Psychology, vol. 3, no. 3 (1993): 275-302.

42. Joy, "Feminism and the Self," 396.

43. Joy, "Feminism and the Self," 280.

44. Ibid., 295.

45. Ibid., 299.

46. See also Morny Joy, "Reflections of Ricoeur's Oneself as Another: Three Loves: Philosophy, Theology, and World Religions (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1994).

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