THE JOY OF THEORY

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However, we believe we are the first to call for an end to reporting the death of reporting the death of Theory.

It will come as no surprise to learn that the ‘post’ in ‘post-theory’ is not to be taken unequivocally – which immediately begs the question of how it *is* to be taken. Common Sense is only too happy to witness the passing of Theory. It was only a matter of time before we outgrew what had only ever been an irritating fad, just a phase we were all going through. Theory has no shortage of opponents waiting for the chance to say I told you so. Not that this distresses Theory. If resistant Blimps did not exist, Theory would have to invent them. The monolith of Common Sense has always been a fantasy of Theory, and a gratifying and sustaining one at that. Relegating resistance to an external reactionary force is always a profoundly comforting strategy.

In any case, Theory itself is only too happy to witness the passing of Theory. Nothing stimulates the production of Theory like the proclamation of its own death, regardless of who makes the proclamation. On the one hand, attacked by hostile voices, it reacts with righteous indignation and redoubles its efforts to prove the doubters wrong. On the other, the death of Theory is a persistent theme *in* Theory. Theory has been troubled by futures, ends and limits for some time. In effect, what is at stake is the right to write its own epitaph.

One reason why Theory has found it necessary to construct the bogey-man of Common Sense (a too-easy formulation which fails to take account of Theory's complex relation to Rationalist traditions) is in order to justify its own self-perception as 'radical'. Theory is 'radical' in that it affects fundamentally the relation one has to the processes and conventions of a given discipline. Theory changes the very conditions of reading literature, experiencing a painting, or sociological investigation. It goes to the root of those 'essential' and 'fundamental' operations and terminologies which function as disciplinary study. Theory 'revolutionises' these unquestioned foundations. If this is the sense in which Theory can be said to be radical, then it is also the sense in which Theory is political. However, the radicality of political praxis and the radicality of Theory might not be of the same order. To take literature as an example, Theory brings to academic criticism a way of thinking and a reason for existing which has more integrity and purpose than debating the minutiae of authorial biography and the impressionistic beauty of babbling brooks. Theory may challenge institutional traditions and liberal/bourgeois/humanist/empiricist (delete as applicable) fancies, and enable the reader to question their approach to a reception of given *a priori*s. However, this does not mean that Theory should be applied universally and mechanistically as a set of techniques, procedures and operators to every book ever written, exposing them one by one as vile inscriptions of reactionary western logomachy. Theory as sausage machine, pouring texts in at one end, producing 'new' readings at the other. Nothing could be less 'radical' or more depoliticising than the closing-off of questioning in an endless repetition of predetermined textual exegesis. Theory should not be a stick to beat a canonical tradition on which it has always relied, in one form or another, but an experience of critical reading which imbricates itself in the text it reads. Ask not what Derrida can do for Jane Austen but what Jane Austen can do for Derrida.

Theory wants more than anything to be thought of as 'Radical'. This desired radicality is firstly a response to its institutional critics, who are in fact only adopting a position Theory has created for them as a precondition of its own existence. It is also a wished-for Political activism. Undoubtedly Theory challenges institutional norms and canonical authority where their effects are most assuredly determined. It may disrupt relations of knowledge, but can Theory *qua* discipline claim that it has ever affected the material processes of history? How many reported cases are there of a Governor of the Bank of England emerging from a Theory reading group, arms raised with a white flag in one hand and a copy of Baudrillard in the other?

Few practitioners of Theory would argue over the merits of introducing students to the thoughts of Marx, Althusser, Fanon or Foucault, but is political commitment (implied by Theory's claims of radicality) as painless as an honours option or special topic choice? What encourages Theory to dress

itself in this radical retro-chic, as if poststructuralism were as sexy as a lava lamp? The rise of Theory as an institutional practice is contemporaneous with the 'decline' of the political left. The retreat of the ambition of left-wing political parties and the advance of the radical claims of Theory are not coincidental. The hesitancy of the Political Left is in contrast to the certainty of the Theoretical Left, and the certainty of the Theoretical Left is in contrast to the undecidability which Theory proposes. In a discipline where meanings are endlessly questioned, are we sure we know what we mean when we talk of such difficult terms as 'politics' or 'the Left'? Furthermore, an inquiring mind might be led to the conclusion that there is some connection between 'market-led' educational reforms and the eminence of Theory within the academy. At a time when only the most popular courses survive and institutions compete for student numbers, Theory proves itself to be a crowd-pleaser which puts bums on seats. Accordingly, Theory does very well for itself in a *laissez-faire* university system which is prepared to promote it as an attractive option to students alongside Golf-Course Management and Tourism Studies.

If Theory's claims of radicalism are greatly exaggerated, then by the same token the radical effects of Theory are greatly undervalued. Certainly, general elections are not fought over the question of aesthetic self-reflexivity, but social activity is always influenced by the unlimited effects, in the field of ideology, of the academic apparatus. Not only is the university itself a site of political contest both in terms of what is taught and in terms of the struggle for control of access to education and 'academic freedom', it is the university in its production and demarcation of the limits of knowledge which defines the possibilities of any institutionalised, or otherwise, activity of thinking. It is in this sense that the way of thinking and reason for existing which Theory introduces to literature, sociology, art-history and so on is of profound importance and its radical effects are unlimited. Of course, any research institution is not free of a compromising relation to the state which sponsors intellectual life. Mark up the first double-bind; Theorists also have mortgages.

'Post-Theory', for Geoffrey Bennington (see Chapter 7), means a falling-off-from-theory (theory, for Bennington, being the *practice* of 'thinking hard'). 'Post-Theory', for Nicholas Royle (see Chapter 1), is the possibility of the hitherto unthought. In their opposition, each definition assumes a certain impatience with Theory at this stage in the theoretical game. If the collection entitled *Post-Theory* can be said to represent something, then it might represent this impatience, and the effort to revise it (the impatience, the theory) in productive directions. There are a number of resistances which this effort has to at least recognise, if it is to stand a chance of making headway.

Post-Theory rejects the dead hand of a self-satisfied and hypostasised

‘Theory’, a theory in love with and, finally, indistinguishable from its own rhetoric. It rejects the sclerosis of theoretical writing, the hardening of Theory’s lexical and syntactical arteries. The words and phrases which are combined in over-familiar ways and thereby banalised, degraded, wielded like a fetish (the ‘always already’ whose precise and critical function has been reduced to a vacuous and impotent gesture of would-be mastery, a yawn-inducing yawn; the paronomasia which was once deployed as a strategy in a wider argument but which now appears to make puns for puns’ sake, the text as a kind of Brownian motion for phonemes, and so on) in order to semaphore that ‘Theory’ is taking place are the surest sign that anything worthwhile just *is not*.

But there are problems more pressing than the laziness or decadence of individual theorists.

It is impossible, now more than ever, to dissociate the work we do, within one discipline or several, from a reflection on the political and institutional conditions of that work. Such a reflection is unavoidable. It is no longer an external complement to teaching and research; it must make its way through the very objects we work with, shaping them as it goes, along with our norms, procedures and aims.¹

Given the ‘political and institutional conditions’ within which ‘Post-Theory’ took shape, *Post-Theory* has its theoretical work cut out. The most visible manifestation of the current conditions must be the Research Assessment Exercise and its related *machins-bidules*. The impact of the RAE on the Humanities is only beginning to be analysed with any rigour. Sean Sayers has discussed the ‘obsession with “research” dictated by the present system’ and concluded that much of it ‘is pointless . . . its main *raison d’être* [being] to gain a research rating and/or promotion’.² The system which is conceived as a way of ensuring and promoting quality tends to accelerate the process of banalisation. Research is often conducted for research’s sake, not in the sense of some putatively disinterested pursuit of knowledge, but to secure funding to finance a place in which research (if, by now, it still deserves the name) is allowed to happen. The sclerotic ‘Theory’ outlined above could have been, *might have been*, made for such a scenario. ‘Theory’, its rhetoric, is *that which can be applied*, without having to bother *applying itself*.

A consideration of the constraints of the institutional context, however, does not start and finish with major events like Research Assessment. Whatever shape it comes in, the institution will always comprise certain banal, that is to say irreducible, features. If the university has one universal constant, it is that there are always fresh students to be taught.

Teaching, in effect, is where even theorists have to get vulgar. It is the point

where they have to get their hands dirty, to risk showing their feet of clay, where the endless, circular agonising has to stop and give way to action. The point is not just that it is Theory's day job, but also that it is its destination. Teaching implies, more or less, packaging; material *must* be selected, presented, portioned in some way or other. Supposing a piece of Theory attempts to make itself resistant to this process, it may only be opening itself to a particularly brutal dismemberment. The spirit of out-and-out instrumentalism is, then, the path of least resistance. Conscious or unconscious, declared or undeclared, it might go something like this. I am quite happy with the theories I have, and there are classes to be taught. Do I really want to have to rethink my Theory all the time? To avoid embarrassment, I'll keep on churning out the same stuff about Theory being a constant revision of our conceptual frame, an unflagging vigilance, and so on. So the urgencies of teaching already tend to sclerosis.

The point, then, is not just to be snide at the expense of those for whom Theory has become canonical, a new orthodoxy, with the level of unconscious assumption that that entails. Nor, on the other hand, should one simply side with praxis (in the guise of teaching), the need to act, and so deride High Theory for excessive abstraction. For one thing, these represent two modalities that are necessarily always present in Theory. It is hardly a matter of choosing one, and discarding the other since the highest and purest Theory depends, for its institutional life, on some ultimate critical yield. To be read, accepted, digested is the inevitable fate of any *œuvre*. If reduction to a set of manageable tenets is an accident that befalls a text, then it is a peculiarly necessary accident.

Why necessary? That is, within what bounds? If there is a good reason for using some imagined teaching–research divide to express this difference in theoretical practice, it lies in the double form of the institution. Research Assessment and Quality Assurance did not impose this doubleness; they merely gave it a new formal rigour. For the time of research – let's say three years – is *not* the time of the undergraduate essay – one or two weeks. There follows a whole series of constraints on how far, and in what form, undergraduate students can ever be expected to engage with Theory, which in turn have some influence on the production of research. And yet, by the same token, a complete divorce between the methodology sponsored in teaching, and that pursued in research, could only be effected by bodily segregating staff. Indeed, a stark drone–queen division remains a possible option for the academic beehive. Yet even this, in turn, would only beg the question once more: what is Theory for? The answer would have to be: to produce books to which undergraduates, and lecturers devising courses, will refer, however obliquely, and from which they will derive knowledge. Resistance is futile; there are children to be taught. Otherwise we risk falling into a supplementary impatience – usually thought of as Victorian – that sees uncivilised elements

not just as that-which-must-be-civilised, but as a wilful blight on the achievement of civilisation.

At any rate, kids want their Theory, and if they don't get it at school they'll get it somewhere else.

Theory, then, cannot afford to ignore its own institutionalisation and consecration. We are perhaps at a stage where its very pre-eminence has opened up real concerns about how it wants to proceed (which of course it must). Theory has itself become doxa, the very state it set out to subvert. This may be where a sociological examination of the state(s) of Theory might be helpful, if only to (re)confirm Theory's disruptive potential and, perverse as it might seem, its autonomy. There can be no doubt that Theory's strength has always been its awareness of its own instrumental apparatus and analytic procedures, its ability to snap at its own heels. What the reflexive turn has led to, or at least may be helpful in leading towards, is (somewhat paradoxically) the realisation that we can never be reflexive enough, we can never quite get there.

The confrontation over the uses of the various 'post'-theories in the social or 'human' sciences perhaps provides an example here. The debate over Theory in a discipline such as Sociology, traditionally mandated and committed to the double orientation of its pragmatic, situated practice, illuminates the debate over the orientation of Theory itself. Bourdieusian theory, as well as other material historicisms, in its attempt to get 'meta' over Theory, has been somewhat hampered by its inability to be reflexive enough about its own position. Attention to the positionality and perspectives of ethnographic observation and the position of the researcher-theorist *within* the institutional framework of practice would allow us to recognise the limits of reflexivity. Theory must always involve a negotiation of the aporia of reflection which holds the reflective in abeyance while remembering reflexivity as a condition of Theoretical production. In effect, the undecidability of this double-bind means that we can never be too reflexive; knowledge through self-reflection will always be endlessly deferred. What we might do in response to this impossible condition of Theoretical possibility is to acknowledge the Anthropology already implicit in Theory. There can be no doubt that there are strategies, rituals, taboos and totemic customs abundant in the Theory jungle. They are there to be uncovered and challenged by Theoretical means. For example, we might ask, what would a theoretical model of teaching look like? The industry of theory therefore is to reassess the Theory Industry. Derrida comments:

The time for reflection is also the chance for turning back on the very conditions of reflection, in all the senses of that word, as if with the help of a new optical device one could finally see sight, could not only view

the natural landscape, the city, the bridge and the abyss, but could view viewing.³

In this sense, the ‘post’ in *Post-Theory* must refer to the doubleness of that adjective. As Nicholas Royle, following Robert Young, points out in Chapter 1, the ambiguities of ‘post’ point to both ‘its temporal sense (where it signifies “coming after”) and its spatial sense (where it can mean “behind”)’. ‘Post-Theory’ must be a Theory which comes before and after itself, taking its own postness in the sense that Lyotard considers the post in postmodernism, by which Theory would be ‘constitutionally and ceaselessly pregnant’ with the reflexive double-bind of Post-Theory.⁴ In other words, the temporo-spatial effects of a ‘postness’ which disrupts and challenges the sclerotic and the unquestioned must be an effect of *différance*, the differed space of the post and the deferred time of postness. Post-Theory then is not just a Theory which is not present but is potentially so, rather it is a theory (an experience of thought) which cannot be fully activated even potentially. Post-Theory is a state of thinking which discovers itself in a constant state of deferral, a position of reflexivity and an experience of questioning which constantly displaces itself in the negotiation with the aporias of Theory. Post-Theory speaks to the Other to whom it must be addressed. Even if the position of thought we are calling Post-Theory does not reach and leave its mark on its institutional other, it still makes its call, address takes place. The deferral of this experience of thought does not relegate the possibility of such a position to an ateleological future. On the contrary, if theory itself (as an experience of thought) is that which is deferred by the practice of Theory (as a series of institutional aporias), then it is an obligation placed upon every practitioner of ‘Theory’ to attempt to approach the Post-Theory condition through the rigorous discipline of thought from within Theory. The engagement with Theory is the experience of the endless promise. Post-Theory promises that ‘Theory’ will only take place when one can ‘finally see sight’.

In a certain sense, then, ‘Post-Theory’ is a Theory ‘yet to come’. If *Post-Theory* as a text were to claim a distinctive approach to the problematic of the institutional fate of Theory (the ‘new direction’ promised in the subtitle), it might be found in its desire to make an intervention in the here-and-now of the academy. The chapters in this book fall into two categories. Part I, ‘*Déjà Vu*’, responds to the situation described above, by pausing to reassess the state of Theory the morning after the party. Theory is the cure to its own hangover, the hair of the dog that bit us. Part III, ‘The Post-Theory Condition’, offers signposts for the directions Theory might take. Part II, Geoffrey Bennington’s Chapter 7, ‘Inter’, is the hyphen (*trait d’union*) that links and separates these sections. The collection brings together three

generations of theorists. There are those ‘Young Turks’ whose work introduced modern French thought to the English-speaking world and whose commitment and courage (sometimes in the face of implacable opposition) helped to establish the anglophone discipline of Theory. They are joined by a generation of thinkers who have both consolidated Theory’s position within the academy and expanded the horizons of Theory into a poststructuralist diaspora which crosses disciplinary borders and continents of thought. Finally, there is a generation of academics who have grown up with Theory and who cannot remember a time when they did not have it. The future lies with them, and theirs is the greatest responsibility. It is their task not to re-enact old paradigms and operations, no matter how comforting and familiar. They must be in a state of constant rediscovery of the conditions of Post-Theory: thinking through the aporias of the institution and resisting a disengagement with theoretico-political events. As such, we are already in the Post-Theory condition.

In Chapter 1, ‘*Déjà Vu*’, Nicholas Royle examines the destabilising role which the ‘concept’ of *déjà vu* plays in several essays by Freud. *Déjà vu* is shown, through rigorous exposition of each particular context, to be ‘undecidable’ and even to resist the possibility of a psychoanalytic theory and practice. Royle suggests that *déjà vu* and ‘post-theory’ are ‘concepts’ which ‘fundamentally unsettle the “first time” of an experience’, and he offers them as points of departure for a new generation of academics into new, newly self-reflexive, theoretical potentials. If the ‘Post’ in ‘Post-Theory’ implies a certain return to the already-seen for Royle, Christopher Norris’s ‘Deconstruction and the “Unfinished Project of Modernity”’ (Chapter 2) might be said to offer a response to the *déjà vu*. Norris presents a reading of Kant’s three *Critiques* through an examination of two essays by Derrida (‘Parergon’ and ‘Mochlos’). He argues that so-called postmodern theory has tended to promote a cultural and moral relativism which is at odds with the post-Kantian enlightenment project of critical-emancipatory thought. Norris offers an attentive reading of Derrida’s essays to demonstrate that, in spite of what is often believed, it is not Derrida who authorises a turning away from the conditions of truth and the rigour of philosophical inquiry. In this respect, Norris makes a claim for the impossible autonomy of philosophy as a critical resource in the ‘post-Theory’ university.

In Chapter 3, ‘Post-Gender: Jurassic Feminism Meets Queer Politics’, Patricia Duncker suggests that there is an important sense of *déjà vu* about contemporary Queer Theory. Duncker calls the feminist politics of the 1960s and 1970s in which she participated ‘Jurassic’ because of its attachment to certainties and to a limited appreciation of the ‘political régime of gender’. In contrast, she finds a new subversive energy in a Queer politics of demand. Queer Theory might be said to offer a more complicated understanding of

the gender system in its insistence upon the dismantling not only of patriarchal authority but also of heterosexual 'normality'. However, Duncker suggests, what is potentially revolutionary about Queer Theory is merely a re-presentation of the strategies and demands of 'Jurassic Feminism': namely, a rejection of essentialism, an emphasis on political organisation, and the destruction of the myths of gender. Antony Easthope could also be said to revisit important theoretical sites of the 1970s and 1980s as a way of thinking through a space for Post-Theory. In Chapter 4, 'The Pleasures of Labour: Marxist Aesthetics in a Post-Marxist World', Easthope considers the crisis of faith surrounding the possibility of a dialectical history. He asks what future there might be for Marxist literary theory, and addresses the problem of the possibility of a Marxist aesthetic operating beyond a functionalist paradigm. By reassessing the attempts (and failures) of the Frankfurt School, *Screen* and Derrida, Easthope argues for an ongoing assessment of the problem and proposes a more rigorously reflexive approach. What is at stake is the possibility of theorising the unalienated labour which art has always offered. In conclusion, Easthope suggests that Lacan's theory of the alienation of the subject might suggest a possible direction for Marxist theory.

Eric Woehrling, like Christopher Norris, is critical of the tendency to identify deconstruction with a Utopian free play of the signifier on the one hand, or cultural relativism on the other. In Chapter 5, 'Is the Novel Original? Derrida and (Post-)Modernity', Woehrling argues that deconstruction might be more usefully thought of as 'post-postmodern' and uses a deconstructive understanding of time to rethink deconstruction's ethical relation to tradition. Part I concludes with Chapter 6, Jeremy Lane's 'Pierre Bourdieu and the Chronotopes of "Post-Theory"'. Lane offers a reading of the current upturn in interest in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, as a symptom of a nostalgia on the part of certain critics who are suffering from Theory fatigue. To explore this longing for an after of Theory (which is paradoxically a return to the past certainties of the before of Theory), Lane looks at the play of the idea of doxa throughout Bourdieu's oeuvre. Lane argues that, while we should not reject the possibility of a sociological approach, we should be suspicious of a critical tendency which wants to find there that perversely seductive thing, a doxic theory.

Chapter 7, Geoffrey Bennington's 'Inter', tolls the bell for Theory, with a capital T, the science of interpretation as it is practised today in the Anglo-American academy. Bennington argues that, having carried the entire theoretical field, difference has effectively become carried away with itself. Henceforth it confounds itself with the classic themes of respect for persons; we can all agree to disagree. When this happens, Theory has thrown off its problematic element; it ceases to question itself and is content to promote some self-satisfied historicism. Bennington wants to shake up this smugness of a History that would like to think that it has got past the challenge of

Theory. He meets this return to History head-on with what is indeed a return to Hegel, to the text of Hegel, so as to see what is irreducible therein. Bennington's contribution could be taken as a call to reading against a certain culture of potted history and the silliness of second-hand philosophy.

For Catherine Belsey in Chapter 8, 'English Studies in the Postmodern Condition: Towards a Place for the Signifier', we are witnessing the end of literary criticism, even the best examples of which are no longer enough. This will be the case as long as we limit ourselves to the traditional terms of Lit Crit (author, work, inspiration and so on) which, although worn out, are still in use. For although Theory has been questioning these practices for some years now, there is no lack of resistance and reaction. Furthermore, the criticism that comes in the wake of Theory is too eager to wrinkle out its favourite themes and issues; it therefore tends to rush straight to the signified without pausing to consider the signifying process. Thus, what we must do is to give renewed attention to the signifier and its effects. Belsey engages with a recent strong instance of the return to tradition, the imposing *The Western Canon* of Harold Bloom. She points out how far Bloom depends upon the idea of the *Unheimliche*, the strange power of literature to bring us face to face with the secrets of life and death, to give shape to the return of the repressed. These are concepts which would require a theory of language capable of giving an account of the experience of the signifier as an experience of the Other. Without this, we are doomed to remain with Bloom gaping before an essentially theological mystery. A literary criticism that fulfilled its potential can still give us a particularly fruitful vantage point for the study of the constitution of the subject in language.

Chapter 9, Lorna Hutson's '*Ethopoeia*, Source-Study and Legal History: A Post-Theoretical Approach to the Question of "Character" in Shakespearean Drama', keeps the conversation of *Post-Theory* momentarily with Literary Studies. This is appropriate considering the historical importance of Literary Studies (and Shakespeare Studies within it) as a space for Theory in the Anglo-American academy. Hutson examines the resistance of the category of 'character' within Shakespeare criticism to poststructuralist and New-Historicist approaches. Hutson's response to this residual trace of Lit Crit is quite different from that offered by Belsey. Hutson makes a return to the analytic strategy of source-study, so quickly dismissed by Theory. Through a reading of *Measure for Measure* and contemporaneous legal documents on slander and sexuality, Hutson suggests that the liberal humanist notion of character may in fact be a consequence of the historical legacy of Shakespearean drama.

Chapter 10, Robert Smith's 'The Death Drive Does Not Think', starts with the question: if we are to follow Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to its logical conclusion, is it ever possible to say that full conscious thought ever takes place? What is at stake is the economy of the psyche, the mechanisms

whereby experience is expended in advance, delayed and exchanged. This broaches the metaphorical status of 'economy', which leads to the Enlightenment as a moment of speculation in thought as in commerce. Smith considers the challenges posed to ethical thought by psychoanalysis, where a death economy of low-risk investment in second-order reproductions might seem to be the norm rather than simply a failure of taste. Smith's chapter opens the collection out onto new theoretical territory. In Chapter 11, "Various Infinitudes": Narration, Embodiment and Ontology in Beckett's *How It Is* and Spinoza's *Ethics*, Alex Houen suggests that Spinoza remains the philosopher who provides the best model for thinking a plane of immanence. As Houen points out, however, this involves two distinct forms of infinity: on the one hand, a infinite quantity of finite bodies, modal forms of substance; on the other hand, truly transcendental essences without which substance as a quality common to all things would be unthinkable. What, asks Houen, is the relation between these two forms of infinity? Criticism faced with what looks like a doubling has tended to offer two distinct Spinozas: the one an idealist, the other a materialist, rarely both at the same time. What is more, it is precisely this classic partition of the spiritual and the bodily which regulates the relation between Theory and Literature. The former is called upon to give us an *idea* of the latter, which appears as an *object*, a phenomenon. Counter to this, it is to a novel, *How It Is* by Samuel Beckett, that Houen sends us for a more adequate response to this problematic.

Charles Forsdick outlines Edward Said's ambivalent relationship with Theory in Chapter 12, 'Edward Said after Theory: The Limits of Counterpoint'. On the one hand, Said has for a long time been critical of what he sees as a new orthodoxy and furthermore a factory for the production of western concepts which attempt to pass themselves off as universal. On the other hand, it is from within this western university that Said elaborates his own concepts. In response to his critics, Said has more recently proposed a criticism that would value counterpoint, the play of domination-resistance that is already at work *in* the colonial text. From this, one might have expected a more reflective project, more understanding of the nuances of contact and less given to apportioning blame along simple geographical boundaries. In spite of this admirable intention, or indeed precisely because of its grandeur, Forsdick suggests that Said can seem insensible to the possibilities of resistance presented by a reflective exoticist such as Victor Segalín. Seeing nothing but the exoticist, Said misses out on the *poète du métissage*. It is in its global ambition that counterpoint finds its limits. Chapter 13, Julian Murphet's 'Grounding Theory: Literary Theory and the New Geography', concludes Part III. In the light of the decline in prestige of the dialectic and the limits that the linguistic turn seems to have reached, Murphet proposes a reassertion of the production paradigm through space. Citing the burgeoning interest in Lefebvrian theory and the new geography, Murphet proposes the

possibilities of its adaptation to the representation of space in literary works. The New Geography might also provide the materials for a more nuanced approach to the conditions of the production of texts. Murphet's interest in the theoretical productions of space might be thought of as being in dialogue with Jeremy Lane's consideration of the chronotope which concluded Part I.

In his 'Preface', Ernesto Laclau responds to the implications of Post-Theory and so sets the scene for *Post-Theory*. In this context, Laclau's text might be thought of as the opening move in the theoretico-political event of this book. As such, this preface is our first post, a marker which opens us out onto Post-Theory. The volume finishes with an extraordinary text by Hélène Cixous, eloquently translated by Eric Prenowitz. This 'Post-Word' is both fragmented and 'unfinished', and, in the light of all that has been said, and all that will necessarily have to be said, about the 'post', this is perhaps the perfect way to 'conclude' this book. The text presented here is a letter sent to the editors in response to a request for a brief epilogue of concluding remarks. In keeping with the logic of the post, Cixous's text exceeds the bounds of what might be thought possible in such a limited space. It also rejects the limits of that space as a possibility for thought. The 'Post-Word' is necessarily incomplete and, as such, compels us to follow a train of thought which steers and folds back along its own impossible way, back to Laclau's reasoned 'Preface', and asks us to make another return to Post-Theory.

NOTES

1. Jacques Derrida, 'The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils', *Diacritics*, 13 (1983), 3.
2. Sean Sayers, 'Who are my Peers? The Research Assessment Exercise in Philosophy', *Radical Philosophy*, 83, May/June 1997.
3. Derrida, op. cit., p. 19.
4. Jean-François Lyotard, 'Rewriting Modernity', in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 25.