

BEYOND METHOD:

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I recently came across a piece written by Paul Willis as long ago as 1976 which supports the "beyond method" argument that I want to take as my point of departure in this paper. It's called "Notes on Method". Paul Willis, "Notes on method", Culture, Media, Language. Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-9, London: Hutchinson (in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham), 1980: 88-95. There, Willis wrote: "I shall be arguing that positivism's unwilling acceptance of 'qualitative' methodology sees more clearly than its own admissions that the emphasis on methodological variety may leave the heartland of the positivist terrain untouched. In its recognition of a technical inability to record all that is relevant - and its yielding of this zone to another technique - positivism may actually preserve its deepest loyalty: to its object of inquiry truly as an 'object'. The duality and mutual exclusivity of the over-neatly opposed categories, 'qualitative' methods and 'quantitative' methods, suggests already that the object is viewed in the same unitary and distanced way even if the mode is changed - now you measure it, now you feel it" (p.88). In his conclusion, Willis argued that "we must liberate the whole notion of 'methodology'" and turn, instead, to the relations between researcher and researched (p.95). While the directions I want to go in now, in educational research in the '90's, are somewhat different to Willis', I retain his spirit of skepticism about the old method debate, and his insight that there's not much difference between the 'quality' and 'quantity' sides of that debate.

So, in titling my paper "beyond method", I am disengaging myself from the fetishization of method that has characterized so much of the debate in the social sciences (what Mary Daly once called "methodolatry"). At the same time, I am also consciously avoiding the catastrophic "end of" type argument that pervades certain versions of "postmodernism". Baudrillard's 1983 essay "In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities...or the end of the social" is one instance of a contemporary theoretical-narrative which takes the "end of" position. His fatalistic, catastrophic tale has been read by some feminists (Laura Kipnis, for one) as playing out white Eurocentric male fear of the loss of modernity and their own supremacy. To claim "the end" of method (or of "the social" and therefore of

social science), would be to disclaim the possibility of further contestation. As Stuart Hall has pointed out, the argument is better understood as being about ideology. (see Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of Silent Majorities...Or The End of the Social and Other Essays*, trans. by P. Foss, P. Patton & P. Johnston, New York: Semiotext(e), 1983; Laura Kipnis, "Feminism: The Political Conscience of Postmodernism?" in Andrew Ross, ed., *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) I am not arguing for the end of method. Instead, I am signalling that the 'qualitative' versus 'quantitative' argument has reached an impasse, and that we need to look at research in education in new ways made available in the contemporary historical juncture. To put it more strongly, I would argue that it is a moral, ethical and political imperative that educational researchers of all "varieties" engage in a re-visioning of their project in the contemporary "crisis" of knowledge, specifically, in this instance, in the social sciences. There are numerous references to the contemporary "crisis" in knowledge. I'll name three. Edward Said (1983) has argued that the University as a site of disciplinary autonomy is under siege. Knowledge produced and disseminated under surveillance in

specialized disciplinary territories, thus protecting the methods of knowledge production, the identity of the field, its experts, its institutional presence, is now being challenged. Stuart Hall, has pointed to the knowledge crisis in his story of the emergence of Cultural Studies at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham. The break up of old structures of thought (theoretical frameworks, categories, themes, narratives, metaphors) is made possible, he claims, by the force of historical events. Cornel West has argued that the historical/cultural coordinates producing the current "crisis" of knowledge include the waning of the age of Europe since World War 11, the decline of North America as a superpower (which changes significantly the frameworks of American Sociology, for instance, and their importation elsewhere) and the ongoing de-colonization process with the consequent dislocation and mobility of peoples all over the world. The new global telecommunications, the international division of labor and the outdated notion of nation-states are other factors. (see Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: two paradigms," *Media, Culture, Society*, 2, 1980: 57-72; Edward Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Washington: Bay Press, 1983; Cornel West, "Black culture and postmodernism," in Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani, eds., *Remaking History*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1989).

A constellation of discourses currently constituting contemporary critical (cultural) theory offer critiques of the social sciences. I'm referring to philosophical "postmodernism", feminism, Cultural

Studies and post-colonial discourses. These discourses have converged, at this historical post-colonial moment, I prefer the term "post-colonial" to "postmodern culture" or "postmodern condition" to name the contemporary historical moment. Either way, the "post" is problematic, since it signifies a position about temporality, a time after/beyond and so makes a claim that "we" are, here and now, in the postmodern or that "we" have reached a state beyond colonialism. I agree with Spivak and others who argue that the post-modern "is not yet". At the same time, post-colonial times (in Australia of the '90's) have to be understood as times not yet here but which "we" (that is, some of "us"), are working toward and looking forward to. The hyphen signifies the interval in-between, a process of emerging through struggle. (see Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817, in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., "Race", Writing and Difference, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986: 186-183; Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, New York: Routledge, 1988; Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) to put into question the epistemological and theoretical frameworks, the narratives, metaphors and categories of modern social science,

including, I want to argue, educational research, in some new and powerful ways. But having said that, I want to stress the necessity of creating a dialogue between these critical discourses rather than merely pointing out their affinities and conflicts or, as seems to be common in work now being published (Rosenau's *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*, for instance Pauline Marie Rosenau, *Post-Modernism And The Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads and Intrusions*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992.), to attempt to "apply" "postmodern insights" to the social sciences without acknowledging that "postmodernism" itself has been critically interrupted by cultural critics of assorted persuasions. I am implying, of course, that feminism can no longer be avoided by male critics who have previously refused to engage with its debates. Any critical work which does not take into account feminist critiques is not engaging fully with the contemporary theoretical scene. (see Linda Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism*, New York: Routledge, 1990; Andrew Ross, ed., *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). By the same token, white feminists can no longer postpone their engagement with the critiques of feminism by women of color and "Third World" critics who, for the past decade at least, have pointed to feminism's cultural imperialism. (see for instance Gloria Anzaldua, ed., *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical*

Perspectives by Women of Color, San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990; bell hooks, *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, Boston: South End Press, 1981; Cherrie Moraga & Gloria Anzaldua, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983; Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics*, 17, 2(Summer 1987): 65-81) What has to be done, I think, is to begin to make a new discourse - a space of ongoing tensions and contradictions - from the emerging critiques, their rereadings and rewritings, of contemporary critical theories.

So, the question I want to ask is what critical possibilities does this newly emerging discourse offer contemporary education research and how can the project of educational research be re-visioned in the contemporary juncture? In the short space of this paper I can only pick out a few headlines and suggest what possibilities might be opened up for educational research.

Perhaps the first thing that needs to be acknowledged is that I have already taken educational research as "discourse". If we are going to rearticulate the project of educational research, then the shift to discourse is necessary and I know that in other sessions of the conference this week discourse analysis will be discussed

with specific reference to policy issues. But it should also be said that the shift to discourse (as in Foucault, or textuality in Derrida), may not be an unproblematic move. Undoubtedly, when education research and policy are understood as instances of discourse, new possibilities for critique are opened up. My caution is that the shift to discourse not signal a shift away from "the world" as is the case in philosophical "postmodernism". If Spivak's "resolution" of the problematic relation of "discourse" and "the world" is kept in mind, namely that discourse is representation of the world in the world, then the tendency of "postmodernism" to turn everything into discourse or textuality can be avoided. The point is to acknowledge discourse as one terrain of struggle but that the world is not a text. In that case, cultural workers need to adopt at least a two-pronged approach, one on education as a discursive terrain and the other on non-discursive practices of educators, kids, parents and the public.

To take the notion of discourse a step further, I want to argue with feminists, post-colonial and "third world" critics, that the social sciences, and educational research (and policy making) are instances of discursive colonization and that this is particularly evident in the context of contemporary heterogenous cultures, including Australian cultures. See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist

Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo & Lourdes Torres, eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991: 51-80 and numerous feminist critiques of science such as Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986; Donna Harraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*, New York: Routledge, 1989; Donna Harraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge, 1991. See also the presentations at this conference by Maori and Koori cultural workers. Homi Bhabha Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817" in Henry Louis Gates Jr., "Race", *Writing and Difference*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. claims that colonial (or, colonizing) discourses (like science, although he's referring to other instances of English cultural imperialism) function through a strategy of disavowal which involves a two-fold process,

of self-erasure and cultural disavowal. In this way, any universalizing discourse, by avoiding both self and others, that is, differences, can claim itself as a discourse for all times, all places and all people. Significantly, it has to be acknowledged that critical cultural theories themselves are not free of colonizing, universalizing tendencies. Laura Kipnis (1988) and Gayatri Spivak (1988) have made the claim that philosophical "postmodernism" is "not yet postmodern" but rather a return to aesthetic modernism, and that, despite its rhetoric of difference, it is a universalizing, colonizing discourse, claiming itself for all people and all time. What it effectively does is to return the Eurocentric male subject to the centre of discourse and meaning making. For the most part, feminists and cultural and post-colonial critics step warily around "postmodernism", some declining to use the term (like Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*), others taking from it what, if anything, they find useful, while making central the problematic of colonizing (Western) discourses. (West, Hall, Spivak)

If we are to work against the colonizing tendency of the social sciences, then, both culture and "selves" must be reclaimed. I want to argue that, for this to take place, the traditional project of the social sciences, and educational research, has to be re-
visioned, that is, both education and research into education have to be understood as cultural terrains and educational researchers (along with teachers and administrators) as cultural workers. To engage in educational research, in the contemporary moment, is to do cultural critique. The reclaiming of culture (and life) implies the reworking of

the relation of social science and cultural studies, that is, a reconceptualization of "the cultural" and "the social", both in terms of what they mean and how they interrelate. It also implies the possibility of knowing other than scientific knowing. Further, reclaiming culture means reclaiming the political, ethical and moral dimensions of knowledge and action. Cultural Studies works against depoliticizing science.

I'll return to this after a detour in search of critical tools.

Read against the theoretical/practical/political project of cultural critique, which I have now claimed for education research, the usefulness of philosophical "postmodernism" begins to fade. While it has challenged, and, to some extent, undermined, the foundations of modern science (by reversing modernist principles of universality, objectivity, rationality, representation and the unitary subject), from a cultural studies perspective significant elements are missing. Hall (who has carefully avoided positioning himself within "postmodernism") claims Foucault leaves us with no representation, no meaning, no agency and no subject. Moreover,

culture and ideology, which are key to cultural critique, have been summarily dismissed. All of these are necessary for understanding the construction of truth and action, the subject and subjectivity. See Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and the Centre: some problematics and problems," in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, London: Hutchinson, 1980; Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: two paradigms," in *Media, Culture and Society*, 2, 1980:57-72; Stuart Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, (summer 1986):45-60. Spivak has argued that to adopt an anti-stance (postmodernism as anti-modernism) to thinking causally or universally, or within humanism, is disabling for cultural practice because these notions are necessary to ground social justice, to make moral and ethical judgements and to take political action.

Moreover, postmodernism has been revealed as itself a discourse of transcendence (despite its own critique) What is the difference between the removal of the experiencing subject from modern science and the "disappearance" of the subject in Foucault and Derrida's anti-modernist theories? and the postmodern theorist as himself a transparent intellectual. While arguing against the transparency of intellectuals, he pretends that he himself has "no geo-political determinations." (Spivak, 1988, p.272) Read by post-colonial critics, "postmodernism" is a discourse about the demise of the Eurocentric male in the post-European era. West says it's "a kind of European navel-gazing", parochial, provincial and

Eurocentric." As an African-American cultural critic, he is rightly suspicious of "postmodernism". He asks what it can offer peoples of color who historically embody and enact postmodern themes such as "difference". Cornel West, "Black culture and postmodernism," in Barbara Kruger & Phil Mariani, eds., *Remaking History*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1989.

In addition, Hall has argued that the epistemologies of "postmodernism" ought not be swallowed whole. What is gained from moving to an "epistemology of difference" in opposition to the modernist "epistemology of identity"? Is the move to difference the way to go in the contemporary historical juncture? Many feminists have argued, critically, that such a move implies either

indifference, or a politics of pluralism and pragmatism. Neither of these alternatives is adequate. Moreover, postmodernism's "epistemology of difference" makes no reference to an actual community of knowing persons; the kind of difference referred to is "pure" difference. Neither can Foucault's shift to "local" knowledge, in response to the problem of universality in modern science, be taken up uncritically; it may well be an instance of an inadequately worked through philosophical gesture of reversal. The timeless/spaceless discourse of the universal (the fiction of singular temporality) cannot be simply replaced by "local" time/place. It's not a question of dismissing one and reverting to the other. Educators know some knowledge does "travel"! I think it's a matter of articulating a different kind of relation between what has been called the "universal" in modern science and the "particular"/ "local" or, in Harraway's term, "situated knowledge". There is a need for blurring of boundaries, for finding an in-between-zone. The suggestion of an "epistemology of identity-in-difference" may offer possibilities. See Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, New York: Routledge, 1988.

Moreover, the "postmodern" move beyond representation remains problematic for education research as cultural critique. At least, to understand this move as the "end of" representation, as certain "postmodernists" do, is not useful for cultural workers for whom a central problematic must be the politics of representation. This, I'd argue, is the central problematic of cultural critique, and of educational research in the contemporary historical juncture. Representational politics are cultural politics. To go "beyond representation" understood as mimesis, on the other hand, or, in the old language of realist educational research, "telling it like it is", is useful, however, because the "is-ness" of educational research is displaced, and representation is understood as constructed and mediated.

So does "postmodernism" offer anything for educational practice as cultural critique?

There is one thing I want to retain and develop further here, and that is its support for "boundary crossing", "Border work"/"border crossing", the anti-disciplinary and non-disciplinary moves (which is not the same as inter- or trans-disciplinary work) supports cultural studies work, while challenging the current compartmentalization of "bodies" of knowledge in the universities. Border crossings are breaking down the disciplinary constraints and challenging and changing the hierarchies of knowledge and power.

and, in particular,
the blurring of boundaries between science and fiction/narrative The notion of science as narrative/fiction is made available through the revival of rhetoric by literary and cultural theorists (Barthes and de Certeau), Lacanian psychoanalysis (Lacan's positing of language, culture and desire as mediators of meaning), and the sociology of knowledge (constructionists like Latour). Nietzsche, Bataille and Heidegger are long time predecessors of these moves (Nietzsche's questioning of Truths etc.). For Foucault, all you can do is produce socio-fictions which have 'reality effects'. (and theory and fiction/narrative). The rearticulation of old notions of Theory and the theory-practice relation are essential too. There are versions of postmodernism and feminism in which theory is rejected or jeopardized. But to make theory is to make cultural practices viable, to enable those practices to be articulated and transformed. Trinh has argued that theory has been separated off from story as well as from practice and that the blurring of boundaries between the theoretical and non-theoretical is now necessary. Story telling, is for her, another way of making theory. Story telling combines theory, analyses and practice since it is a reading, an interpretation. The art/craft of story telling breaks with modernist representational practices in that "she speaks to not about". (Trinh Minh-ha, *The Moon Waxes Red*)

My argument in this paper for the necessity to go "beyond method" is, in part, to challenge the regime of representational practices that have constituted educational research and to contest the authority of social science as the privileged representational practice in education. I am aided in this by reclaiming narrative and story telling, and especially the notion of science as narrative. According to this view, rather than providing a direct copy of reality, science, while retaining a relation to reality, narrates the facts. Through this kind of "border crossing," the boundary of science can be opened up and contested, unmasking science as a non-neutral, "fictional" space, culturally and historically constructed and

woven in power relations.

Addressing the problem of the closed text of science, feminists have successfully deployed the notion of science as narrative (Donna Harraway's *Primate Visions* is exemplary) to open up access to an otherwise exclusive field. Science, they argue, is one way of producing knowledge, indeed a particular kind of knowledge, but there are other ways, other knowledge producers and other stories, possibly better stories, about education than those produced by professional education researchers using the traditional technologies of science (again, I stress, 'quantitative' or 'qualitative' is not the issue). So, whereas the stories of science have been the privileged narratives about the world of schools, there are other story tellers and other stories which are produced differently but may be more valid. This, of course, implies a rejection of the epistemology of modern science as the privileged mode of knowledge production, understanding it as one way to produce knowledge, not the only, nor the privileged discursive authority on education. This move to narrative and story telling is significant in

reclaiming the narrative knowledge teachers produce about their own practices. The question is not whether teachers can do research or not. Given the constraints of teaching practice, it is easy for academics and professional researchers to stake out a claim to the territory of knowledge production about education, on the grounds that teachers simply don't have the time and know-how. The point is the knowledge teachers produce about schooling is not the same kind of narrative professional researchers produce. Teacher narratives compete with professionally, "scientifically" produced narratives. And some stories are better than others.

The narrative approach exposes social science/educational research as an instance of discursive colonization, as a culturally embedded "intertextual" practice which imposes its "models", frameworks, stories and metaphors on the world (of education), stories which are linked to other cultural/historical discourses, often patriarchal and Eurocentric, such as the military, biology, economics and communications engineering. These stories of

strategies, Harraway has written that the metaphorical and conceptual structure of the world in the post war West has taken the form of "a problem of strategic control." It is within this framework that educational research (of whatever variety) has constructed its objects and produced meanings and possibilities to the exclusion of others. These objects of research, and their "truths", have to be understood as cultural and historical artefacts. (see Donna Harraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science*, New York: Routledge, 1989) goal orientedness, measureability and calculability,

to name just a few, function as technologies of power shaping the discourse and practices of educators as militarized and/or economic zones open to prediction and control. These are the hegemonic stories which frame the debate, to the exclusion of alternative, and possibly more productive, metaphors and narratives.

Representational practices do have profound effects on educators and public debates generally. The notion of education research as narrative opens up the possibility of challenging and changing the narratives, categories and codes through which thinking about education has taken place.

If the notion of science as (cultural) narrative contributes to countering the colonizing tendency of educational research, it must also be countered by reclaiming bodies and selves. The moves amongst contemporary cultural theories to reclaim "the body" (bodies) and "the self" (selves) and rewrite "the subjective" and "the personal" in their cultural connectedness ("my" story is neither me nor "mine", but yours and yours; it's not bound to the identity "I" Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When The Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*, New York: Routledge, 1991.) open possibilities for the production of new knowledge. The dream of the social sciences of a disembodied epistemology free of locatedness Bordo calls this a "dream of everywhere", a dream which she argues is shared by both postmodernism and science. (see Susan Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism," in Linda J. Nicholson (ed), *Feminism/Postmodernism*, New York: Routledge, 1990: p.136), a dream of the possibility of self-erasure (I see you but forget myself) and the negation of bodies (a distancing which is itself a delegation of power), is an ideal model constructed in particular historical and cultural

circumstances, in the seventeenth century. See Susan Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987. How can we justify its use now? The bringing into play of the "self" in science has, of course, been forbidden. Typically neither "I" nor "we" nor "you" appears in the language of social science or educational research. If they enter, the field shifts to "not science". (you do hear "I" and "we" in teacher/curriculum development workshops, but of course that's dismissed as mere narrative, knowledge "improperly", that is, unscientifically produced)

Reclaiming bodies is also to reject the "postmodern" notion of "the death of the author". Whereas Foucault and Barthes claimed it didn't matter who the writer was, feminists and cultural critics have argued the necessity of an authorial signature and the

"situatedness" of knowledge. Social science is a marked discourse and must be acknowledged as such. He who writes carries the marks of his own body, his history and culture. Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions*. He must "position" himself - politically, ideologically, morally, ethically - when he speaks/writes.

Where will new narratives, new metaphors, new knowledge come from? From all those who have been excluded from the frame of representation. That includes those now considered to be key subjects in cultural critique, the new "hybrid" subject of post-colonial times. The "subject" of social science, typically understood as a permanent identity (one "subject" in one time, for all time), divisible into discrete parts (what Hall has called the "mantra of race, class and gender"), has now been displaced by the theory of the decentered/non-unitary subject (suggested by "postmodernism" but more powerfully articulated by post-colonial and cultural critics). The "subject"/"identity" is returned to her complexity. The new understanding of "hybrid" identity allows for the possibility of new subject positions which must now be central to educational research as cultural critique. See Stuart Hall "New Ethnicities," in Kobena Mercer, ed., *Black Film/British Cinema*. ICA Documents 7, London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988; Maria Lugones "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception," in Gloria Anzaldua, ed., *Making Face, Making Soul/ Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990: 390-402; Homi Bhabha, *ibid*) I'll just give one example of this. The category "gender" can no longer be used as a single category. It has to be linked more complexly with "race", class and other categories. (as black women keep telling white women they are not represented by the category "women"; gender is not lived/experienced separately from "race" and class for black or white women) But Hall says hybridity is everywhere. It has become particularly evident in the light of post-colonial critiques. That we live in more than one time and more than one place simultaneously, moving between "worlds" in our daily lives, necessitates a reconstruction of the theory of "subjects" which underpins social science/educational research.

To conclude. The old debates about "qualitative" and "quantitative" research have indeed been brought to an impasse. To take positivism as "the enemy" is to narrow the field of debate. To focus attention, as educational ethnographers like Willis wanted to do in the '70's (and ethnographers in anthropology are currently seeking), on equalizing or neutralizing the researcher-researched relation has been tried and proven unsuccessful. Moreover, the

inside/outside dichotomy has been rearticulated by contemporary

cultural theories, displacing the old idea of the researcher as the "outsider". "Method" is displaced by critical reading. What is needed now are new theoretical frameworks, new stories, new metaphors and alternative ways of conceptualizing education and research. I am suggesting that one way to do this is to understand educational research as cultural critique. The educational researcher, the transparent intellectual of social science, becomes a cultural worker who positions himself inside the frame of representation and speaks from the traditionally tabooed position of "I". He sees himself as having a moral, ethical and political imperative to engage in what Hall calls a "worldly vocation" rather than serving as a gatekeeper of science. This, I argue, is the path for change in the contemporary moment.

NOTES