

a symposium of  
*synthesis, an anglophone journal of comparative literary studies*  
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## ***The Legacies of Poststructuralism Revisited***

### **PROGRAMME**

*9.30-10.00 coffee and welcome*

**10.00-11.00**

MARIA MARGARONI, Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου/University of  
Cyprus  
*after the neuro-turn: the futures of psychoanalysis and the  
wager of the soul*

**11.00-12.00**

JOSH COHEN, Goldsmiths, University of London  
*theory and/as waste*

*12.00-13.00*

*Lunch and coffee break*

**13.00-14.00**

PATRICK FFRENCH, King's College London  
*suspended sentence; suspended animation, 'points de  
suspension', body suspension,  
'sustentation', the 'suspensive' force of deconstruction*

**14.00-15.00**

GIOVANNA COVI, Università degli Studi di Trento  
*creolisations, imperfections and becoming common:  
a feminist framing for radical global democracy*

15.00-15.30 CLOSING

Athens, Thursday 18 June 2015  
9:30-15:30  
University of Athens History Museum  
Tholou 5, Plaka 10556

### ***after the neuro-turn: the futures of psychoanalysis and the wager of the soul***

Staging a confrontation between Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic thought and that of neurology-indebted philosopher Catherine Malabou, my aim is to reclaim the value of this intimate space that constitutes the distinct object of psychoanalysis. What are the stakes of the confrontation between neurology and psychoanalysis within Kristevan territory? Can the neurological understanding of the emotional brain do justice to the heterogeneous site that Kristeva calls "the amorous, warrior soul" in all its historical richness? Finally, what is the potential that this (admittedly) theoretical site holds for the kind of "ensouled" politics Franco "Bifo" Berardi envisions: a politics of happiness, as he insists, that involves the creation of "zones of therapeutic contagion"? Drawing on Kristeva's post-1990s theoretical work and her fictional biography of Saint Thérèse of Avila, my aim here is to flesh out the psychoanalyst's multi-faceted response to the recent neuro-turn in contemporary Western thought. Certainly not dismissive of current developments in the fields of neurology and neurobiology, Kristeva continues to warn against temptations to "organicize the intimate"; insists on conceptualising psychoanalysis as the *tendere esse* of meaning and refuses to abandon the amorous dynamics of the "talking cure."

#### **MARIA MARGARONI**

is Associate Professor of Literary and Cultural Theory at the University of Cyprus. She is co-author with John Lechte of *Julia Kristeva: Live Theory* (Continuum, 2004); co-editor with Effie Yiannopoulou of *Metaphoricity and the Politics of Mobility* (Rodopi, 2006) and *Intimate Transfers*, a special issue of the *European Journal of English Studies* (2005). She is currently working on a monograph titled *Julia Kristeva's Faith in the Political* (under contract with Other Press). She is also the co-editor of a collection of essays titled *Layering: Rethinking Contact, Historicity and Critique Across the Humanities* (Lexington Books, Rowman and Littlefield).

### ***theory and/as waste***

One of the productive ironies of the poststructuralism's legacy is that it invites us to preserve a conceptual genealogy of waste and excess. In this paper, I will explore this genealogy, beginning from a Laplanchean reading of the Freudian death drive as the organism's impulse to radical, self-annihilating discharge. For successive modern theorists and artists, aesthetic experience is the privileged region of this self-annihilation. For Georges Bataille, the artwork is the dark or 'evil' residuum of an economy of waste that has been superseded by the instrumental rationality of modern Western economy. Following Bataille, Maurice Blanchot posits art as the other of a Hegelian history premised on purposeful activity and progress. Art's profundity lies in its absolute lassitude, its refusal to participate in the waking world, a claim I will develop through reference to a number of literary and visual art works by Melville and Tracey Emin among others. Taking account of the present economics of austerity, I will ask what kind of politics is ciphered by this wasteful aesthetics.

#### **JOSH COHEN**

is Professor of Modern Literary Theory at Goldsmiths, University of London and a psychoanalyst in private practice. He is the author of *Spectacular Allegories: Postmodern American Writing and the Politics of Seeing* (Pluto Press, 1998), *Interrupting Auschwitz: Art, Religion, Philosophy* (Continuum, 2003), *How to Read Freud* (W.W. Norton, 2005); and, *The Private Life: Why We Remain in the Dark* (Granta, 2013); Josh Cohen has published numerous articles on modern literature, aesthetic theory and psychoanalysis.

***suspended sentence; suspended animation, 'points de suspension', body suspension, 'sustentation', the 'suspensive' force of deconstruction***

The trope of *suspension* is remarkably active across poststructuralist and deconstructive theory, whether it relates to referential and communicative linguistic norms or to juridical and ethical procedures, both of which are salient in the idea of the 'suspended sentence'. Suspension, taken in its corporeal and experiential dimensions, also problematises assumptions around the notion of the Subject, who may be seen to stand with both feet on the ground and to thus be grounded and secured in knowledge and in experience. To be suspended seems to reverse this relation and propose a radical *undgrounding*. This paper will plot the linguistic and juridical issues around suspension against its spatial and bodily representation and performance, drawing on a range of theoretical and literary texts from Bataille to Derrida.

**PATRICK FFRENCH**

Is Professor of French Language and Literature at King's College London. He is the author of *The Time of Theory: A History of Tel Quel* (Oxford University Press, 1996), *The Cut: Reading Bataille's Histoire de l'oeil* (British Academy, 2000), *After Bataille: Sacrifice, Exposure, Community* (Legenda, 2007). He is also the editor of *The Tel Quel Reader* (Routledge, 1998), and has published numerous articles on twentieth-century French literature, theory, and film. He is currently working on a book on technologies of the moving body from Baudelaire to Beckett.

***creolisations, imperfections and becoming common: a feminist framing for radical global democracy***

This paper addresses a concern about theory's double-bind: its possibility to enable oppositional critique and potential for speaking truth to power, and its tendency towards the systemic academicisation and aseptic professionalisation of political and cultural discourse. It takes the actions and knowledge produced by Audre Lorde, and argues that Lorde's discourse—a worldly theory inflected in Afro-Caribbean-American feminist lesbian terms and shaped as a creolising poetics—shows how to fruitfully inhabit theory's double-bind because it is a poetics of relation, an imperfect theory, and a deficient practice. I argue that Lorde's discourse translated into Italian today may nourish fundamental empowerments and unexpected new affiliations, provided we embrace the full meanings of intersectionality as subjectivity and process (Kimberlé Crenshaw), of creolisation as opacity and relation (Édouard Glissant) and of radical democracy as ethics of imperfection and regard for the common (Leela Gandhi). The encounter may enable us to counter the paralysis of democracy trapped within a liberalism that excludes the ordinary and the unexceptional to give ourselves instead a democracy that is capable of including all "*sistah outsiders*"—a democracy for globalisation that is radical in so far as it is not grounded on the perfectionism and exceptionalism that provides the foundation of totalitarianism, colonialisms and liberalisms alike.

**GIOVANNA COVI**

teaches American Literature and Gender Studies at Università degli Studi di Trento. She has authored *Jamaica Kincaid's Prismatic Subjects* (2003); edited and co-authored *Interculturality and Gender* (2009), *Caribbean-Scottish Relations* (2007), *Modernist Women Race Nation* (2006); co-edited *Democracy and Difference: the US in Multidisciplinary and Comparative Perspectives* (2012), *Gendered Ways of Knowing in Science: Scope and Limitations* (2012); Giovanna Covi has contributed to the *Journal of Contemporary Thought*, *Modern Fiction Studies*; as well as in the volumes *Edward Said and Jacques Derrida: Reconstellating Humanism and the Global Hybrid* (2008), *Literatures in English: Priorities of Research* (2008), *From English Literature to Literatures in English* (2005).

*The symposium has been organised by Mata Dimakopoulou, Maro Germanou and Mina Karavanta  
Faculty of English Language and Literature  
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens*