Editor's Column: What's Wrong with These Terms? A Conversation with Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Diana Taylor

HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN CRITICAL TERMS LOSE THEIR POWER? Could it be that some of the fundamental notions of literary and cultural studies have been adopted so broadly in so many contexts and disciplines that they explain too much, and thus not enough? This is true for terms such as *textuality, discourse, narrative,* and *representation,* some of our colleagues have claimed. If critical terms originating in our field are imported, or some may say appropriated, by the social sciences, the arts, architecture, even law and the sciences, it is surely because they enable new ways of thinking and new modes of analysis. Can they be too open, too prevalent?

Last May, at a colloquium I attended, titled Mediating Anne Frank, this paradox came alive for me as I witnessed, with some consternation, the critique of a term I use productively in my teaching and writing. The event was organized by the Working Group on Jews, Media, and Religion, which is part of the Center for Religion and Media at New York University. Jeffrey Shandler introduced the colloquium by explaining the choice of "mediating" rather than "representing" in the title. Mediation is more dynamic, he stated; it is transactive and multiply relational, as opposed to representation, which still implies a relation of at least desired fidelity to an original, and thus still suffers from a burden of accuracy. In her introductory remarks, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Shandler's conference co-organizer, reiterated some of these cautionary words, which she already had mentioned to me in conversation at another conference, Visual Culture and Jewish Identity, the previous month. *Identity* is like *representation* in that it no longer means very much, she had told me. I tried to explain what representation meant for me when I lectured on "gender and representation" in the introductory course for

Women and Gender Studies, taught a course called Representing the Holocaust, or coedited the volume *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*. In our introduction to that volume, Irene Kacandes and I begin with the consciousness that "the generations of current college faculty members and students, and of *their* future students . . . have come to accept as a given that our access to the events of the Holocaust is multiply mediated," even as we insist that "at [the] heart [of this volume] is the question of representation itself. It is our conviction that the Holocaust, like any other historical period, cannot be taught separately from the question of how it is represented. At the same time, we need to emphasize that any teaching of representation must be grounded in a historical understanding of what we have come to call the Holocaust" (2, 5). At the volume's heart is the *question* of representation itself—hence the singular in the title. Mediation—multiple mediation—is a given, but the reference point is the relation between the vital and meaningful notion of representation, on the one hand, and a no less complex conception of history, on the other. Given its topic, the volume necessarily reflects on the *limits* of representation and on what might lie *beyond* textuality, representation, and narrative. Traumatic repetition or reenactment and what Charlotte Delbo so eloquently evoked as "deep memory," lodged in the body and the senses, certainly push notions of representation and narrative to their limit (see esp. Bennett).

I began to wonder what might happen if we started our thinking in a different frame. What follows is a part of an ongoing conversation I have been having (live and by e-mail) about these issues with two colleagues in performance studies at New York University, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (originally trained in folklore and anthropology) and Diana Taylor (originally trained in theater studies), and my attempt to understand the problems they see with the "colonizing" of terms from literary studies. What do we leave out when

we use the language of discourse, textuality, representation, narrative, when we construct objects of study of all kinds as "texts" and our analytic practice as "reading"?

BK-G: Thank you, Marianne, for launching this conversation. Let me start by commenting on your opening statement. Then I'd like to reflect on why it might be useful to bracket representation and think in terms of mediation.

I'm struck by two words, *appropriate* and *colonize*, which I take as an index of the problem: "critical terms originating in our field [literature] are . . . appropriated" by other fields, and other fields are "'colonizing' . . . terms from literary studies." Yes, *representation*, the term that you asked me to address, has been very productive and in no small measure because of the imaginative work of literary scholars. But, I would argue, it is also a victim of its own success and of the imperial ambitions of literary studies. When representation is a theory of everything, we need to bracket the term and step back. Take, for example, the conclusion to W. J. T. Mitchell's *Picture Theory*, which asks a promising question: "What is beyond representation, different from it, antithetical or other to it?" (419). Not much, it turns out, except for an even more protean theory of representation that can cover even more ground. Rejecting the naive notion of representation as correspondence, Mitchell, whose work I deeply admire, proposes a "notion of representation as something roughly commensurate with the totality of cultural activity" (420). That's the problem: it is not that a term like *identity* or *representation* "no longer means very much" but rather that it means too much.

I find it telling that *representation* is the first keyword in *Critical Terms for Art History* (1st and 2nd eds. [Nelson and Shiff]) and *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (1st and 2nd eds. [Lentricchia and McLaughlin]). *Mediation* makes its appearance by way of an introduction to, but not yet as a critical term per se

in, the second edition of *Critical Terms for Art History*. This I see as a virtue, as I will explain. Interestingly, Raymond Williams includes entries for *media, mediation,* and *representative* in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1st and 2nd eds.) and devotes chapters to *medium* and *mediation* in *Marxism and Literature,* which expands on several of the terms in *Keywords,* but in neither volume does Williams give to *representation* the centrality it enjoys in the United States.

While I appreciate Mitchell's efforts to make a disciplinary difference by turning literary studies toward the pictorial at a time when "various models of textuality" have become "the lingua franca for critical reflection on the arts, the media, and cultural forms," the notion of representation that he offers to that end is both too specific and too broad (11). Specifically, "[o]ne polemical claim of *Picture Theory* is that the interaction of pictures and texts is constitutive of representation as such" (5). Broadly, representation is a "stand-in for 'culture'" (423). Thus, Mitchell proposes first that representation serve as "the master-term for this field," somewhat narrowly defined as the "image/text problematic" (6), and second that *representation* replace the term *culture,* which is "so mystified and loaded with honorific connotations that it instantly paralyzes the faculties," because "'[r]epresentation' is more neutral, and (if it's thought of as a kind of stand-in for 'culture') it suggests the constructed, artificial character of forms of life, in contrast to the organic, biological connotations of 'culture'" (423). To his list of scholars who are likely to be offended by *Picture Theory,* Mitchell can add anthropologists, who would surely take issue with the idea that culture is the problem and representation is the solution.

If literary studies has experienced a cultural turn and anthropology has experienced a textual turn, they have not ended up in the same place. While the cultural turn in literary studies expanded the field into cultural studies,

the textual turn in anthropology has produced a "crisis of representation." The recognition that ethnography is a literary activity—and that it is deeply implicated in the relation of knowledge and power—has prompted an intense internal critique within anthropology, as well as important experiments in ethnographic writing. This crisis was formulated by Michael M. J. Fischer and George E. Marcus in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* and revisited in *Critical Anthropology Now* (Marcus).

MH: Do you see a need—or an opportunity—to mediate between literary studies and anthropology, for example?

BK-G: That is an interesting question. What anthropology (and other empirical fields) can offer is grounded theory and a more ethnographic approach to the material practices that Raymond Williams stresses. His work has been expanded by those working in "the anthropology of media," a field whose range and possibility are captured in the recent collection *Media Worlds* (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin). But that is another conversation.

What we need, I would argue, is not theory in search of objects but objects in search of theory. Objects that are new, whether to the world or to our fields of study, have the potential to alter the way we study the ones we already know, but not if they are simply assimilated into the frameworks we have used for studying the old ones. So long as the objects we think about—and think with—are words and pictures, so long as we think about them in terms of representation, which is finally where Mitchell's preface lands, we are likely to assimilate new objects under the existing rubric, while realigning the rubric to accommodate new objects. This is all well and good, but it is also the reason for the impression that there is nothing "beyond representation, different from it, antithetical or other to it." This is a case of path dependency: where you start—

literary studies, art history—will condition the path you follow, and that path will play an important role in defining the destination.

MH: What lies beyond representation?

BK-G: Referring to the Holocaust in this context, you said, "Mediation—multiple mediation—is a given, but the reference point is the relation between . . . representation . . . and history." But why is mediation a given? That is my point. As for representation, however much theorists resist reducing it to correspondence, when it comes to the Holocaust, this is precisely what is at stake: the relation between something (what actually happened) and its representation—and, even more acute, the relation of memory, particularly survivor memory, to history. The quintessential problematic for the Holocaust and representation has been formulated around the impossibility of representation, representation as necessarily misrepresentation (Elie Wiesel), and the limits of representation and representation of limits (Saul Friedländer, Berel Lang). That, of course, does not stem the tide of Holocaust "representations." Quite the opposite, particularly in the face of unrelenting Holocaust denial and ongoing genocides in our time. While mediation does not offer a way out of the impasse, it does offer a way around it, by changing the topic of conversation and directing our attention to other aspects of the phenomena.

MH: What other aspects? Is *representation* the problem and *mediation* the solution?

BK-G: No. Representation has been an enormously productive concept, richly theorized, and the concept has animated the exploration of a wide range of phenomena. It is semiotic at its core. Incidentally, I find it interesting that Charles Sanders Peirce considered representation a subset of mediation, which was fundamental to his theory of the sign. What Jeffrey Shandler and I are calling

for is a rescinding of the givenness of mediation, which, like representation, is prone to being reduced to a dualism—a primary phenomenon and its secondary mediations—and to correcting the distortions that ensue. It is worth noting here the somewhat dystopic tendencies in much work on representation, which arises from the worthy critical project of exposing the relations of knowledge and power, especially in regard to visibility—Martin Jay has taken this topic up in some detail. Mediation can take us somewhere else. As Jeffrey Shandler said at the colloquium Mediating Anne Frank, we are interested in "the relations among creators of a mediation, its medium and genre, its audience, its critics and epiphenomena, its history of remediation, as well as the form and content of the media work itself." While the term and the concept have a longer history, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, by Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, have made them central to thinking about the relations among media and mediations, whether a digital scan (on an auction Web site) of a printed postcard of a photograph of a painting or a complex book like *House of Leaves*, analyzed by the imaginative literary scholar N. Katherine Hayles.

We are inspired by Raymond Williams's reflection on mediation as "constitutive and constituting," chastened by his admonition that one of the root meanings of *mediation* (intermediary) is an impediment to theorizing the term, encouraged to salvage what is useful from this problematic concept, and emboldened by his insistence on material social practices: "Every specific art has dissolved into it, at every level of its operations, not only specific social relationships, which in a given phase define it (even at its most apparently solitary), but also specific material means of production, on the mastery of which production depends. It is because they are dissolved that they are not 'media.' The form of social relationship and the form of material production are specifically linked,"

and that link may be one of identity or contradiction (*Marxism* 100, 163).

MH: Why mediation? Do we really need more terms?

BK-G: I confess that we were given a set of terms—*Jews, media, religion*—and asked to think about them, rather like players of the surrealist game of exquisite corpse, at least at first. With these terms as our mandate and an open research agenda, Jeffrey Shandler and I have been convening the Working Group on Jews, Media, and Religion at New York University's Center for Religion and Media, at the invitation of Faye Ginsburg and Angela Zito, the center's directors. *Media* and related terms (*mediation, remediation, media practices*) have long and complicated histories. While we certainly use these terms, they have not yet risen to the status of keywords in our fields (literature, art history, anthropology, history). This we took to be an opportunity, as we did our initial perplexity about what precisely we would study.

Our working principle is reconnaissance: what phenomena might come into view or be worth examining at the convergence of Jews, media, and religion? The collection of objects that is emerging is remarkable not only for its diversity but also for the heterogeneity of each case: *Schindler's List* tours in Kazimierz, the incorporation of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* into the Passover seder through playing of the plague section of the film on videotape at the appropriate moment during the reading of the Haggadah, sing-along *Fiddler on the Roof* events, the Talmud on CD-ROM, Internet Jewish matchmaking services, nineteenth-century scale models and twenty-first-century webcam views of Jerusalem. In approaching this material, we first examine how social relationships are linked to forms of material production.

Thus, when we think about Anne Frank, our primary concern is not with how she is represented—this is the overwhelming focus of much of the Anne Frank scholarship—but with her many mediations and the embodied experiences of them. Her diaries are not only texts (now in dozens of languages and in definitive, expanded, and critical editions) but also physical objects, whose vulnerable materiality has prompted a five-year project of scrupulous "facsimilization." Rather than approach the facsimile project in terms of representation—the obvious place to go would be simulation, (in)authenticity, and the like—we prefer to explore how a facsimile can acquire "life" and value in its own right and to analyze it in terms specific to its media. We turn to a document describing the project, which speaks of the "uniqueness" of the facsimiles (a limited edition of two), bringing them "to life," and creating them "with love," through use of both the latest (optical) and the oldest (hand) technologies. The online remediation of the facsimiles—with zoom magnification—is an invitation to verify the claim that "only with careful study can one detect differences compared to the originals," right down to the thread count of the red and white linen of the original cover, the correct gauge of thread, the right dye, and exact replication of the woven pattern (Tanja).

There is no deceit here, no passing off of the facsimile as something that it is not, but rather full and proud disclosure. The artifactuality of the facsimiles, their madeness, and the labor of love that went into creating them are the point. The proper mode for engaging them is comparison (not substitution), for the facsimile is a relational object in the most concrete and material terms. What the facsimile does, among other things, is intensify one's sense of the utter materiality of the original diaries and reward attention to the minute, even microscopic, physical detail of both. In these ways, the facsimiles far exceed the project's stated goal: no margin of error, the perfect copy. As Pau Groenendijk, of Atelier Mooie Boeken, explains, "The assignment to facsimilize the

work of Anne Frank was an exciting and fascinating puzzle for me. A kind of book archeology; an expedition to recapture the essence of these books: the visual form through the printing, the theatrical form through the secondary items, and the three-dimensional form through the bookbinding" (qtd. in Tanja).

In thinking about Anne's house in Amsterdam, which is now a pilgrimage site, we start with the idea that you go there to be physically and affectively present to it. Once there, however, you discover that the house is caught between the promise of immediacy and a carefully produced interface that makes possible the visits of thousands of people a day, a dilemma anticipated in the site's mission statement: "The Anne Frank House is a museum where visitors are given the opportunity to personally envision what happened on this very spot" ("Historic Route"). A space that was inhabited day in and day out, as chronicled in Anne's diary—but precariously, in secret—the house is also caught between being and happening, which goes to the heart of what the house can and cannot do for the visitor. The key to visiting the house is walking. However, the nature of the house as an inhabited space is not well suited to the telling of Anne's story. That would require the synchronization of walking and narrating in a chronologically organized space—walking the plot—that we associate with historical exhibitions in museums. Because the sequence of rooms does not follow the major plotline of her life, the proprioceptive experience of Anne's house is of a different order. It is about what happened day in and day out as much as about what happened once and for all, the promise of a "historic route through the house" and "story on the spot" notwithstanding. For this and other reasons, it might be helpful to think about the house in terms of Diana Taylor's notion of scenario rather than as a spatialized historical narrative through which one moves—except for the final climactic disclosure of the secret annex.

We then turn to the CD-ROM, which miniaturizes the house, takes it apart, renders it transparent, and offers views of it from everywhere, at the will of the seated viewer. The house becomes navigable in ways made possible by the absence of gravity and materiality—one flies and glides and leaps rather than walks. The house becomes intelligible in architectural, even scenographic, terms. It becomes a toy theater, complete with a cast of characters, cutaways, furnished rooms, scenes, scenarios, and a plot—awaiting the gestures of the visitor to activate the views and plot elements and their significance in ways that are both structured and random. Online there are also a webcam and film footage that record the perspective from the back garden of Anne's house to the secret annex, creating a small opening, accessible 24/7 anywhere in the world, to a view of the chestnut tree that Anne mentions three times in the diary—that very tree in living color, the wind blowing through the leaves ("Virtual Display"). "News about the chestnut tree" online updates the fate of this dying witness, the victim of a moth and fungus attack. And there is a lavish book treatment of the house and museum and no doubt yet other remediations to be discovered. This material requires what Hayles calls media-specific analysis and attentiveness to particularities of remediation.

Is *mediation* the best term for capturing what interests us about this material? Perhaps not, but *representation* would not take us where we want to go. We are not looking for the perfect term or the perfect concept. We like the tension and torque of problematic ones like *media* and *mediation*, which force us to work with and against their sedimented meanings in new, old, and multifarious situations. By deliberately submitting ourselves to a handicap—by bracketing representation—we are forced to approach this material not as representation. There are other senses besides the visual (and more than the five senses we have long assumed). There are other modalities besides

texts and images. There are other practices besides reading and looking. There are other turns besides the textual and the pictorial.

MH: Bracketing representation—that is indeed intriguing and, as you say, a handicap. What would happen if we bracketed other terms, *narrative*, for example? In both editions of *Critical Terms for Literary Study* and *Critical Terms for Art History*, narrative appears fifth, enjoying a centrality close to that of *representation*. J. Hillis Miller, the author of the entry on narrative in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, underscores its importance in the first sentence: "Nothing seems more natural and universal to human beings than telling stories" (66).

DT: Literary theory has been extremely generative in providing scholars from other disciplines with valuable tools for "reading" all kinds of social "texts" and for transforming all sorts of meaning-making paradigms into "narratives." But part of the problem for performance studies theorists is that these terms transform everything—from cityscapes to films to embodied practice—into a discursive act that can only be understood with methodologies drawn from textuality. That literary lens leaves out many discursive and nondiscursive practices, acts of communication and transmission that involve words and those that take place through dance, music, and everyday practices (what in *The Archive and the Repertoire* I call the "repertoire" of embodied practices). Performance studies scholars who focus on embodied practices cannot afford to limit themselves to terms that turn entire repertoires of performed, meaning-making acts into discursive formations predicated on writing.

Let me take narrative as an example. For the term *narrative* to be useful to performance studies, it would need to be rethought in terms of embodiment and interaction. People—real live actors on the stage, in a courtroom, reciting an epic, undergoing psychoanalysis—say, do, confess, and perform. Such live performances are more multilayered, self-contradictory, than literary texts. That is why body language often cancels or acts against utterance. And in the conflict between utterance and corporeal expression, the latter is usually taken to be more true. Verbal oaths and other performatives often require the additional guarantee of a handshake, or the hand on the Bible. Why? Because folk wisdom knows that it is harder to mask or lie with gesture and facial expression than with words. Lying with words is relatively easy. Lying with bodies is harder. But some people can lie with their bodies—professional actors. It is this, not their words, that earns actors the suspicion of philosophers and thought police, from Plato forward in the West. No matter what the words are—whether a script or transcript—the act of the live body engaging with those who are present contributes another dimension. The readers of narrative would need to be replaced by corporeal viewers, participants, audiences, spectators, and what Augusto Boal so aptly calls "spect-actors." And instead of "reading" an expression or event, we would analyze and interpret it. In other words, we need a theoretical point of entry that will illuminate rather than occlude embodied practices and behaviors.

MH: Is theater more than just a point of departure for you?

DT: Theater, of course, makes visible the gap between the narrative elements we associate with plot, character, imagery, and other scripted features (i.e., drama) and the embodiedness of the live performance. The staging always has to pay attention to the distance between the social actor and the character. Bertolt Brecht, for example, chose to highlight the gap to sharpen the viewer's critical capacities, while Konstantin Stanislavsky sought to bridge it to promote audience identification.

A performance studies lens requires that we pay attention not only to the functions actors perform as characters in relation to narrative structures but as well to the social actors who embody roles. Such a lens also encourages us to examine the context in which the scene (or what I have theorized as scenario) is activated. The way an actor says a line onstage during a dictatorship may communicate more to the audience than the script does. Silence itself communicates, and censors can control texts but not tone or silence.

But the issue of embodiment goes way beyond theater studies. Gender studies scholars have noted the fact that drag kings and queens, for example, illuminate the corporeal work that goes into the normative performance of gender. Other fields would benefit enormously if scholars thought not just of narrative and discursive practices but also of bodies and behaviors. For example, if we analyzed survivor testimony in trauma studies as a performance rather than just as a narrative, we could explore the vital embodied dimension of trauma and better understand the process of transmission that is survivor testimony. Trauma, after all, manifests itself physically in the flesh, revisiting the body through flashbacks, shudders, sweats, and other symptoms of distress. Traumatic memory often relies on live, interactive performance for transmission. Even when theorists discuss traumatic transfers as narrative, it is clear from their quotations and examples that traumatic memory is transmitted from victim to witness through the shared and participatory acts of telling and listening associated with live performance. Bearing witness is a doing that takes place in real time in the presence of a listener who, as Dori Laub puts it, "comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event" (57).

So whether it's a question of mimetic representation (an actor assuming a role), a therapeutic working-through, or a testimonial transfer or whether it's a question of performativity, of social actors assuming socially regulated patterns of appropriate behavior, it is essential that our explanatory methods pay attention to bodies and to the systems of embodied practices that they transmit. This will be difficult, if not impossible, if we continue to overuse and extend words such as *narrative* and apply them to fundamentally nondiscursive objects of analysis. Textual or inscribed practices differ from embodied or incorporated ones—a distinction Paul Connerton explores in *How Societies Remember.* In my work, I use *scenario* to refer to large, overarching paradigms of cultural imagining, somewhat akin to narrative or, maybe better, master narrative but understood from the perspective of embodied social practices and behaviors.

MH: How do you define *scenario*? And how, precisely, does it differ from *narrative*? What, in your view, does it do that *narrative* does not?

DT: I use *scenario* as a meaning-making paradigm that includes features well theorized in literary analysis, such as narrative and plot, but that allows for context, milieus, and corporeal behaviors like gestures, attitude, and tone not reducible to language. Scenarios frame and activate long-standing social dramas. Scenarios, like narrative plots, as Vladimir Propp proposed in his work on the folktale in 1928, are limited to a finite number of variations, with their own classifications, categories, themes, forms, characters, and so on. As do narratives, they delimit the range of expressive possibilities for the communities that generate them. Social dramas, like theatrical dramas, are emplotted in culturally specific ways. In the West, we have learned to think linearly about conflict, crisis, and denouement. The anthropologist Victor Turner took the Aristotelian beginning-middle-end model of drama and applied it to what he saw as the four stages of social drama—breach, crisis, redressive actions, reconciliation—as

if this model were universally applicable. But communities around the world clearly differ in what they identify as viable options, what they rehearse as ideals, and how they go about emplotting those options. These decisions are, of course, the product of economic, political, and social structures that they, in turn, tend to reproduce. All scenarios, like narratives, have local meaning reflecting the assumptions, values, goals, structures of power, and social players of a specific community. Given that fact, the ways scenarios play out might seem predictable, even inevitable. How could it be otherwise? But they are, ultimately, flexible and open to change. Social actors may be assigned, or may take on, roles—deemed static and inflexible by some. Nonetheless, the irreconcilable friction between the social actors and the roles allows for degrees of critical detachment and cultural agency. Social roles are always being redefined—that's what making history means. And the ability to make history through embodied practice drives Brechtian and Boalian commitments to social change through performance.

MH: Do you understand scenarios as embodied forms of what we might call master narratives?

DT: I would argue that the notion of scenario expands our vision of cultural constructs that seem ubiquitous and almost disembodied, or indeed what many call master narratives. Scenarios of conquest, for example, have reappeared constantly throughout the past five hundred years in the Americas. Why do they continue to be so compelling? They are portable frameworks that bear the weight of accumulative repeats. Scenarios are as old and yet as recent as the visions a community has of itself. Is the United States a conquering nation, a Wild West, live-free-or-die mix of empire and unruly frontier mentality? How do those images circulate in ads, newspaper headlines, fashion, films, stories, cartoons, and so

on? The scenario makes visible, yet again, what is already there—the ghosts, the images, the stereotypes. So the scenario includes the work of narrative but adds the corporeal dimensions that narrative leaves out. Yet the scenario is not necessarily, or even primarily, mimetic. While the paradigm allows for a continuity of cultural myths and assumptions, it usually works through reactivation rather than duplication. Instead of a copy, the scenario constitutes a once-againness. In musical terms, we could call it a variation on a theme. The discoverer, conqueror, and "savage"—the native princess, for example—might be staple characters in many Western scenarios. Sometimes these stereotypical figures and plots are written down as narrative, but the scenario predates the narrative and allows for many possible endings. Astronauts and tourists may actually undertake adventures to live the glorious fantasy of conquest and possession. Television contestants strive for protagonism in shows such as *Survivor* and *Fantasy Island.* The scenario both reflects and structures our understanding. Like Propp's plots, scenarios also haunt our present, resuscitating and reactivating old dramas. That may be why they seem so convincing: "Wanted Dead or Alive." We've seen it all before. The framework allows for occlusions—by positioning our perspective, it promotes certain views while making others disappear. In the "fantasy island" scenario, for example, we might be encouraged to overlook the displacement and disappearance of native peoples, gender exploitation, environmental harm, and so on. This partial blinding is what I have called percepticide (*Disappearing Acts*).

MH: How can scenarios be changed, resisted? It seems to me that there is a political edge to your analysis as there is to Brecht's and Boal's, of course.

DT: The scenario forces us to situate ourselves, physically and therefore politically, in

relation to it. While narrative also asks us to position ourselves, as readers, scenarios place us as actual participants, spectators, or witnesses to the event. We need to be there, part of the act of transfer; otherwise, the transmission or communication does not occur. Reading also entails embodiment, as the reader curls up on the sofa with a good book, for example. But the reader need not be present at the event being depicted. Yet even when the scenario takes place in private, as in confession or therapy, it depends on interactivity between people. The utterance may be a monologue, but it is never simply a narrative. So while the gap between role and social actor encourages critical distancing, the physical involvement in the scenario of the onlooker or participant precludes the safe distancing allowed by texts and narrative. Even the ethnographic writers who cling to fantasies that they might observe cultures from the margins are part of the scenario, though perhaps not the one the writers strive to describe (see Clifford). Scenarios do not allow for perspectival vision that places viewers safely outside the frame—we are in it, part of the picture that we, as scholars, are also trying to understand.

Considering scenarios as well as narratives expands our ability to analyze the live and the scripted, the repertoire (or corporeal storehouse) of embodied practices as well as the inscribed practices of the mortar-and-brick archive. It also allows us to recognize similarities and differences between incorporated and inscribed practices so that we can more fully analyze each on its own terms and in relation to the other—the citational practices that characterize both, how traditions get constituted and contested, the various trajectories and influences that might appear in one but not in the other. Narrative, grounded in textuality, might be considered more permanent and resistant to change than scenarios. After all, we have texts that are thousands of years old. Corporeal practices seem doomed to the now. They may be considered

ephemeral, as that which disappears. But that is why it is so important to think about scenarios as structures of embodied practices that continue yet change over time. Communities can make legal claims to land ownership, for example, based not on documents but on past practices. Organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank ratify conventions and develop cultural policy around "intangible cultural heritage," recognizing that performed practices sustain communal identity over time. Isn't it time that more scholars in literary studies consider expanding not their terms but their methodological frameworks, to better understand and explore the workings of the repertoire?

MH: Your objects are *Schindler's List* tours, the Talmud on CD-ROM, the Anne Frank House, embodied practices, scenarios of conquest. Where does literature fit into your work? What about Anne Frank's writing? In literary studies, we have said that we can apply our practices of reading to other "texts" or objects such as the ones you have named. Can we apply your methods of analysis to literary works? Do you see a continuity or a commonality between literary and other objects?

DT: We often include literary texts in the analysis of a scenario, as part of the larger picture. How do texts—such as *Robinson Crusoe* or Fernando Arrabal's *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria*—point to moments in the production of cultural imaginaries that are being played out on local, national, or international levels? But the focus is different from that of literary studies, which might look at the world through the text, while we might look at the text as part of the larger world.

BK-G: We want to extend a consideration of text beyond literary analysis, beyond discourse and reading. This means asking, as Carlo Ginzburg does, how abstract notions of text arose through processes of disembodi-

ment and dematerialization as technologies of writing and printing separated the text from its oral and gestural performance, while reading and interpretive practices made the physical characteristics of the text irrelevant. As a result, as Ginzburg notes, the text was "gradually purified at every point of reference related to the senses" (107). Work like Jeremy Stolow's project "Orthodox by Design," on ArtScroll, a publisher of lavishly produced Jewish books, restores to a consideration of text matters of the senses, embodiment, materiality, and performance. Methodologically, we are interested in how the methods used by artists might inform our ways of working, along the lines proposed by the film scholar Robert B. Ray. This takes us in a direction more heuretical (if not heretical), following Gregory L. Ulmer's notion of heuretics, from *heuresis*, or invention, in rhetorical theory, in contrast with hermeneutics. A heuretical approach invites attention to what is made *with* and not only *of* the text. Particularly rewarding in this regard is the avant-garde wedding celebration of the video and performance artist Melissa Shiff and the media scholar Louis Kaplan, which included projections of sacred Hebrew texts—some of them decomposing and recomposing to form new texts—onto bride and groom during the ceremony.

MH: Well, it seems we have come to a traditional—narrative, performative, and mediated—form of closure: a wedding! But in the context of this issue of *PMLA*, we are at a beginning. What follows is an exciting set of articles that echo many of the questions we have raised here as they discuss bourgeois interiors (Badowska), performance and opera (Goehring, Krimmer, and Kolb), cultural displacement (Christie), and writing and visuality (Lynd). Three state-of-the-art essays—"Queering History," "Literature and Politics of Native American Studies," and "Literary Studies: The Southern United States, 2005"—continue this new feature, which has already elicited lively

conversation in the Forum section of this issue. We look forward to your responses.

Marianne Hirsch

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