Post – Structuralism –
a (very) brief Introduction

Structuralism/ Post Structuralism

(early 20th Century – 1960…..)

- There are so many similiarities between post structuralist theories and postmodernist practices that it is difficult to make a clear distinction between them.
- Post structuralists like Foucoult, Barthes, Derrida and Lyotard can also be thought of as postmodernists.
- Postmodernism is in part a description of a new type of society, but also, in part, a new term for Post - structuralism in the arts (Sarup:133)
- **Post structuralism develops the implications of structuralist premises about meaning, in order to develop a position which, though recognizably distinct, does not discard those premises altogether. (Introduction to Continental Philosophy: 178)**

Key Theorists include:

Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Lacan/Freud, Levi - Strauss, Deleuze & Guattari, Michel Foucault, Monique Wittig, Luce Iraguay, Jean - Francois Lyotard, Donna Haraway, Bracha L Ettinger.

Key Themes:

Jacques Derrida – Deconstruction
Deleuze and Guattari – Rhizomatic/Schizoanalysis
Roland Bathes – Death of the author
Judith Butler – Gender performativity
Bracha L Ettinger – Matrixial Theory, pre-oedipal concept
Donna Haraway – Cyborg Feminism
Jean-Francois Lyotard – analysis of the Impact of Postmodernism

Key Texts:

Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology
Delueze & Guattari, A Thousand Plataeu's, Anti- Oedipus
Roland Bathes – Death of the author
Judith Butler, Gender Trouble
Bracha. L Ettinger, The Matrixial Border Space
Donna Haraway - The Cyborg Manifesto
Jean-Francois Lyotard: The Postmodern Condition

Structuralism/ Post structuralism

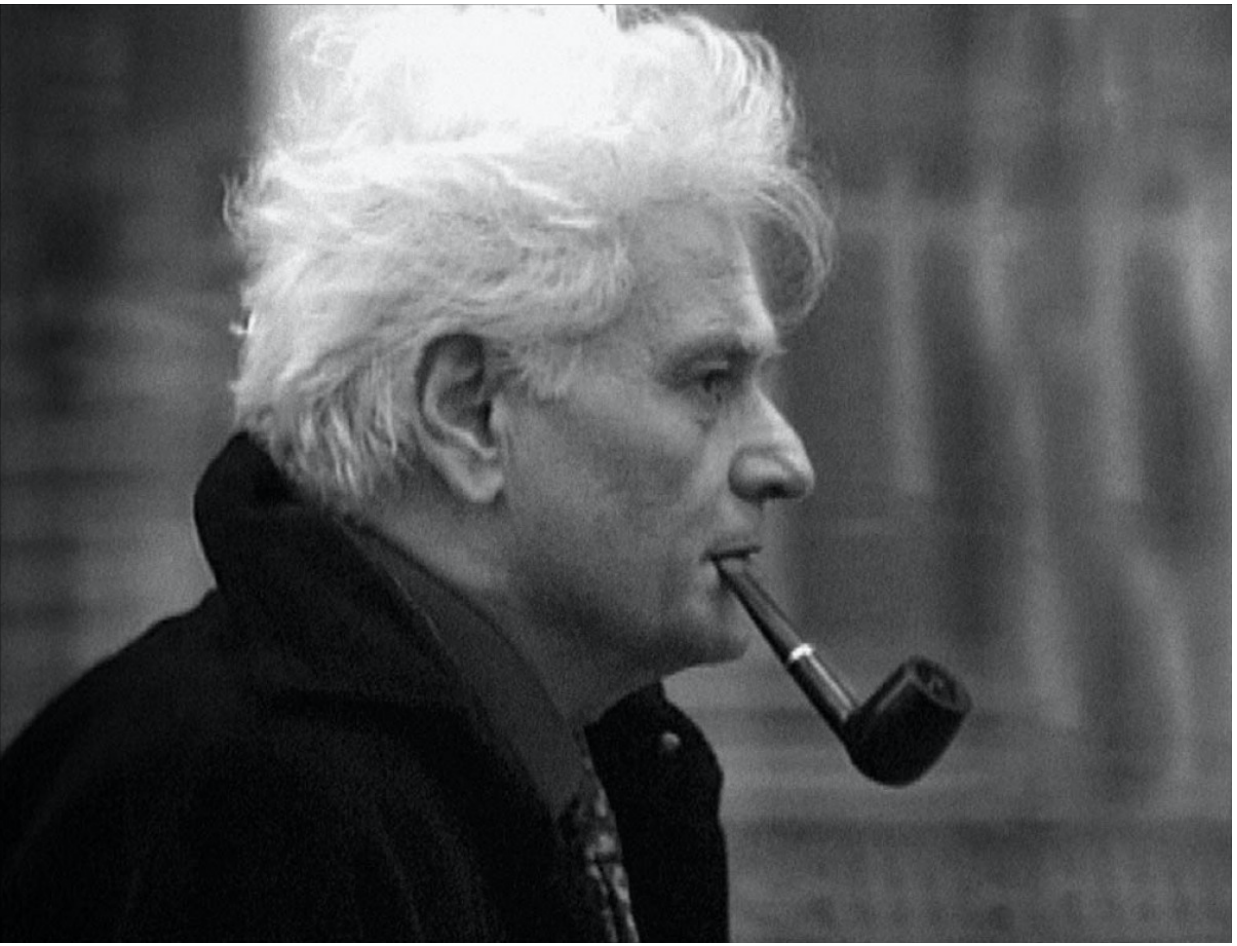
Stucturalist thought – **establishes and reinforces boundaries. These binary** oppositions of metaphysics (branch of philosophy) include signifier/ signified, sensible/intelligible, speech/writing, speech(parole)/language(langue),diachrony/synchrony, space/time, passivity/activity, male/female. Derrida criticise's the structuralists for not questioning these oppositions. He suggests they have not been put **'under erasure'** (Sarup: 38) .

Poststructuralist thought **– open's up boundaries** for (re)interpretation.
It embodies **'différance'** to draw from Derrida's terminology, Much like postmodernism, it is marked by **intertextuality, irony, pastiche, and genre blurring.** (Owens, 1990: 57, Barker, 2004: 157)

Post Structuralism works against the idea of grand narrative (which is deemed reductionist, simplistic and totalizing), in favour of '**petit récit**' or '**small narratives'** (Lyotard, 1984, p.60). However, Post structuralism/post modernism have been criticised in this sense, since in establishing a theory, might that not also be thought of as a totalizing or grand narrative?

The contrast between is **not one of outright opposition**. PS develops the implications of Structuralist premises about meaning in order to develop a position, distinct but not entirely discarding of principals. (Intro to continental Philosophy: 178)

Jacques Derrida and Deconstruction



Algerian born French Philosopher.(1930- 2004)

Derrida is famous for developing a procedure called **Deconstruction,** and is mainly concerned with the role and function of language.

This involved reading a 'text 'so closely that its criteria failed itself. It is Derrida's attempt to deconstruct the opposition between speech and writing which is important here.

Philosophers before Derrida including Husserl, Rousseau, Saussure, Plato, Freud believed that **speech was more present that writing**, therefore more privileged, immediate, immanent, truthful, implying (immediacy of voice)or 'phonocentricism', **Writing remained "hopelessly mediated"** second hand, less present, an appendage.

Saus rature and Différance

One of the most important concepts to grasp in Derrida's work is the concept of '**saus rature' or 'under erasure'**

In Derrida's view of language, the signifier is not directly related to the signified. For example, to consult a dictionary is to continually find a sign that leads to another and another indefinitely. Meaning is continually moving along on a chain of signifiers. The importance of this is that language is much less stable affair than was thought by the structuralists such as Levi - Strauss.(Sarup:33).

A dictionary 'reading' provides a useful analogy here.

Différance, as a neologism (or new word) is a a term which is subtly but significantly unlike **différence,** the normal French word for difference – written differently but pronounced identically in French, Derrida is able to disrupt the precedence for speech, its truth/ presence in this gesture.
(Introduction to Continental Philosophy: 179)



Levi Strauss - Levi – Strauss

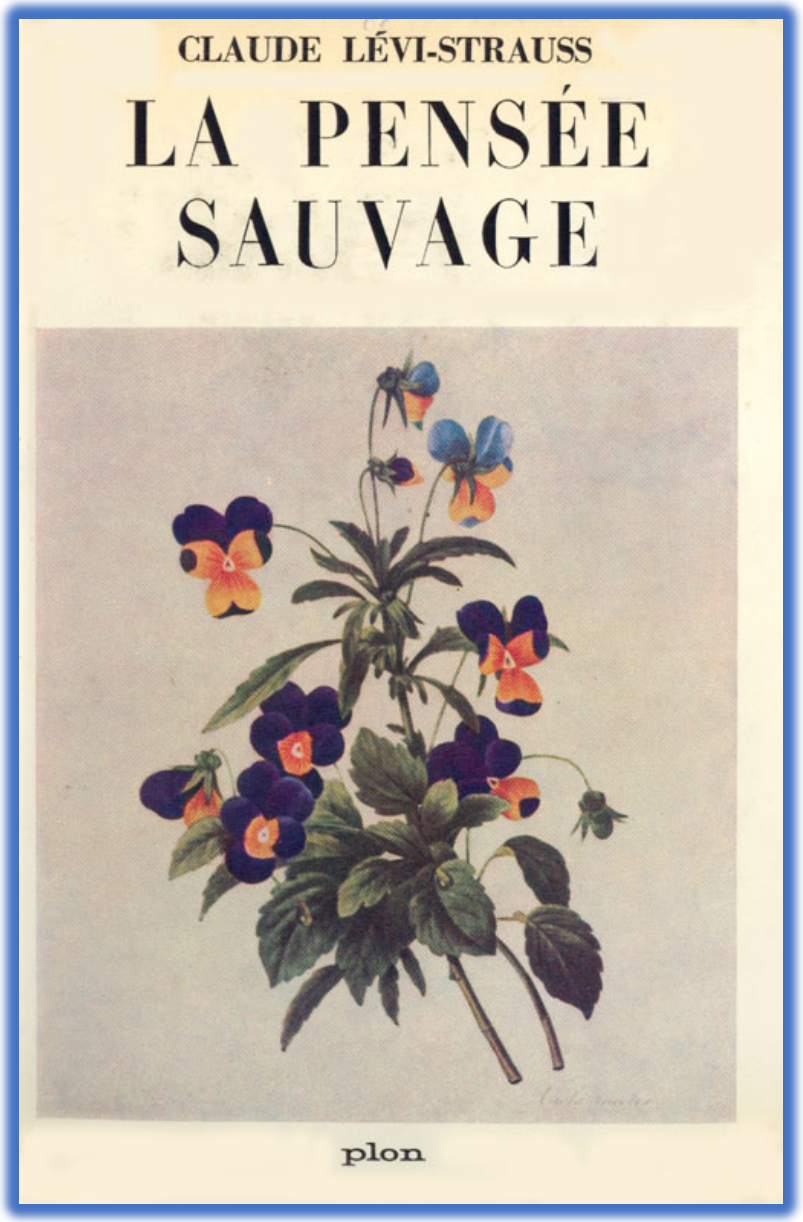
Writing is the name of the structure always already inhabited by the trace. In other words, writing through deconstruction tactics reveals the text through its absence. This is referred to as a **metaphysics of presence.**

Writing as Deconstruction is not the empirical concept of writing.

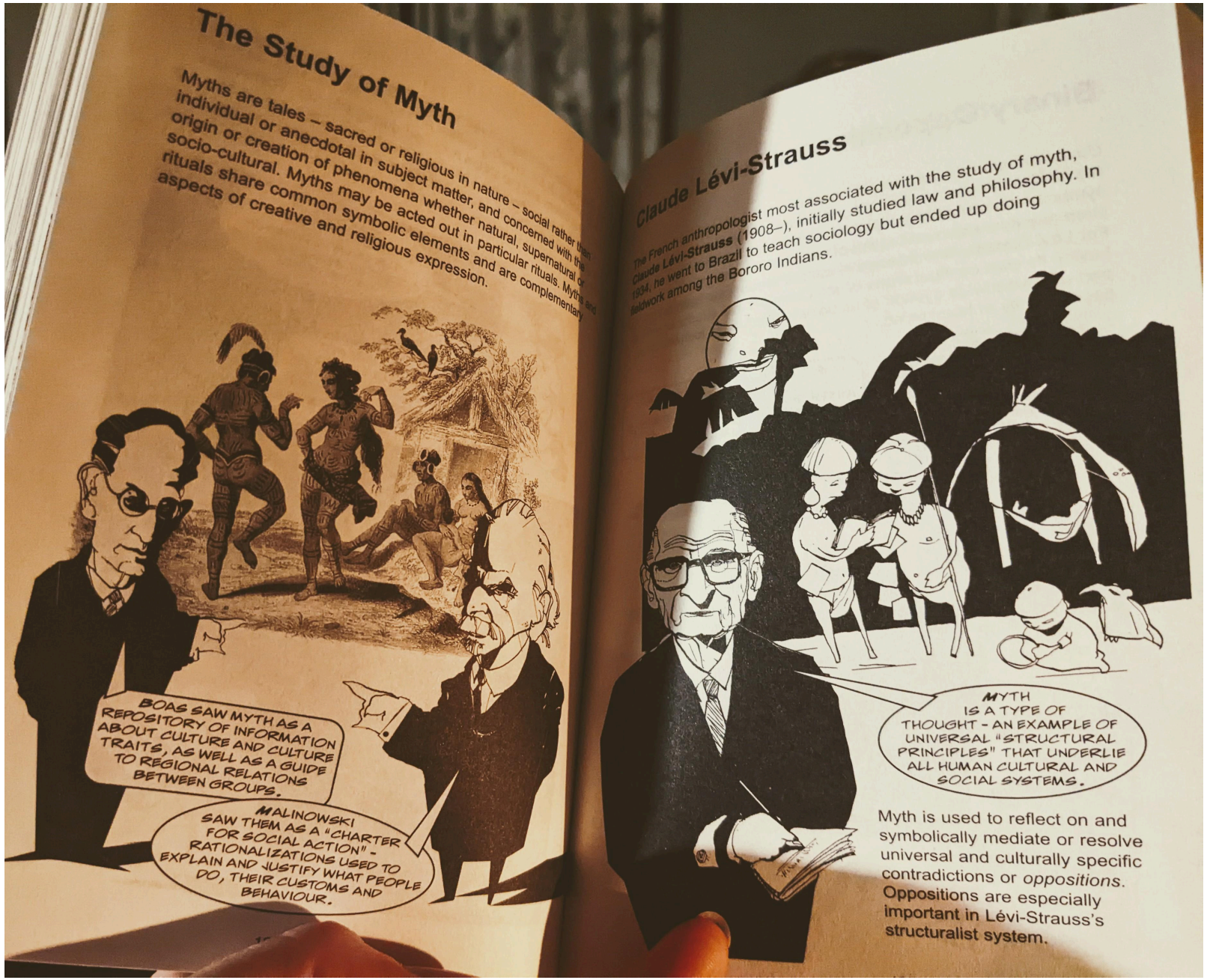
For example, Derrida suggests that when the anthropologist Claude Levi –Strauss (1908 - 2009) describes the life of the Nambikwara and their transition to civilization he takes upon himself the burden of guilt produced by this encounter between civilization and the "innocent' culture it ceaselessly exploits. In Derrida's a view there is no pure 'authenticity' as Levi Strauss imagines; the theme of lost innocence is a romantic illusion. (Sarup:40).

Claude Levi Strauss, (1908 - 2009). Anthropological fieldwork

Heavily influenced the field of **structuralism**.
Influenced a generation of social scientists
A white, French, male anthropologist, Levi – Strauss, **adopted the privileged position of observer.**
He produced work on **kinship as a universal structure** which encompass distinctive and irreducible rules of combination and transformation. The diversity of structures found in human societies and cultures can be shown to derive form a single unifying structure.
His field work included the study of the Nambikwara Indians.
He deemed writing an instrument of oppression, a means of **colonizing the primitive mind.**
In "The Savage Mind" he creates the distinction between the **bricoleur**, who is the "savage mind", and the **engineer** who represents scientific thought.



The Savage Mind, 1962



Introducing Anthropology, A Graphic Guide.

The Study of Myth

Myths are tales- sacred or religious in nature rather than individual or anecdotal in subject matter, and concerned with the origin or creation of phenomena whether natural, supernatural or socio cultural. Myths may be acted out in particular rituals. Myths and rituals share common symbolic Elements and are complementary aspects of Creative and religious expression.

Trinh T. Minh-ha, Vietnamese (1952) (anti)ethnographical fieldwork



https://archive.ica.art/whats-on/season/trinh-t-minh-ha/index.html

A theorist, (of feminist and post colonial influences), composer and feminist filmmaker.
Dedicated to **questioning totalising systems of knowledge, representations and categories of identity.**
Work is characterised by **interdisciplinarity, reflexivity and the inclusion of a multiplicity of voices.**
Work exists as **'boundary event(s)'.**
She **disrupted the male gaze**, producing filmic works **as part of**, rather than outside of lived experiences.
If post structuralism is a critique of structuralism conducted from within, Trinh- T - minh-ha's work can be considered in relation to her (anti) ethnographic approach.

Re (assemblage), **Trinh T. Minh-ha's** Anti-Ethnography

A general tactic for grasping Trinh's cinema is supplied by the artist herself. The frequently quoted line from her first film, *Reassemblage* (1982), a study of women and rural life in Senegal, where she lived for three years while teaching at the National Conservatory of Music in Dakar, goes: **"I do not intend to speak about; just speak nearby".** Trinh refers to her position as a visitor vis-à-vis the villagers she met and discloses her position **as an *un* - authoritative narrator.**

artreview.com/the-enduring-power-of-trinh-t-minh-ha-films/



Bricolage is the central cultural style of the postmodern [characterised by a continual flow of images] a juxtaposition/montage, paradox, ambiguity and the blurring of the boundaries of genre, style and history.
(Barker, 2004: 157)

Postmodernism is in part a description of a new type of society, but also, in part, a new term for Post - structuralism in the arts. (Sarup:133)



Exploring Concepts – Bricolage.
between structuralist and post structuralist approaches

Bricolage is the skill of using whatever is at hand and recombining them to create something new.
Levi - Strauss compares the working of the bricoleur to that of the engineer.
The bricoleur, who is the “savage mind”, works with his hands in devious ways, puts pre-existing things together in new ways, and makes do with whatever is at hand. What Levi-Strauss points out here is that signs already in existence are used for purposes that they were originally not meant for. (Doja; 2006)
https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/16575/1/16575.pdf

As opposed to the bricoleur, the engineer, who is the “scientific mind”, is a true craftsman in that he deals with projects in entirety, taking into account the availability of materials, and creating new tools.
https://literariness.org/2016/03/21/claude-levi-strauss-concept-of-bricolage

In contrast, Thompson – Hardy uses ‘critical ethnography’ in a bricolage, to gain insight into films and documentaries that center on child beauty pageant culture. Rather than conducting traditional audience studies like John Fiske (1993), I want to investigate the culture and characters portrayed in these films and documentaries and to investigate the social dynamics that exist outside the films.

In contrast, Thompson –Hardy sees herself as a bricoleur, using this method to ‘balance my use of self without dominating others' views in the research […] so that a dialogue between research and researcher focuses **not on privileging a dominant narrative or view-point, but on breaking down the hierarchies that exist between research and researcher.** Chapter Three: Bricolage: Cultural Studies, Poststructural Feminism, and Poststructuralist Ethnography

Bricolage, Levi – Strauss to Levi Strauss



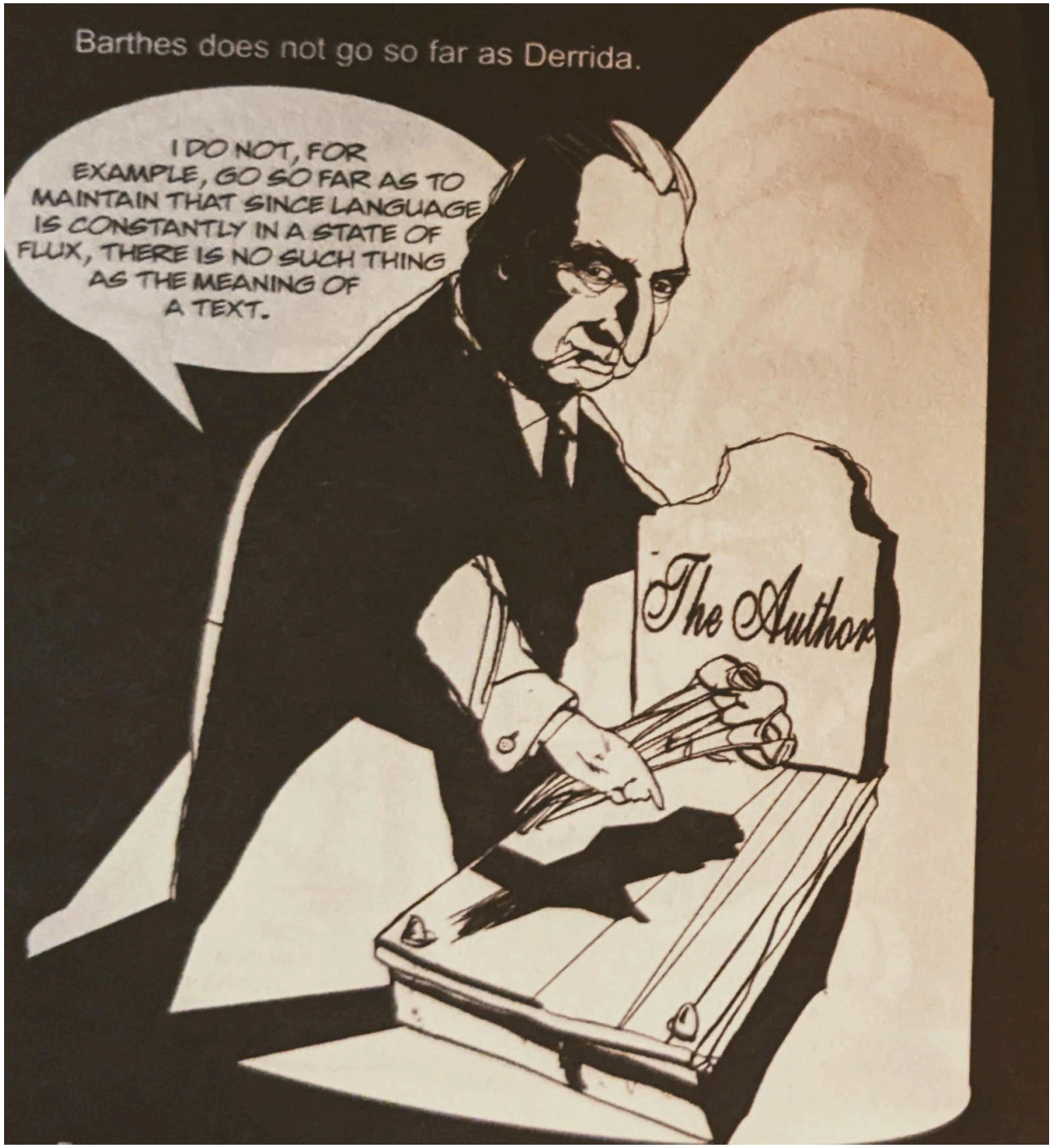
The rearrangement and juxtaposition of previously unconnected signifying objects to produce new meanings in fresh contexts. For example. The boots, braces, cropped hair, Staypress shirts and Ska music of skinheads during the 1970's was read as a stylistic symbolic bricolage which communicated the hardness of working class masculinity. (Barker, 2004: 17)

Sta-Prest (a stylized rendering of "stay pressed"). In the 1964 Levi Strauss & Co found a way to put a permanent crease into trousers — no iron required. The process was called STA-PREST™, and it was an immediate hit, becoming an iconic look of that era. https://www.levistrauss.com/2018/02/15/innovation-1960s-style-sta-prest-clothing/

Roland Barthes/The Death of the Author



Whilst structuralism sees truth as being ‘behind’ or 'within’ a text, post structuralism stresses the interaction of reader and text as a productivity. In other words, reading has lost its status as a passive consumption of a product to become performance.
This concept materialises in the work of French philosopher Roland **Bathes (1915 -1980)** so that "text is
a tissue [or fabric] of quotations,"



Barthes suggest that placing linguistic (or even non- linguistic) signs in their social contexts will explain how and why they work. This aspect of his thinking links him with other post- structuralist's especially Jacques Derrida.

Introducing Barthes, A Graphic Guide.

Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari

D&G's text, A thousand plateaus consists of a 'patchwork of relations' among concepts and plateaus, **intentionally not unified by a single line of argument, authorial voice or disciplinary perspective -** an intention made easier to realize inasmuch as they are co-authors, one a philosopher (Deleuze) and the other a militant anti psychiatrist and political activist.
(Eugene Holland:11)

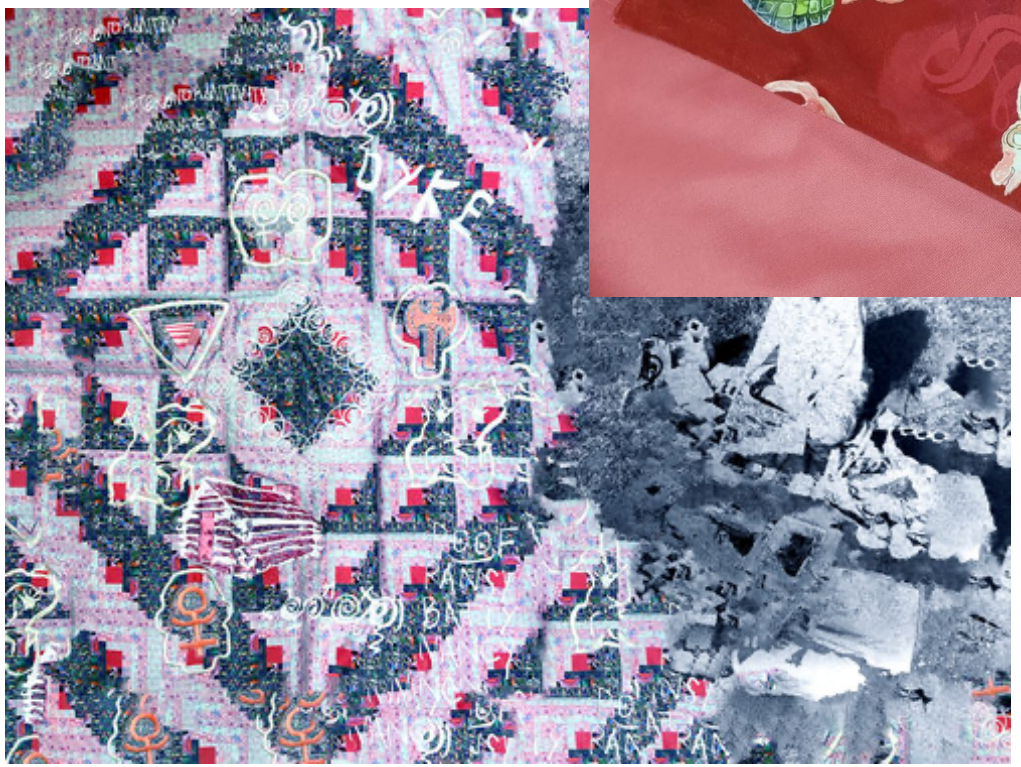


Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Skyros, Greece, ca. 1980. Photo: Karl Flinker.

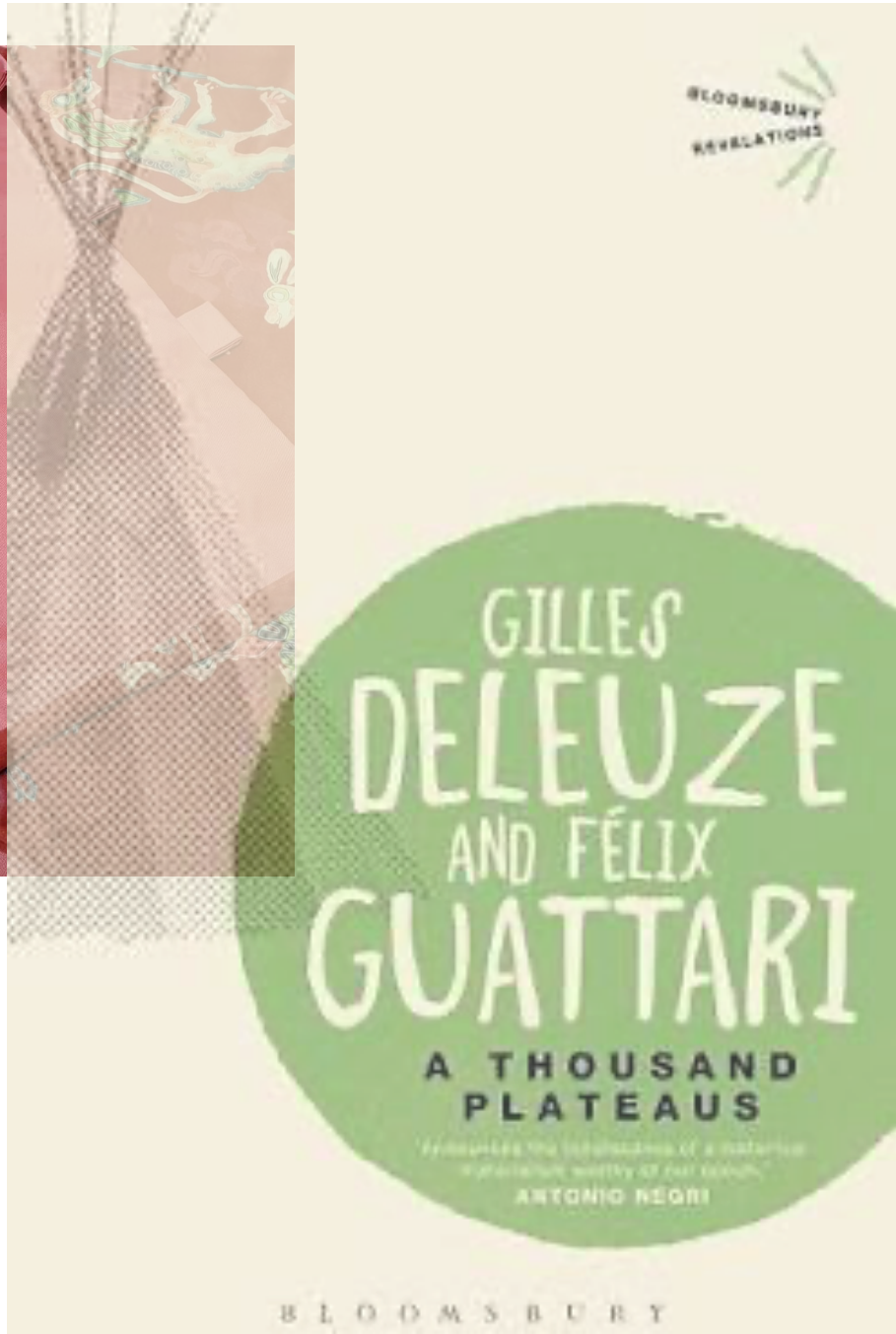
Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives, by François Dosse, translated by Deborah Glassman. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010
https://www.artforum.com/print/201104/francois-dosse-s-deleuze-guattari-27817

…the book's arguments (of which there are many) go off in all directions, **intervene in debates in all kinds of disciplines** and are therefore **more like patches added haphazardly to a patchwork quilt**.



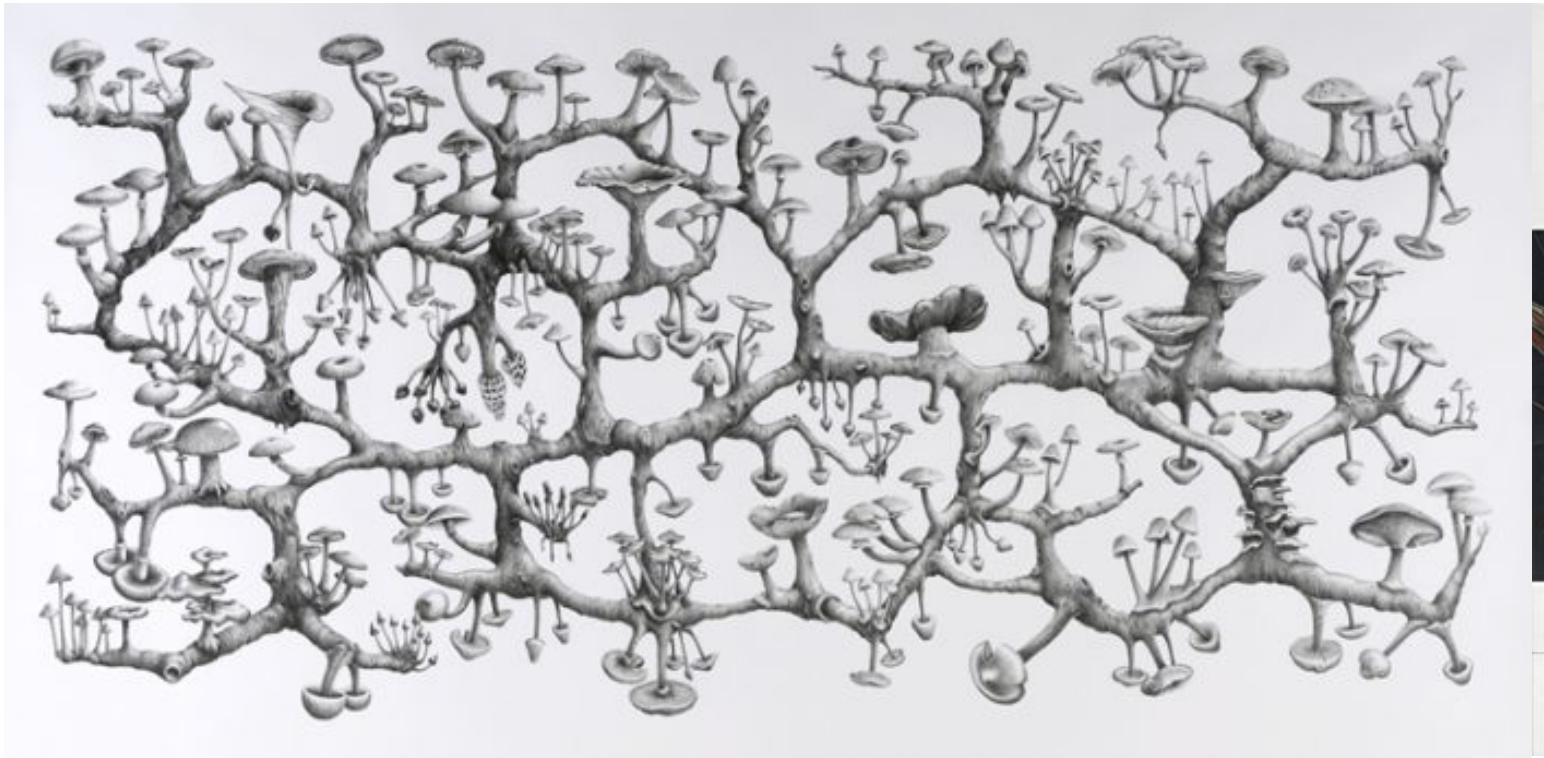


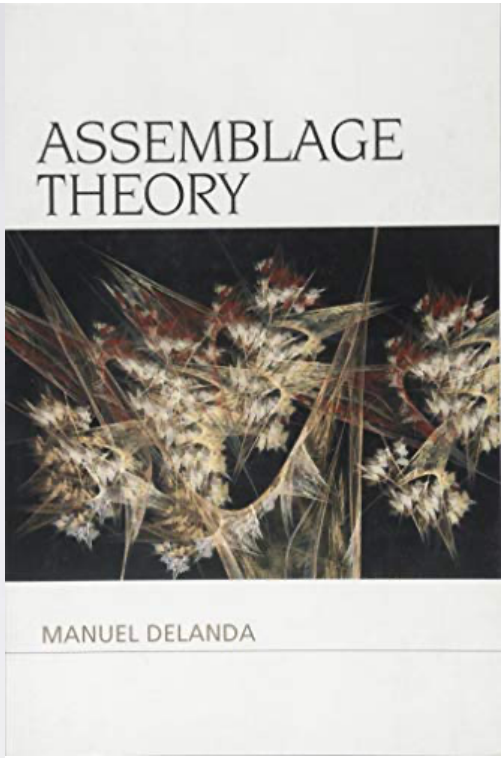
Sarah-Joy Ford, Quilts



Deleuze & Guattari Concepts

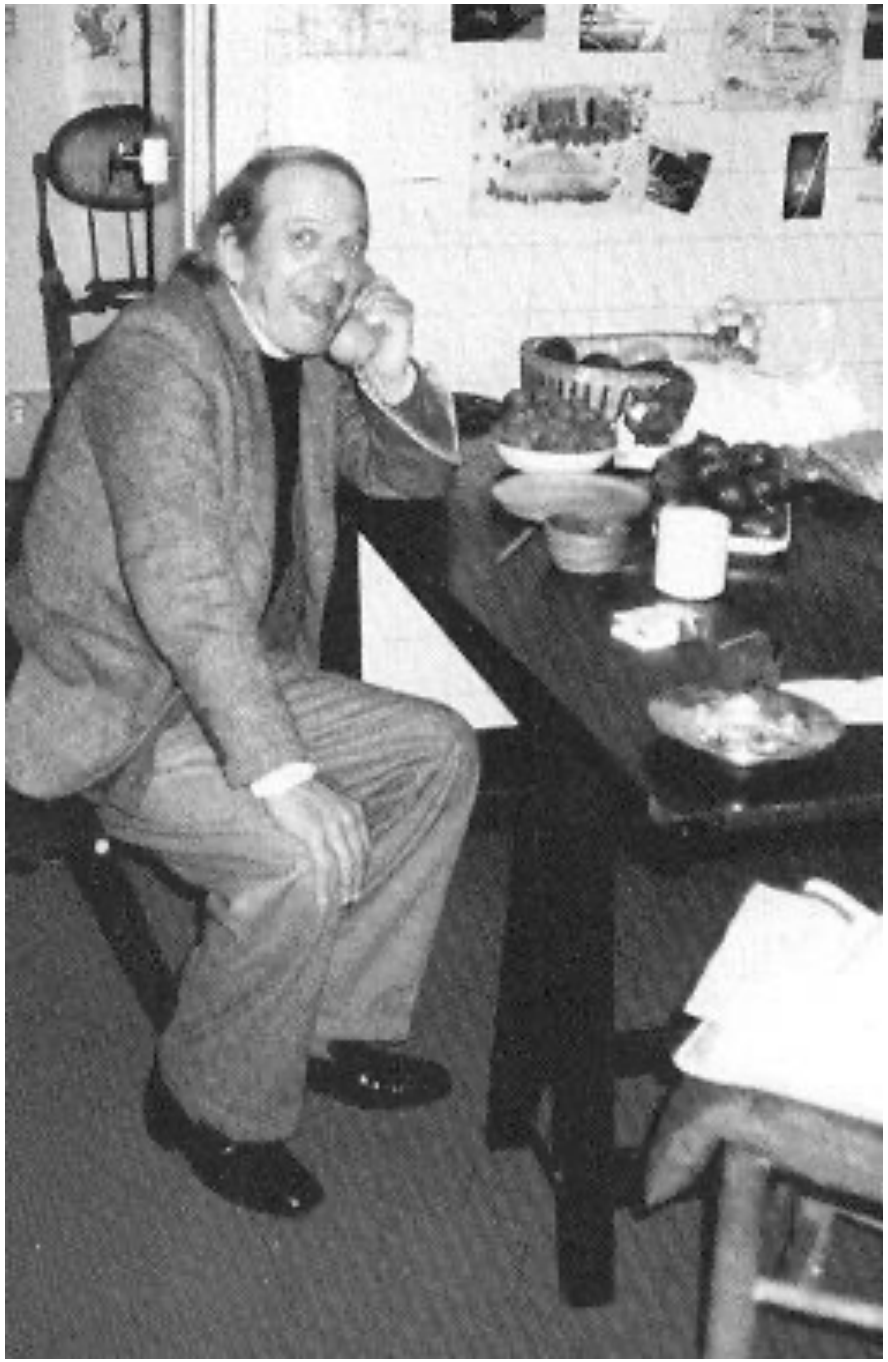
Rhizomatic
Smooth and Striated
Assemblage Theory
Body Without Organs
The Fold
Becoming Animal
The War Machine
Concrete Rules and
Abstract machines





ASSEMBLAGE

The concept of assemblage, developed by Deleuze and Guattari, derives from the English translation of their concept in French of *agencement* (arrangement), or the processes of arranging, organising, and fitting together. ***18*** (Livesey: The Deleuze & Guattari dictionary)



In ditching Marx and Freud for Nietzsche and Bergson, Delueze was already in the 1960s heralding the reaction against so-called grand philosophical narratives that, in the wake of the failed politics of 1968, would become the hallmark of postmodernism.

There are those who regard Deleuze as a philosophical genius and those who see his work as a political cul-de-sac. There are also perverse creatures like myself who hold both views simultaneously.

The dogmas are tediously familiar: All multiplicity, decentering, or dispersion is positive, while all unity or homogeneity is suspect; all marginality is creative, while all majorities and consensuses are oppressive; small-scale political action is to be commended, while large-scale, state-centered projects are to be treated with thorough-going skepticism. (Terry Eagleton: 2011)
https://www.artforum.com/print/201104/francois-dosse-s-deleuze-guattari-27817

Weavething (http://www.weavething.com/) is Kate O'Brien + Heather MacKenzie.

In a state of transformation and becoming they enact a queer relationship with the loom, since the need to make cloth is abandoned

Brought together by the centripetal force of craft community and a shared interest in the technical aesthetic possibilities of the loom, we are artists, minor mathematicians, educators and material philosophers. With a keen interest in the parameters of diverse weaving technologies, **we encounter the loom as a problem space where we work to expand what "textile" is.**



"As weavers interested in pursuing textiles as a generative and boundless terrain, we experience a knee-jerk resistance to Deleuze & Guattari's condemnation".

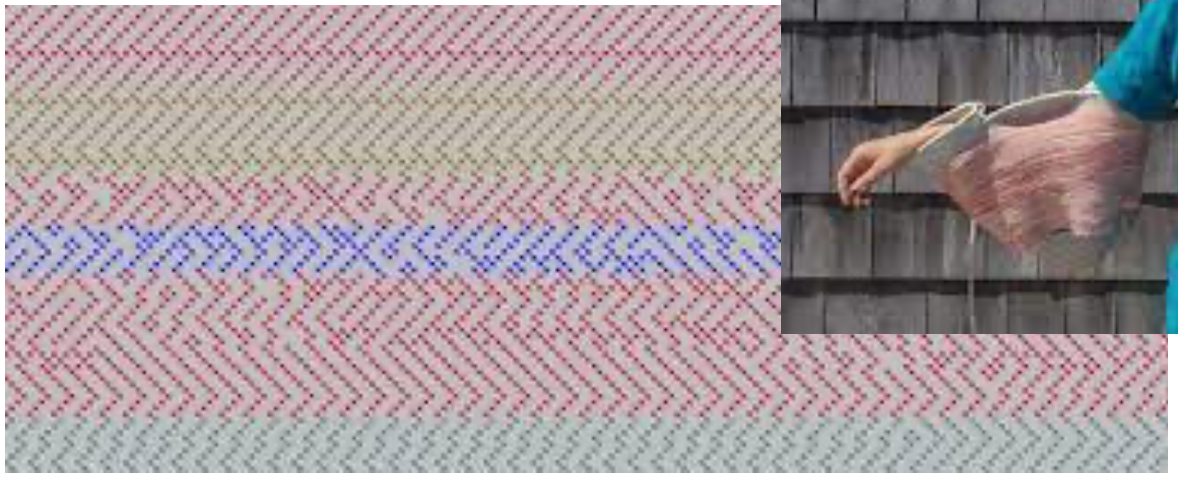
Much Thompson – Hardy who uses 'critical ethnography' to construct Bricolage, O'Brien and MacKenzie work in a multi- faceted way to **collapse boundaries**, take apart and undo assumptions, EVEN challenging Deluze and Gauttari's post structural theoraticl perspective related to smooth and striated space, as a further contemporary iteration.

Kate O’Brien, Heather MacKenzie

Between the tool and the technical: Jovencio de la Paz and the Thread Controller 2

Explored as a contemporary weaving practice through the exploration of a particular tool: the digitally-integrated Thread Controller 2 (TC2). Advertised as a “loom for creators,” this machine “reads” uncompressed black-and-white bitmaps as weavingdrawdowns. This allows designers to access the loom through the graphic editor, Adobe Photoshop, or other software not specifically designed for weaving.

Although Deleuze & Guarttari (1980/1987) famously describe weaving as a model of striated space, the TC2 opens woven form to more **undifferentiated and smooth spaces within the digital realm, transforming the way artists work with the loom.**

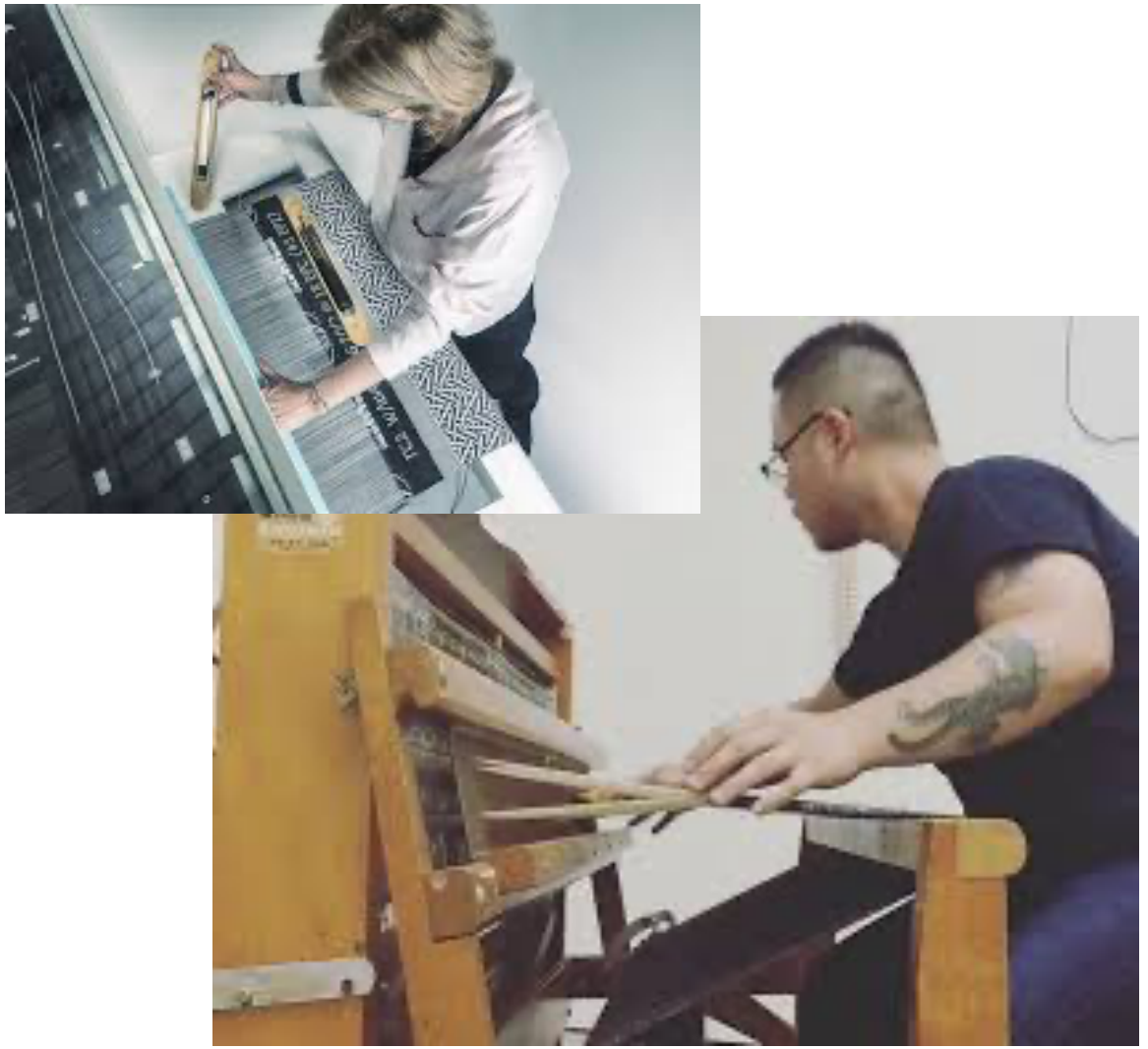






Asking questions:
Between the tool and the technical in the work of Jovencio de la Paz

- Thinking through Gilbert Simondon's (1958/2017) notion of the "open machine," we tell the history of the TC2's development
- They explore how its operational practices set it apart from familiar loom technologies.
- As a case study, they (O'Brien and MacKenzie) examine this tool's participation in the work of contemporary American artist, Jovencio de la Paz.
- They consider how the TC2 engenders new possibilities for weaving as a technical aesthetic practice.
- In Weave Draft Aberrations and In the Summer so too the Winter, de la
- Paz (re)thinks colonial draft patterns through the TC2, reflecting both the radical possibilities of this tool and its genealogical connections to historical weaving practice.



American artist, Jovencio de la Paz

Thread Controller 2 (TC2)

Advertised as a “loom for creators,” this machine “reads” uncompressed black-and-white bitmaps as weaving drawdowns. This allows designers to access the loom through the graphic editor, Adobe Photoshop, or other software not specifically designed for weaving. Although Deleuze & Guarttari (1980/1987) famously describe weaving as a model of striated space, the TC2
opens woven form to more undifferentiated and smooth spaces within the digital realm, transforming the way artists work with the loom.



Phallocentrisism – Lacan

From the perspective of a privileged masculinity

In psychoanalytical theory, the Phallus is held to be the symbolic transcendental universal signifier of the source developed by Jacques Lacan (1901-1981)

For woman in Freudian theory this is regraded as a 'lack' (without male genitals) and woman subsequently becomes 'other' – male *is* prior/power and female *is* non prior/passive within a binary system of identification/signification, known as the Oedipal complex. (this is Freuds reworking of the Greek myth of Oedipus)

In Lacan's reworking of Freud, the Oedipal moments marks the formation of the subject into the Law of the Father, and thus entry into the symbolic order itself . The power of the phallus is understood to be necessary to the very existence of subjects.

- It is a transcendental signifier of power,
- Splits the subject form the desire for the mother
- Makes the interruption between the mother/child dyad (necessary)
- Allows the subject to experience itself as a unity without a lack. (Barker)

Luce Iraguay's has critically examined this work, in relation to feminine repression.

Logocentrisism –privileging speech over writing (Derrida)

Logocentricism

Derrida uses the term logocentric as a substitute for metaphysics in order to foreground that which has determined metaphysical systems of thought: their dependence on a *logos* (Sarup:37)

Logocentricism- a tradition which regards words and language as a fundamental expression of an external reality.

Logocentricism is the pervasive tendency of Western thought to associate truth with the voice or "the word" (logos) which is conceived as the immediate expression of the self- presence of consciousness.
(Intr to continental Philosophy: 179)

Phonocentrism

Phonocentrism regards speech as a more transparent medium of thought or meaning than writing. The voice is closer to immediacy and self presence of consciousness. […] in speech we are not aware of the gap between the word as sound and its meaning, between signifier and signified.
(Intr to continental Philosophy: 179)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hothfi2dqfs

Patriarchy

- The idea of patriarchy refers to a social order in which there is a recurrent and systematic domination of men over subordinated woman across a wide range of social institutions and practices.
- Patriarchy is connected to feminist theory
- It gained currency during the second wave of the women's movement (1960's-).
- Patriarchy asserts that sex is a central organizing principle of social life where gender relations are thoroughly saturated with power. (Barker: 142)
- From a psychoanalytic point of view, patriarchy provides the context in which identification with the father and symbolic Phallus and the domain of social status, power and independence boys take on a form of eternally oriented masculinity achieved at the rice of emotional dependence on women.
- In contrast while girls acquire a greater surety with the communicative skills of intimacy through the introjection of, and identification with, aspects of their mothers' own narratives, they have greater difficulty with externally orientated autonomy.
- Patriarchy has (and continues) to be so **ingrained** in society that it is therefore essential that "we" consider feminist processes/practices in order to make change. Feminists including Butler, Kristeva, Iraguay, Pollock, Ettinger, - minh- ha, …..have all contributed to this discussion, addressing very particular aspects, and theorists. (Post Structural) feminists **do not** always agree on each other's perspectives even though they take patriarchy and phallo-centrisim as places to critique.

Judith Butler



Judith Butler (b. 1960) is one of the foremost writers around sex/gender, subjectivity and identity. Her originality lies in the way that the post structuralism of **Michel Foucault** and **Jacques Derrida** is combined with psychoanalysis (courtesy of Lacan) and speech act theory to generate **a theory of sex as performative**. (Barker:17)



The notion of a stable structure really depends on a subject distinct from it.

Judith Butler (1960-) Gender Performativity

Butler (as with other theorists) explores psychoanalysis in relation to key terms including ‘phallocentrisism’ and ‘patriarchy’ (as explored through Freud, Lacan and Levi Strauss) Butler then examines the work of other key (post) structuralists to consider gender identity. This is examined through the work of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault – (1926-1984)and Luce Irigaray.

For example, in relation to Foucault, Butler examines his case study of Herculine Barbin, a French intersex person who was assigned a feminine gender at birth, citing ‘an unacknowledged emancipatory ideal that proves increasingly difficult to maintain, even within the strictures of his own critical apparatus’



Deconstructing binaries

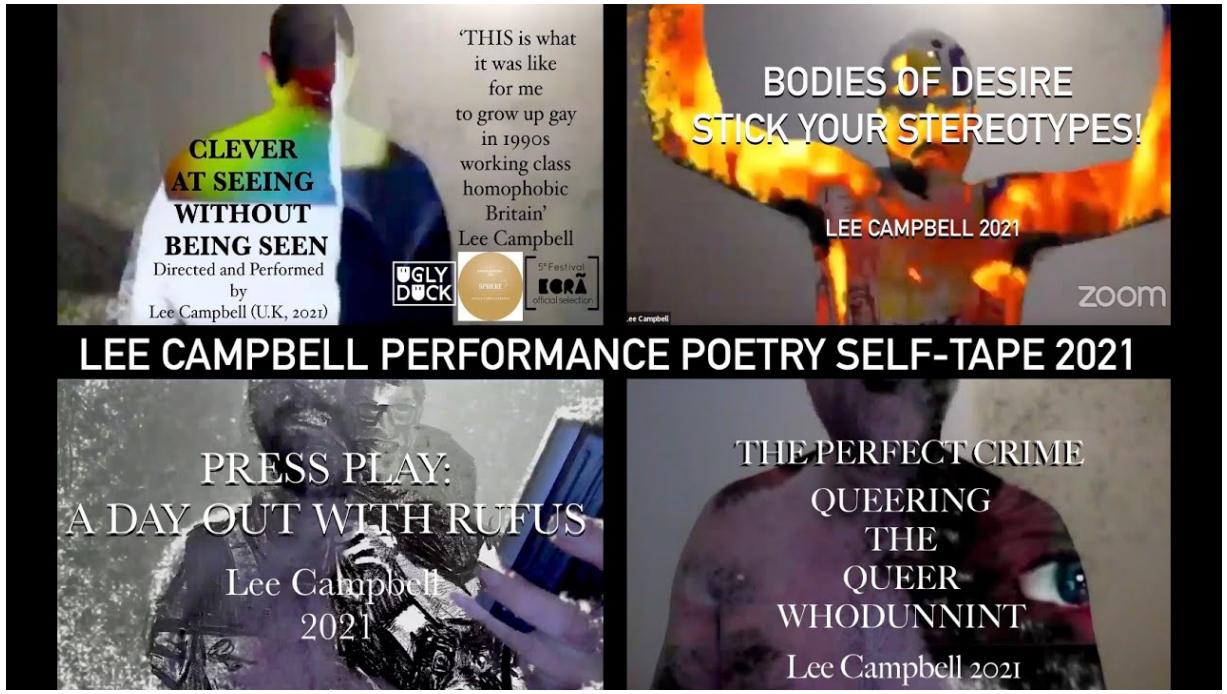
When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one.
(Butler, J.,1990, Gender Trouble, Routledge)

- As part of a post structural discourse, this enables her to examine how binary definitions have been organized and ingrained in within culture in order to disrupt them.
- She explores the idea of the 'minor', including her own position as a white, female, lesbian, American.
- She addresses this notion of 'woman' in Gender Trouble. How do/can you define/ 'woman'.
- Gender performativity is a concept that Butler developed in the 1990's in this text. It has been deemed controversial in its approach to (re) thinking gender (stereo)types.

Lee Campbell
Clever at seeing without being seen, 2021
https://youtu.be/18yGYyVua0o

Also performed as a A livestream online performance for PRAGUE BIENNALE 2022, 15. 9. 2022, 1830 BST (CURRENT U.K TIME).
https://www.praguebiennale.cz/

Innovative media reuse, text back and looping, voice layering and the use of filters on the Zoom platform result in a repetitive multi-layered multimedia socially-specific creative live performance by British author Lee Campbell.



Performativity: identity in a world of diversity



Through colourful, immersive, structured, organic and disorientating collage, the artist narrates the experiences of young queer people through his personal autobiography. **Lee starts from the idea that queer existence itself is inherently performative; engaging the various roles that present themselves in a world of diversity**. The world wide web introduces new possibilities for the construction of queer identity. **In the manner of bricolage – building and constructing from what is at hand, piecing together images and visuals available on the internet to explain one's identity to oneself**. Sharply and poignantly, the performance evokes many of the feelings that are so common to discovering one's sexuality in adolescence. The work is raw and authentic, with the artist sharing with the audience his own journey to authenticity and emphasising the message 'just be yourself'.

Lee Campbell

END

The task of the Post – Structural thinker, theorist, philosopher, writer, artist and practitioner