

REMEMBERING AND DISMEMBERING: DERRIDA'S READING OF LEVI-STRAUSS

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Abstract. *The excitement about poststructural theories has subsided, yet a proper critical assessment of their significance is still lacking. In order to question the revolutionary potential still attributed to deconstruction, I propose a close reading of Derrida's deconstruction of Levi-Strauss in his 'Structure, Sign and Play in the History of Human Sciences'. My purpose is to draw attention to the ways in which Derrida, the champion of difference, ends up by re-affirming a thoroughly repressive logic of the same, a gesture which, in my opinion, makes Derrida guilty of the Eurocentrism of which he accuses Levi-Strauss. I will argue further that his radical suspicion and injunction against reminiscence are comparable to a forced conversion recorded in the myth of Orpheus. The dismemberment of Orpheus may be understood as an outward projection of the violent interruption of his mourning for the past, of the inner fragmentation resulting from forgetting, and Derrida's recommendation of free-play, like all other poststructuralist endeavors to 'de-originate' the individual, are the latest version of this ancient cultural crime.*

Now that the poststructuralist and postmodern literary and cultural theory, or Grand Theory, is slowly receding into the past, it is, I believe, important not to allow it a quiet exit: instead of treating it as a passing intellectual fashion, or even an interesting aberration, one should recognize it for what it really was. The necessity of the adequate criticism and judgement is urged by a number of alert critics, well aware of the propensity of all regime-serving and state-sponsored mode of thought to reproduce itself in seemingly novel guises. Among them is the English author Colin Falck. In the preface to the second 1994 edition of his book *Myth, Truth and Literature* Falck announces the collapse of the whole of post-Saussurean theory, and pleads for a proper understanding of its aims before the spiritual vacuum that it has left in its wake is re-filled by an equally sterile alternative. The French-based literary-cultural theorizing, Falck writes,

with its callow and philosophically incoherent anti-metaphysical posturings, has tried to disengage literature from its troublesome spiritual dimension altogether -

by simply denying the existence of that dimension. It has thereby threatened to deprive an entire generation of students and intelligent readers of a part of their spiritual birthright. The replacement of this movement, now more or less universal (especially in American) academic circles, by the theories of 'multiculturalism' threatens to do the same thing again.¹

In summing up poststructuralism, deconstruction and postmodernism, however, most contemporary authors ignore Falck's warning. They stop short of a careful scrutiny, and support instead of challenging these theories' pretensions to be a liberating, democratic improvement in relation to both traditional humanist criticism and to all brands of structuralism. Thus in their introduction to the poststructuralism and postmodernism section in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan claim that the beginning of poststructuralism is to be seen in an urge to subvert the structures of power that structuralism initially took upon itself to describe but ended up by legitimizing. They observe, correctly, that deconstruction and poststructuralism on the whole start from the realization that the principle of binary opposition used by structuralists to describe events or texts is itself the principle of repressive ideologies; they work by splitting the world into irreconcilable polarities and then privileging one of the two terms, while suppressing or banishing the other.² Hence it was increasingly felt that the study of signification, or principles that enable the production of meaning, such as binary oppositions, was not a path to knowledge but a way of serving cultural regimes that imposed repressive categorical orders on the world; and structuralism, which relies on these principles to describe the world was found to be methodologically conservative. The point was no longer to understand how the system or the structure function, but how they may be undone, so that energies and potentials that they held in place might be liberated and used to construct a different kind of society³. This revolutionary task, according to Rivkin and Ryan, has been accomplished by poststructuralist thinkers.

In order to argue against this view I have selected for close examination Derrida's seminal essay 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences'. It is, among other things, Derrida's polemic with Levi-Strauss, and thus of special significance to my primary purpose, which is to evaluate, by setting them against each other, the two schools of thought - 'the school of suspicion' and the 'school of reminiscence', as Paul Ricoeur called them⁴ - and demonstrate the failure of Derridean suspicion - a radical suspicion whose moment of de(con)struction precludes the moment of new foundation - to offer any valid cultural critique still less point to any cultural transformation. But 'Structure, Sign and Play' is also a difficult text and, as an introduction to the points I want to make (though the readers well acquainted with Derrida's works will find it redundant), I propose a brief preliminary explanation of his general deconstructive procedure.

¹ Colin Falck, *Myth, Truth and Literature: Towards a True Post-Modernism*, Second edition, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. xi-xii.

² Rivkin and Ryan give the example of the sense/nonsense polarity, which allowed nonsensical modes of thought to be labeled as madness and banished, and helped establish the ideal of reason as the guiding category of Enlightenment. Reason assisted the nascent capitalism by permitting utility or usefulness to be calculated and people and objects to be assigned categories and controlled.

³ See Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, eds., *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Blackwell Publishers, 1998, pp. 333-357.

⁴ Paul Ricoeur, 'The Conflict of Interpretation', K. M. Newton, *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*, St. Martin Press, 1988, 193-194.

Derrida's method, and philosophy, might be best understood on the example of his deconstruction of the Saussurean sign. In structuralist linguistics the meaning of the sign is not a matter of its correspondence to the empirical object, or referent, (language is not a reflection of reality) but is produced solely by a difference between two signifiers. This single minimal opposition (pat/bat, for example) is sufficient to attach a concept, or signified, to its signifier implying their stable, symmetrical one-to-one correspondence. But meaning, claims Derrida, is also the product of the network of differences between one and many other signifiers. (Mat is mat, not simply because it is not hat, but also because it is not cat, rat, meat, mass, etc.) Instead of being a concept neatly tied to a particular signifier, meaning is a spin-off of potentially endless and complex interaction of signifiers. Moreover, there is no simple distinction between signifiers and signifieds: looking up a word in a dictionary is enough to demonstrate that signifiers keep transforming themselves into signifieds, and vice versa, in a theoretically infinite circular process, so that it is impossible to arrive at a signified which is not at the same time a signifier in itself. Thus language, for Derrida, is no longer what it was for Saussure: a structure wherein stable coherent meaning is present. In fact, the undermining of the Saussurean sign entails a deconstruction of this other, and more fundamental, binary opposition, that of present/ absent. To do so, Derrida introduces the terms 'trace' and '*différance*'. The latter is an untranslatable pun in French, combining the meanings of difference and deferring or postponement. On the level of difference, which is a spatial category, referring to a web of differences between a particular signifier and all other words excluded in order to constitute a sign, trace points to the presence precisely of those seemingly absent alternatives: for although excluded, they nevertheless inhere in any sign, constitute it by defining what it is not, define it by what might be called the presence of their absence. *Différance* in the sense of deferring or postponement involves the effect of the trace in the temporal aspect of language. Not only in 'the here' but also in 'the now' meaning is never present because the meaning of any sign or a sentence is inseparable from what preceded it, or from what it anticipates. The sign contains the traces of the ones which have gone before and holds itself open to the traces of those still to come, thus forming a complex tissue which is never exhaustible: meaning is scattered or dispersed along a chain of signifiers, cannot be nailed down, is never fully present in any one sign alone, but is rather a constant flickering of presence and absence together. Pure meaning or its full presence is impossible; it is never identical with itself because one half is not there (deferred, still to come), and the other is not that (since it is defined by what it excludes).

Derrida employs his deconstructive method to demonstrate that all other binary oppositions relied on for coherent thought are in fact untenable. He shows, for example, that the literal/metaphorical contrast is a relative one. The literal, it is assumed, is the first, original meaning whereas the metaphorical is its substitute. The literal is that which does not come as a supplement for something else, it is thus the ground or center to which the play of metaphorical substitutions can always be reduced or referred back as to its first principle. Derrida claims however that the process of substitution is endless, that there is no literal meaning that cannot be also seen as metaphorical, a substitution itself for some more original thing which is impossible to represent. There are no so-called first terms, so indispensable to philosophers: Marx's basic principles, base and superstructure, for example, are clearly architectural metaphors, and as such, Derrida seems to imply, invalidate Marx's or any other thinker's attempt at positive unequivocal understanding of the global logic of history.

Similarly Derrida denies any firm ground on which the speech/writing opposition might be maintained. The dismantling of this opposition is, in fact, of central importance to Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, which he also calls phonocentrism or logocentrism, and which permeates the whole of western philosophical tradition. In privileging speech as the first, original term of which writing is only a substitution, Derrida detects a desire for epistemological security, for immediate presence of truth or meaning in language. The voice is privileged not only in external communication: there the presence of the speaker, who can always intervene in case of misunderstanding and clear up his intention to the listener, guarantees the authenticity, authority, truthfulness of what is said, whereas the transcription of speech into written word alienates it from the intention of the speaker, removes it from his control, and by repeating it in different contexts opens it to different interpretations. The priority of speech is also associated with the authority of the inner voice of consciousness, which we assume, wrongly according to Derrida, to be the most immediate way in which truth is present to the mind. As Rivkin and Ryan explain,

Derrida notices that in philosophy from Plato down to Husserl, speech, meaning and thought are conceived as almost a natural weld, a continuum without joints or articulation... The mind's awareness of meanings or ideas in its own internal voice of consciousness is, according to Derrida, a repeatedly referred to norm of authenticity, authority, truthfulness in metaphysics. We know what the truth is because our mind tells us what it is, and we can trust that voice of reason because it is closer than any other form of signification to ideas as they occur in the mind⁵.

Yet, Derrida insists that speech cannot be original since in order to say anything or think anything there must already exist and operate the process of differentiation; some prior, more original expulsion must have taken place in order that the identity of spoken meaning, concept, or idea might be established. However far back we go, to the hypothetical first linguistic utterance, for it to signify anything, an anterior system of oppositional rules must be presupposed. Living voice as much as writing uses signs, and signs, spoken or written, are constituted by division and difference, expulsion and postponement. Writing then, (which obviously does not refer to its graphic meaning - words on the page - but is synonymous with *difference*) is the more original than speech, which can be said to represent only a form of or a substitute for writing.

The attack on phonocentrism is, as already noted, an attack upon logocentrism: the belief in the first founding principles, or transcendental signifieds, such as logos, idea, god, spirit, etc., which act as the ground or center of structures of philosophical thought. In 'Structure, Sign and Play' Derrida detects an irresolvable but concealed contradiction in the concept of centered structure. The center is conceived as both inhering within the structure, yet transcending it. It is part of structure's totality, its first premise, a starting point or foundation without which no philosophical system can begin to be defined. Yet in order to be its first principle, its literal meaning, around which metaphorical substitutions circulate, the center must also exist outside language, beyond the play of structurality. The Biblical text would be an example of this 'double bind'. God is the effect of the story, yet is conceived as its cause: he is spoken by, invented by the words of the

⁵ Rivkin and Ryan, op. cit., 339

Biblical narrative, nevertheless must himself be the word which first caused all other words. His presence at the center of the story is paradoxically guaranteed by his existence outside the story, as its origin, independent of and prior to it, self-identical and self-sufficient: he is who he is. But this precisely is what is impossible: *Il n'y a pas de hors texte* - another of Derrida's axioms, roughly translatable as 'there is no outside of the text' - means that all thought and being is caught up in language. And since in language identity is an effect of difference, since difference is more primordial than identity, no condition where man was or will come again into the possession of some original, full, unmediated meaning is imaginable: like Godot, the final truth, revelation, or salvation never arrive. The only deliverance, in the absence of the transcendental origin, which is at once the absence of the transcendental end - both as goal and as termination or closure - is the surrender to the infinite freeplay of language.

Obviously Derrida's assault on the metaphysics of presence is also the final blow done to the humanist concept of the self. It smashes, as Terry Eagleton writes,

not only my meaning, but, indeed me: since language is something I am made out of, rather than a convenient tool I use, the whole idea that I am a stable, unified entity must also be a fiction. Not only can I never be present to you but I can never be present to myself either. I still need to use signs when I look into my mind or search my soul, and this means that I will never experience any full communion with myself. It is not that I can have a pure unblemished meaning, intention or experience which then gets distorted and refracted by the flawed medium of language: because language is the very air I breathe, I can never have a pure unblemished meaning or experience at all.⁶

Deconstruction can be used and misused. When employed to expose the violent hierarchisation whereby certain terms such as Logos, Reason, Order, Consciousness, Man are privileged in western culture, and given the status of original, and hence unquestioned, axiomatic truths, while their opposites are expelled beyond the frontier of what can be spoken or even imagined, deconstruction is a powerful critical method: it may help us see how repressive ideologies - rationalism, capitalism, patriarchy - maintain their control of the individual. In this sense it even recalls and is compatible with J. C. Ransom's criticism of the platonic impulse, Jung's condemnation of the one-sided rationalism of our culture, Fromm's exposure of patriarchy's moral debacle. But as to the actual liberation from these ideologies, Derrida's deconstruction points to none. Not only because after showing that such absolutes as Logos, Reason, Man, or Consciousness are incapable of being the first principles, Derrida refuses to privilege their opposites. That would be tantamount to establishing another center, which according to Derrida, is both undesirable and impossible: for nature, body, woman, and the unconscious would in that case be as much founded upon an absence, as much an effect of differentiation, their presence as illusory as the presence of the principles they substitute. The failure of deconstruction comes chiefly from Derrida's refusal to envisage any kind of language or ontology wherein these opposites could blend harmoniously. On the contrary, he turns his deconstructive method, whether directly or indirectly, against those thinkers who pointed to possible alternatives to western logocentrism as often as against its proponents. To deny the authenticity to the inner voice of the mind, as Derrida does, is implicitly to

⁶ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Basil Blackwell, 1983, 130.

silence the most creative rebels in our philosophical and poetic tradition, from Socrates to Nietzsche, from Shakespeare to Joyce, No-sayers whose No to the dominant culture was a Yes to a recollection of other existential possibilities preserved in the deepest self. Derrida's readings of Rousseau and Levi-Strauss are an explicit endeavor to eradicate this memory.

In their investigation of primitive oral cultures both Rousseau and Levi-Strauss take them as a criterion of health, authenticity or spontaneity that have been lost in western society. Their comparative study would be quite legitimate according to critics such as Lionel Trilling, who claimed that one of the ways to escape the omnipotence of culture is to see it, judge it, and condemn it, from the vantage point of another cultural tradition. But not according to Derrida. Yet it is at first difficult to see why he should quarrel with Levi-Strauss, who, like Derrida himself, is concerned to show the repressiveness of modes of thinking founded on the principle of binary logic. Although he claims that it is common to both modern and primitive man, Levi-Strauss's anthropology is essentially a tribute to the creativity of the mythological or 'savage mind', which, unlike the logical mind, finds a way past the antithetical kind of thinking. In his essay 'Myth and Incest', for example, Levi-Strauss shows how, instead of choosing between the extremes of two corresponding oppositions (incest/sexual abstinence and arrogant speech aiming at usurpation/complete rejection of words), primitive man let himself be taught by nature: in an analogy with the cycles of seasons, where neither the eternal summer (the unleashing of natural energies to the point of corruption, plague and decay), nor the eternal winter (to the point of sterility and death), are allowed to prevail, he chose the middle way - that of exchange of women and exchange of words in frank communication without ulterior motives⁷.

One might have expected in Derrida's reading of Levi-Strauss in the second part of his 'Structure, Sign and Play' a recognition of a common ground or intention: for Levi-Strauss's anthropology at every point is an implied criticism of the western logic, its rationalism, scientism, and ethnocentrism. But instead, Derrida accuses Levi-Strauss of perpetuating precisely the rationalist, ethnocentric logic which his intention is to criticize. He notes immediately that Levi-Strauss bases his whole argument on the opposition nature/culture, which, as Levi-Strauss himself discovers, is untenable: universality is the attribute defining natural phenomena, yet incest, which is a set of cultural prohibitions, is also found to be universal. Levi-Strauss calls this self-erasure of the difference that hitherto seemed a self-evident truth a scandal. Yet although he admits that the opposition culture/nature can no longer be relied on as having any truth value, he nevertheless pursues his analysis in the hope that the terms nature and culture are, if not ontologically then methodologically valid, and can still be used as an instrument serving his purpose. Derrida quotes from *Elementary Structures*: 'Above all, it is beginning to emerge that this distinction between nature and culture, while of no historical significance, does contain a logic, fully justifying its use by modern sociology as a methodological tool.'⁸ Derrida would have none of this. In his opinion, to exploit the relative efficacy of these terms in order to destroy the old machinery to which they belong and of which they are themselves pieces is by definition a self-defeating project. Instead of remaining always faithful

⁷ See Claude Levi-Strauss, 'Incest and Myth', David Lodge ed., *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader*, Longman, 1972, 449-450.

⁸ Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', *Writing and Difference*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, 284.

to this double intention - to preserve as an instrument the concepts whose truth value he criticizes – Levi-Strauss 'should have thought and questioned systematically and rigorously their history'.

But it seems to me that the logic Levi-Strauss intuitively in this opposition can yield more fruitful results than the rigorous and systematic logic of Derrida's deconstruction. The logic Levi-Strauss speaks of is that of myth. As Derrida notices at once, Levi-Strauss begins as an empirical observer, but ends by accepting the possibility that his investigation may be no more than a myth. It is not immediately apparent then why Derrida should spend so much time on deconstructing a writer who has already deconstructed himself - stepped beyond traditional logic and empiricism, and moved into the realm of the mythic, or of interpretation. But myth, or interpretation, does not have the same epistemological status for Levi-Strauss as it has for Derrida. For Derrida, to be aware of the mythic status of interpretation, can only lead to a 'concern with the founding concepts and their deconstitution'⁹: it should have presumably lead Strauss to the point where he could only conclude that while using the opposition culture/nature he cannot say what he means, nor mean what he says. The contradictory and provisional status of the first principles renders the whole argument meaningless. For Derrida, an heir of the French Cartesian rationalism, the impossibility of objective, empirical truth is the impossibility of any truth. For Levi-Strauss, on the other hand, 'mythical reflection can reach brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane'. Though not empirically true, myth for Levi-Strauss, as for Frye, is a container of human meaning, man's way of knowing the world and orienting himself in the world; and the fact that obviously there is more than one way of doing this invites, indeed necessitates, comparison. Hence, if interpreting myths can only result in another myth, to think mythically is still to think in terms of hierarchy of values, in terms of moral choice, and commitment. The intellectual results Strauss arrives at are inseparable from his ethical commitment - to the tribal societies which did not, it is true, enjoy any unity with nature (whoever claimed that they did?) but whose myths mediated between society and nature in such a way as to preserve a relationship of reciprocity, or precisely that sense of each being traversed by, of each containing the traces of the other, which the subsequent violent hierarchisation criticized by Derrida destroyed; inseparable too from a condemnation of, as well as a sense of guilt for himself belonging to the civilization which destroyed those tribal cultures. Nor is his guilt and nostalgia an impotent regressive longing for the impossible return to the archaic past of natural innocence, but an evidence of the romantic historical sense, backward looking yet projective, intent on, as Wordsworth would say, preserving the spirit of the past for future restoration.

It emerges finally that the sole point of the academic rigor, of perverse pedantry, with which Derrida exposes Strauss's quasi-scientific method is to invalidate his humanist content, to make an end once for all to all romantic endeavor to translate the old mythic stories of fall and redemption into new scenarios of hope. As an alternative to this structuralist thematic of broken immediacy, this negative, saddened, nostalgic, Rousseauistic, guilty humanism, Derrida recommends his own joyous anti-scientific anti-humanism. Forgetting that Nietzsche himself looked back to the ancient, pre-Socratic mythic traditions, and found in the reconciliation of the Dionysian and Apollonian principles, of nature and culture, the original wholeness and spiritual health which he applied

⁹ Ibid. , 284.

as a criterion in judging modern decadence, Derrida calls his own affirmation Nietzschean, 'that is the affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of the world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin...'¹⁰

But behind this seemingly anti-totalitarian affirmation of life as a process, there lies paradoxically the most totalizing gesture of closure, a thoroughly repressive logic of the same. What one must give up to arrive at this position is precisely the notion of difference: since all language functions by difference and deferring, it follows that all language is the same; since all language involves division, articulation and absence, the original wholeness or presence is an illusion, the condition of broken immediacy universal throughout human history; and since there is no difference in this respect between the language of archaic societies and the language we now use, there is no need, indeed no ground, for any comparison. This precludes any possibility of choice ('we are in a region where the category of choice seems particularly trivial', says Derrida) and, in spite of the talk about the innocent world of becoming, any genuine change.

Derrida insists that the change will be epistemological: it will consist in reading philosophy with a difference. This means, as he demonstrates elsewhere in his two-level interpretations of philosophical texts, that whatever positive meaning of the text we come to construe while reading it in a conventional way (Reading I) will be undermined in the next, deconstructive phase of interpretation (Reading II), which shows meaning to be invariably founded on irresolvable paradoxes. Thus the step from Reading I to Reading II is a step from difference, between various texts and their meanings, to sameness: to a level where, predictably, monotonously, all diversity of human thought, of contrasting philosophical positions (romantic, rationalist; materialist, idealist; empirical; mythological) will be lumped together, leveled down to a single, universal principle of indeterminacy.

If this leaves us wondering about the epistemological value of Derrida's freeplay, we begin to see more clearly what change, psychologically and ethically speaking, it may imply: the amnesia it demands is reminiscent of the prohibition of the 'backward glance' by which the Greeks cut their poet from his source of inspiration – the memory of completeness of being experienced in love. If 'remembering' has derived from and preserved the latent meaning of 're-membering', re-assembling the torn and scattered body parts, the verb 'dismember' may also have the reverse symbolic meaning of 'to make forget', 'to mentally fragmentize'. The dismemberment of Orpheus may then be understood as an outward projection of the violent interruption of his mourning for the past, his forgetting, his inner fragmentation, and Derrida's freeplay and all other post-structuralist endeavors to 'de-originate' the individual as the latest version of this ancient cultural crime. The purposes are the same. The song with which Orpheus served Dionysus, a god of spontaneous creative ecstasy, was to be appropriated for the celebration of Apollo, the destroyer-God. Modern Orpheus, once he succumbs to the self-decentering, dis-membering philosophy of freeplay, will presumably be ready to join in the celebration of what Derrida, at the end of the essay, invokes as 'a birth of some as yet unnamable... formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity'. The image is ambiguous, but the reader acquainted with Yeats will readily associate it with the vision of 'the rough beast' slouching 'towards Bethlehem to be born' – the poet's appalled antici-

¹⁰ Ibid. , 292.

pation, now that 'the center cannot hold' any longer, of the tide of violence (including the rise of Nazism) that was to inaugurate the new historical cycle. The difference in the tone of voice (Derrida's rhapsodic, Yeats's troubled) is all important.¹¹

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¹¹ Whether this interpretation would be endorsed by Derrida himself is beside the point. What matters is the fact that he left the nature of the monstrosity unspecified, and should be held responsible for this and similar ambiguities. How serviceable they might become to the American establishment had been anticipated, even before Derrida impinged upon the American academic scene, by Herbert Marcuse. His books *One-dimensional Man* (1964) and *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (1972) were written at the time when what we have since learnt to call postmodernism was in its initial phase and was called cultural revolution. They both point prophetically to the way the cultural revolution, in art and in the accompanying theoretical discourse, might be in fact falling in with the capitalist redefinition of culture, with the adjustment of culture to the requirements of capitalism. Of particular interest in view of Derrida's prescription of amnesiac freeplay is the essay 'Art and Revolution', where Marcuse defines all great art and meaningful life as stemming from recollection (*Counter-revolution and Revolt*, Beacon Press, 1972, 99); and the essay 'The Conquest of the Unhappy Consciousness', in which Marcuse's argument alerts the reader to the striking confluence of Derrida's repudiation of metaphysical transcendence and the way institutionalized, repressive desublimation characterizing one-dimensional societies, particularly the USA, deprives the individual of his power to transcend culture: the organs of transcendence such as guilt, conscience, love - all dissolve in de-eroticized sexual pleasure indistinguishable from the sadistic pleasure of war-games. (*One-dimensional Man*, Beacon Press, 1964, 56-83)

It was Marcuse, in fact, who, after emigrating from the Nazi Germany to the USA together with Fromm and other members of the Frankfurt School, first recognized in the repressive tolerance of the American consumer society and its post-war interventionist global politics a nascent neo-fascism. This explains the speedy takeover of the major teaching posts in the American universities, hitherto held by humanist thinkers like himself, by teachers of Derridean persuasions. For it is Marcuse's exposure of the new imperialism masked by the Newspeak about democratization of the world and human rights that constitutes a truly subversive insight, one that might lead to the release of revolutionary energy. Appropriated in postmodern literary and cultural analysis, Derrida's theory and vocabulary became themselves a sophisticated form of Newspeak, a medium of the academic 'bought priesthood', whose role has been to prevent critical thinking while appearing to defend it and thus ensure that the revolt of the sixties would never happen again.

IZMEĐU SUMNJE I SEĆANJA: DERIDA VS. LEVI-ŠTROS

Lena Petrović

Poststrukturalističke teorije gube prestiž koji su donedavno uživale, ali je pitanje o njihovom kulturološkom značaju još uvek otvoreno. Autori koji im pripisuju revolucionarna stremljenja i potencijal još uvek su u većini. Cilj ovog rada je da preispita opravdanost ovih ocena kroz kritičko poređenje dva interpretativna postupka, odnosno dve hermeneutičke škole, kako ih je nazvao Pol Riker: Deridine 'škole sumnje' i Levi-Štrosove 'škole reminiscencije'. Analiza dekonstrukcije kojoj je u svom poznatom eseju 'Struktura, znak i igra u diskursu humanističkih nauka', Žak Derida podvrgao antropologiju Levi-Štrosa, otkriva, po mišljenju autora, neuspeh radikalne epistemološke sumnje - (čije apriorno utvrđeno ishodište, de(kon)strukcija, ne predviđa trenutak novog utemeljenja značenja) - da ponudi validnu kritiku istorije zapada, a još manje ukaže na mogućnosti prevazilaženja postmoderne krize identiteta. Naprotiv, Deridina hermeneutika sumnje i tabuisanje romantičarske nostalgije podseća na prinudnu promenu vere koja je ozakonila logocentričnu civilizaciju, i koju, po autorovom mišljenju, beleži mit o Orfeju. Komadanje Orfejevog tela može se shvatiti kao simbolički ekvivalent prekinutog sećanja, mentalne fragmentacije usled nasilno izazvanog zaborava; a slobodna igra, kao i svi slični pokušaji poststrukturalističkih teoretičara da čoveka liše svesti o poreklu i svrsi, moderna verzija ovog davnog kulturnog zločina.