

Creativity and the Return of a Political Will: Art, Language and the Creative Subject

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Abstract

The globalised economies led by industrialised nations proclaim the fundamental importance of creativity for the making of the entrepreneurial self and innovative nation of the 21st century. Creativity and creative enterprise might be politically positioned as key economic drivers, but how is the creative subject determined, and how is the subject of creative discourse fostered in education and the public sphere? This paper is concerned with the creative subject, the way creativity is positioned, understood and valued, and the processes in art and language whereby the creative subject becomes apparent or dies within the texts of entrepreneurial discourses. The discussion draws from Chantal Mouffe, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Hélène Cixous and the work of art and language to call for a more critical awareness of creativity and difference, and the need for a political will in discourses of the creative subject in the building of knowledge economies.

The paper is divided into three parts. The first is concerned with creativity, its definitions and political applications through liberal and neoliberal frameworks; the second addresses the subject of discourse through art from 14th century Italy to 21st century Bondi Beach as a way of identifying the way the liberal subject of creativity appears; and the final section performs a creative analysis of poetic language to draw attention to the creative subject of discursive formations of difference. Throughout this discussion there is an underlying call for the return of a political will as a way of rescuing creativity and the creative subject from a consensual casting of the 'entrepreneurial self'.

Part One. Creativity: the definitions

What are the modes of existence of this discourse?

Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it? (Foucault, 1977: 138).

The early twenty-first century is characterised by new political and social attention to creativity as a fundamental condition of global knowledge economies, with the cultural and creative industries as an identifiable category of economic investment and market focus. The word 'creative' is used in variable contexts to mean innovative, entrepreneurial, digital, interactive, networked, and often loosely interchanged with globalised knowledge itself. The creative category is applied to a range of educational fields and knowledge strategies, but it is one particular field known as the 'creative arts' that is the main focus of this paper. The discussion examines creativity and the creative subject in liberal and neoliberal frameworks, working through Chantal Mouffe and Michel Foucault to call for the return of a political will to counter consensual assumptions around creativity and the subject of discourse.

The concept of creativity is securely tied to liberal discourses of the political, social and cultural subject. 'Creativity' comes from Latin, *creare*: to grow, to bring (something) into existence, giving rise to the concept of creativity as a state or process of flux, change, transformation, growth, making something original, or rearranging certain conditions to revisit, renew or reinvent knowledge. This might mean inflecting the old with innovative characteristics or expressions, taking cognitive or intuitive leaps, or working through the materiality of practice to invent, intervene, imagine or perform an idea, object, artefact, dance, image, sound, text or set of thoughts and systems.

In education we call these fields of enquiry the 'creative arts' and one would assume that they would be a privileged category in light of the dominating discourse of creativity as an economic driver for industrialised nations and global economies. However, with the folding of knowledge into the mission of creative economy building, the valuing of the creative arts is positioned in the same terms as the valuing of start-up businesses or technological innovations. The transferability of knowledge becomes a key driver of economic interest so the creative arts are judged in those terms. Definitions abound for creativity: in fields such as management or business to be creative is to be enterprising; in engineering and technology being creative is to be innovative; and in science it is more about discovering or testing with proof. In visual and sound art and the other creative arts pursuits of music, dance, drama, creative writing, film, fashion, textiles, design, hybrid digital formations, poetry and narrative et al, creativity works as both a practice and a methodology; it defines the input and the output. Being creative is a way of thinking different from means-end technological thinking and action. Practitioners and researchers in the arts perform their thinking through the arts and act upon their conditions of practice via methodologies that differ from those in the social sciences or scientific disciplines. The arts may elicit a performative embodiment of ideas, a reflexive engagement between theory and practice, making unlikely connections through aesthetic responses and relational possibilities. The impetus may be to express, but the outcome inevitably reveals something about the world of ideas, practices, beliefs, materiality, as well as self and subjectivity. Knowledge becomes apparent through processes of affective thinking and action and the creative outputs are generally open to the participatory and discursive meaning-making processes of viewers, readers, listeners or audiences. The subject and object of research cease to be divided through these creative processes, which may be discursive, heuristic, phenomenological, imaginative, aesthetic, perceptual, relational. Epistemological and ontological questions are formed or addressed either implicitly or explicitly as tacit knowledge manifests in codified domains of creative practice.

What is there in these explanations that might be specific to the creative arts as a field of enquiry? Making a health product or breakfast cereal may involve imaginative inventions and applications of tacit knowledge, but do these necessarily equate with the output of a creative artist? Terrorists might be risk-takers but are they necessarily driven by creativity as the impulse for action? It seems there is a *kind* of creativity that situates the artist. There is a kind of knowledge required for the artist, which is specific to artistic practice and different from that of other forms of material practice. And it is a kind of knowledge that is validated in very specific ways and contexts. Thus there is a particular *kind of context* in which the artist situates the output of creativity and creative action. The context for artistic creativity is made overtly public if it is to be validated and given worth, and there is a particular kind of public at stake here. It is called the 'artworld' public as discussed by George Dickie (1984) in his institutional theory of art. Dickie shows how the artworld provides the framework for art's definition *as* art via these forms of legitimation. Similarly one could define creativity *as* creativity by the legitimating frameworks of specific public activity. Thus, in many respects it is the context that determines an action as creative; and specific contexts ensure one cannot assume a consensual defining proposition for the creative subject.

Creativity in an expanded field

Today the contexts of creativity are shifting and changing from what they once were when Western art and the artist held the monopoly on creativity as a condition of being through discourses of liberal humanism linking creativity with the highest form of human creation. Now the expanded horizons of creative practice are linked to growth and development for communities, nations and regions in alignment with policies of governments and agencies as the concept of creativity and creative innovation becomes a key driver for the global knowledge economy and art as an aesthetic production starts to lose its place and meaning in the greater global public. The American writer Richard Florida positions creativity in the economic development of cities and regions as a kind of revitalisation model of social and cultural life. Reinforcing the sort of hype

that underscores economies of creativity, Florida (2005: 1) opens *Cities and the Creative Class* with this premise, "Cities are cauldrons of creativity". This may be so, but the creativity at the core of the creative arts as a field of educational enquiry is the very creativity that is too easily bypassed in the firing of these economic cauldrons.

Florida defines the creative class in terms of members who "create meaningful new forms" (2005: 34). However, making "new forms" could apply equally to the resurgence of violence as a fact of 21st century life, or meeting globalised commercial needs of endless consumption devoid of ethical considerations. Creativity is assumed as a self-identifying positive force for progressive economic growth in spite of any negative implications, forms or effects. One example can be found in the global tourist industry with its exponential expansion of culturalism. Obliteration of cultural traditions via quick packaging and exchange might be a form of cultural wealth but also a form of violence. Positioned as a creative driver of capital growth the packaging of culture for tourist dollars can dissipate cultural significance by presenting traditional or heritage knowledge as simulacra to meet global market needs. In this context where heritage and environmental issues loom large it is crucial that creative arts practitioners and researchers have the capabilities to withstand powerful political interests and engage critically with the way knowledge is presented and represented via heritage, tradition, image, object, artefact, sound, language and media exchanges.

Creativity might be called for in the solving of social and environmental problems in the face of the proliferation of digital forms, cyber-violence, unsustainable growth of urban centres, social and environmental degradation and other effects of fast capital, but the rhetoric of creativity has become so over-used in the globalisation of knowledge exchange that it ceases to have much meaning beyond that of consensual usage. So where does this leave the field of art as a creative knowledge domain, or the communities of creative arts that claim creativity as the defining *métier*, and the creative self or subject within these discourses?

Part Two. The Subject of Discourse: Mouffe and Foucault

What is 'the creative self or subject' and how might we find an approach sufficient to question the discourses of creativity in which the subject appears? Casting an eye on the 20th century, Mark Poster (1994: 53) writes:

The question of the subject or the self has been a central issue of contention for intellectual movements in the twentieth century. Psychoanalysis, surrealism, existentialism, structuralism, and most recently poststructuralism have sought to differentiate themselves from prevailing positions by putting into question their formulations of the self. The point of disagreement has to some extent been remarkably consistent: the position under attack is said to present a doctrine of the self that is too centred, too unified, too rationalist, in short too Cartesian.

This being so, then in terms of this paper with its focus on the creative subject I will trace how this doctrine of the self as a centred or unified subject appeared as an agent of discourse in art and how it is framed today. To address the question I will look at some ways that the subject of discourse appears through art as a site of knowledge by casting the gaze on some well-rehearsed Renaissance examples and then a 21st century response, but first a brief investigation of political discourses of the liberal subject as a way of positioning the subject in broader frames of political reference.

In the discourses of liberal democracy the subject has the power of agency, a rational subject coursing through history to produce a better future. If this subject is an artist, writer or other creative practitioner then the agency is exercised through the 'natural' claim to creative knowledge identifiable through authentic authorship as a self-evident state of 'creation'. It is the 'self-evident' in political discourses of the liberal state that Chantal Mouffe (1993, 1992) questions as she seeks a more radical principle for organising liberal democracy. Her project is to rattle the professed norms of the traditional left while working within left

politics, to move beyond destructive politics of antagonism by accepting discursivity as inevitable and employing an agonistic model of democracy. This position does not shy away from conflict but accepts the polyphony of voices, which are irreducible to a unified or consensual position. Mouffe advocates for a democratic arena in which differences can be confronted rather than a matrix for the obfuscation of differences and sedimentation of a unified centre of consensus where mediocrity reigns. If one applies this political argument to the question of the creative subject one can move beyond that which is self-evident in the liberal discourses of creativity, beyond the notion of creative agency as a one-size-fits-all mediocre norm to one that allows for difference in its very framing and celebrates the agonistic spirit that arises from such difference. Then one can follow Roland Barthes' (1977) questioning of the intentionality of agency and authorship, and accept the claims to difference in the acts of creative language as spoken by Hélène Cixous (2000a, 2000b). Working through these performative texts will lead to an understanding of creativity as a condition beyond the self-evident approach of a unified, rational, Cartesian self embedded as it is in the consensus of marketplace ideology with its roots in the fundamentals of liberal democracy. Today this neoliberal position casts the creative subject as an entrepreneurial self, exercising his or her agency to frame an intentional future of economic productivity. The subject here becomes a rescripted agent of neoliberal discourses, reborn as an autonomous author in the building of knowledge economies.

Foucault calls the notion of autonomy into question when he imagines "a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author". Foucault writes (1977: 138):

Discourses, whatever their status, form, or value, and regardless of our manner of handling them, would unfold in a pervasive anonymity. No longer the tiresome repetitions:

'Who is the real author?'

'Have we proof of his authenticity and originality?'

'What has he revealed of his most profound self in his language?'

New questions will be heard:

'What are the modes of existence of this discourse?'

'Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?'

'What placements are determined for possible subjects?'

'Who can fulfil these diverse functions of the subject?'

'What matter who's speaking?'

What Foucault (1977: 113-138) suggests by the author as a *function of discourse* is quite contrary to the historicised notion of the humanist liberal subject as individual agent of politic's, art's, literature's and philosophy's history. Foucault's proposals displace an assumed autonomy of human agency, which has been recorded through historical constructions of artistic attribution and authenticity in post-Renaissance discourses. To displace the idea of agency suggests a deconstruction of the creative subject, the artist or author whose tacit quest is for an autonomous platform on which to engage meaningful activity. If the idea of art or language as an *a priori* expression for the creative agent is deconstructed, then the consensual idea of an autonomous artist or author as agent of history is challenged and displaced. So where does this position the artist, author or educator as the 'knowing subject' of history? "Writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind", said Foucault (116).

Foucault has enunciated a rare kind of author-function called a "founder of discursivity". Foucault posits that such authors "are unique in that they are not just the authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules of formation of other texts" (cited in Schrift 1994: 186). This position is confirmed in Chantal Mouffe's concept of the discursive subject of a radical democracy.

Foucault portrays a new kind of intellectual who does not urge his or her subjects to replicate and represent via the authorial intention of the proposition. He advocates that the role of an academic, an artist or intellectual is to apply a critical approach to one's own field, and through this approach

to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people's mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to reexamine rules and institutions ... to participate in the formation of a political will (Foucault in Kritzman, 1990: xvi).

The familiar and accepted canon of the creative subject in Western art

The creativity of the 'great masters' of art has been postulated as self-evident, masterfully positioned through the discourses of divine naturalism over centuries of academic practice as a bedrock of liberal Western culture. Artistic ability and creative power became synonymous with the concept of genius in the writing of Western history with figures such as Duccio, Masaccio and Michelangelo looming large in the canon of received knowledge. The idea of an individual as an autonomous, creative, human subject grew from the period post-Middle Ages in the Western world as seen through Duccio's work, appearing historically at the time of the rise of humanist scholarship and the Renaissance revival of classicism in 15th Century Italy as witnessed in works by Masaccio and Michelangelo. The principles informing their creative outputs threaded through the foundations of empirical scholarship throughout the centuries of Enlightenment in European art, science and cultural production through the 16th to 20th centuries. At the centre of such scholarship is the figuring of the idealised human subject, an individual who is fixed in space and time; an individual who represents a viewpoint of the world and of all that there is in it and beyond it. This is a human-centred universe, with 'Man' at the centre of knowledge acquisition and understanding. It is the end of Medieval monastic spiritualism where God was on high and human a lowly creature. 15th century 'Man' moved to the centre of the sacred and profane, a logically ordered world-view deemed open to empirical proof throughout subsequent centuries.

Aesthetic manifestations of the transforming subject of discourse are available through the work of artists such as Duccio and Masaccio in the 1300s and 1500s respectively. Note the changes. In 1308 the *Opera del Duomo* of Siena commissioned the master painter, Duccio to paint the great altarpiece for the high altar of Siena Cathedral, with the *Maesta, Majesty of the Virgin*. Completed in 1311 it was carried in triumph to the Cathedral amidst great festivities and music. The narrative painting covers both sides of the panel altarpiece. On the front is the Virgin Enthroned between two rows of saints and angels. The throne is like an open book shown without perspective. This image and its execution is an offspring of Byzantine tradition, its solemnity tempered by the sweetness of the contemplating angels with the saints, enframing the spiritual majesty of the Virgin Mary.

A story of great spiritual significance is being told in images to a lowly human audience. In this triumphant image the object of vision, the Virgin Mary, is placed physically on high to reflect Her spiritual importance. The viewer, the generalised human subject, not yet individualised (historically speaking), is physically and spiritually lowly. The masses would be largely illiterate and would 'read' the images as though scanning a comic book today. Note the Christ Child does not offer blessings to the people. Both the Mother and Child are still and stylised. They are generalised as signs of implied presence sufficient to sanctify the artist's work and bestow blessings upon the people. The two spatial spheres of heaven and earth are forever separated. 'Man' in the generalised state is not yet at the centre of the universe, but the artist is blessed through his God-given creation.

The inscription is significant for understanding the image in terms of its relationship to God, human beings and the spaces they inhabit. It reads (English translation) *Holy Mother of God, grant peace to Siena, grant life to Duccio, who had painted you thus*. Thus the image acts as an invocation for blessings and

spiritual protection of both the city, Siena, and the artist, Duccio. Both are being stabilised and magnified in the eyes of God. Hence, the artist as a creative subject has a God-given and spiritually sanctified role to play in the confirmation of the human subject of Western Medieval discourses.

More than a hundred years later in 1426 Italy, the artist Masaccio is commissioned to paint a polyptych for the Church of the Carmine in Pisa. The commissioning date is 19 February, 1426, and Masaccio completes the work by December that year. Today the central panel, *Madonna Enthroned*, can be seen in the National Gallery, London. The idealised Byzantine spirituality of Duccio's Madonna gives way to a more human visage as a more individualised human form appears. The baby reaches for grapes; the mother is weighty on the throne, her garments revealing not a spiritual essence of linear tracery but an anatomical physicality. Here is a more individualised notion of the human subject, a more human Madonna available to viewers who are now identifying the idea of being human as a central claim to knowledge in and of the world.

By the end of the 15th century the individualism of the subject was highly charged with emotion of universalised, if mediated, experience. Michelangelo's *La Pieta* in the Vatican shows the aching grief of a mother with her dead son draped across her knee, the marble crafted with definitive accuracy to the articulation of the human form and communicative power of human emotion. The artwork speaks directly to the people, individualised by their own and humanity's universal sorrow. There is clarity to this relationship of artist-artwork-God-creation and the artist is seen to hold the gift of creation to bring such power of the human condition to a communicative force.

In *The Creation of Man*, the triumph of 1511 in the Vatican Sistine Chapel, Adam as 'Man' is created in the image of God at the hand of Michelangelo. All the protagonists in this drama have become highly charged with creative individualism, linked in that idealised trio: God-Man-Artist. The artist, Michelangelo is firmly established as the author of a profound moment of creation upon which the later Enlightenment civilising principles were based: the likeness of 'Man' to God, the placing of 'Man' at the centre of the universe and the idealising of human form. By implication, through the knowledge and achievements of the human being as 'individual Man', universal order will prevail. The order enunciated here is spiritual and physical, neo-Platonic and Aristotelean, securing the exercise of reason, logic and beauty in the progressive practices of civilization. Thus the Artist is positioned along with Aristotle and God as a humanist scholar informed by the rightness of reason and philosophy. Logical coherence reigns in this ordered universe of idea made present in the world via the artist and his images.

Renaissance artists looked to Greece for their inspiration of the power and dignity of human presence¹ as humanist activity was coupled with concern for order and truth situated in the *objects* of beauty. Educated minds of 15th and 16th century Rome and Florence learned from values associated with new discoveries of arts and knowledge of antiquity through Greek texts, Latin translations, and archaeological evidence of the ancient world. Humanist methods were inscribed in philosophical schools whereby the Western tradition of thought was reconstructed as unified continuity. Humanist ideals were enhanced in practices of architecture, painting and sculpture through prestigious papal commissions amidst the conflation of religious and political activity, as the idea of 'Renaissance Man' as a secularised humanist scholar was nobilised via such practices.

The power and dignity of the individual was inscribed through the study of arts, artists, philosophers, poets, and dramatists of classical antiquity. Thus the scholar of the *studia humanitatis* was well read in the Classics, Latin, Rhetoric, Poetry, History and Moral Philosophy, and looked to the practices of making sculpture, painting, and architecture for the representation of humanist values. Through the 15th century in Italy, the artist, who had been previously considered a craftsman, was regarded increasingly with awe as his (rarely her at this time) programme reflected the clarity and unity of ancient classical traditions, reinscribed in the technological procedures of the contemporary Renaissance society.

Displacing the unitary subject

In the mid to late 20th century artists and writers sought to displace such unambiguous and unitary representations of subject, meaning and history. "Clarity is not a condition, clarity burns. As it does, it lays both claim and waste" (Nesbit, 1999: 6 cited in Grierson, 2000: 101). To take the work of one American postmodern artist, David Salle (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1999), the logic of meaning falls into doubt as consensual understandings are displaced. The artwork's meaning is fugitive; the work is transgressive; the work unsettles modernist myths of formalist purity; it problematises the grand narratives of Spirit or aesthetics or the logic of reason as a way of accessing knowledge embedded in creative productions. Any search for clarity is sure to confound the 'first principles' upon which the search is undertaken. Molly Nesbit calls on Wittgenstein in her engagement with Salle's *unclarity* in his work:

It has now been largely forgotten just how beneficial Wittgenstein's writing had been to how many especially those weary of the formalist reductions of Greenberg. For Wittgenstein showed his readers how shaky all first principles were, and that first principles were a human vanity, an arbitrary scaffold, a cramp-inducing shame (Nesbit 1999: 5-6).

Today, in 2007 on Bondi Beach in Sydney another sort of subject appears, a new sort of technology, new sort of art, a new way of approaching meaning. If there is a Madonna she is an everyday passer-by. She may or may not be present walking across the sands into the cage-like bars of the 21 beach cells of this site-specific work by German artist, Gregor Schneider. A disturbing vision of normality appears to have colonised the open spaces of Bondi. Metal cages and fences remind one of Guantanamo Bay yet each enclosure is complete with blue beach mattress and umbrella for the use of beach goers. Instead of suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives the only interventions come from locals or visitors whose presence marks the endless replications of everydayness and generalised leisure. The work is called *Bondi Beach, 21 Beach Cells, Sept-Oct '07*. Art has become a relational event through this work and the subject of discourse is positioned as part of the artwork, part of the world. There is little differentiation between art and world. Aesthetic responses to do with beauty or form are irrelevant as subject and object divisions dissolve in the relationality of the event. Relational aesthetics has become a way to think about the creative arts and their relation to everyday life, and coupled with that is the creative subject. Meaning is available only through the discursivity of relational interchanges. Event is all there is.

It was French theorist and curator Nicolas Bourriaud who coined the term "Relational Aesthetics" in 1996 to represent the particular forms of artistic practice in the last decade of the 20th century when Western arts became difficult and often opaque as the old forms of aesthetic understanding no longer held sway. Beyond the concept of the creative individual and their well-packaged artworks, relational aesthetics goes into the realm of relational art where the boundaries between artwork and audience are slippery. What was once thought of as the audience is now seen as a participatory community. Relational arts produce encounters that are based in inter-relations or inter-subjectivity and meanings become apparent through the community encounters. This takes the experience of the arts to an alternative space from that of individual consumption; and it can also take the pressure off artists, musicians, performers, composers and other creatives to privilege the easily-marketable packages of liberal expectation. However, a new sort of expectation occurs in the constructing of 'event' and marketing the artist's name. So the question must be asked, does relational aesthetics provide any alternative to the weight of authorship and demands of originality of the liberal subject?

Language, text and the disappearance of the authorial subject

Relational aesthetics, and my question surrounding it, has a lineage that can be traced back to the discourses of the death of the author. In 1968 Roland Barthes offered a critique of the liberal humanist notion of the subject as a unique and fixed identity. Barthes was positing a deconstruction on authorial intention and the

liberal humanist approach to writing and reading literary texts in which the human subject is ‘naturally’ perceived as an individual creator, a whole and stable originator or inventor of the discourse being read (as texts) or viewed (as works of art). At the death of the author there was the birth of the reader as authorial intent gave way to multiple readings open to relational possibilities. Roland Barthes works through the work of literature to uncover the signifying practices within which the work is embedded and which give it form. ‘The Death of the Author’ is a small essay from 1968, which starts (1977: 142):

In his story *Sarrasine* Balzac, describing a castrato disguised as a woman, writes the following sentence: ‘*This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious sensibility.*’ Who is speaking thus? Is it the hero of the story bent on remaining ignorant of the castrato hidden beneath the woman? Is it Balzac the individual, furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of Woman? Is it Balzac the author professing ‘literary’ ideas on femininity? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology? We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing.

Barthes points to the functional disconnection between the fact being narrated and reality itself. *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* said the artist René Magritte, *This is not a pipe*, it is an *image* of a pipe, a sign or symbol which stands for pipe but which has lost its connection to that origin – or taking it further a symbol that is, in Barthes words, “finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself” (1977: 142). In other words we are looking merely at a symbol, a practice of making symbols, an artifice rather than the mimetic representation of the thing in itself – and certainly not a representation of the author.

The art speaks for itself; we (the creative subject as originator with intent) do not speak through it. So it is with writing: the text is a series of notations acting as symbols or signs; paintings are constructed of visual signs and symbols, but the meanings they present are divorced from the thoughts, feelings, identities of the author or artist. They are not a copy (mimetic) of the artist; they are the model or event in themselves. There is a necessary disconnection as “the voice loses its origin” says Barthes (1977: 142) and “the author enters his own death”. There the “writing begins” or painting begins, sculpture begins, photography begins, or creative subject begins when the authorship, as such, ends.

As in the art examples given above Barthes shows that this phenomenon of the author (artist) as originator emerged from the Middle Ages through the Reformation when the prestige of the individual or human person was privileged (1977: 142-143); and with the rise of capitalism there has been increasing presence and importance given “to the ‘person’ of the author” as Barthes put it (143). “The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author ‘confiding’ in us” (Barthes, 1977: 143).

If the text is the “multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings [images], none of them original, blend and clash” (Barthes, 1977: 146), then the text is a site of struggle and contestation for meaning, “a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture” (146) – this, the very fabric of Mouffe’s discursive political subject of neoliberal discourses and also a descriptor of the subject of globalisation. It is here, in the recognition of eclectic formations of difference, that Chantal Mouffe calls for an agonistic spirit through the exercise of a political will.

Part Three. Performing the creative subject through language and difference

Can the exercise of a political will, in this sense, be available to the creative subject of language who is marked by unification with today’s economy? She was the text *Inside* (2000a: 22-23). She, Hélène Cixous,

was pushing her language to the edges of reason where divisibility might be visible at the thresholds of the alignment of *unclarity* and clarity. *There a blue dress is billowing forth, too tight and too big for her...* The language creates a displacement of certainty. The writing subject performs her subjectivity transgressively, creatively, politically:

My dress is blue like the sea where my body has grown, slept, aged; it's a young girl's dress. Inside I'm laughing ... The night is at the other end of the city, camped out on the terrace of the last house ... The city is long, and the night short, I run ... the streets climb, I straddle them ... When the streets are exhausted, I have reached the walls. The white door opens, the blue door fades away ... But in my impatience I have forgotten forms and limits, I have forgotten the shores, the walls, the steps, the porches, the others ... (Cixous, 2000a: 22-23).

The creative subject is spoken/written into being. Subject-object binaries collapse in a transgressive act of language. "In brief", says Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* (1887), "the development of language and the development of consciousness (*not* of reason but merely of the way reason enters consciousness) go hand in hand" (1974: 299); and he speaks of language as "a gesture". Cixous' particular gesture engages ontological formations of language through which the question of 'being' is deconstructed via language-as-style, and in this Cixous takes a radical position on language and the creative subject. Transgressing phallogocentric² formations, Cixous writes performatively via language-as-style to question the Word, the Law of language, the logic of the proposition. Here is the Nietzschean gesture. For Cixous the scene of writing-reading-subjectivity is scaffolded on a Nietzschean and psychoanalytical lineage as she writes, "*tous les deux*" ... "the irreparable separation ... the experience of distancing or inaccessibility which conjoins ..." (Derrida, 2000: vii-viii). For Cixous:

Writing is equated ... with the desire that can propel *personne* beyond the rule of 'opposition, aggression (and) enslavement' currently in force, beyond lack, castration, the Law and death. Texts are valued according to their ability to bring the subject into play ... (Sellers, 2000: 27).

As Cixous puts it in *First Names of No One* (2000b: 27):

I ask of writing what I ask of desire: that it have no relation to the logic which puts desire on the side of possession, of acquisition, or even of that consumption-consummation which, when pushed to its limits with such exaltation, links (false) consciousness with death.

In her embodied language-as-style, Cixous displaces the *a priori* locus of being and intentionality, origin as a 'natural' condition of creative knowledge, and by this her act is radical. Metaphysical principles are deconstructed in the very act of writing as the divisibility of the subject becomes manifest through a play of style that displaces that of the Law of logic. Questions of legitimacy are at stake here: the legitimacy of subjectivity in a process of becoming; the legitimacy of language to speak one's subjectivity into being; the legitimacy of the way language is or might be used; the legitimacy of collapsing the binary separations of subject-object that keep the 'knower' at a distance from the thing being known; the legitimacy of creativity and the creative subject as one who appears in and through *difference*. As Cixous puts it (2000b: 29), "It is not a question of making the subject disappear, but of giving it back its divisibility: attacking the 'chez-soi' (self-presence) and the 'pour-soi' (for itself)..." and:

All of them say the struggle must be led on two fronts; legitimacy must be doubly assaulted:
the front of subjectivity, insofar as it harbours and secures the lure of unicity, of totalization ... of conservatism and totalitarianism ...
[and] the front of intersubjectivity: the critique of logocentrism cannot be separated from a putting in question of phallogocentrism.

Thus the very principles of language as propositional inscription of the liberal subject are exposed via Cixous' performative texts. "The conjugal grammar is dislocated. The new desire soars out" (Cixous, 2000b:

29). Cixous echoes the writing strategies of Luce Irigaray whose “texts not only demand but also enact the overflow of meaning, structure, argument, putting phallogocentric oneness into question” (Grosz: 1992: 127).³ The French Feminist strategies enable a radical pulling-out and pushing-through of *difference* in language and subjectivity. Their work displaces pre-determined boundaries and limits on language, thought, subject and object, and as such they deconstruct the certainties of metalanguage and metaphysics in the inscription of one’s being-in-the-world.

The enterprising self as subject of knowledge discourses

Today so much is postulated as self-evident and progressive: creativity, innovation, enterprise, and the enterprising academic as the new subject of discourse in the neoliberal economies of creative globalisation. But following Foucault we need to question these postulations over and over again. All too easily the pressures of input-output knowledge exchanges of globalised knowledge capital give rise to quick answers to ill-thought questions, and the collapse of pragmatics into creative makes an ill-formed hybrid. As a result, rather than privileging the performative texts, the poetic inscriptions and the interventionist arts, we witness discourses of creativity expunging and purging creative performativities and possibilities. Rather than acknowledging that the text is a site of struggle or contestation, there is a return to the claims of clarity positioning creativity as an instrumentalised force for economic productivity. “Creativity has become viewed ... as centrally relevant to education globally in a way that has perhaps never been before” (Craft, 2005: 3). We witness the high value placed on individualism as a return to the liberal subject in the discourse of creativity embedded in marketplace formations and expectations. Thus, there is today a reinscription of the individualism evident in the Renaissance when the idealised human being became the centre of the universe as reflected in the canon of the ‘great Masters’ of art. However, instead of the certainty of a higher Spiritual Being there is a new sort of certainty. God as the knowledge economy on earth and the subject of this discourse has become manifest not through the death of the author, nor the mode of *difference* inscribed through language’s performative acts, but through a return to an economically fundamentalist, metaphysical, certainty of purposeful being as the driving goal of life.

“People are accustomed to consider the goal (purposes, vocations, etc.) as the *driving force* ... but it is merely the *directing* force – one has mistaken the helmsman for the stream”, wrote Nietzsche (1887) in *The Gay Science* (1974: 316). With the prevailing return to empirical research, the dominance of positivistic outcomes of knowledge capital and the determinations of the creative subject as an entrepreneurial agent of knowledge, Nietzsche’s words serve to inscribe a timely reminder of the need to question consensual goals in the incessant and recurring drives of the creative economies as they play out in educational and public life. Through the exercise of a political will we may yet find a way to rescue creativity from the driving discourses of economic globalisation.

Notes

1. The ideal mimetic representation of neo-Platonic beauty, as the pinnacle of Renaissance humanist achievement, is witnessed by Michelangelo’s monumental marble *David* (1501-04) carved for the city of Florence, and Raphael’s Apollo, god of the sun and divine patron of the arts, and Athena, patroness of Athens and goddess of wisdom, which dominate the architectural spaces of Raphael’s Vatican fresco *School of Athens* (1509-1511). It is significant to note also the representation of Pythagoras engaged in mathematical calculations or measurement, which is consistent with the increased interest in the rational approach to understanding natural phenomena by educated humanist scholars.
2. ‘Phallogocentrism’ is a conflation of ‘phallogocentrism’ and ‘logocentrism’. (For a discussion of phallogocentrism, see Smith, 1992: 316-318; also Grosz, 1992: xix-xx).
3. Elizabeth Grosz offers her analysis of three French Feminist writers, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Michèle Le Doeuff, ‘as a response to problems that emerged in teaching feminist theory to undergraduate students (Grosz, 1992: vii).

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