



ROUNDTABLE 4

INTRODUCTION

Gayle Margherita

Director: Jean-Claude Guédon

Editorial Board:

Wlad Godzich
Walter Moser
Michel Pierssens

Christie McDonald
Antonio Gómez-Moriana
Gilles Bibeau

Acknowledgments:

Surfaces would like to thank the following organizations for their support: Apple Canada for providing essential equipment, Industrie Canada, the SSHRC and MESSQ for funding, and the University of Montreal for infrastructural support.

Addresses:

SURFACES

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal
Université de Montréal
C.P. 6128, succ. Centre-ville
Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3C 3J7

Tel.: (514) 343-5683

Fax: (514) 343-5684

INTERNET Access

World Wide Web:

<http://pum12.pum.umontreal.ca/revues/surfaces/>

Technical assistance: **guedon@ere.umontreal.ca**

Editorial inquiries: **guedon@ere.umontreal.ca**

ISSN: 1188-2492

Submission of Texts

Articles, reviews and notes may be submitted to the editors by electronic mail, on diskettes, or by mail. Please follow MLA style in matters of presentation and accompany your text with a three or four line abstract.

Any authorial alterations to already published articles must be submitted to the editorial board. Once accepted, an updated version of the article (coded v. 2, with the new date) will replace the original on the electronic network.

Copyright for texts published in **SURFACES** remains the property of authors. However, any further publication should be accompanied by an acknowledgment of **SURFACES** as the place of initial publication.

Citation of texts

Anyone wishing to cite a text from **SURFACES** should consult the journal at source in order to be sure of using the latest version and base textual references upon the pagination (/pp. xx/) inserted in the text rather than upon the foliation (footers). Those without access to electronic mail should contact the editors, who can furnish either a new diskette or printed copy.

The problem of the body—and I think it continues to be a problem for feminism—is also the problem of theory. Within some feminist discourses, the feminine body has for some time been the site of a struggle, a struggle in which poststructuralists are accused of reducing (or elevating) corporeality to the status of a trope, while empiricist feminists are accused of placing the body outside language and culture, of subscribing to the worst sort of biologism. If the body is, as many theorists have asserted, the central object through which relations of power and resistance are played out, how and where are we to locate the stable identity that would seem to be the necessary ground for political action, for subjectivity itself? On the other hand, it seems to me that one must also acknowledge that an extrasemiotic notion of the body as "materialized subject" explains very little about the contradictions and paradoxes that constitute us as women. These are questions that have been raised in a number of different contexts during this conference—the inside/outside opposition that seems to be preoccupying us here finds its most urgent expression, it seems to me, in the question of the body and its boundaries. Because the question of the body is a question of boundaries: the metaphysical boundaries that endeavor to separate the body from the word, the racial and national boundaries that both produce and threaten difference, the various mappings of power and sexuality that make—as Judith Butler puts it—some bodies matter more than others. The generation of surplus capital is, in some sense, predicated upon the material subjugation of a hemispheric underclass, a labor force in which women are, by all accounts, decidedly overrepresented.

Our concern with the body also foregrounds the connection between speculation and specularity, and reminds us that "theory" derives from a Greek word meaning "to look at." The theorizing of

the body thus has its fetishistic aspects—when attempting to theorize the culturally determined mapping of feminine bodies across national and racial boundaries, this specular moment can too easily slip into what Sabina Sawhney calls "cultural tourism," a practice whereby the presumably exteriorized gaze of first-world feminists is /pp. 4-5/ directed fleetingly and paternalistically at the differently colored and coded bodies of their cultural "others." If it's Tuesday, this must be Asia, or India, or Mexico, and you must be my sister in feminism. For the feminist theorist, no less than for any other onlooker, the question of the body is thus a politically and ethically urgent one: the specular moment is the moment in which we are caught looking, interiorized by our own delusions of exteriority.

Gayle Margherita
Indiana University, Bloomington

/p. 5/