

Chapter Title: Prologue to a Generic Event

Book Title: *Diaspora Criticism*

Book Author(s): Sudesh Mishra

Published by: Edinburgh University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g09zs1.4>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



*Edinburgh University Press* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Diaspora Criticism*

JSTOR

# 1

## *Prologue to a Generic Event*

### EVENT, WITNESS, STATEMENT

Long before we can speak of a genre, a genus and therefore a taxonomy, still more one affiliated to that hugely capacious category called criticism, literary, cultural or some other, we must possess the training, the fortunate timing, to witness an event, as it happens, across the tremulous horizon of discourse. Clearly the subject encountering an event, the witness, is also the one who vouches for it, and may be understood as a witness in the related juridical sense of the term. The very act of witnessing installs the attestant, the one present in the raw face of the occurrence, as the subject of the vouched-for event. This same witness is entrusted with the task of enunciating the event in the first instance, since there is no event as such without a corresponding attestant. Similarly, the witness *qua* witness exists only in relation to the event and ceases to exist with the latter's disappearance. The attestant is obliged by the very predicate that constitutes it as subject to formulate one or a number of enunciative statements<sup>1</sup> to frame the eventful entity. It matters little that these statements are overblown conceits, litotes, ironic disavowals, sly innuendoes, casual asides or flagrant untruths, whether they are audaciously forthright or cunningly oblique, for without exception they serve as event-marking testimonies, emanating from the *testis*. In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Giorgio Agamben comments on the forked sense of the witness in Latin:

In Latin there are two words for witness. The first word, *testis*, from which our word testimony derives, etymologically signifies the person who, in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties, is in the position of a third party (*tertis*). The second word, *superstes*, designates a person who

has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and therefore can bear witness to it. (Agamben, 1999: 17)

At this point it is sufficient to say that the vouched-for event, the one we can actually *bear* to witness in the face of subliminal pleasure or terror, is a mediated happening whereas the event as raw occurrence bears upon it the (question) marks of an incomprehensible purity.

Considering the event in terms of the sublime *now* of the avant garde, Jean-François Lyotard observes:

That it happens ‘precedes,’ so to speak, the question pertaining to what happens. Or rather, the question precedes itself, because ‘that it happens’ is the question relevant as event, and it ‘then’ pertains to the event that has just happened. The event happens as a question mark ‘before’ happening as a question. It happens is rather ‘in the first place’ is it happening, is it, is it possible? Only ‘then’ is any mark determined by the questioning: is this or that happening, is it this or something else, is it possible that this or that? (Lyotard, 1989: 197)

The question mark is the point at which thought is ‘disarmed’ (Lyotard, 1989: 197), it is the mark before any remarking, the premonitory sign before any signification. *Is it happening* introduces the possibility that *nothing is happening*, *nothing happens*, and so thought undoes itself, the witness doubts his senses. Only later is it possible to say that this or that is happening and whether it is this or some other. For Lyotard the question mark relates to the yet-to-be-determined character of the event. Since it is anticipatory, a presentiment, it marks a non-mark, an abyss of sorts. But it is equally possible, I think, to conceive of the question mark as marking too much, as abounding in multiples to the point of madness, thereby rendering thought-as-cognition impossible. The mark is semantically overcharged. In this scheme (or the lack thereof), thought is not peering into the abyss of itself but floundering inside a heady clamour. Language fails because there is, paradoxically, too much language. A state of commotion prevails within the system of signs. In the face of utmost horror, to risk an analogy, nothing may be said because there is too much to say. The din of possibilities at the scene of pure happening – pure because the event may not be extracted, will not *eventuate* – renders impossible the singularity of the event and, by extension, the act of attesting to its occurrence. In this sense, then, the pure event is a cognitive (though not philosophical) impossibility. At once cacophony and delirium, it is devoid of ‘the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens’ (Deleuze, 1995: 5). Incapable of being witnessed, it withholds its name. It is a species of glossolalia, a saturnalia of tongues, where neither the speaker nor the receiver has any purchase on sense.<sup>2</sup> The witnessed

event or the event *proper* is already a nomination, a statement, though of a rudimentary sort, and holds within it the seeds of other statements, opinions, predicates. When newsreaders speak of the Asian Tsunami, we know they are adverting to an event whose eventfulness is dependent on a host of other factors that are being stated, not stated, understated, overstated and counter-stated in relation to the caption: the inexorable force of the tsunami, its link to a primary causal event (earthquake), the special place it now occupies in the calendar of natural disasters, the terrible toll it has exacted on human and other forms of life, its impact on the tourist industry and on various intra-national forms of civil strife, its theological reckoners and apologists, its connections to global warming and its multiple 'impact' sites (Sri Lanka, Thailand, Banda Aceh, Andaman Islands, Maldives and India), its deformation of fragile littoral ecologies and circumvention of prognostic technologies, and so forth. The eventfulness of an event is bound up with the flow of discursive matter around the bare datum of the nomination. Once witnessed, the event incites other statements to justify the nomination. As a matter of fact the transience or longevity of the nomination is entirely dependent on the magnetic capacity of an event to attract statements.<sup>3</sup>

Speaking of the compulsive nomination of 9/11 as (major) event, Derrida says that it

remains ineffable, like an intuition without concept, like a unicity with no generality on the horizon or no horizon at all, out of range for a language that admits its powerlessness and so is reduced to pronouncing mechanically a date, repeating it endlessly, as a kind of ritual incantation, a conjuring poem, a journalistic litany or rhetorical refrain that admits to not knowing what it's talking about. (Borradori, 2003: 86)

Although the statement, 9/11, as recurring mantra, may not know what it's talking about (and to be sure it does not), it persists in talking nonetheless without the benefit of this knowledge, and this talking, this mesmerising recitation of a date in its curt algebraic form, is, to my mind, graphically overdetermined. Graphically because, in this instance, we are in the province of the sign pictorial rather than the sign abstract; and this sign is televisionary, since technology permits us to see together from great distances, as well as telepathic, for modern mediascapes<sup>4</sup> have trained us to decipher each other's minds from afar. Where Derrida reads repetition as betokening the emptiness of the concept, as 'neutralising, deadening, distancing a traumatism' (Borradori, 2003: 87), I prefer to read it as the symptom of an insufferable excess in speculative signification as it pertains to the spectacle itself. Every repetition – the vertiginous presentation and representation of the assault on the twin towers – offers the becoming-memory of a *différance* (them not us, though they are

deferrable to any number of geo-fanatical sites) and an overabundance of supplementary takes on the same memory. For it is proper to ask: what is a Palestinian's view of 9/11 as opposed to a New Yorker's? Or what's a stock-broker's perspective on the event as distinct from a peasant's? Where does a cinematic mediation of 9/11 stop and the non-cinematic begin? Drawing on Heidegger's proposition that *ein Ereignis* (or what we have called the pure event) resists systemic appropriation, in part at least, Derrida insists that there is something irreducibly pre-discursive about that which counts as an event because, as he points out, language stands dumbstruck before it. It may be possible to advance a contrary opinion which argues that, in its raw occurrence, the event is a remorseless brimming over of signs – a chaos-cosmos of sorts. Not ineffability but non-extractability. The former condition relates to the unspeakable paucity of signs whereas the latter relates to their intolerable surfeit. Nothing happens – which is how Derrida understands the pure event (Derrida, 1992: 199) – because too much happens. The language of the pure event, affective or otherwise, is always too much with us. Too sublimely over-charged, it says too much, too soon, and all at once. Which is why in his bid to announce the pure event of God's death, Nietzsche's madman – and all madmen exist inside the maelstrom of the pure event – admits to the unsayability of what he says:

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they too were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke and went out. 'I come too early,' he said then; 'my time has not come yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering – it has not yet reached the ears of man'. (Nietzsche, 1976: 96)

When language is in the midst of anarchy, when disquieted by newness, heteroglossia<sup>5</sup> runs riot, turning into glossolalia, cognition falters, comprehension fails. It is, therefore, not a question of the absence of a horizon or context, but of altogether too much horizon (vertigo) and too much context (nausea), for the instrument of appropriation – the discursive statement – to cope with. This is precisely the point at which the attestant enters.

The attestant is able to bear witness and it is this ability that allows it to generate statements, to wrest from the indecipherable big bang of too-much signification a relation, an utterance, a description, a swag of statements, appellations, explications, even a harvest of axioms and motifs. Yet this bearing witness turns the tumultuous, unstable horizon of the pure event, its teeming cornucopia, its semantic turmoil and semiotic glut, into something else: an ensemble and a category and, indeed, an order. This is the paradoxical law of bearing witness to an event, its non-accessibility in the pure carnivalesque

form. For once the event is witnessed, the unbearably semiotic dissolves in the space of the legibly symbolic, which space the statement or an array of statements transforms into a scene, an order, a regularity of sorts. By semiotic I refer to a disorganisation of precursory sign-traces that goes by the name of pure event, and by symbolic to the representable sign arrangements that define a witnessed event. Alain Badiou remarks that 'what composes an event is always extracted from a situation, always related back to a singular multiplicity, to its state, to the language connected to it, etc. In fact . . . an event is nothing but a part of a given situation, nothing but a *fragment of being*' (Badiou, 2004: 98). And it is exactly this fragment, and the act of excerpting a fragment, that makes for the event proper. Dostoyevsky captures something of this notion in the opening paragraph of 'The Double' which tracks the consciousness of Yakov Peterovich Golyadkin in the process of waking up:

It was little before eight o'clock in the morning when Titular Councillor Yakov Peterovich Golyadkin woke from a long sleep, yawned, stretched, and finally opened his eyes completely. He lay motionless in bed, however, for a couple of minutes more, like a man who is not yet quite sure whether he is awake or still asleep, and whether what is happening around him is real and actual or only the continuation of his disordered dreams . . . But a moment later he leapt from bed with one bound, probably because he had at last stumbled upon the idea round which his scattered thoughts, not yet reduced to order, had been revolving. (Dostoyevsky, 2003: 127)

The emergent idea on the verge of order is what distinguishes disordered dreams from the proper event. The pure event has no harness and certainly no harnessable limits. It is what Deleuze, referring to Platonic theories of dimension, calls 'pure becoming without measure, a veritable becoming-mad, which never rests. It always eludes the present, causing future and past, more and less, too much and not enough to coincide in the simultaneity of a rebellious matter' (Deleuze, 1990: 2).<sup>6</sup> Neither a rule nor an order, it is a misrule, a jumble of agitated, overabundant, non-harvestable sign-senses. Sign-senses subsist between words and things. Although emanating from the proposition, they are independent of it. (That I can speak of the pure event from an impure site – an obvious aporia – tells us something about the capacity of language to over-reach itself, to slip into the too-garrulous or too-silent non-place of the spectre.) The vouched-for event, on the other hand, succumbs to the delimiting procedure that involves testimony, the issuing of *expressible* yet heterogeneous statements, which is to say, statements in keeping with the phantasmal rules of a proposition, a protocol or an etiquette. The pure event is an untameable excreta of sign-senses (and must always remain so), while the procedures

of incorporation that summon the event proper, sundering it absolutely from its pure state, lead to a formation, to an articulation, to something approaching a congruity, a contiguity and an order. And since the law of incorporation is based on structures of repetition and resemblance, for we must be able to decipher the echo, the insinuation, no matter how faint, of a precedent or directive, as well as radical acts of departure, for no new event is worthy of its name, is newsworthy, unless it breaches the limits of all previous events, all prior marks, we are obliged to speak of a scene of enunciative statements. Enunciative statements are past-dependent in that they have to be *re-cognised*,<sup>7</sup> present-discontinuous inasmuch as they say something other than what's in the past and the immediate present, and future-oriented, since by saying this 'something other' they foreshadow the scene of future statements. In any case, even a heterotopia, such as the one in Jorge Luis Borges that provokes Michel Foucault to laughter, must echo the possibility of a table, of tabulation, even if remotely and mockingly, before shattering the 'locus' or 'residence' that 'holds together' a series of common nouns (Foucault, 1991a: xviii):

This passage quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopaedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.' (Foucault, 1991a: xv)

In this heterotopia the impossibility of generic cohabitation is determined, in the first instance, by the possibility, the potential existence, of the indexical, alphabetical or numerical list itself. For, clearly, what the egregious siding of things does is to shatter the *nomos* of the *taxis*, the law (syntax) of arrangement. Yet, it has to be said, no matter how abstractly or emptily, the heterotopia is doomed to re-cite the list even in the midst of derangement. The law is instituted at the heretical scene of its violation.

Out of the asystemic logorrhoea of the pure event, out of the intolerable semiotic babble, which is never *here* in this sentence except perhaps symptomatically, for otherwise it – the sentence – must slide into vertigo and madness, arises the event proper, which as a witnessed event, as a fragment of being extracted from a situation, aspires to the condition of the statement. And the statement, if we remain true to Foucault's startling definition, appears in the domain between the linguistic sentence and the referent. It is at the intersection where statements share a common residence, a scene and a habitus, that the impure event subscribes to the order of arrangement, to the perpetually contestable propriety of cohabitation. And these statements may be primary

non-discursive (i.e. linguistic) sentences mutating into statements or referents sliding into statements, or they may be statements annexed from other events (proximate or distant), disciplines, archives, tracts, and pressed into the service of a new event. Moreover, the so-called 'intersection of common residence' is at once historical, since each event comes with its own durational aura (and duration is not regulated clock time but any meaningful segment suspended above chronology), and transhistorical, since any given event may be deformed and reformed, deranged and rearranged, dispersed and salvaged though acts of citation across innumerable temporalities. Be that as it may, what we are speaking of is a distributive and attributive ordering of *values-as-statements* that cannot dispense with the 'scene' or at least the phantasmal reference to a scene. The scene is where all kinds of statements enter into some form of sociality and it is this sociality – understood as the participatory relationship between diverse actors (statements) – that generates the scene. A scene is not a territory, which suggests enclosures, limits and borders. It is a simulated locus generated by the act of performative *participation* and not by any claims to membership. A scene is *staged* when there is a society of two or more statements acting out a scene. It is 'invoking the reply which makes any scene "move"' (Barthes, 1990: 76). While Roland Barthes is predominantly concerned with the theatre of love and the theatricality of lovers, what he says is on the whole relevant to the scene of the statement as well. Barthes writes that the scene is based on 'an exchange of reciprocal contestations' and depends on 'the practice of a language of which they [the lovers, the participants, the statements] are co-owners [co-sharers]; *each one in his turn*, says the scene, which means: *never you without me*, and reciprocally' (Barthes, 1990: 204). Since statements hail from scenes other than the one they inhabit, what's inside is invariably outside and what's outside is potentially within the scene. (Derrida describes this situation as participation without belonging.) But this externality is forgotten in the reciprocity of statements making a scene.

In any case, I am speaking loosely of the classificatory procedures involved in the engendering of events-as-beings<sup>8</sup> through modalities of dispersion, juxtaposition, indexation, measurement, difference, division, analogy, antagonism, similitude, alignment, segmentation, sedimentation, whether of body (matter) or of spirit (ether). I am referring to the strange attraction<sup>9</sup> of irregular statements, of all that appears discontinuous, evasive and restive in statements, to the same eventful *domicile*, above and beyond all the divergent, maverick and recalcitrant paths a statement may take before, during and after residence. I mean to employ the term 'domicile' in an enriched sense here, as referring to the Latin *domus*, 'home', but also to *domicilium*, 'dwelling', which is derived from the Old English *dwellan*, 'to lead astray, delay' but finds its current sense in Middle English, 'to remain in place'. It is now possible to say that the



statement, for that's what holds my attention at this point, 'remains in place' as testament to the impure event, and yet 'delays' and 'leads astray', since the event proper is a metonymic fragment for countless roads not taken, for those nameless unquantifiable spectral<sup>10</sup> potentialities, for all that may never be vouchsafed. 9/11 is no more and no less than a metonym for all the possibilities and impossibilities – in the self and its other – of sorrow, ire, satisfaction, gift (death), horror, retribution, justice, motivation, awe, epiphany, violence, belief, compassion, blindness, malice and hypocrisy – which is to say for all that, in the final analysis, evades the statement, eludes testimony.

The fortunate sociality of statements attesting to an event brings into being a metonymic fragment that finds residence in what I have described as the scene. At this stage, the metonymic fragment is more than the minimal statement (since a scene supposes the participation of two or more statements) yet less than an exemplar. At any rate, as a result of the constitutive 'lack' that characterises all metonymic systems, the fragment postpones the knowledge of its own partiality by straying in the direction of the supplement, its relational, dissenting and rhizomatic other. It is the movement of supplementarity that allows for the unstable processes of incorporation, accreditation, ostracism and disavowal of values-as-statements at the relational scene of the event. Derrida notes that the

play, permitted by the lack or absence of a centre or origin, is the movement of *supplementarity*. One cannot determine the centre and exhaust totalisation because the sign which replaces the centre, which supplements it, taking the centre's place in its absence – this sign is added, occurs as a surplus, as a *supplement*. The movement of signification adds something, which results in the fact that there is always more, but this addition is a floating one because it comes to perform a vicarious function, to supplement a lack on the part of the signified. (Derrida, 1978: 289)

We need only think of the forever-unfolding scenes of Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxist political economy, where statements are constantly formulated, exhausted, revived and banished, to understand how this works. It should be by now clear that metonymic fragments account for the operation of most taxonomic categories, and the generic event is no exception.

#### THE GENERIC EVENT

Not all events are equally eventful. The parsimony or profusion of enunciative statements *over time* determines the eventfulness of an event; while never actually quantifiable, the more eventful the event the greater the number of active statements circulating at its scene. An eventful event reverberates; it

brings statements under the umbrella of a nomination. Eventfulness, however, is not simply a matter of dramatic intensity and narrative density (since an event may attract a throng of lively statements over a fleeting moment); it is also a matter of durability or, at least, the aura of durability. An eventful event is able to keep attracting and discarding statements (and all statements are transformative of the event as basic datum) over a substantial span of time. No doubt ideology motivates the over- or under-deployment of all eventful statements since power of one kind or another (economic, sexual, military, institutional, disciplinary and so on) underwrites all statements *as values*, past, present and future, but I take this fact as already embedded in my understanding of the statement. Whenever an event gathers about it that quality of time-tested eventfulness that permits it to operate as an *exemplar* (which is a special type of metonymic fragment), we witness the rise of a generic event. But the exemplar cannot, of course, hold itself up as an example since whatever procedures it deploys gains visibility only in relation to other exemplars. A genre, after all, is never a singularity (except in the form of an overarching nomination) since it is made up of more than one – one and an other. In this sense, there is no founding novel since the novel as a generic event comes about in an exemplifying series, without end or beginning. Tzvetan Todorov has something akin in mind when he claims that ‘the question of origins cannot be separated from the terrain [scene] of the genres themselves’ (Todorov, 1990: 15). And since each exemplar must stand in relation to some other in a haphazard process, the generic event neither generates nor conforms to universal laws. One exemplar may substitute another, but without clarifying any fixed codes. What Lyotard says about philosophical discourse holds equally true for the exemplar in that it too lives by the fundamental rule – the rule of the rule, the law of the law – ‘that it must be in search of its rule’ or ‘its rule is that what is at stake is its rule’ (Lyotard, 1989: 394). The exemplar is simultaneously searching and ‘waiting for its criterion’ (Lyotard, 1989: 394). To be sure, since each exemplar stands in a metonymic relationship to its others, what distinguishes one generic event from other such events are the features that participate at the *scene of exemplification*, each restlessly circling the elusive, unrepresentable law that incites it and justifies its place in the scene. As Derrida argues in a discussion of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, exemplarity is not concerned with making present the law it struggles to exemplify, but with its effects, since this law ‘incites [the example] from its place of hiding’ (Derrida, 1992: 191). Respect is, thus, ‘aimed at persons only insofar as they offer an example of the moral law, which never shows itself but is the cause of that respect’ (Derrida, 1992: 190). Or, to put it another way, respect incites statements on moral law without disclosing the total or ideal statement behind the incitement. One could think of this incitement of the law in

relation to the forever-elusive essence of one or another generic category. As Frederic Jameson notes in *The Political Unconscious*, some literary critics speak of ‘the essence or meaning of a given genre by way of the reconstruction of an imaginary entity – the “spirit” of comedy or tragedy, the melodramatic or epic “worldview”, the pastoral “sensibility” or the satiric “vision” . . .’ (Jameson, 1989: 107). Here the law – as spirit, vision, worldview or sensibility – incites one or another example without ever showing itself to either the exemplar or the critic. With reference to the special case of James Joyce, Maurice Blanchot comments that the genre (and he is thinking of the novel here) comes about not ‘by engendering monsters, formless, lawless works lacking in rigour, but by provoking nothing but exceptions to itself, that constitute law and at the same time suppress it.’ In short, ‘we could never recognise the rule except by the exception that abolishes the rule, or more precisely, dislodges the centre of which a certain work is the uncertain affirmation, the already destructive manifestation, the momentary and soon-to-be-negative presence’ (Blanchot, cit. Todorov, 1990: 14–15). What Blanchot fails to clarify, but which point forms a clandestine part of his argument, is that the simultaneous constitution and abolition of the rule leaves the rule itself outside the order of representation. If what is constituted is *at the same time* abolished and abolished the moment it is constituted, then finally it can be neither constituted nor abolished; it is an unrepresentable law that facilitates and subverts both movements at once: suppressing while constituting and constituting while suppressing. It is this same unrepresentable law that drives all metonymic categories to the supplement. The question of the generic event is, consequently, never a settled one, for that would lead to its termination. Death, after all, is the failure of supplementarity; or perhaps its finest moment. As a matter of fact, since an exemplar seeks to justify its place in the scene of the genre by pursuing and being pursued by an unrepresentable law, it remains outside the law – an outlaw. It seeks to be other than what it is and suppresses the other in order to be what it is. Clearly metonymic exemplars bring to the scene of exemplification strains of lawlessness, of errantry<sup>11</sup> that, ironically, safeguards the generic event from degeneration and certain death.

Exemplary statements participate at the scene of exemplification without belonging to it. This is because the ‘re-mark’ or the repeatable trait or characteristic that ‘is absolutely necessary for and constitutive of what we call art, poetry or literature’ (Derrida, 1992: 229) participates in all exemplars but belongs *essentially* to none *in particular*. Derrida seems to be offering a radical representation of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s principle of family resemblances, where the members of a family possess no common *features* and yet share a *face*; consequently the face, belonging simultaneously to all and none, exists outside the order of relationality and representation. In an article entitled ‘Universals

and Family Resemblances', Renford Bambrough provides the following illustration of Wittgenstein's principle:

Let us suppose that 'the Churchill face' is strikingly and obviously present in each of the ten members of the Churchill family, and that when a family group photograph is set before us it is unmistakable that these ten people all belong to the same family. It may be that there are ten features in terms of which we can describe 'the family face' (high cheekbones, cleft chin, dark hair, dimpled cheeks, pointed ears and ruddy complexion). It is obvious that the unmistakable presence of the family face is compatible with the absence from each of the ten members of the family of one of the ten constituent features of the family face. It is also obvious that it does not matter if it happens that the feature which is absent from the face of each individual member of the family is present in every one of the others. The members of the family will then have no *feature* in common, and yet they will all unmistakably have *the Churchill face* in common. (Bambrough, 1968: 190–1)

Similarly, for Derrida, the re-mark participates without belonging:

Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text, there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging. And not because of an abundant overflowing or a free, anarchic and unclassifiable productivity, but because of the trait of participation itself, because of the effect of the code and of the generic mark. In marking itself generically, a text unmarks itself [*se démarque*]. If remarks of belonging belong without belonging, participate without belonging, then *genre-designations cannot be simply part of the corpus*. (Derrida, 1992: 230)

If they are not part of the corpus, then genre designations remain aloof from the statements that participate at the relational scene: the nomination, to be precise, is never affected by what occurs in its name. (In the concluding chapter, I discuss the immutability of genre designations in the context of Saul Kripke's thesis on rigid designators.) This may go some way towards explaining why the scene of exemplification (or the relational scene) is devoid of a systemic or unified body (corpus). It is the partial, performative arena where the example is caught up in the paradoxical and relational movement of constitution and abolition *at the same time*. Consequently, the total statement is never realised.

At this stage, it would be prudent to limit my understanding of the generic event, or the genre as we may now call it, to aesthetic and social scientific categories of writing, and to critical discourse in particular, for our topos, that which I am striving to conjure into visibility here, goes by the name of diaspora

criticism. In so naming this event, even at this premature stage, I am preparing to bear witness to it, and have already, in some measure, borne witness to it, since gestures of nomination achieve in the raw the promise, the obligation to the future, that marks the nominated object. I may be close to repeating an axiom when I say that all acts of naming are promissory in one form or another. Indeed the process of bearing witness to a genre, of stating what it is and is not, entails the act of engendering the exemplar. What distinguishes an exemplar is the fortunate sociality of event-generating elements or statements. Event-spawning statements perform at least four simultaneous actions. First, they echo a prior (not in a chronological sense) order, no matter how faintly, erringly or aberrantly; second, they cannibalise other orders, whether past or present, whether fortuitously or through meticulous argument; third, they renew, recruit or expel whatever order or archive deemed to be anachronistic or antagonistic; and, fourth, they surpass all such orders by (lawlessly, relentlessly) pursuing an unrepresentable law through a peculiar relational process. The durability and currency of a particular genre – understood in terms of the shared scene of its various exemplars – rests entirely on the capacity of the latter to perform all four actions in time.<sup>12</sup> And the desire and drive to perform is clearly predicated on the eternal dissatisfaction that haunts the exemplars; and haunts, too, the witnesses.<sup>13</sup> Any sign of inertia is fatal to the exemplar and ultimately to the genre. As the *Britannica World Language Dictionary* (International Edition, 1959) reminds us, in a certain philosophical sense, an event may refer to ‘anything that occurs, usually manifesting changes and lasting only a relatively short time: thus opposed to *object*, which endures.’ It follows that the durable event has within it a certain restorative strain – a life-maintaining mutability – that permits it to exfoliate, to shed all statements that betray symptoms of exhaustion. Within the scene of the dynamic genre, we witness a series of minor epistemic turns and tremors (as opposed to severe ruptures that distinguish one event from another), that keeps it one step ahead of whatever (statement or exemplar) is obsolescent or effete in its temporal habitus. This habitus or scene may be quite different from the time of the event’s initial appearance (its durational quality), but that point I have already noted. What I want to say here is that in the region of the internal epistemic tremor there is a notable intensification of all the four statement-related actions described above, but particularly of the two actions of incorporation (of new statements) and purgation (of moribund ones), since the genre is under intense pressure to overcome its own fast-approaching death. In the aftermath of an internal epistemic tremor the genre may shift its terms of reference but without renouncing its name. If the scene of exemplification is transformed as a consequence, then the transformation is bound to be, more or less, dialectical; and dialectics, as Deleuze explains, is ‘the art of conjugation’ where ‘it is the task of language

. . . to establish limits and to go beyond them. Therefore language includes terms which do not cease to displace their extension and which make possible a reversal of the connection in a given series . . .’ (Deleuze, 1990: 8). What never alters is the pursuit of the always unrepresentable law that justifies the singularity of the designation – which is why we speak of *this* genre and not some other. All dialectical manoeuvres, all possible transformations of the scene, are already present in the nomination. The two epistemic tremors of Kleinian object relations theory, with its stress on the social ego rather than instinctual energies, and Lacanian neo-Freudianism with its renewed but radically different – poststructuralist and semiotic – emphasis on id-based drives, may be seen as scene-transforming points in Freudian psychoanalysis. In this regard, we may speak of the two scenes of exemplification within the genre of Freudian psychoanalysis.

The argument so far has been as follows. A proper event is an already witnessed entity and, in its most rudimentary form, consists of a minimal statement: 9/11 or Asian Tsunami or Postmodernism. The eventfulness of an event is determined by its capacity, over time, to recruit timely statements and to jettison untimely ones. When an event attains that pitch of eventfulness that transforms it into an exemplar, we witness the rise of a genre or genre-like category. Not all events, of course, undergo this sort of transformation. All exemplars are made up of statements that perform the four simultaneous actions described previously. Exemplars exist only in relation to other exemplars, but without attesting to any universal or transcendent principle. In fact, it is the process of seeking and suppressing an unrepresentable law (i.e. the statement in its impossible totality), or at least the critical process of attributing this motivation to the various exemplars, that creates the shared scene of exemplification. Exemplars perpetually exist in a condition of supplementarity. A genre is no more and no less than the repertoire of statements at the relational scene of exemplification; and this scene enjoys a nomination that demands no proof.<sup>14</sup> Clearly there is no *generic* name without the scene since it is the heteroglossic encounter between statements and exemplars that makes for the nomination in the first instance. A nomination minus the scene is always an extra-generic nomination. Since they operate metonymically, exemplars are subject to the indefatigable process of supplementation. And it is through the logic of supplementation that one exemplar surpasses another’s argument while compensating for an insufficiency (and all metonyms are insufficient) in the latter.

#### DIASPOETICS

The genre of diaspora criticism, for that’s my ongoing example, sustains itself by recognising and repeating certain methodological manoeuvres derived from

contemporary theory (philosophy, human geography, cultural, race and ethnic studies, border theory, literary studies, structuralism, deconstruction, social anthropology, postmodernism, postcolonialism and so on); through selectively incorporating the archives of other disciplinary genres (migration or citizenship studies, ethnography, film studies, history, musicology, population studies and economics); by recruiting and transforming a quasi-biblical description – diaspora<sup>15</sup> – into a modern critical practice; and by *staging* a series of statements about travelling communities that, in a sly combinatory manner, surpasses all the previous orders of bearing witness to migratory events and mobile subjects. The meta-critical activity of talking about this site, of engendering the genre as a secondary critical witness bearing witness to the testimony of other witnesses, other critics, who actually engender the event (diaspora) and themselves as its subjects (diasporists) through a diversity of statements, I would like to, without any further delay, call *diaspoetics*. Diaspoetics is the meta-critical art, the *techne*, of witnessing the witnesses of the event called diaspora criticism.<sup>16</sup> Its method is a bringing forth (*techne*) and holding up to scrutiny all statements and exemplars, whether arborescent (rooted) or rhizomorphic (routed), that end up vouching for it. Its mode of operation is that of an intervention, the interposition of a non-witnessing witness or, rather, of a witness who attests to the act of bearing witness, but its behaviour is incontestably that of a supplement. For not only does it add to (and subtract from) the scene of the event, thus servicing its constitutive metonymic drive, but it subversively overreaches it as well.

I have referred to a vestigial durational quality that characterises the emergence of an event, for there is a temporal horizon of some description from which the event is extracted, which is not the same as saying it is limited to this horizon, since I have made it amply clear that exemplars are spatially staged rather temporally placed at the relational scene of exemplification. It is this scene that allows us to speak of Rushdie, Rabelais, Dickens and Sterne in the same breath when discussing aspects of the novel form. Exemplars bring together eventful statements that are habitually transportable, transhistorical and transformative. The eventful statement succeeds in traversing multiple temporal dimensions, modifying itself at the slightest contact with other eventful statements, and yet without ever dispensing with the shared scene of exemplification. Even when epistemic tremors transform the shared scene of exemplification, the nomination stays intact. Otherwise it would be impossible to bear witness to the extant events of cultural materialism and evolutionary biology in the twenty-first century, an era decidedly remote from that familiar to the founders of these discursive practices: Marx and Darwin. (Marxian or Darwinian axioms may be transferable to other genres but this action will have little impact on these initial sites, except by the way of return.) Exemplars are



driven towards an unrepresentable law that incites from its place of hiding, thereby giving rise to an incessant flow of effects and examples. All exemplars are metonymic types futilely dreaming of the total statement that reveals, once and for all, the corpus of the generic law.

While it is imprudent to speak of diaspora criticism as a major generic event, it is possible to bear witness to a certain durational quality surrounding its emergence. It is admissible, in other words, to claim that this critical event was wrested from a teeming epistemological situation in the 1980s and 1990s and continues to attract a flurry of exemplars. To be sure, I am not in the least concerned with the amorphous mass of diaspora-style commentary that came and went, namelessly, narcissistically or under different banners, prior to this period. I am not in the position, for that would be an untenable one, to bear witness to the amorphous, chaotic, tumultuous, overdetermined situation – the pure event – out of which arose the impure genre of diaspora criticism. I am concerned rather with the strange attraction, the fortunate sociality of theoretical statements that, despite their promiscuity and non-consanguinity, testify to, and thereby generate, the exemplars of diaspora criticism. To nominate the durational horizon of this event as the 1980s and 1990s (and now extending into the first decade of the new millennium) is to identify a sudden garrulity of a discursive kind around the eventful entity – diaspora – that was formerly lacking, or, if present, present in a quasi-discursive, non-eventful manner. This garrulity and gregariness had much to do with the publication of Sheffer's *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* in 1986, Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* in 1993, the launching of the transnational journal, *Diaspora*, in 1991, and the participation in the debate of other significant periodicals such as *Public Sphere*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Social Text*, *Positions*, *Daedalus* and *Textual Practice*. These institutional fora, together with the individual interventions of foundational witnesses such as Gabriel Sheffer, William Safran, Walker Conner, Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin, Roger Rouse, Khachig Tölölyan, James Clifford, Robin Cohen, Steven Vertovec, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Kobena Mercer, Rey Chow, Aihwa Ong, R. Radhakrishnan, Avtar Brah, Martin F. Manalansan IV, Brent Hayes Edwards and Vijay Mishra, among others, created the scene of garrulity and sociality for the emergence of generic exemplars. There was, to be sure, no shared scene of exemplification and, consequently, no exemplars prior to this period.

It is my opinion that the genre of diaspora criticism has, so far, witnessed three scenes of exemplification – or two epistemic tremors or riffs (limit-transforming repetitions) – in its metonymic drive towards the unrepresentable law of the total statement. These scenes do not constitute neat temporal blocks. Rather, they intersect across the same temporal axis and some participants (such as Vijay Mishra and Stanley Tambiah) end up contributing to more than



one. In the first scene, which may be labelled the *scene of dual territoriality*, the emphasis falls on divided terrains as exemplars seek to account for diasporic subjects, cultures and aesthetic effects in terms of the subjective split between the geo-psychical entities of here and there, of hostland and homeland. In a move that is reminiscent of structuralism's reliance on stable coordinates, the home and host territories are seen as cohesive tensional entities. This position is premised, it seems, on a reading of the homeland state as classically auto-centred, racially self-evident and ideologically homogenised. Suspended between two such terrains (living without belonging in one, belonging without living in the other), diasporas are seen to represent a new species of social formation. For diasporists participating in the first scene of exemplification, there is a straightforward correlation between territorial-nationalistic and psychological-ideological (dis)locations.<sup>17</sup> It is exactly this move, this mapping of the geopolitical onto the psycho-subjective, which spawns a series of classificatory statements about diasporas in general. Roughly, there are three sets of statements interacting at the scene of exemplification. The first set seeks to identify the new *being* (psychic identity) of an uprooted ethnic cluster as it vacillates between homeland (the absent topos) and hostland (the present topos), the second set undertakes to tabulate the peculiar *characteristics* of this cluster, while the third, targeting the constitutive role played by memory in identity formations, attributes to the diaspora a departure (from an implied or designated norm) on the *plane of consciousness*. Strains and symptoms of this consciousness may be found in the diaspora's social, cultural and aesthetic practices.<sup>18</sup> In their privileging of determinate territorial loci, first scene participants take an overwhelmingly aborescent view of diasporic formations. The main contributors to this scene are Gabriel Sheffer, Walker Conner, William Safran and Robin Cohen. Chapter 2 is devoted to an analysis of this first scene of exemplification.

The fundamental proposition sustaining the scene of dual territoriality was soon found to be groundless and this moment of identification created an epistemic riff that dialectically transformed the first scene without dangerously affecting the nomination. This second scene may be described as the *scene of situational laterality*. The exemplars participating here take issue with the idea of bounded terrains and the constitutive role played by the tensional split between homeland and hostland in diasporic subject constitution. In *The Black Atlantic*, which comprises this scene's privileged exemplar, Paul Gilroy writes against 'national and nationalistic perspectives' because 'neither political nor economic structures of domination are simply co-extensive with national borders' (Gilroy, 1993: 9). Endeavouring to explain the diaspora of the black Atlantic (Africans transported and translocated to the Americas, Caribbean and Europe in the ever-unfolding drama of modernity) in ways that 'transcend both the

structures of the nation-state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity' (Gilroy, 1993: 19), Gilroy emphasises the 'rhizomorphic, fractal structure of [this] transcultural, international formation' (Gilroy, 1993: 4). In this picture, homogenised, circumscribed and nationalised territories no longer function as privileged referents for identity constitution. Gilroy owes an intellectual debt – one he freely acknowledges – to Stuart Hall's insights on the complexities of cultural identity in black Britain. In a paper first published in 1990 entitled 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', Hall makes a case for diasporic identities based on what he calls strategic *positioning*. He explains that during the movement of *différance* that drives all signification, 'meaning, in any specific instance, depends on the contingent and arbitrary stop – the necessary and temporary "break" in the infinite semiosis of language.' However, '[t]his does not detract from [Derrida's] . . . original insight. It only threatens to do so if we mistake this "cut" of identity – this *positioning*, which makes meaning possible – as natural and permanent rather than arbitrary and contingent . . .' (Hall, 1990: 229–30). Hall's emphasis on the strategic positional cut as constitutive of identity opened up the possibility for future commentators (such as Gilroy, Mercer, Clifford and Brah) to think of diasporas in terms of lateral, peripatetic and multipolar (as distinct from linear, fixed and bipolar) positionalities. It follows that the whole question of diasporic identity ends up being linked to situation-specific *becoming*, or the middle passage (milieu) in the active sense, rather than to the tensional pressures exercised by bipolar nation-states.<sup>19</sup> Drawing on Hall's and Gilroy's insights, James Clifford refers to the lateral axes of dissemination – rhizomorphic routes in preference to arboreal roots – as distinct from dualistic concepts of origin and return: symbolic, psychological or actual. Arguing against teleologies of origin and return, he observes that 'multi-locale diasporas are not necessarily defined by a specific geopolitical boundary' and that they betray a 'principled ambivalence about physical return and attachment to land' (Clifford, 1994: 304–5). Entering the fray on the side of hybridity, Mishra thinks of this ambivalence in relation to what he calls the 'semantics of the hyphen' (Mishra, 1996a: 433) whereby the diasporic subject is simultaneously sundered from and sutured to its various psycho-territories. Here the subject rhizomatically experiences, at the one and the same time, the double movement of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome upholds the principle of an asignifying rupture:

Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialised, organised, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialisation down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie

back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of good and bad. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9)

Deriving their argument from such versions of poststructuralist thought, the participants at the scene of situational laterality assume a dogmatically decentred view of diasporic movements and subjectivity. Indeterminacy supplants stable points of geo-psychical recognition. Chapter 3 focuses on the crucial contributors to this second scene of exemplification.

The third scene, which may be dubbed the *scene of archival specificity*, while both critiquing and enlisting the exemplars of the two previous scenes, dispenses with the more generalist paradigms in favour of an interrogative specificity. Instead of drawing on an assortment of diasporic clusters to frame a general theory of diasporas, the third scene participants perform an archaeology on specific diasporas. As Mishra puts it: ‘To understand diasporas necessitates tempering [*sic*] with idealist notions of the exemplariness of diasporas in the modern world’ (Mishra, 2001: 29). Unhappy with ‘the idealist scenarios endorsed by some diaspora theorists’, he recommends a much more rigorous archive-based interrogation of ‘individual diasporic histories’ (Mishra, 2001: 28). This recommendation inaugurates the second epistemic riff within the genre. Mishra’s own work, for instance, involves charting the historically-motivated differences and discontinuities between the old and the new Indian diasporas. The old or exclusivist diasporas that came about during the time of plantation capital exist in a discontinuous and yet overlapping relationship with the new or border diasporas that are a feature of migratory flows in the era of advanced capital. Exemplars in the third scene include Martin Manalansan’s work on queer Filipinos in New York, Donna Gabaccia’s detailed account of Italian dispersion over the *longue durée*, Brent Hayes Edwards’ revisionist take on the black Atlantic and Martin Baumann’s micro analysis of religious identity formations among Hindu Trinidadians. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth account of the principal participants in this scene.

No matter what the exemplar or the scene of exemplification, diasporists have built their theories around a fundamental, if prodigiously understated and scantily inspected, economic premise. Khachig Tölölyan, for instance, thinks of modern diasporas as ‘exemplary communities of the transnational moment’ (Tölölyan, 1991: 5). Aihwa Ong, too, describes dispersed communities in terms of transnationality. She explains:

*Trans* denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the *trans-*versal, the *trans*actional, the *trans*lational, and the *trans*gressive aspects of

contemporary behaviour and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of state and capitalism. (Ong, 1999: 4)

By limiting themselves to transnational modes and temporality, Tölölyan and Ong mean to draw a distinction between the classical ‘ethno-diasporas’ – Jews, Greeks, Parsis and Armenians – and large-scale dispersal of significant ethnic clusters witnessed in the time of advanced capital. This distinction has appealed to a wide range of diasporists. Ian Chambers, for instance, claims that the ‘chronicles of diasporas – those of the black Atlantic, of metropolitan Jewry, of mass rural displacement – constitute the ground swell of modernity’ (Chambers, 1994: 16). Before taking exception to idealist notions of exemplarity, Mishra too conceived of diaspora as ‘the exemplary condition of late modernity’ (Mishra, 1996a: 426). After sorting through the general confusion regarding periodisation, Chapter 5 contends that for diasporists there are at least three distinct historical moments corresponding to the emergence of diasporas: classical, the (early) modern and the late (advanced) modern. Diasporists are mostly concerned with the last of these moments, but they rarely dissect the economic assumptions underpinning many of their assertions. In other words, they decline to investigate the actual workings of transnational capital, that is to say capital delinked from the material realms of production. Are we really in the middle of a metamorphic stage in the history of capital? Has post-Fordist speculative capital based on market predictions and exchange rates mechanism – the spectral economy – finally replaced the humdrum systems of surplus value production and accumulation? Is it true that floating financial capital no longer relies on classically anchored modes of production for its daily proliferation? Is the labour theory of value, consequently, defunct? What is the connection between delinked capital *and* hypermobile populations *and* hybrid cultural productions? Is this connection mimetic or symptomatic? Is Arjun Appadurai correct in identifying ‘fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics’ (Appadurai, 1996: 33) in the global system? By avoiding such base-level questions, diasporists fail to clear sufficient ground for many of their assertions about globalisation, modernity and transnationalism. Chapter 5 takes a close look at these three crucial pillars of diaspora criticism.

Suggesting that diaspora criticism has turned into an immense culture industry ceaselessly *defining* an object – diaspora – without becoming in any way *definite*, Chapter 6 affords a short account of those works that profess titular or eponymous belonging without participating in the genre. Where the three scenes of exemplification were distinguished by a certain methodological focus, theoretical rigour and dialectical consistency, a simple titular mention is now sufficient for some studies to count as potential ‘exemplars’. The current

proliferation of extra-generic studies points to the paradox that haunts the law that incites the genre from its place of hiding. In its desire to fix limits and to attain the definitional moment of the total statement, diaspora criticism keeps overstepping set limits, rules and definitions. As the rule is the want of a rule and the limit the want of a limit, it follows that the nomination, the generic rubric, is increasingly being treated as empty and promiscuous. When this happens – and it usually happens to a genre at an advanced stage – it becomes possible for a breathtaking array of projects to share in the nomination *without any recourse to generic memory and without the burdensome responsibility of participation*. Such emptily ‘nominal’ studies, sundered as they are from the three scenes of exemplification, *belong without participating* in the genre. And since participation without belonging best describes what occurs in a genre, the reversal of this order may, in all likelihood, intimate the first symptom of an approaching exhaustion.

#### NOTES

1. My understanding of the enunciative statement coincides with Foucault’s: ‘A statement is not confronted (face to face as it were) by a *correlate* – or the absence of a *correlate* – as a proposition has (or has not) a referent, or as a proper noun designates someone (or no one). It is linked rather to a “referential” that is made up not of “things”, “facts”, “realities”, or “beings”, but of laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated, or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied in it’ (Foucault, 1992: 91).
2. Commenting on Paul’s first Letter to the Corinthians, Agamben writes: ‘The “speaking in tongues” (*lalein glōssē*) of which Paul writes refers to an event of speech – glossolalia – in which the speaker speaks without knowing what he says (“no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries” [1 Corinthians 14:2])’ (Agamben, 1999: 114).
3. The philosopher Donald Davidson has analysed events in terms of the dispersion of simultaneous argument places in sentence formations. Eventfulness, accordingly, relates to the possibilities and potentialities of predication in any given statement (Davidson, 1996: 81–95).
4. Coined by Arjun Appadurai, mediascapes ‘refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media. These images of the world involve many complicated inflections, depending on their mode (documentary or entertainment), their hardware (electronic or pre-electronic), their audiences (local, national, or transnational), and the interests of those who own and control them. What is most important about these mediascapes is that they provide (especially in their television, film, and cassette forms) large and complex repertoires of

images, narratives, and ethnoscapas to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed. What this means is that many audiences throughout the world experience the media themselves as a complicated and interconnected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens, and billboards. The lines between the realistic and the fictional landscapes they see are blurred, so that the further away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds which are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, particularly if assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other imagined world' (Appadurai, 1996: 35).

5. I use heteroglossia in the sense suggested by M. M. Bakhtin, that is as representing the diversity of social voices and stratified utterances that make up the compositional unity of a narrative system (Bakhtin, 1981: 260–75).
6. Deleuze gives this extraordinary example to illustrate his point: 'Alice and *Through the Looking-Glass* involve a category of very special things: events, pure events. When I say "Alice becomes larger," I mean that she becomes larger than she was. By the same token, however, she becomes smaller at the same time. She is larger now; she was smaller before. But it is at the same moment that one becomes larger than one was and smaller than one becomes. This is the simultaneity of becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present. Insofar as it eludes the present, becoming does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future. It pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once. Alice does not grow without shrinking, and vice versa' (Deleuze, 1990: 1).
7. Re-cognition describes the process where two statements are alike but non-identical; similarly, re-citation describes the act of echoing a precedent while simultaneously diverting from it.
8. I understand 'being' in the Heideggerian sense as pertaining to all existential entities. As such, I resist Deleuze's understanding of events as incorporeal entities or extra-beings, based on the simple and no doubt simplistic assertion that whatever eludes the proposition is simultaneously generated by it and cannot evade – precisely in the moment of evasion – a certain mode of beingness.
9. In chaos theory 'strange attractors' are forces, at once aleatory and deterministic, that give rise to natural systems such as the weather.
10. Derrida defines the spectre as a becoming-body, neither body nor spirit but potentially both (Derrida, 1994: 6).
11. 'The "perpetual mutability" (*in inconstantia constans*) which animates me, far from squeezing all those I encounter into the same functional type (not to answer my demand), violently dislocates their false community: errantry does not align – it produces iridescence: what results is the nuance' (Barthes, 1990: 103).
12. Let me clarify at once that by durability and currency I am referring to asystemic patterns of dispersion and recurrence rather than to linear notions of longevity. In his important work, *The Architext: An Introduction*, Gérard Genette makes this observation: '. . . [T]he argument of duration must be handled carefully: the longevity

- of the classical forms (epic, tragedy) is not a sure indication of transhistoricity, given the conservatism of the classical tradition and its ability to sustain mummified forms for centuries . . . A more significant criterion than longevity would be the capacity for dispersion (among diverse cultures) and for spontaneous recurrence (without the stimulus of a tradition, revival, or “retro” style)’ (Genette, 1992: 215).
13. Derrida notes that it is the law’s inaccessibility that ‘bars the gate to genealogical history’ while stimulating ‘desire for the origin and genealogical drive . . .’ (Derrida, 1992: 197).
  14. Genette makes the point that no one act of generic nomination is more sound than another: ‘In the classification of literary species as in the classification of genres, no position is essentially more “natural” or more “ideal” – unless we abandon the literary criteria themselves, as the ancients did implicitly with the modal position. There is no generic level that can be decreed more “theoretical,” or that can be attained by a more “deductive” method, than the others: all species and all subgenres, genres, or supergenres are empirical classes, established by observation of the historical facts or, if need be, by extrapolation from those facts – that is, by a deductive activity superimposed on an initial activity that is always inductive and analytical, as we have seen in the charts (whether explicit or implicit) of Aristotle or Frye, where the existence of an empty compartment (comic narrative; extroverted-intellectual) helps one discover a genre (“parody,” “anatomy”) otherwise condemned to invisibility’ (Genette, 1992: 214).
  15. Nico Israel notes that ‘Diaspora . . . has traditionally possessed a specifically religious and spiritual significance. According to the *OED*, the word’s original usage was in the Septuagint (third to second century B. C. Greek) translation of the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, chapter 28, when the postexodus Moses, after informing the Israelites of the many good things that will transpire if they are faithful and observant, warns them of the dire consequences [removal from all earthly kingdoms] of disobedience . . . In the context of its appearance in Deuteronomy, this diasporic removal is associated with a curse, with a perpetual otherness amid others, with blindness, madness, and defeat (Deut. 28: 28), with a spreading that weakens. (In fact, the Hebrew word *Za’avah*, rendered *diaspora* in Greek, denotes not so much a “removal” as a “fleeing in terror.”). Although generally homologous with loss, the word “diaspora,” like “exile,” has accrued a positive resonance as well, bespeaking a sense of tenacity, resistance, and preservation of faith during the worst of circumstances. Generally applied to the experience of the Jews – the mutation of diaspora to “the Diaspora” is a fairly recent one – the description has seemed apposite to the experiences of other minority groups at different points in their histories as well: to Christians, to Muslims, to the Irish, to African Americans, and, most recently, to postcolonial migrants’ (Israel, 2000: 2–3).
  16. Todorov makes the important point that while ‘*historical* existence of genres is signalled by discourse on genre,’ this ‘does not mean that genres are simply metadiscursive notions and not discursive ones’ (Todorov, 1990: 17).
  17. Elsewhere I have demonstrated how any account of *dis*location is simultaneously an account of *this* location (Mishra, 2002a: 136–45).

18. Steven Vertovec has commented that diaspora refers variously to a 'social form', to a 'type of consciousness' and to a 'mode of cultural production' (Vertovec, 1997: 277–8).
19. In the early part of his paper, Hall distinguishes strategic commonality of identification (being) from arbitrary discontinuities of the self (becoming), without discounting the political relevance of both these modes of subject formation.