

Difference Incorporated

Roderick A. Ferguson and Grace Kyungwon Hong, Series Editors

THE REORDER OF THINGS
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The University and Its Pedagogies
of Minority Difference

Roderick A. Ferguson

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at the University of Minnesota. Special dispensation must always go to Richard Morrison—for his friendship, for his painstaking editorial work, and for his belief in this book.

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As a project that was both critical and contemplative, this book helped me to reactivate that wisdom that we often carried to our childhood rites of passage. No need to worry that a scraped knee and a bruised palm will result in defeat; there will be other chances to get up and try it again.

INTRODUCTION
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Affirmative Actions of Power

LET THIS IMAGE BE A LESSON TO YOU. In fact, think of it as an archive, but one that records what typical depositories refuse to document. It’s called *Self-Portrait 2000*. The piece is a collage by African American philosopher and conceptual artist Adrian Piper. It’s made up of two columns and a picture residing at the base. The left column is an excerpt of a letter that Piper, a professor in the Department of Philosophy, sent to Diana Chapman Walsh, president of Wellesley College from 1993 to 2007. Piper’s letter reads:

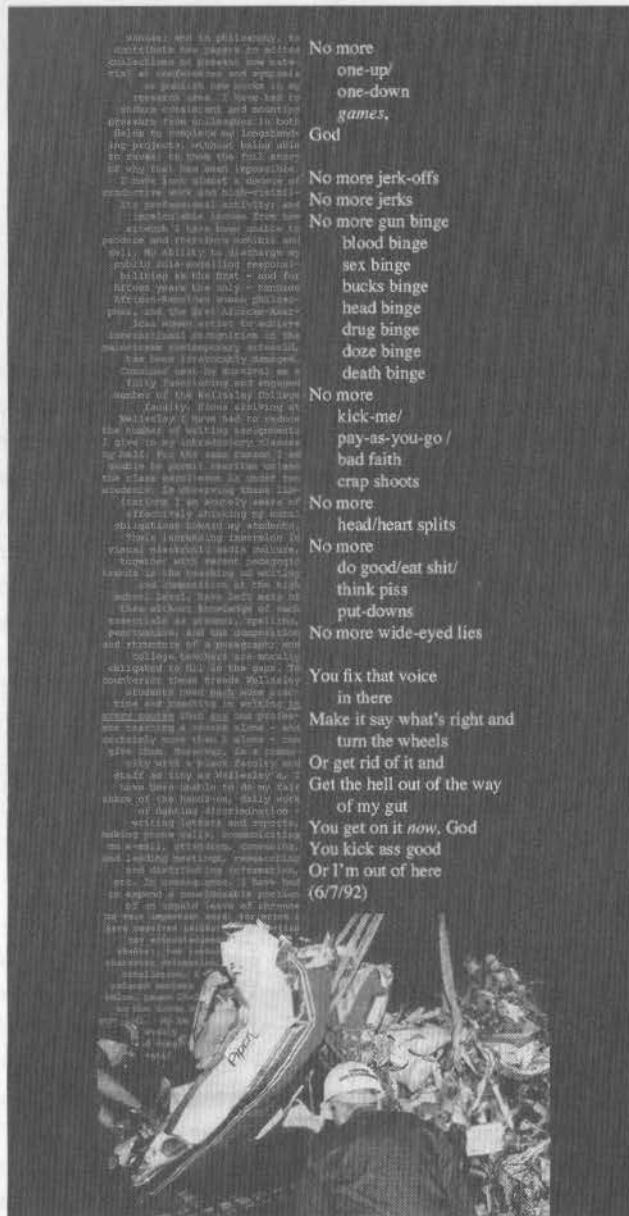
After having spent nine months at the Getty Research Institute in an environment supportive of my professional interests and respectful of the singularity of my professional needs, I am able to see anew Wellesley’s longstanding hostility to both. I now realize that my inability to extend under these circumstances the record of *professional success and personal wellbeing* I had established before I arrived here is not due to my own failings, moral dereliction, or lack of motivation. It is the consequence of the paralyzing and punitive limitations Wellesley has repeatedly imposed, since the first year I arrived, on the anti-racism work I have done both on and off campus. Having chosen to hire me as Wellesley’s only tenured black woman purportedly because of my high-profile anti-racism work in both art and philosophy, Wellesley has consistently refused me the institutional support necessitated by the high level of public visibility at which I am conducting these two careers. In consequence it has knowingly sabotaged both of them, by standing by and watching as I get buried in an unending avalanche of visibility-related demands that have made it virtually impossible to produce and publish the anti-racism work it purportedly brought me here to do. Wellesley has used my public visibility to *enhance its multicultural*

public image while in reality actively preventing me from doing the multicultural work it publicly claims to welcome.¹

The other column in the collage is a poem written to God. While the letter to Chapman observes the rhetoric and dispassion of a professional, the poem claims an emotional tone fit for more artistic genres:

Hey, God!
 How come I get stuck
 with this
 dumb bunch?
 It sucks
 you goofed bad
 on this sad batch, God
 and you know it
 Where do you think
 you're off to?
 You get back to that lab
 right now and
 shake up those test tubes
 one more time
 Don't you dare
 turn tail and run
 Screw that
 Big Bang shit, God
 You fucked up
 big time,
 now you fix it . . .²

At the feet of the two columns lies a picture of a downed airplane. Barely distinguishable as a plane, the only element that saves it from anonymity is the word *Piper* written on the side. Two white men in hard hats inspect the wreckage. In the artist's notes for the exhibit, we learn that the letter to Chapman is part of a larger dossier of grievances, including legal documents against Wellesley as well as word of an appendicitis that Piper suffered, presumably because of her working conditions. We also learn that the felled plane named Piper is the one in which JFK Jr. died and that the Piper Aircraft Company—founded by Piper's great-uncle—owns the plane.



Lower portion of Adrian Piper, *Self-Portrait 2000, 2000*. Scroll-down Web site artwork. Copyright Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation, Berlin. Collection of Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation, Berlin.

We are also informed that Piper's mother was the upstairs maid in Cape Cod for JFK Sr. during the early 1960s.

Several histories are "archived" in *Self-Portrait 2000*. There is the history conjured in that decade known as "the sixties," a period noted for its historic promise of minority incorporation into social, political, economic, and academic realms. Then there is the historical present evoked in the title. As *Self-Portrait 2000* is bookended by Piper's mother's employment in the Kennedy house in the early sixties and the letter to President Chapman in 2000, it constellates the features of the contemporary American academy by connecting them to the social formations of the sixties and seventies. Put plainly, we might think of the collage as presenting us with an arc that traces a line between past promises of recognition and present-day catastrophes. Indeed, by using the letter to Chapman Walsh, the poem to God, and Piper's portrait of her own wreckage, the collage seems to measure the failure of those promises. That failure—"archived" by the collage—goes somewhat like this: An academy that was reborn from the protests and agitation of the sixties and seventies was supposed to make good on its promise to minorities, in general, and to a black woman artist and intellectual, in particular. Humanity was supposed to keep faith with that promise and with the people of color to whom the promise was made; a life—Adrian Piper's—was supposed to land safely and come to intellectual and institutional fulfillment. How, then, do we explain this disfigurement that followed a promise and a chain of supposed-to's?

The pages that come after this question represent attempts to answer it. One of the questions that the piece raises is this one: in the context of the academy, how are modes of power exercised upon the daily lives of minoritized subjects and knowledges and how was that exercise prepared for in histories that are supposedly no more? One of the things that the piece points to in its letter to a college president, its poem to the divinity, and a picture of a minoritized life brought down to ruin is the ways in which that life is caught within a new configuration of power, a configuration whose climax is preceded by courtship, invitation, and acknowledgment.

Hence, I choose to read *Self-Portrait 2000* as a meditation on this new configuration. In it is a complex history of the ways in which technologies of power began to work with and through difference in order to manage its insurgent possibilities. When Piper writes, for instance, that Wellesley has "sabotaged" the antiracist artistic and philosophical work that the college

"purportedly" brought her there to do, she engages the very chronology that this book is interested in—an insurgent articulation of difference begun in the sixties because of and with the U.S. student movements and the subsequent institutionalization of modes of difference and the undertheorized technologies that this institutionalization wrought.

Despite all that we think we know about difference and power via post-structuralism, *Self-Portrait 2000*—read as the archive of the attempts to manage the student movements and their outcomes—divulges a story not captured in the taken-for-granted analytics of Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Lyotard, or their descendants. Typical poststructuralist and postmarxist theorizations leave out the student movements that yielded the interdisciplinary fields. As this book will illustrate, a theorization that takes seriously their historical and discursive impacts is crucial to understanding not only the changes within the American academy but also the ideological and discursive shifts that informed power's clutch on state, capital, and social life in the post-civil rights world.

The history of the U.S. ethnic and women's studies protests presents the transition from economic, epistemological, and political stability to the possibility for revolutionary social ruptures and subjectivities. For instance, the San Francisco State student strikes of 1969 advocated a "Third World revolution" that would displace and provide an alternative to racial inequality on that campus. That same year, 269 similar protests erupted across the country.³ At Rutgers, black students took over the main educational building, renaming it "Liberation Hall." At the University of Texas at Austin, a student organization called Afro Americans for Black Liberation "insisted on converting the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library to a black studies building and renaming it for Malcolm X."⁴ Inspired by the black power movement, Chicano students would also form "the United Mexican American Students, the Mexican American Student Association, and MEChA, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, while others in San Antonio founded the Mexican American Youth Organization, MAYO."⁵ Those students would also begin to demand Chicano studies courses and departments. Similarly, in 1969 American Indian activists took over Alcatraz Island and claimed it as Indian territory, with hopes of building a cultural center and museum.⁶ And in 1970, the first women's studies programs would be established at San Diego State University and at SUNY-Buffalo.

While the state governments in California and Wisconsin called out the National Guard on students advocating for ethnic studies, systems of power also responded to these protests by attempting to manage that transition, in an attempt to prevent economic, epistemological, and political crises from achieving revolutions that could redistribute social and material relations. Instead, those systems would work to ensure that these crises were recomposed back into state, capital, and academy. Whereas modes of power once disciplined difference in the universalizing names of canonicity, nationality, or economy, other operations of power were emerging that would discipline through a seemingly alternative regard for difference and through a revision of the canon, national identity, and the market.

This theorization of power converges with and diverges from Foucault's own observations, converging with him through an emphasis on the strategic nature of power relations. For instance, recall his argument about power in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, where he argues for power's "intentional and nonsubjective" nature.⁷ According to Foucault, whatever intelligibility power relations may possess, it "is not because they are the effect of another instance that 'explains' them, but rather because they are imbued, through and through, with calculation."⁸ Elaborating on the strategic but nonindividualized character of power, Foucault wrote that "there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject."⁹

The Reorder of Things builds on this element of Foucault's theorization by looking at how state, capital, and academy saw minority insurgence as a site of calculation and strategy, how those institutions began to see minority difference and culture as positivities that could be part of their own "series of aims and objectives." As formations increasingly characterized by the presence of minority difference, state, capital, and academy—in different but intersecting ways—began to emerge as hegemonic processes that were "especially alert and responsive to the alternatives and oppositions which [questioned] or [threatened their] dominance."¹⁰ Hence, this book looks at the diverse but interlocking ways in which state, capital, and academy produced an adaptive hegemony where minority difference was concerned.

In keeping with Foucault, the book eschews an individualized notion of power, preferring instead to regard power as a complex and multisited

social formation. Rather than being embodied in an individual or a group, power—Foucault says—is a set of relations in which "the *logic* is perfectly clear, the *aims* decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them."¹¹ In this book, the impersonal nature of power is derived from the ways in which hegemonic investments in minority difference and culture are distributed across institutional and subjective terrains during and after the period of social unrest, terrains such as universities and colleges, corporations, social movements, media, and state practices.

The book also uses the category "power" in the spirit of Foucault's own implicit belief that complex situations deserve a name. Even though the name is ill-fitting, it is the "closest [we] can get to it."¹² Addressing the cat-achresis called power, Foucault says, "power establishes," "power invests," "power takes hold."¹³ Furthermore, in his description of biopower, he writes, "Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied to the level of life itself."¹⁴ For Foucault, power becomes like a character in a story, a code name for the "multiplicity of force relations."¹⁵ Like Foucault, I use *power* as shorthand for a plurality of relations, arguing that if power is the "name that one attributes to a complex *strategical* situation in a particular society,"¹⁶ then power in the age of minority social movements becomes the new name for calculating and arranging minority difference.

While *The Reorder of Things* attempts to rigorously attend to how dominant modes of power in the post-World War II moment utilized minority difference, the book does not reduce the "the political and cultural initiatives" of the social movements—those grand champions of minority culture—to the terms of hegemony. Indeed, as part of its own archival investigation, the book attempts to unearth those elements of the social movements that were antagonistic to the terms of hegemony, giving attention to how university and presidential administrations in the sixties attempted to beguile minorities with promises of excellence and uplift. Thus, as part of its investigation of the changing networks of power, the book analyzes how dominant institutions attempted to reduce the initiatives of oppositional movements to the terms of hegemony.

This book diverges from Foucault as it takes racial formations as the genealogy of power's investment in various forms of minority difference

and culture while extending Foucault's emphasis on the productive—and not simply the repressive—capacities of power. From the social movements of the fifties and sixties until the present day, networks of power have attempted to work through and with minority difference and culture, trying to redirect originally insurgent formations and deliver them to the normative ideals and protocols of state, capital, and academy. In this new strategic situation, hegemonic power denotes the disembodied and abstract promotion of minority representation without fully satisfying the material and social redistribution of minoritized subjects, particularly where people of color are concerned. One of the central claims of this book, then, is that the struggles taking place on college campuses because of the student protests were inspirations for power in that moment, inspiring it to substitute redistribution for representation, indeed encouraging us to forget how radical movements promoted the inseparability of the two.

As such, this book attempts to revise a reigning assumption about the academy—that as a social institution, it is always secondary to and derivative of state and capital. Instead, I hope to demonstrate the ways in which power enlisted the academy and things academic as conduits for conveying unprecedented forms of political economy to state and capital, forms that would be based on an abstract—rather than a redistributive—valorization of minority difference and culture. As the book deploys the academy as a way to re-know state and capital as interlocutors with rather than determinants of American university life, the book does not look for power “in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique sovereignty from which secondary and descendant forms would emanate.”¹⁷ Instead, it discerns relations of power in their most dispersed associations with minority difference. As a text that understands oppositional formations as both critical and solicitous of power, *The Reorder of Things* understands the institutions that attempt to recycle those formations as contradictory ones that harbor the elements of their own negation.

To Reckon with Kant's Trickery: Materialist Critique and the Relocation of the Academy

The dominant means of approaching the question of the academy has been to read it as a derivation of capitalist economic formations. Hence, we talk about the academy in terms of the “corporate university,” the “neoliberal

university,” the “knowledge factory,” and so on. With all that these expressions tell us about the ways in which the academy understands and articulates its relationship to knowledge, students, and faculty, they presume a flow of influence that the student movements seem to contradict. Indeed, the diverse social formations that made up the U.S. student movements suggest that the academy is not simply an entity that socializes people into the ideologies of political economy. In many ways, those movements point to an institution that *socializes state and capital* into emergent articulations of difference. Framed as such, the antiracist and feminist movements and the changes that they inspired in the American academy constitute a history that compels us to once again think the limits of economic narratives in theorizations of power.

In *Eyes of the University*, Jacques Derrida locates the genealogy of this derivation within Immanuel Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Inspired by Kant, Derrida argues that the university has been constituted by a series of analogies, a constitution in which “one would treat knowledge a little like in industry . . . ; professors would be like trustees . . . ; together they would form a kind of essence or collective scholarly entity that would have its won autonomy.”¹⁸ The presumed autonomy of the university reaches its limit once the university has to transact with the public sphere. As Derrida states, “When, however, the issue is one of creating public titles of competence, or of legitimating knowledge, or of producing the public effects of this ideal autonomy then, at that point, the university is no longer authorized by itself. It is authorized . . . by a nonuniversity instance or agency—here, by the State—and according to criteria no longer necessarily and in the final analysis those of the scientific competence, but those of a certain *performativity*.”¹⁹ Hence, for Derrida, the university must perform a certain degree of responsibility to students (i.e., “the young”) and to the interests of the state. Derrida thus seems to reinforce the academy's subordinate relationship to the state and civil society.

While using his analysis of *The Conflict of the Faculties* to point to the university's historic identification with political and economic institutions, Derrida fails to unpack the full implications of the university's (and Kant's) performance of deference. While the university and Kant may perform an unadulterated responsibility to the state and the king of Prussia, that performance camouflages its manipulation of the state and the king in a veneer of sincere obedience and submission. This tension between sincerity and

manipulation engenders a subtle contradiction within *The Conflict of the Faculties*. For instance, while Kant prominently argues for the university's role as the vassal of the state, he also theorizes the university as the indoctrinator of the future agents and architects of civil society. In his explanation of the "lower faculties"—that is, that division of the faculty that "looks after the interests of science"²⁰—he writes:

It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government's command with regard to its teachings; one that, having no command to give, is free to evaluate everything, and concerns itself with the interests of the sciences, that is, with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak publicly. For without a faculty of this kind, the truth would not come to light (and this would be to the government's own detriment).²¹

Kant's theorization of the lower faculties is deliberately full of ironies. To begin with, the lower faculties are simultaneously subordinate and independent, impotent and endowed. Throughout the passage and the text, one gets the sense that the lower faculties are the model of restraint and abstention—a faculty possessing "no command to give." Theorizing the lower faculty in this way was doubtless a reassurance to King Frederick William II, who was quite nervous about the teachings and arguments of Enlightenment enthusiasts.²² To this argument about the lower faculties' restraint and impotence, Kant attaches what appears to be a contradictory pronouncement—the lower faculties' far-reaching powers of evaluation. While the higher faculties can issue commands to its agents—the clerics, lawyers, and theologians—the lower faculties ostensibly have no constituency to command, but they have an intellectual and ethical obligation to evaluate. In doing so, Kant hides the lower faculties' interpretative and evaluative prowess by strategically constructing evaluation and interpretation as modest and unobtrusive endeavors. As Kant says, "reason is by its nature free and admits of no command to hold something as true (no imperative 'Believe!' but only a free 'I believe')." ²³ To submit to the lower faculty is to surrender to truth, and in this surrender there is no subjugation, only freedom.

We can see the contradictory and surreptitious articulation of the lower faculties in Kant's theorization of that ideal that comes to characterize this division—truth:

But a department of this kind, too, must be established at a university; in other words, a university must have a faculty of philosophy. Its function in relation to the three higher faculties [medicine, law, and theology] is to control them and, in this way, be useful to them, since truth (the essential and first condition of learning in general) is the main thing, whereas the *utility* the higher faculties promise the government is of secondary importance.²⁴

In keeping with the contradictory nature of the lower faculties, to be controlled by the lower faculties and regulated by the truth—a control and regulation that Kant must conceal—represents the horizon of what is useful and effective for the higher faculties and for government. This control and regulation will allow the higher faculties to produce students who are themselves so regulated, students who will go on to become the officials and agents of state and civil society and who will proceed to "create a lasting influence on the people." Contrary to the idea that the lower faculties internalize the elements of a preexistent and fully formed state, the lower faculties internalize the interests of government only *after* they have articulated those interests *for* the state and its constituents. Contrary to the presumption that the academy is a mere reflection and derivation of state and civil society, Kant suggests here that the academy—as the laboratory that produces truth and political economy's relation to it—is a primary articulator of state and civil society.

The student movements of the sixties and seventies represent both a portion and a disruption of this genealogy. They point to an academic moment that helped to rearticulate the nature of state and capital, a moment in which truth as the ideal of the university and the mediator of state and civil society was joined by difference in general, and minoritized difference in particular. Moreover, the academy became the "training ground" for state and capital's engagement with minority difference as a site of representation and meaning.

A historical *and* theoretical reconsideration of the interdisciplinary fields means displacing the economic and its thesis that the academy is a mere reflection or derivation of political economy. In terms of this narrative of reflection and derivation, we are the inheritors of a philosopher's deception, the children of a ruse. The extent to which we accept the academy and things academic as the designs of the economic is the measure of our dependence on this trick secured through a rhetoric of impotence and remove.

The modern Western academy was created as the repository and guarantor of national culture as well as a cultivator and innovator of political economy. As such, the academy is an archive of sorts, whose technologies—or so the theory goes—are constantly refined to acquire the latest innovation. As an archiving institution, the academy is—to use Derrida’s description of the archive—“*institutive* and *conservative*. Revolutionary and traditional. An *eco-nomic* archive in this double sense: it keeps, it puts in reserve, it saves, but in an unnatural fashion, that is to say in making the law (*nomos*) or in making people respect the law.”²⁵ The academy has always been an eco-nomic domain; that is, it has simultaneously determined who gets admitted while establishing the rules for membership and participation.

In the context of the post–World War II United States, the American academy can be read as a record of the shifts and contradictions of political economy. Indeed, with the admission of women and people of color into predominantly white academic settings, the eco-nomic character of the American academy did not simply vanish. The academy would begin to put, keep in reserve, and save minoritized subjects and knowledges in an archival fashion, that is, by devising ways to make those subjects and knowledges respect power and its “laws.” Put differently, the ethnic and women’s studies movements applied pressures on the archival conventions of the academy in an effort to stretch those conventions so that previously excluded subjects might enjoy membership. But it also meant that those subjects would fall under new and revised laws. As a distinct archival economy, the American academy would help inform the archival agendas of state and capital—how best to institute new peoples, new knowledges, and cultures and at the same time discipline and exclude those subjects according to a new order.

This was the moment in which power would hone its own archival economy, producing formulas for the incorporation rather than the absolute repudiation of difference, all the while refining and perfecting its practices of exclusion and regulation. This is the time when power would restyle its archival propensities by dreaming up ways to affirm difference and keep it in hand. Ethnic studies and women’s studies movements were the prototypical resources of incorporative and archival systems of power that re-invented themselves because of civil rights and liberation movements of the fifties, sixties, and seventies. Part of the signature achievements of these affirmative modes of power was to make the pursuit of recognition and

legitimacy into formidable horizons of pleasure, insinuating themselves into radical politics, trying to convince insurgents that “your dreams are also mine.”

By excavating the social movements, we may be able to chart the emergence of this new kind of archival economy that transformed academic, political, economic, and social life from the late sixties and beyond. Moreover, focusing on the social movements and the denominations of interdisciplinary forms that emerged from them might allow us to produce a counterarchive detailing the ways in which power worked through the “recognition” of minoritized histories, cultures, and experiences and how power used that “recognition” to resecure its status. The histories of interdisciplinary engagements with forms of difference represent a conflicted and contradictory negotiation with this horizon of power. Seen this way, we must entrust the interdisciplines with a new charge, that of assessing power’s archival techniques and maneuvers. As *Self-Portrait 2000* suggests, the involution of marginal differences and the development of the interdisciplines, broadly conceived, denoted the elaboration of power rather than the confirmation that our “liberty” had been secured. We must make it our business to critically deploy those modes of difference that have become part of power’s trick and devise ways to use them otherwise.

The influence that the student movements had on institutional life within the United States points to a need to assess the streams of the academy within political economy. If state and particularly capital needed the academy to reorient their sensibilities toward the affirmation of difference—that is, to complete the constitutional project of the United States and begin to resolve the contradictions of social exclusion—then it also meant that the academy became the laboratory for the revalorization of modes of difference.

This changing set of representations, the institutions that organized themselves around that set, and the modes of power that were compelled by and productive of those transformations are what we are calling the interdisciplines. The interdisciplines were an ensemble of institutions and techniques that offered positivities to populations and constituencies that had been denied institutional claims to agency. Hence, the interdisciplines connoted a new form of biopower organized around the affirmation, recognition, and legitimacy of minoritized life. To offset their possibility for future ruptures, power made legitimacy and recognition into grand enticements.

In doing so, they would become power's newest techniques for the taking of difference. What the students often offered as radical critiques of institutional belonging would be turned into various institutions' confirmation.

As a critique of institutional belonging, *Self-Portrait 2000* grapples with the potential malignancies of recognition. Indeed, the collage narrates a transition—that is, the shift from the figure of Western man as the basis of agency and representation to that of minoritized cultures, subjects, and differences as contenders in the quest for acceptance, normativity and lawfulness. But through its substitution of a plane crash for an actual portrait of Piper, the piece refuses any humanist celebration of Man's minoritized replacements. Never giving us a picture of minoritized people or one of Piper, the piece withholds the visage of the very figures that the moment and the collage were supposed to represent. In *Self-Portrait 2000*, the institutional and artistic forms that are supposedly best equipped for representing people in general, and minoritized people in particular—the state, the academy, the portrait—are utterly incapable of representing those subjects and can offer only a wrecked depiction instead. In doing so, *Self-Portrait 2000* refuses the affirmations that constitute minority nationalisms.

We might contrast the absence of a biographical image in *Self-Portrait 2000* with revolutionary and cultural nationalisms' presumption that they can make institutional, state, and administrative forms in their own image. Indeed, we can think of various cultural and revolutionary nationalist projects as attempts to stamp their own visages upon institutional contexts. Such attempts are not idiosyncratic or insignificant but conventional and definitive for minority nationalisms. In the context of the sixties and seventies, such attempts were not only expressed in terms of the fabled takeover of the state form but in terms of epistemological, administrative, and institutional reflection as well—ostensibly launched by the actual takeover of academic buildings and the erection of departments, centers, and programs. The triumphant and anticolonial slogan of “Massa day done” applied, then, not only to the state but to other modern institutions as well, particularly the academy.

Self-Portrait 2000 refutes this fable of reflection that posits dominant institutions as potential mirrors for minority culture and difference. Instead, the collage seems to suggest that institutions—if mirrors at all—are ones that can offer only dim likenesses. In this way, we might read *Self-Portrait 2000* as a rebuttal to the boasts of institutions, that in their archival capacities

they can adequately reflect minoritized cultures and differences. We may go even further and say that *Self-Portrait 2000* exhibits and expresses the critical possibilities of minority cultural forms, particularly in post-civil rights moments. By “critical possibilities” I mean the potential of those cultural forms to offer accounts of institutional modes—not simply the disfranchisements and betrayals of institutions, but also the rules of inclusion and the anatomies of recognition and legitimacy; not simply how we are entrapped, but also how we might achieve provisional forms of freedom and insurgency.

As a critical formation, powerful strains of women-of-color feminism have historically offered a critical suspicion to bourgeois, cultural, and revolutionary nationalist desires for recognition and institutional legitimacy. Indeed, women-of-color feminists have often theorized minority nationalisms not as formations insulated from state nationalism but as ironically entwined with its ideologies and discourses. Plainly put, such interventions have sought to discern the institutional models at play in minority nationalisms.

In a similar gesture, Jacques Derrida offers a reading of cultural forms as records and articulators of institutional practices and logics. Again, in *Eyes of the University*, he writes:

with students and the research community, in every operation we pursue together (a reading, an interpretation, the construction of a theoretical model, the rhetoric of an argumentation, the treatment of historical material, and even a mathematical formalization), we posit or acknowledge that an institutional concept is at play, a type of contract signed, an image of the ideal seminar constructed, a *socius* implied, repeated, or displaced, invented, transformed, threatened, or destroyed. An institution is not merely a few walls or some outer structures surrounding, protecting, guaranteeing, or restricting the freedom of our work; it is also and already the structure of our interpretation.²⁶

Here Derrida points to the fact that institutions are not simply things that are embodied externally in the form of buildings and paperwork. Institutions are also modes of interpretation that are embodied materially, discursively, and subjectively, modes offering visions of community and communal engagement. Commenting on the interpretative and textual aspects of institutions, Derrida goes on to say that

[the] interpretation of a theorem, poem, or philosopheme, or theologeme is only produced by simultaneously proposing an institutional model, either by consolidating an existing one that enables the interpretation, or by constituting a new one in accordance with this interpretation. Declared or clandestine, this proposal calls for the politics of a community of interpreters gathered around this text, and at the same time of a global society, a civil society with or without a State, a veritable regime enabling the inscription of that community.²⁷

Derrida's argument about the simultaneity of institution-building and hermeneutical practices accurately suggests the place of interpretation and textuality in institutional struggle. Institutions are the outcome and locations of imagined communities, with interpretative modes representing the brick and mortar of those imaginations.

The ethnic and women's movements moved to the heart of this relationship between institutionality and textuality. Indeed, the admission of women and people of color into predominantly white universities and colleges forced new modes of interpretation and new institutional visions within the American academy. At the same time, the student movements and student demands had to negotiate with and appeal to prevailing institutional structures. The student movements of the sixties and seventies constituted and inspired interpretative communities that would propose institutional models that were both disruptive *and* recuperative of existing institutions. In sum, the relationship between institutionality and textuality accounted for a constitutive contradiction within the student movements—their simultaneous estrangement from and appeals to institutional power.

We can actually situate *Self-Portrait 2000* within this critical genealogy. *Self-Portrait 2000* tries to delineate the overlapping institutional models that have come to characterize the post-civil rights moment. The collage asks us to rethink the presumption that the major institutions of civil society—the academy, the state, and capital—have fostered institutional concepts that protect and shelter minoritized differences and cultures. It asks us to consider how those differences and cultures have been archived in power's newest arrangement and how they have attempted to close critical universes established in the name of new formations around race, gender, and sexuality.

As a piece that worries over the relationship between the institutional and the interpretative and how it bears on minoritized lives, *Self-Portrait 2000* actually bears the properties of minority cultural forms and practices in general. As the genealogical issue of those contradictions that inhered within the student movements, minoritized cultural forms and practices represent both an aspiration to and estrangement from processes of archivization, institutionalization, and professionalization. Indeed, this book attempts to provide a theorization of minority cultural forms and practices as expressions of complex relationships between institutionality and textuality in the post-civil rights moment.

We need a critical itinerary that can outline and interrogate the constitutive contradictions of minoritized formations in the years after the sixties social movements, contradictions that have to do with the simultaneous identifications with and antagonisms to the institutional embodiments of power, a deconstructive meditation that can assess power's calculus as one that both estranges and entices. We also need analytic models that will help us imagine ways to maneuver taken-for-granted contradictions so that their economies are not constantly tilted toward identification but move in the direction of disidentification and on to more sustained embodiments of oppositionality.

We need to retain and elaborate an awareness of the contradictory nature of modes of difference as a way to simultaneously appreciate and evaluate our radical vulnerability and as a means of imagining strategies of intervention. Oppositional critiques of difference run the risk of a totalizing depiction of power's relationship to difference. Such a risk demands that we theorize the institutionalization of minority difference away from what philosopher Jacques Rancière calls "the space of consensus" within various schools of critical thought. Defining this "space of consensus," he writes: "there is a whole school of so-called critical thought and art that, despite its oppositional rhetoric, is entirely integrated within the space of consensus. I'm thinking of all those works that pretend to reveal to us the omnipotence of market flows, the reign of the spectacle, the pornography of power."²⁸ Accordingly, consensus assumes a policing quality once it abolishes "dissensus," that "political process that resists juridical litigation and creates a fissure in the sensible order by confronting the established framework of perception, thought, and action with the 'inadmissible.'"²⁹ Noting the ways in which critical formations are vulnerable to becoming

disciplinary apparatuses, he argues that “[by] abolishing dissensus and placing a ban on political subjectivization, consensus reduces politics to the police.”³⁰

Critiques of the university that presume the derivative nature of the academy from the economy implicitly and unconsciously place a ban on modes of difference as sites of political subjectivization. They become spaces of consensus as they dismiss minority culture and minority difference as formations completely overwhelmed and determined by commodity culture, whether within or outside the academy. Such stances disqualify minority difference and minority culture as potential sites of dissensus with the potential to create fissures and to make room for the inadmissible.

Given the flexibility of minority difference, ours must be an ongoing experimentation with the ruptural possibilities of modes of difference. *The Reorder of Things* is, therefore, a provocation to not only evaluate the vulnerabilities of sixties social movements and the interdisciplinary formations that they inspired but also “develop modes of analyses which . . . are capable of discerning, in good faith, the finite but significant openness of many actual initiatives and contributions.”³¹ Such an investigation requires that we find ways to slip away from the archival maneuvers of power/knowledge, recognizing that power’s archival advance is ever encroaching. The context of power/knowledge might be the occasion for interdisciplinarity’s revival rather than its demise. The possibility for a generative inquiry into institutionality lies in the interrogation of those relationships between textuality and institutionality and what they reveal about the co-constitutive anatomies of institutional belonging and minoritized subject formations. As a letter frames a plane crash, so the academic frames our social predicament. In doing so, the collage suggests the means by which minority difference is brought into regimes of representation and fundamentally reconstitutes them. This examination is the business of a critical interdisciplinarity.

So, this is what inspires me to tell you not to forsake this image and the lessons that it bears. Some will see this picture and become like that Watcher who “turns his eyes away in resignation” as his dreams are mocked to death by power and institutions, his cynicism validated by his experience of the facts. Others—not beholden to any breed of positivism—will take its cautions to mind and heart, crafting deeds and working up visions that are in the institution but not of it, knowing that the dream is still the truth.

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The Birth of the Interdisciplines

IF WE THINK OF THE ARCHIVE not simply as an institution but as a social formation, we might say that the United States is the archival nation par excellence. In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Derrida argues that the word *archive* is derived from the Greek *arkheion*, which was understood to be the residence of “those who commanded.”¹ The archive was the house where official documents—no matter their heterogeneity—were filed and entrusted to speak and impose the law.² As archives provided homes for those documents, they placed them under certain jurisdictions, not only consigning them to prescribed areas but also gathering them under certain sets of meanings. Thus, in the archive a diverse assemblage of documents were coordinated so that they might articulate an ideal unity. Whatever diversity those documents possessed, whatever secrets they might contain would have to be managed so that the ideal of the archive would be preserved rather than ruined;³ archives represented the places to put those documents and the regimes that would discipline them.

As an archival entity, the United States is simultaneously the fabled home that promises to put different peoples in their rightful places and the infamous regime that disciplines in the name of freedom. As such, it embodies the quintessential properties of all archives. Indeed, the motto “e pluribus unum” (one out of many) expresses, as literary scholar W. C. Harris observes, both the identity and the experiment of the U.S. nation-state, an experiment that harks back to Greek philosophical thought, one that attempts to resolve the imperative of unity with the reality of heterogeneity. For Harris, this experiment finds unprecedented momentum in the social, cultural, and political contexts of the nineteenth-century United States, a momentum that gains footing and speed in those documents that first made