

**NAMING FEMALE MULTIPLICITY:
AN INTERVIEW WITH BHARATI MUKHERJEE**

*Francisco Collado Rodríguez
Universidad de Zaragoza*

Bharati Mukherjee was interviewed by Francisco Collado in Madrid on 19 December 1994. The day before, at the University of Alcalá de Henares, she had delivered a plenary lecture entitled “Beyond Multiculturalism: The De-formation and Re-formation of the U.S. National Identity”, in the course of the 18th National Conference of the Spanish Association for Anglo-American Studies.

Defined by some critics as a controversial feminist writer, Bharati Mukherjee’s own life seems to be an adequate representative of the postmodern experience. Born in Calcutta, she was educated according to the traditional values of her Brahmin family, a high-class rule that imposed upon the future writer so many restrictions that in 1961 —having finished a double master of arts degree in English and Ancient Indian Culture (Baroda University)— she chose to emigrate to America. In Iowa she attended the Writer’s Workshop, and also received another master of arts degree and eventually her Ph.D. in English. With such outstanding cultural baggage, and already feeling a transient, she went to Canada where she was to live for a number of years before going back to USA. In 1988 she became an American citizen and refused to be called Indian-American, disliking both the dash and the use of a double epithet to define her identity. Conscious of belonging to a minority group also defined by the issue of race, Mukherjee was one of the first writers to oppose white women’s appropriation of the rights of minority women to defend themselves, a stance that brought about the likes and dislikes of different feminist groups.

Praised and censored by women in both America and India, Bharati Mukherjee is the author of three novels and two collections

of short-stories, including *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988, New York: Fawcett Crest), a book that won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1989 and that already contains the seed of its author's outstanding capacity to describe the complexity of contemporary life and human beliefs, and the necessity to transform a society paradoxically centered on the notion of difference. Her latest novel, *The Holder of the World* (1993, New York: Knopf), is probably the richest and most impressive text she has produced so far. Protagonist Hannah Easton seems to be, at times, also a reflected image of writer Bharati Mukherjee: her journey from Puritan New England to the Coromandel Coast in India is but the beginning of a dreaming romantic adventure where chaos theory, Hindu beliefs, Muslim fundamentalism, intertextuality, and historiographic metafiction combine to produce the impression of a complex world where textuality and ideology amalgamate to conform the human experience of life.

Q. Critical readers of your works may perceive that you are very fond of using an underpinning current of symbolism, however the quality of the prose that you frequently use in your creative writing looks very realistic. Do you think that realistic prose, even if we are talking here only of an apparent realism, is still the best way for a writer to denounce the living conditions of a —race or gender— minority and to encourage social advances?

A. Well, I think that I'm divided in my personality. There is a part of me that is the writer who is thinking of finding the most appropriate narrative strategies for that story or that character . . . but then there is also another part of me that is a politicized citizen who cares very much about carrying out a *mission*, about social reform. However, when I am writing novels, while my mission has social and political emphasis, I really make the decisions about sentences, about language, according to what the story means or the way this or that character would think, and the word that I use for this is *voice*. I may be making many beginnings to a story but I know it doesn't feel right, so as a fiction writer I know that while the *message* is right, aesthetically the story is not fixed until I can hear the character speak, until I've entered into the skin of the character, so that those language decisions are being directed not because I want to communicate my social message straight away but because it

feels right, because I think: “this is how the character would speak”. Now, having said that and coming back to your question, I also do favor directness, clarity to the obfuscation of experimental art for art’s sake, and I think this goes back to the core of my colonial damage, to my access into English language and colonialism: I was brought up in independent India, however I was taught to valorize nineteenth-century well-formulated British clauses and phrase making, you know, that artificial British wit and smoothness... and this has been a very empowering experience for me. I wanted to get rid of all that and write with energy and simplicity, sometimes even deliberately using all the crudity of American speech. This has been my anti-colonial effort, a way to express decolonization.

Q. I asked you this question because, as you know, there are many contemporary minority writers who are very fond of denouncing the social conditions of their group in realistic terms. However you seem to have moved from this tendency in your latest novel . . .

A. Yes. My first novel, *The Tiger’s Daughter* [1972, New York: Fawcett Crest] —that probably isn’t available in Spain— is very *English*, because when I wrote it I was still an expatriate, a post-colonial Indian writer living in the United States. So this novel is very *Jane Austenian*, and what I thought to be the natural easy point of view that constitutes the story is again very British, still Edwardian in a sense: the point of view in my novel was omniscient in a moment in which no one else among my writer friends in the United States were using this omniscient point of view in their books. It seemed so European, bourgeois, and crazy. However, I still thought this was the natural thing to be done; the world was still perfectly ordered for me: here are the gods, here are the demons, here are people; good guys and bad guys doing their things. I cannot tell you how terribly mellifluous and ordered my sentences are in this first novel but I can’t and don’t want to do that anymore.

Q. And I assume that this is the reason why you started to move to more complex technical grounds. In effect, in later books your narrators began to be also the protagonists or participants in the stories they narrated. However, more recently you built up the technical structure of *The Holder of the World* in which a historical personage is virtually

recreated in the mind of the narrator while two different historical periods start to inform each other. And, still related to this issue of the technical development in your narrative, can you mention the names of any writers who may have been influential in your own progress as a novelist?

A. First of all, I'll tell you something: Ideologically I despise the idea of having mentors because I'm continuously rebelling against a culture that has encouraged women —and everybody else, but particularly women— to be very pliant to gurus, to mentor/disciple relationships, so my rebellion against this has led me to discourage mentors, but there are people who don't write anything like me who, however, might have exerted some indirect influence on me. I have read them at just the right time and thought then that I have understood something not only about their work but also about how to write mine, and —weirdly enough— I am referring here to very different writers, such as Flannery O'Connor with her dramatizing of morality, where the punishments are very disproportional to the actual crimes. Anton Chekhov was also very important to me at one time, because I saw in my earlier years the passing of my aristocratic way of life in Calcutta with the coming in of the Communist Government, as being reflected in Chekhov's literary presentation of a decadent Russian society. And Bernard Malamud was like a second father to [my husband] Clark and me: he was Clark's teacher and when I got married that event also meant our friendship. I loved his writing but I didn't think it had anything to do with my own literary vision, with my world, until I had a very low moment in my life, in 1984. I had then very little money left because of a racist wave in Canada, I was not allowed there any more and legally I could not even have a job; and I was sitting in the kitchen reading Bernard Malamud's *Selected Stories* [1983, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux] that the writer had sent me himself and suddenly, out of my self-despair, I said, "My God, he is writing about the Jewish community, about their attempts to accommodate to and assimilate American culture or about their failing to do so, which is precisely what I want to write about my own community". And that was my inspiration, in a way, for *Darkness* [1985, Markham: Penguin Books], my first collection of stories.

Q. But has not your writing been also affected by the Writer's Workshop and by your direct acquaintance with other writers and their opinions about literature?

A. Yes, of course I have the experience of the Writer's Workshop in Iowa and so, in a sense, I know almost every American writer of my age group because in the 1960s, in the early 1960s especially, the Writer's Workshop was the only place in the United States where creative writers could keep up, and that meant for us the best aspect of the Workshop: the creation of a community of writers.

Q. In a sense my next question also deals with your studies at the university level: often your readers may think that especially your narrators sound very "poststructuralist". Their minds, as reflected in their words, seem to be specifically oriented towards a poststructuralist understanding of life: to what extent do you think that your ample university studies have affected Bharati Mukherjee the Bengali woman who went to America and became a creative writer?

A. I try to keep both my personalities —my writing persona and my academic persona— very separate, to the extent that as a writer I live in a funky apartment in San Francisco, but then I also have a rented apartment in Berkeley where I am a *Professor* [laugh]. When I am writing I am not really thinking of literary theory at all, but then I'm a scholar and so I also have that love of getting to know the raw material for my stories, of getting my hands on every bit of data that I can find on the subject matter when writing; that is a kind of additive pleasure for me to the extent that I put a huge amount of energy in research, in acquiring all the information that otherwise I may not even need at all . . . on shipping routes, or the diaries of seventeenth-century European traders and travelers to India. Take the case of Captain Kidd, for instance: he comes in *The Holder of the World* only for two sentences, but I have read almost every book available on him. I could now write one full novel only about Captain Kidd!

Q. It sounds as if it is true what your narrator says in the novel: you, the same as Beigh, have read about five hundred books in order to write this novel . . .

A. O yes, at least! So I would not like to talk in terms of literary theory. I think it can be very damaging for creative writing. Only second-rate fiction is produced by those who write propaganda or thesis novels . . .

Q. Do you also include here the novels of literary theorists such as John Barth or Raymond Federman?

A. No, no, by no means. I am talking about minority groups who meet to, let's say, create model characters and write texts to be taught in different Ethnic Studies programs. This is what happens with literary theorists like bell hooks [*sic*], the African-American critic that I have referred to a couple of times in my lecture yesterday. She and other minority critics —like Gayatri Spivak— would say that the role of criticism, or what bell hooks describes as “gestures of defiance”, and also all writing by minorities should be used to valorize minority characters and to break down the hegemonic social structure, which means that all white characters —as representative of the dominant culture— *have to* be bad; and when this type of critics are teaching texts, they are looking not at the novelist's novel but only for their own criteria to be met in such academic courses; they are looking for texts to be used in courses where they can make the political and ethnic argumentation. The result is that too many writers are producing propaganda novels just for this kind of readership. That's what I think is very harmful for fiction.

Q. However, social commitment is also quite clear in your books. Connecting this issue with my previous question about the impact of literary criticism in your creative writing: you are also very fond of offering both your protagonists and your readers a web of binary oppositions; your characters frequently have to choose one way or another. This is not exactly what I would qualify as *applied deconstruction*, but perhaps it shows that you already have a worldview that, to a certain extent, coincides with some postulates of poststructuralist discourse . . .

A. Yes, it could very well be so. I'm not thinking consciously about it, though. What I think when I'm writing is that a good story requires a conflict. Take, for instance, what we may have in the structure of a short-story: you begin on a day when things seem to be very normal for your character but really, unconsciously perhaps, there is always a

little *vehicle*; the character may not know it but then suddenly there is a wake-up call from the unconscious and that marks the beginning of the conflict. Then, the character has to choose between temptation or morality, and either choice will be able to resolve the trial . . . so I'm thinking like a dramatist: there is no story, really, it's just another day, and then the conflict appears when you order the banality of daily sequences.

Q. Some of your narrators are also the protagonists in the stories that they narrate but when we come to your latest novel, *The Holder of the World*, readers have to cope with a different, more innovative technique: here you have chosen a narrator who is external to the story she is telling and who actually tries to build up or recreate a sort of historical romance that at times may also remind the reader of Hawthorne's masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter* [1850; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978]. Were you aware when writing this novel of the existence of a contemporary literary trend in which historical information goes hand in hand with the implementation of metafictional devices that tend to undermine the reader's belief in historical truth? I am referring here to the type of fiction being written by novelists like Doctorow or even Pynchon, a writer who is also mentioned in your latest book.

A. I have enjoyed all Pynchon's writings very much—I'm not talking about *Vineland* [1990, London: Secker & Warburg], however—and I have also admired Doctorow's books, but I think that these works were not in my mind when I started my research for *The Holder of the World*. I became interested in seventeenth-century European travelers: Italian, French, English in—for them—a very alien country, India, where they had to survive this alien condition; and so I went to these seventeenth-century travel documents, memoirs and trading journals, because I thought of these travelers as people like me or like characters in, let's say, *The Middleman and Other Stories*, making their living in rather frightening or perilous surroundings. So it was not that I wanted to write about history; I was trying to do the reverse. History was my second subject at the university; if I had not got my Ph.D. in English I would have done it in History, but then I loved the story part of History. When I read travel documents, I was more interested in the way how travelers see an alien country, how they represent that country, meaning how they make it familiar by saying things like "O, it looks like Devon", even if they are somewhere in India or Dubai; or, on the other hand, there are also those

travelers who in their reports turn the natives into headless men or any sort of monsters . . . so, I became interested in the representation of the other. I started the novel mainly because of two germs. One was Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, a novel that I had to read for my Ph.D. and also for my teaching classes and that has always been a favorite book of mine. I was always more interested in Pearl, the "legacy of passion", than in Hester but then I also felt that the end of the book had also been subject to an Eurocentered decision on the part of some critics who simply assume that Pearl Prynne has married an European count and has gone to Europe after the events told in the story. They have assumed this because at the end of the book Pearl is sending to her puritan mother in colonial Massachusetts all these very exotic presents with heraldic crests that could not be decoded.¹ Now, I thought that these heraldic crests should have been decoded if they were European, and then the more documents I read, the more I realized how much trading there was for the importation of objects, ideas, even people —freaks especially— from the Coromandel Coast in India. So Pearl Prynne was one of the inspirations for my book.² But then I also saw a painting when I was very much involved in the research for the novel. I saw a miniature painting at Sotheby's in New York that was entitled "An European Woman in Emperor Aurangzeb's Court", and she was a woman in a splendid court heroine outfit, you know, like a princess. At that moment I felt that I had my character. Originally, however, the novel was just about this character, Hannah Easton, but as somebody writing in the 1990s I soon became bored creating a straight historical novel and it wasn't until suddenly [narrator] Beigh Masters, who has my initials, popped into my head with her boyfriend from MIT —as would a lot of young American women in the Harvard or Cambridge area [laugh]— that I was able to possess the novel: it became not a historical novel by *my* novel. So what I'm saying is that, as an individual, I don't really see the point in writing a historical novel that is simply a passive retrieval of past data. I need to experience history and have my readers experience history rather

¹ "Letters came, with armorial seals upon them, though of bearings unknown to English heraldry. In the cottage there were articles of comfort and luxury, such as Hester never cared to use, but which only wealth could have purchased, and affection have imagined for her" (Hawthorne 1978, 274).

² The Grand Mughal calls protagonist Hannah "Precious-as Pearl, the Healer of the World", and by the end of the novel we are informed that, "She wasn't Hannah anymore; she was Mukta, Bhagmati's world for 'pearl'. And she gave Bhagmati a new name: Hester, after the friend she had lost. *The friend that had indirectly brought her to the Coromandel Coast*" (Mukherjee 1993, 271; my emphasis).

than be told historical information. On top of that, I've always been interested in technology and science as a way of interpreting the world, as an access to it, and I think—whether it's chaos theory or Hindu beliefs—that the kind of technology I mention in the novel [computerized virtual reality] is complementary to art rather than the enemy of art.

Q. From your own words I also imply that *The Holder of the World* is for you a book that demands a reader who has to be rather perceptive. In the pages of this novel you are frequently offering little clues for the reader to decode your creative building: your initials in the narrator's name, the custom house, Pearl, Chief Factor Prynne . . .

A. Yes, there are little nuggets, many secret cues and clues so that, for instance, scholars of Puritan America—whether we consider here Literature or American Studies—may find many references to historical figures and skirmishes during the [King Philip's] Indian wars of 1675 and 1676, when the Indian leader Metacomet rebelled against the English colonists. At the time, as a result of these wars a literary trend started to become very popular in America, the "captivity narrative": you may have heard of one of the writings that I mention in my novel, the *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* [1682; C.H. Lincoln, ed., New York: Barnes and Noble, 1952], in which this woman recounts what happened to her in that war; her book was something like our bestsellers are now and I decided to also introduce some elements of this minor genre in my novel, including Hannah being taken captive. But I had to redo all this. I mean, as a woman writing in the 1990s and as a feminist born in India I had to reject the Sita model but then I also had to use it for Hannah's captivity narrative [Mukherjee 1993, 173-76]. All this came out by research; but I also introduced the kidnapping of Bhagmati, something similar to what happened very often in India; girls who, like Bhagmati, were kidnapped could not be taken back by their Hindu families because they had lost caste. In this way, I worked in the narrative of the Puritan American literary tradition, and I worked it together with many other references, such as the fate of pirate William Kidd or the episode of Peter the Great freeing slaves; I put them together into one fabric . . . I remember that I started reading about a Mughal Emperor who lived in the sixteenth-century and who seemed to be quite a nice person, and then I read on and on until I found his descendant, his

great-grandson Emperor Aurangzeb who fitted in all I wanted to say in the novel: I was working on religious fundamentalists, starting with the American puritans on the one hand, and then I continued with Muslim fundamentalists on the other, people such as Aurangzeb who really devastated temples and charged Hindus with heavy taxes. Finally, I also moved to Hindu fundamentalism: that's my Raja character, Jadav Singh, who is modeled a little bit—I mean, “imagined upon”—a guerrilla Hindu leader who was also like a “desert rat”, you know, the name the Muslims give the Raja in my book.

Q. We may turn now to some other recurrent elements that at times can also be noticed in your narrative. In *The Middleman*, for instance, your readers may have the impression that the only value that we can find in the contemporary “American dream” is money and the necessity to possess more and more things. Money seems to be the only available replacement for traditional hierarchic societies, such as the Hindu. Is money really the only way to free the emigrants from the traditional bonds of a caste-oriented society?

A. I see, a very interesting question somehow related to the idea of contemporary American imperialism. However, in *The Middleman* I was doing this critique less consciously. I was not yet thinking of the American dream also as temptation and as empowerment but then I came to *The Holder of the World*, having written *Jasmine* [1989, New York: Fawcett Crest] in between, and I was *showing*—because each novel is, in a sense, covered autobiography, or disclosure of my own psychological state—that other America that embodies the will to transform. In Hannah you see the benevolent side; she goes as far as her imagination will take her and she has a tendency to follow her impulses; but then there is the other side as reflected in the white traders who try to imperialize; this dark side of the American will is to transform the *other*, to control the *other*, actually this shows up even in a character like Hannah who thinks that she can stop the centuries-long war between Muslims and Hindus. But, is this already showing in *The Middleman*? I don't know. I think this is where scholars and reviewers are able to detect things that the writer in the process of creating a novel did not think about.

Q. Going on, then, to another of those aspects that we may sometimes perceive in your writings from our outside position, I have the impression that sometimes your female protagonist —let's think of Jasmine, for instance— is able to forsake husband or lover to move on and improve her living conditions. Is it simply a need to defend herself or it is that perhaps you think that human beings are *essentially* selfish creatures?

A. Well, when writing a novel things seem to come “from the guts” although I hope intelligence is integrated somehow in the process [laugh] and when thinking, in this sense, about both Jasmine and Hannah I saw both of them as pioneers. Both characters are a little ahead of their time, they are pushing back the frontier. Now, I've always felt that there is a lot of hardness and greed in pioneers, an aspect that American literature has usually forgotten or romanticized. Traditionally writers have put a little sheen of civility for all those white pioneers who have dispossessed the Indian nations, and who have also withstood a lot of physical obstacles. They had a kind of iron will, they were capable of hardness and cruelty and so I also wanted to show in my characters that element that to be a pioneer also requires: some selfishness, the self-centredness that appears in a survivalist mentality. And what to say about the males? I grew up in a culture where women didn't see men as the enemy, not necessarily. However, women had to find alternate ways of dominating, of controlling, of clearing the obstacles so, in a sense, my female characters are also part of a debate with doctrinaire American feminists who did a lot of talking, especially in the mid 1970s, who were excellent at discourse but who got very little done compared to the Third World feminists. This is also my private battle; I had a long-running feud in the mid 1970s with these people —and that includes a famous magazine— because of my novel *Wife* [1975, New York: Fawcett Crest], in which I was asking —ahead of my time in USA— white American women not to dictate to us, minority women, how to be free: all that looking at our bodies in the mirror to bring about consciousness raising . . . such things may be fine for middle-class white suburbanized women who do not need to get water from the well but they would not work for us.

Q. In a sense related to your words, the reader may sometimes notice that some of your female characters—who have frequently been abused or even attacked by men—are also able to react using sex as a

weapon against male dominance. Is sex really an effective female tool for liberation.

A. Sex as empowerment, yes. You see, I was brought up in a society that had taken in all the prudery of Victorian and Edwardian England and so we always had to read, for instance, expurgated editions of Shakespeare's; or I could never say the word "sex". I would blush if I had to read the word "love" in a poem, and I really didn't know—even though a host of population in urban places like Calcutta are naked street people!—, we women didn't know what a male body looked like. I never knew until I got married, I am talking here about a cultural willful ignorance of sex. In that patriarchal society an enormous emphasis was put on women's chastity; and so for my characters liberation is sometimes expressed in being able to take pleasure in sex, sexuality as pleasure rather than as dutiful procreation. This often leads my female characters into trouble; for these women sex is a way of taking charge of their own bodies and of being accounted for, which leads them into trouble with religious fundamentalists precisely because my women use their sexuality or enjoyment of sex as a metaphor for liberation.

Q. Let us move now to more scientific grounds. Yesterday in your lecture—as well as in your words now—you insisted on the necessity to build what you denominate as a "we-community". However, in your narratives you abundantly use the metaphor of chaos theory to refer to the human condition; fractals, duality, bifurcation points where one must select one of the possible choices . . . ultimately, in your books your readers may have to face that other metaphoric duality where chaos theory also has to stop: fate vs. freedom. Even if we try to reproduce and anticipate the workings of the system by means of virtual reality, is there really any way out of this ultimate dilemma?

A. All right. Let me very briefly give you some of my notions about the metaphorization of chaos theory in my books. I think that I'm coming to this opposite structuring of things from different platforms that are, however, central to my own experiences. One is that as a Hindu I see salvation as the fusion of opposites; there is no good and devil, they are only seen different when you are under illusions and then they become the same thing. There is no differentiation between snake, human, and

god, they are just appearance. So for me it is the fusion of opposites that constitutes the answer. There is no sin but there is the natural venom in the snake: there is the Christian idea of the serpent as evil, but the real job of the god or hero, of the agent of goodness is to neutralize the venom; not to kill the snake but simply to put it where it cannot harm the rest. Now, about the duality fate vs. freedom I have to say that it was something that I had to work through in every single thing I have Jasmine say, and what I have Jasmine say is very much what I think every day: I don't know what the answer is, which means that I must treat every moment with reverence. Then, about my use of chaos theory I must say that I have come to it after the Hindu notion; suddenly I found that these scientific theories are saying what I've always believed. In this way, these theories became very useful metaphors for ordering my own beliefs: with them I can claim scientific validity to what I have done; they also make me see Hindu philosophy in a new way, not as religion but as geophysical explication.

Q. Is this new scientific enterprise then a holy quest, as one of your characters in *The Middleman* suggests when commenting on fractal geometry?

A. Yes, the quest is one of explaining things, and to do that science is not an enemy but an alternate way that, in this case, seems to coincide to a large extent with philosophy or religion.

Q. What is your position in this metaphoric understanding of life? Behind all the cultural variety and multiplicity of life, behind all the random events and options that you represent in your books is there really an underpinning pattern—as chaos theorists assume—or is it simply wishful thinking and human necessity to produce a totalizing understanding of life?

A. No, I believe there is an underpinning structure but not in a stable sense: my key phrase here—also related to chaos theory—would be *dynamic destiny*. You are given choices but you have to cope with the choice. The same as happens with the Christian parables, in India we also have Ramic teachings, thousands of examples explaining, for instance, how two people may come across a pot of gold; one of them will kick

the pot and follow his path, the other will pick it up and make himself a decent home. The pot of gold being at your feet is part of your destiny, but your decision about it is dynamic destiny, it is not determinism.

Q. I think that my last question might also be related to your apparent poststructuralist and scientific understanding of life: it concerns the power of names to build up or to be built up in society. Your female characters, especially Jasmine and Hannah, always have to or are forced to change their names, something that usually happens on account of the males they are living with. However Bharati Mukherjee the writer has not changed her name despite her married condition, something rather surprising for an Indian-American woman. Where is the power of naming for you? Does naming produce social reality?

A. This is something related, once again, to my upbringing. In Bengal every male or female has one nonsense name called *hoshmi* which is the name for daily use among your family members and intimates; I also have a *hoshmi* name and it doesn't mean anything, it's just silly nonsense syllables. And then we also have a formal name; in my case, for instance, Bharati means "goddess of learning". So I am both people: I can relax when I am called by my familiar name, but I have to be dignified when I am Bharati. This explains why I have always been aware of how a name can give you a certain sense of freedom or restriction. I am using the names as reincarnations; to name yourself is to say, "I'm going to be this person for the time being". Then, how people react to you is something, of course, outside your own control.

Now, is all this also related to poststructuralist theory in my case? Well, here I am thinking more about reinvention, refashioning of the self. However, the distribution of power is also to be found, for me, in the facility of language: all my novels are really about language and about how you control the world through linguistic fluency. Take my second novel [*Wife*], for instance, there you have a character who the more English she learns, the more at home she feels, the more self-empowered she comes to be in the new and frightening Manhattan society. Is this poststructuralism? . . .

