

Appreciation

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It's hard to believe I am writing this "farewell" message to Professor Sheila Hones. We've been collaborators and conspirators on so many fronts over the years and I find it difficult to imagine what my life is going to be like without her. But I also know that actually our ties will not be severed by her departure from the University of Tokyo. In fact, I look forward to maintaining our dialog as she continues to, in her words, "muddle" through new intellectual territories, charting ways for me to follow her path.

As the essay she has written for this volume shows, she is magically capable of framing all sorts of abstruse concepts in ways that are not only understandable but also appealing and relevant to one's academic concerns. She has done that not only for so many students in classes but also for me in offices and cafes. When I first met her, I knew nothing about literary geography. I still do not claim to know much. But I have become keenly sensitive to the issue of space—how space conditions our life, mind, and language and how aware we need to be of the concept of space to understand the dynamics of power in our society.

More specifically, one of the many things I learned about from my conversations with Professor Hones was Actor Network Theory (ANT). I know she claims not to understand the theory perfectly (in fact, she says it's not exactly a theory anyway). I had heard of and tried to learn ANT before but it felt rather alien and not a little irrelevant to what I do. But our conversations over a cup of tea (and glasses of wine) about the agency of scallops have made me realize that ANT potentially allows me to understand the significance of museums—a topic of deep academic interest for me—in a more insightful way. For example, how should one think about a particular museum exhibit? Obviously, it is important to consider the significance of collecting and ordering of museum objects. But in what ways? Through our dialog about ANT, she has inspired me to think of the different agencies involved in the making of the exhibit that are both human and non-human. In Australia, for example, telegraph poles were indispensable to the success of scholarly expeditions into the interior, as the white explorers felt they had no choice but to be in proximity to their tools of communication to the coastal towns. So the poles and wires as well as their locations profoundly conditioned what these white men collected and how they understood Aboriginal society. The complex network of different agents generated particular forms and contents of museum col-

lection, which, in turn, profoundly impacted the political and social dynamics of race in the nation.

I know my understanding of ANT is woefully rudimentary. But I write this as an example of the wonderfully inspiring academic conversations I have been able to have with Professor Hones. When I think of her, what come to my mind is not the endless administrative meetings and obligations that we endured together (though we certainly did that, too!). Rather, it's the critical and often precarious academic endeavors that she fearlessly embraced despite challenging circumstances and her gentle yet tireless exhortation to me to do the same so that we might always challenge the norms and simple binaries imposed by existing forces. Simply put, she has been a true colleague and will remain so for me and many others even after she leaves this campus.