

Power Play
Writing assignment #2
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Theme: Borders, together with Yusser, Franziska & Clara

The difference between the “we” and the “stranger” often starts because of the creation of places and their (invisible) borders. Moving between places often requires pushing against oppressive boundaries set by race, sex and class domination, as is explained in the book “The margin as space”.

Where do we place ourselves in the society, in our family, in our country etc?

Do we place ourselves on the side of the colonizing mentality or do we stand in political resistance with the oppressed? To stand with the oppressed means to create space for unlimited access to power and knowledge. This space is a margin; a profound edge, not a safe place but a place where you need to have the ability to conceptualize alternatives.

The way we place ourselves is crucial in the way we approach people. The “we” will only sympathize with the “other” if that other is acknowledged by the “we”, which is often only through speech of suffering. Language is therefore also a place of suffering. It changes throughout the phases of life and based on who you’re speaking to. Sometimes it is needed to speak the language of the oppressor, which is an unnatural thing to do but a very important thing to do. By doing so you can influence the way you are being approached and the way you approach others.

Language and the way we speak is very interesting for our topic: borders. We talked about how we all sound different when speaking English, how we can not speak our minds directly and how we connect it to professionalism. English is the language of modernism, therefore a language of the oppressor.

You can compare the language English to a place, for instance Amsterdam, it’s the center of modernism, a place you should visit, a place where things get done and where you can reach new opportunities. It is largely known and heard because it is well represented. The violence this can cause is the exclusion of other places and other languages. All of a sudden we connect the place and/or language you speak to unprofessionalism without knowing you personally. You have become the other for nothing more than a barrier of place and language.

Even when we integrate in the same place, it will be hard for us to not have this created fear for the unknown. The unknown language or the unknown place and community the “other” person comes from. The border that is between us, that we are afraid to cross.