

Jane Gallop *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*
The Daughter's Seduction

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1 *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*

Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*¹ would seem to insert itself in a broad tradition of books in whose titles one finds 'and' tucked snugly between two powerful nouns. In such cases, the conjunction serves to indicate either the author's study of little- or well-known intersections between the two domains, or a projection of a possible, fruitful union. Within this tradition the most strenuous task allotted to 'and' might be to connect two sub-stantives that are totally indifferent to each other. Yet, this is not the fate of Mitchell's 'and', which lies serenely on the cover in denial of the battle that is raging between psychoanalysis and feminism. This 'and' bridges the gap between two combatants; it runs back and forth holding its white flag as high as possible. Although, of the two, feminism has shown itself to be the most belligerent, psychoanalysis has not been known to come begging for forgiveness or reconciliation. The quiescent tradition of 'and' as mainstay for peaceful coexistence is belied by the assertiveness of Mitchell's step.

Her boldness stands in fullest relief in America, where feminists' views of Freud run the gamut from considering him an evil man, and one of women's greatest enemies, to seeing him as a brilliant dreamer, who was either blind to the conditions around him or did not look beyond those conditions. Following both the developments of psychoanalysis and the course of feminism peculiar to different countries, she sets up a 'descending scale of opposition by feminists to Freud' (p. 297) and finds the greatest opposition in America, most interest on the continent, with England in between. So it seems fitting that Mitchell, one of England's best-known feminists, should take on the project of importing the continental feminist interest in Freud, in an effort to combat the American opposition to psychoanalysis. Although, at one point, she mentions Scandinavian feminists (p. 297), she is, in fact,

leaning not upon a general continental but upon a specifically French feminism, and especially upon the group 'Psychoanalysis and Politics', towards which the introduction of the book points for general orientation. Having based her undertaking upon a certain French feminism (and, as we shall see later, upon a generally anti-Freudian atmosphere of English-speaking feminism, not as Shulamith Firestone did for a partial, piecemeal acceptance, but for a serious reading of Freud, one which does not evade his unpleasant analysis of the feminine position, penis-envy and all.

Mitchell's book offers a harsh critique of a pervasive blindness in American feminism to Freud's analyses: a blindness founded upon a distaste for the situations he describes. Mitchell is at her sharpest when analyzing the distortions inflicted by feminists upon Freud's text and his discoveries. She ties the feminists' distortions to the work of Wilhelm Reich and R. D. Laing, whom she sees as having strongly influenced the radical ideology of the sixties that gave birth to modern feminism. These critiques give the book a path-clearing thrust which makes it essential reading for anyone interested in feminist ideology. Mitchell is not just saying something else about Freud; she is saying that what all the other feminists before have said is wrong. And Mitchell is saying that their errors have very serious consequences for the feminist analysis of woman's psychology and woman's situation: in short, grave consequences for feminism's effectiveness.

For Mitchell, the feminist misunderstanding of Freud is not a simple chance happening. She aptly shows her readers certain traits shared by all the feminist distortions: above all, an implicit denial of Freud's unconscious and of his concept of a sexuality that is not inscribed within the bounds of actual interpersonal relations. Although feminists before have differed in their stand on Freud, Mitchell's contribution lies in tying their various positions together, in seeing in them a structure and not merely diverse contingencies. Each of these authors, after paying tribute to the discovery of the importance of sexuality in human life, proceeds to deny it by converting it, after all, into something as generalized as "life-energy"—a generality from which Freud originally rescued it and to which, time and again, he had to forbid it to return' (p. 352). The 'time and again' points toward some tendency inherent in the Freudian discovery to revert to

pre-Freudian concepts. Mitchell delineates the work of such a tendency by describing the odyssey of Freud's discovery through diverse misunderstandings. She carefully pinpoints that which she considers most original, most 'Freudian' in Freud's work; then she shows how the post-Freudian has been but a repeated return to the pre-Freudian. The possibility of this return is structured into the difficulty, the audacity of Freud's discovery. Even Freud was not immune to it: 'Freud was as capable as anyone else of being pre-Freudian—but he had less to gain from it' (p. 323). Obviously, 'pre-Freudian' cannot here be an expression of temporal relationship as usually understood. And if not all of Freud is 'Freudian', it is essential that we understand what Mitchell is referring to. The 'Freudian' Freud placed a premium on 'psychical reality' over actual 'reality'. Freud's contribution to man's understanding of himself is a description of the human being in culture, not of the natural animal, man. Distortion of Freud always seems to go in the direction of some sort of biologism. Hence his descriptions of man's inscription in culture are interpreted as prescriptions for normality based on nature.

One of the first to fall back into biologism, in an attempt to go beyond Freud, specifically on the question of women, was Karen Horney, who has gained a readership among modern feminists looking for a theorist of woman's psychology. Naturally, women's liberation has chosen Horney over Freud: she decries the unfairness of woman's lot while he, according to feminists, fails to do so. Mitchell's criticism of Horney suggests that the latter's seeming radicalism is actually quite reactionary. 'The male analyst, [Horney] claims, theorizes about women much as the little boy speculates about the little girl, and women submit to being this receptacle of masculine phantasy—often against their true nature. Worthy as were Horney's intentions, . . . nothing could have been more disastrous for the future of the psychoanalysis of women than this call to a "true nature"' (p. 128).

In a movement similar to her perceptive reading of Horney, Mitchell's criticism of other theorists influential in provoking modern American feminists' opposition to Freud repeatedly underlines these same points: a misreading of description as prescription and a valorization of 'reality' over psychic life. It seems that at the heart of every reaction against Freud is some sort of essentialism. Freud subverted the traditional belief that alienation was secondary, that it acted upon some essential, unified

ego, thus perverting it, and alienating it from itself. Mitchell analyzes how all the writers discussed in the book return, either explicitly or implicitly, to a belief in an essential self, just as she finds Horney basing her psychoanalysis of women upon a 'true nature' that has submitted itself to distortion. The unwillingness to see that the Freudian discovery points to a self that, unlike Laing's 'divided self', is primarily alienated is the refusal of the unconscious, the Freudian unconscious.

As Mitchell says, 'The Freud the feminists have inherited is a long way off-centre' (p. 301). The Freud Mitchell wants to bring to the feminists is not the one who, unfortunately, might have said 'anatomy is destiny', but a Freud who analyzed and described how man, primarily alienated, 'makes' himself in culture. She is advocating a Freud virtually unknown to American feminists, who associate Freud with normalizing adaptation to the *status quo*. In fact, the Freud Mitchell supports did not believe in adaptation; and so she hopes that by introducing this Freud, the 'Freudian' Freud, she can supplement a serious lack in modern Anglo-American feminism. Thus one of the meanings the 'and' of the book's title must maintain is that of an addition: Mitchell would add psychoanalysis to feminism to make feminism stronger, richer, wiser, better.

In her Introduction Mitchell states, 'If advocacy of Freud is the theme of this book, the conversation is at all times with the many aspects of feminism' (p. xix). In a book where the author writes of the constitution of the ego in alienation, where in a footnote she writes, 'Freud had his analyst in Fließ, the recipient and, in a sense, originator, of Freud's letters' (p. 62n), the role of the interlocutor cannot be taken lightly. In her specific readings of the feminists, where she is at her most incisive, Mitchell is nastiest, wittiest and most playful in her language. These chapters are characterized by a stinging informality which offers a sharp contrast to both the critical respect evident in her chapters on Reich and Laing and the objective exposition of the earliest chapters, the chapters on Freud. Later, after the section on the feminists, she becomes more serious, more difficult, until she reaches the heartfelt projects of the last chapter, the chapter entitled 'The Cultural Revolution'.

Besides her major thesis that all the feminist writers are denying the nonbiologism of Freud's discovery, Mitchell argues

that much of their criticism consists of trivial complaints against Freud the man. In the earlier chapters which set forth Freud's theories she quickly dismisses the 'red herring' that is the examination of Freud's life (p. 107). Yet, interestingly, the repudiation of this trivial *ad hominem* argument returns continually. In a curious footnote Mitchell writes: 'If in this account I have defended Freud's character as well as his theory of psychoanalysis, it is not because I consider it in any way important. . . . But the subject matter of psychoanalysis makes Freud particularly vulnerable to this critical red herring. My "defence" should thus be seen as an irrelevance, introduced to counter an irrelevance—not a very defensible aim!' (p. 332n). 'An irrelevance introduced to counter an irrelevance' seems to underline the odd complicity between the partners of a conversation, Mitchell's 'conversation. . . with the many aspects of feminism'. In the light of her declaration that interest in Freud's character is a 'critical red herring', it is significant that *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* includes a seventeen-page appendix called 'Psychoanalysis and Vienna at the Turn of the Century', the largest part of which contains examples of how Freud, for his time, was often quite liberal with regard to women. Why does Mitchell devote so much space to 'an irrelevance introduced to counter an irrelevance'?

It seems that the fanciful prose in Mitchell's reading of the feminist texts and her repeated discussion of the *ad hominem* argument are indicators of a continuing wish to distance herself from these feminists, to position herself apart from them, a wish that must remain unfulfilled because it is impossible to keep her stated project—a conversation. . . with the many aspects of feminism—constantly separate from a conversation with actual feminists. She is locked into an exchange with those whom she is trying to transcend. Hence she is most forcefully lucid in criticizing these her interlocutors, and weakest in synthesizing a version of Freud that goes outside the limits of that conversation. While undertaking to introduce psychoanalysis into the bounds of a certain English-speaking feminism, she excises that which does not fit within those bounds, rather than question the limits themselves.

Mitchell's argument touches upon recent psychoanalytic developments in France, especially the work of Jacques Lacan, which is virtually unknown to American feminists. Lacan has been a

powerful influence upon French feminist thought. Much of Mitchell's project follows Lacan's direction in its emphasis on fidelity to the originality of Freud's text and in its denial of Freud's biologism. Yet, oddly, her relation to Lacan's theory is never made explicit. For a reader acquainted with Lacan, he functions as a very present absence, an absence inadequately exorcised by Mitchell's reference to him.

In the long and rather confusing chapter 'The Different Self, the Phallus and the Father', which contains Mitchell's most radical statements in the register of psychoanalysis (quite different from her most radical feminist statements), Lacan is mentioned frequently and his works are quoted several times. Yet Mitchell provides no continuity between the specific points of Lacanian theory; she includes in this chapter no sign as to whether the material between these points is in agreement with his theory, derived from his theory, in opposition to it, or simply indifferent. Apart from affording the reader no clear conception of what Lacan is actually about, the chapter is hard to follow. Above all, the reader remains unsure of the relationship between feminism and this discussion of a primordially alienated self, a dead father, and a symbolic phallus. And, continuing into the next (and last) section of Mitchell's book, one finds that the most difficult points in 'The Different Self...' have been left behind: they are never integrated into her general theory.

In this chapter, Mitchell has recourse to a discussion of the difference between desire and need—one of Lacan's references in his distinction of the instinctual from the condition of man in culture, a distinction Mitchell wishes to uphold. According to Mitchell, 'The baby needs food, protection, etc.; his mother then demands certain responses from him, as for instance in toilet training; in learning to understand the nature of his mother's demand, the child comes to desire to satisfy her desire. Desire is therefore always a question of a significant interrelationship, desire is always the desire of the other' (p. 396). On the same page Mitchell goes on to explain that in the absence of the breast or whatever is needed, 'need changes to demand (articulation), and if unsatisfied or unreciprocated, to desire'. There seems to be a contradiction between these two quotations: in the first, the baby's need changes to desire through the workings of the mother's demand; in the second passage the need itself changes to 'demand (articulation)' and then, through the cruelty of the outside world, to desire. Neither of these follows the Lacanian conception of the relationship between 'need', 'the demand' and

'desire'. Of course, Mitchell is not obliged to present the Lacanian conception; however, 'need', 'the demand', and 'desire' are articulated with each other in Lacan's works in a formulation that resembles the two quoted above, yet is essentially different. Lacan relies upon no contingency to link these concepts. In Mitchell's first formulation the mother could feed the child without demanding toilet training. In the second, an 'if' appears: 'if unsatisfied or unreciprocated' implies the possibility of 'if satisfied or reciprocated'. Yet this un-Lacanian explanation is sandwiched between two direct references to Lacan upon whom Mitchell is leaning in order to define the phallus.

Here then is this very relation as it appears at one point in Lacan's work: 'Let us at this point examine the effects of this presence [of signifier]. There is first of all a deviation of man's needs due to the fact that he speaks, in that in so far as his needs are subjugated to the demand they come back to him alienated. This is not the effect of his real dependency... but of the putting into signifying/significant form as such and of the fact that it is from the locus of the Other that his message is emitted. That which thus finds itself alienated in needs constitutes an *Urverdrängung* [primal repression], by being unable, by hypothesis, to articulate itself in the demand, but which appears in an offshoot, is what presents itself in man as desire.' By placing the emphasis on 'this is not the effect of his real dependency', which is directed to just such contingent explanations as those of Mitchell cited above, Lacan, unlike Mitchell, grounds his argument entirely in the effect of the signifier, that is, the effect of language. And curiously, there is a hint of this linguistic structuring in Mitchell's wording 'demand (articulation)' and maybe even in 'significant interrelationship', although 'significant' does not have the same direct relationship to the signifier as does the French 'signifiant', translated above as 'signifying/significant'.

If Mitchell is trying to paraphrase Lacan's exposition, she is taking a needlessly treacherous path. By not including language explicitly in her elucidation of Lacan's theory she arrives at formulations based upon contingencies. On the next page (the conclusion of this chapter) she apologizes for her omission of the discussion of language in the following manner:

The situation is infinitely more complicated than this reduced and condensed version, above all because I have left out... what really amounts to the *whole framework and thrust of the theory*: the importance of language. In a sense this is an *inex-*

cusable distortion of a theory but one necessitated by the specific concern: the psychology of women under patriarchy. The absence of any reference to language—the very world into which the human child is born and by which he is named and placed (man does not speak, language ‘speaks’ him) *can only be excused by the inexhaustible number of other omissions*, all of which, in that they refer to the way mankind becomes human and lives his humanity, have bearing on the formation and meaning of feminine psychology. (pp. 397–8, my italics)

What is most unsettling about this generally disconcerting passage are two closely related contradictions: first, that ‘an inexcusable distortion of a theory’ could in any way ‘be excused’ (and that, like the ‘irrelevance introduced to counter an irrelevance’, the distorting omission is ‘excused’ by ‘other omissions’); second, that what is stressed as ‘the whole framework and thrust of the theory’ should be on a par with an ‘inexhaustible number of other omissions’.

Language, it seems, is fated to share with Lacan the position of ghost (the dead Father) in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. Yet, although language’s relegation to the margins is no more easily explained than Lacan’s, this second omission can perhaps illuminate the first. For, whether Mitchell is referring to Lacan here or not, ‘the theory’ whose ‘whole framework and thrust’ is ‘the importance of language’ is Lacan’s theory. His interpretation of Freud consists of reading the letter of Freud’s text in the light of his own distillation of modern (structural) linguistics. Lacan’s theory cannot be presented coherently without a major discussion of the function of language. Hence the ‘present absence’ of Lacan discussed above is already an omission of ‘the importance of language’. Perhaps this, too, stems from Mitchell’s having trapped herself into a conversation, not with feminism, but with specific feminists—feminists who reflect the way American psychoanalysis ignores the ego-subverting significance of language.

Certainly a theory of language is not, and should not be, outside the bounds of feminist analysis. If we believe, as Mitchell does, that it is crucial that a lucid feminism throw off the influence of a biologicistic, normalizing reading of Freud, then it is necessary to see ‘civilization’s discontents’ as structurally inscribed into civilization and, thus, to ward off the reformisms of contingency-based explanations. Mitchell begins on that path, but her confusion in the chapter on ‘The Different Self...’ indicates that her formulations are inadequate for avoiding contingent

explanations. An inclusion of language, especially Lacan’s brand of structural linguistics, might have evaded some of those pitfalls of domestication. Without it, Mitchell—locked into her dialogue with those whose ‘empiricism run riot denies more than the unconscious; it denies any attribute of the mind other than rationality’ (p. 354)—falls back into that kind of common sense which underlies her interlocutors’ belief in a rational, utility-based explanation for human behaviour.



TREE

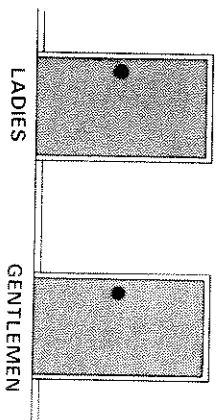


FIGURE 1

‘The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious’ is one of the major essays in which Lacan exposes his theory of the signifier. It is in this essay, at a moment important for its presentation of the inextricable relation between the influence of language and sexual differentiation, that Lacan introduces the drawings in Figure 1.

The first image is an example of the classic method of presenting the relation between the signifier and the signified: a one-to-one correspondence between the word and the ‘thing’. The ‘meaning’ of the word ‘tree’ can be learned through the drawing of the thing ‘tree’ which illustrates it: the word ‘stands for’ the thing. This classic manner of understanding the relationship between signifier and signified is totally inadequate. Lacan pro-

duces the second image to underline that inadequacy. Here the relationship between the words and the doors they indicate is stunningly more complex than any one-to-one correlation that might be assumed to operate in the first drawing. Since they refer to two identical doors, the pair of signifiers in the second illustration can only be understood (1) in relation to each other (each is 'not the other'), and (2) in what Lacan calls a 'signifying chain' (by the contexts in which these signifiers have been learned).

Lacan then relates the following story which uses the second image as its illustration. 'A train arrives at a station. A little boy and a little girl, brother and sister, are seated in a compartment face to face next to the window through which the buildings along the station platform can be seen passing as the train pulls to a stop. "Look," says the brother, "we're at Ladies!" "Idiot," replies his sister, "can't you see we're at Gentlemen?"'¹⁴ In this story each child is able to see only one of the rest rooms; thus, each one sees an image which is more like the first drawing than the second. The first drawing leads one to be confident that words have delimitable 'things' which they 'mean'. Interestingly, it is the girl who sees 'Gentlemen' and the boy who sees 'Ladies'; as if one could only see the sex one is not, as if only the sex one is outside of could be perceived as a whole, unified locus. The 'psychical consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes' have a structure similar to that of the situation in this anecdote. Through the biological given of sitting on one side of the compartment or the other, each sex is placed in a structure, and as such is unable to see that structure. The biological differences are only of import to men and women in so far as they institute the subject into the play of the signifier, a play unknown as long as one accepts the first model of language, the model of one-to-one correspondence.

Yet, whether the subject knows it or not, he must function in relation to an arbitrary and thus absolute boundary between the two realms of Ladies and Gentlemen, a boundary installed irrevocably upon his horizon through the advent of the signifier. 'Ladies and Gentlemen will be henceforth for these children two countries towards which each of their souls will strive on divergent wings, and between which a cessation of hostilities will be the more impossible since they are in truth the same country and neither can compromise on its own superiority without detracting from the glory of the other.'¹⁵ Because of the rule of the signifier over the signified, the two words 'Ladies' and 'Gentlemen', in the illustration above, constitute, by their very installation, the two

doors, although, in some mythical prehistory prior to the signifier's arrival, the doors are identical. Similarly, it is not the biological given of male and female that is in question in psychoanalysis (his Mitchell herself makes quite clear), but the subject as constituted by the pre-existing signifying chain, that is, by culture, in which the subject must place himself. A biologicistic reading of Freud sees only the subject already inserted into his position of blindness within that chain, and does not see the subject's placing himself or the chain as chain. The first image of the subject is then very much like the first image above, the drawing of the tree: a one-to-one correspondence is assumed between, for example, the word 'woman' and a woman. By such a reading, the only delimitable 'thing' the signifier 'woman' could possibly 'mean' is the biological female. Whence springs the whole normalizing moralism of biologicistic psychology.

However, an understanding of the signifying chain does not mean that the subject can remove himself from his blind situation merely by knowing that the second rest room exists somewhere outside his field of vision. What Lacan has sketched in the above passage is a situation of desire. The register of desire is where the 'cessation of hostilities' is 'impossible'. Although one can hypothetically reconstruct a pre-linguistic, pre-cultural 'real' (positing the two doors as originally identical, the human child as naturally bisexual), this mythical prehistory cannot erase the situation of desire which is the result of the perversion of the need by the signifier's presence. An exposition of the structured articulation of need and desire will not institute an idealistically utilitarian return to the need, to the biological, to the pre-perverted 'real'. As Lacan writes, 'far from yielding to a logicizing reduction, there where it is a question of desire we find in its irreducibility to the demand the very energy that also keeps it from being collapsed back into need. To put it elliptically: that desire be articulated, precisely for that reason it is not articulable. We mean, in the discourse appropriate to it, ethical and not psychological.'¹⁶ The demand is made within language's imaginary register, where the first model of one-to-one correspondence is presumed to operate, and, thus, the demand is assumed to be satisfiable: its signified is assumed to be delimitable. Desire is that portion of the pre-articulated need which finds itself left out of the demand--the demand being the register of ethical discourse. Of course, Lacan can indicate the marginal place of desire, but he does this in the only way possible--in psychological discourse. In ethical discourse, spoken from our place as subjects attempting to signify ourselves

in the signifying chain, we are all sitting on one side of the compartment or the other: we are all subject to the blindness imposed by our seats in the compartment; there is no other way of being on the train (chain).

To date, the feminist efforts to understand and struggle against the cultural constructs of male-dominated society would have the subject consider as illusory the entire structure which makes the realms of Gentlemen and Ladies appear defined and absolute as they do in the one-to-one correlation. That effort would place the feminist as observer in some sort of floating position outside the structure, a position of omniscience. Such positioning ignores the subject's need to place himself within the signifying chain in order to be any place at all. There is no place for a 'subject', no place to be human, to make sense outside of signification, and language always has specific rules which no subject has the power to decree. Although Mitchell also maintains that the self's alienated condition within culture is the only means of placing itself, in her 'ethical discourse'—the chapter 'The Cultural Revolution'—she falls back into the unconscious-denying, contingency-based formulations that do not greatly differ from those of the feminists whose distortions she has exposed.

It seems that Mitchell, in the end, fails to come to grips with the feminist's place (her place) as *desirer*. By containing the goals of the feminism she would supplement by psychoanalysis inside the bounds of the feminism she is interrogating, Mitchell abandons the radical subversion of the traditional notion of a self that is whole unto itself, the very subversion she is advocating through her criticism of the biologicistic and reductionistic readings of Freud that have previously influenced feminism. Because desire is non-articulate in ethical discourse and because to be within the bounds of feminism, where she would locate herself, necessitates ethical discourse (prescription for action), Mitchell is trapped into making the reign of insatiable desire contingent in order to make it impeachable. If she can banish desire from ethical discourse, that discourse can be as lucid, as infallible, as the psychological theory which precedes her last chapter. Thus in that final chapter the unconscious which, by avoiding the discussion of language she has made into a repository of some vague notion of culture, is open to being understood as culture known consciously. She then ignores the unconscious as that which in lapses, dreams, etc., always manifests itself as a disrupter, a subverter of rationality and utility. Culture thus becomes external, just as the

train incident is for the omniscient observer who would ignore that the signifier has forever changed the 'meaning' of the once identical doors.

In her readings of feminists, Mitchell delineates just such a trend of utopic rationalism, of 'biological wishful thinking' (p. 221); yet, when it comes down to proposing what feminists should do, Mitchell's solution resembles the legislation from our rational standpoint' (p. 349) whose inadequacies she so accurately exposes. Mitchell suggests that we demonstrate the contradictory nature of the cultural constructs inscribed into the unconscious. Yet those contradictions are the necessary result of the subject's place—as one who desires—within the signifying chain. Desire has a contradictory nature by being that which exceeds the bounds of the imaginary satisfaction available to the demand. Her inaccurate, contingent formulation of the juncture of need and desire has left her free to banish desire by showing its non-necessity. So she proposes that 'women have to organize themselves as a group to effect a change in the basic ideology of human society. To be effective, this can be no righteous challenge to the simple domination of men . . . but a struggle based on a theory of the social non-necessity at this stage of development of the laws instituted by patriarchy' (p. 414, my italics). She goes on to state that 'when the potentialities of the complexities of capitalism . . . are released by its overthrow, new structures will gradually come to be represented in the unconscious. It is the task of feminism to insist on their birth' (p. 415). If women can 'organize themselves as a group to effect a change in the basic ideology of human society' and can 'insist on the birth' of 'new structures' in the unconscious, then somehow they transcend the non-contingent fact that human beings, subject to the unconscious, are fated not to be rational. What about the unconscious of the feminist in which, according to Mitchell's own formulations, ought to be inscribed the constructs of a patriarchal order? Are the actions of this subject not affected by the unconscious?

If the structures in the unconscious were linked to the structural fact of articulating oneself through language—whose inception is both the beginning of society in general and of the self which is culturally constituted—perhaps it would not be so easy for Mitchell to revert to a formulation that makes the unconscious as internal culture a mere reflection of an actual, historical society, if not contemporary then past. Mitchell closes the book with the following paragraph: 'It is not a question of changing (or ending)

who has or how one has babies. It is a question of overthrowing patriarchy. As the end of "eternal" class conflict is visible within the contradictions of capitalism, so too, it would seem, is the swan-song of the "immortal" nature of patriarchal culture to be heard' (p. 416). Perhaps the irony signalled by the words Mitchell sets off in the oxymorons above is double-edged. For if patriarchal culture is that within which the self originally constitutes itself, it is always already there in each subject as subject. Thus how can it be overturned if it has been necessarily internalized in everybody who could possibly act to overthrow it? If, as Mitchell has stated (pp. 394-5), the law of patriarchal culture is the law of the symbolic, the dead Father, then the living male has no better chance of acceding to that sovereign position than does the living female. The goal of a feminism infused with the Freudianism Mitchell has advocated can no longer be the overthrowing of patriarchy. One cannot kill the Father who is already dead.

Feminism must re-examine its ends in view of Lacanian psychoanalysis. It is not patriarchal culture, but the biologicistic reduction of the Law of the Dead Father to the rule of the actual, living male that must be struggled against. To understand the living male's imposture, feminism must embrace a psychoanalysis that has been returned to its original audacity through an exchange with linguistic theory. *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* certainly initiates this undertaking by beginning with an effort at fidelity to Freud's discovery. Mitchell's incisive analysis of other writers reveals the distortions attendant upon those who read Freud as pre-Freudian. The tone of her analysis is one of harsh denial, the denial of similarity with those whose errors she is exposing. Yet, although she wins the battle against these writers, she is contaminated by the exchange. At the end of the book, with the proposals for the use of psychoanalysis in the overthrow of patriarchy, she takes over the position of the writers she has criticized. If, after the injection of psychoanalysis into feminism, feminism remains unchanged, what is the point of that infusion? Perhaps the 'and' suggestive of peaceful coexistence in the title *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* betrays Mitchell's wish that psychoanalysis should not disrupt feminism as she knows it. Perhaps that is even why her discussion of Lacan/language is so insufficient. But the stronger, wiser, better feminism she would have cannot also be still the same feminism.

2 Of Phallic Proportions: Lacanian Conceit

It has become a commonplace in discussions of psychoanalysis's relation to women to make reference to the fact that Freud did not get around to writing about the 'psychical consequences' of 'sexual difference'—about the ways in which female sexuality might differ from the model of 'human' sexuality he had generated from the little boy's history—until late in his career, around 1925. Like Freud, Jacques Lacan, in the beginning, talked about subject, language and desire without specifying the sexual differentiation of his schemes. Only two of the *Écrits* (the monumental collection of his major statements from 1936 to 1966) are directed to questions of sexual difference, of the specificity of female sexuality. Both of those texts—'The Signification of the Phallus' and 'Directive Remarks for a Congress on Feminine Sexuality'²—were written in 1958.

These two *écrits* with special interest to feminism are separated by only one essay. The arrangement does not seem to be strictly determined by the chronology of writing or public presentation, but rather creates its own chronology of reading. The essay separating the two 1958 writings on sexual difference is a memorial to Ernest Jones, written in 1959, a commentary on Jones's 1916 article 'The Theory of Symbolism'. Jones died on 11 February 1958. The year of his death is the year Lacan undertakes work on sexual difference, work which makes explicit reference to Jones whose major disagreement with Freud centred around female sexuality and the phallus. I would like to read the memorial to Jones as the centrepiece to Lacan's 1958 texts on sexual difference. By that I mean both that Lacan's interest in the subject is the 'broad' version of a tribute to Jones, who regretted Freud's phallocentrism and neglect of female sexuality, but also that Jones's 'Theory of Symbolism' as read by Lacan contains the central question of Lacan's articulation of sexual difference.