

painful effect of individuating is the reason that women are identified with loss' (Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 288). None of them explains why a universal maternal nurturance is assumed. Given the mother's (up-to-now) indispensable role in bearing children, the presumption that she, or some woman, nurtures the child is social, not given. It seems that Lacan's defenders, rather than his critics, base their positions on biologicistic presuppositions. By contrast, Irigaray and other more critically minded feminists seek a positive representation of the two sexes, and not simply the inclusion of women in so far as they are mothers.

If Lacan begs women to tell him in what their pleasure consists,¹⁴ he is not prepared to hear what they have to say. The absence of an answer from women is clearly itself an answer – that this is a problem for men who want to know, to master, to name, that which is not theirs. Women, for Irigaray, are the sex 'which is not one'; not one (like the phallus), but not none either! Woman is not one for she doesn't conform to the logic of singular identity, sexuality, and desire: the sex which is more (*encore*) than one, in excess of the one (organ) demanded from women's bodies to render them definable in men's terms. If Lacan's interrogation is directed to a man's stone representation of a woman, i.e., to Bernini's representation of St Teresa, it is not surprising 'she' has nothing to say! But if Lacan had looked at her own words (she was a prolific diarist and writer), he may have heard something quite different – the 'corporeal' language of hysteria, not the *jouissant* experience of unspeakable intensity (see Irigaray, 'Cosi Fan Tutti' in 1985b).

If he has succeeded in describing women's containment in men's fantasies, Lacan has not left any room for the representation of women in other, more autonomous, terms. If he places this pleasure beyond the phallus and thus beyond the symbolic and representation, this is because the symbolic, linguistic structure he describes is restricted to those dominant discourses and systems which accord women no place of their own. There are, there must be, other discourses and forms of possible representation capable of speaking of/as women differently.

Lacan and feminism

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Lacan continues to be one of the most controversial figures within contemporary feminist theory. Many feminists use his work on human subjectivity to challenge phallogocentric knowledges; others are extremely hostile to it, seeing it as elitist, male-dominated, and itself phallogocentric. These contradictory evaluations of his work seem irresolvable; in some cases they are maintained within one and the same person. Like Freud's work, Lacan's *is* contradictory (sometimes intentionally and sometimes not). His is a self-consciously paradoxical, oxymoronic style; there is nothing he seems to enjoy as much as punning, playing with language, wrenching the maximum resonance from each term. The relations between his version of psychoanalysis and feminism remain ambivalent. It is never entirely clear whether he is simply a more subtle misogynist than Freud, or whether his reading of Freud constitutes a 'feminist' breakthrough. The utility of psychoanalysis for feminist endeavours remains unclear. It is a risky and double-edged 'tool', for as a conceptual system it is liable to explode in one's face as readily as it may combat theoretical misogynies of various kinds.

I will focus on some of the relations between Lacanian psychoanalysis and contemporary French feminisms in this chapter. As the two most influential and well-known French feminisms working within psychoanalysis, and as feminisms diametrically opposed in the kinds of commitment they make to Lacan, I will focus on the work of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray.

Before proceeding, I would like to make clear some of the reasons why Lacan's work has held so much appeal for otherwise quite divergent feminist positions – why, that is, his work *can* be defended (at least up to a point) by feminists. Below is an outline of some elements of his work that are significant in relation to Kristeva's and Irigaray's projects.

a. Central to both is Lacan's critique of the Cartesian *cogito*, the

pre-given, indubitable, unified subject. Lacan denounces the illusory mastery, unity, and self-knowledge that the subject, as a self-consciousness, accords itself. For him, consciousness is continually betrayed by the evasion typical of the unconscious. The subject, considered as natural individual, is problematized by Lacan. He proposes a theory of the socio-linguistic genesis of subjectivity which enables male and female subjects to be seen as social and historical effects, rather than pre-ordained biological givens.

b. Lacan's work also helped to introduce questions about sexuality¹ to legitimized academic and political discourses. Although there may be a number of serious problems with Lacan's understanding of sexuality (as mentioned in chapter 5), his work does make it clear that patriarchal subjects acquire a social and speaking position only by confronting the question of castration and a sexual difference conceived in terms of the presence and absence of the male sexual organ (the oedipus complex/name-of-the-father). Lacan inserts the question of sexuality into the centre of all models of social and psychical functioning.² To be a subject or 'I' at all, the subject must take up a sexualised position, identifying with the attributes socially designated as appropriate for men or women.

c. His work has been instrumental in demonstrating the centrality of systems of meaning or signification to subjectivity and the social order. The discursive/linguistic order constitutes human socio-cultural and sexual activity as such.

In place of a Cartesian *res cogitans*, a thinking being, Lacan posits the speaking subject, a subject defined by and in language. This subject is not simply a speaking being, a being who happens by chance to speak, but a being constituted as such by being *spoken through* by language itself. It cannot be conceived as the source or master of discourse, but is the locus or site of the articulation (*énonciation*) of representations, inscriptions, meanings, and significances.

These three key areas in Lacan's work – the interlocking domains of subjectivity, sexuality, and language – define broad interests shared by many French feminists. His decentring of the rational, conscious subject (identified with the ego), his undermining of common assumptions about the intentionality or purposiveness of the speaking subject's 'rational' discourses, and his problematizations of the idea of a 'natural' sexuality, have helped to free feminist theory of the constraints of a largely metaphysical and implicitly

masculine, notion of subjectivity – humanism. He has thus raised the possibility of understanding subjectivity in terms other than those dictated by patriarchal common-sense.

Kristeva and Irigaray share Lacan's broad anti-humanism, his commitment to the primacy of language in psychical life and his understanding of the necessarily *sexualized* position assumed by the subject in the symbolic. They share a familiarity with Freud's work, with the texts of a history of (largely) idealist philosophers, as well as a background in Lacan's seminars. Both are practising psychoanalysts. Both are committed to developing analyses of the production of sexed subjectivity. Both focus on the relation obscured in Freud's and Lacan's work – the mother-child relation (for Kristeva), and the mother-daughter relation (for Irigaray). In articulating the mother-child relation as a site for both the transmission and the subversion of patriarchal values, both affirm the archaic force of the pre-oedipal, which although repressed is thus also permanently preserved. Both affirm the fluid, polymorphous perverse status of libidinal drives and both evoke a series of sites of bodily pleasure capable of resisting the demands of the symbolic order.

In spite of their adherences to a Lacanian framework, both remain at a critical distance from his position, though in very distinctive ways. Kristeva presents a series of internal adjustments or modifications to his position while remaining within his overall conceptual frame. As a literary theorist and semiotologist, her major interests are directed towards transgressive discourses, the texts of the avant-garde, which destabilize the unified or 'thetic' subject. She directs her researches towards understanding the mutual interplay between a discursive realm and the domain of psycho-sexual, i.e., individual development. Irigaray, by contrast, poses questions about the outside, the absences, and silences of psychoanalysis, its repressions, disavowals, intolerable impulses, and wishes. While also concerned with the relations between subjectivity and discourse, Irigaray is more interested in elaborating a theory of enunciation, a theory of discursive production which makes explicit the positions of woman as a speaking subject. Her project is committed to making explicit the sexualization of all discourses. Ultimately this may mean that, whatever the similarities of their reliance on Lacan, Kristeva's and Irigaray's projects are incompatible in aim, and contradictory in methods and underlying political commitments. This will form the basis of discussion for this chapter.

Dutiful daughters

The dutiful daughter is the one who submits to the Father's Law. Her submission may take various forms: a submission to the oedipalization of desire, to the patriarchal denigration of her corporality and pleasure, to a femininity defined as passive, castrated, superficial, seductive, narcissistic, or even a submission through what appears to be resistance to the oedipal law, i.e., the so-called 'masculinity complex'.³ The dutiful daughter must occupy one of the (three) positions Freud outlined as the girl's 'resolution' of her oedipus complex: 'normal' castrated passivity, frigidity, or the masculinity complex (Freud 1933: 126-7). In a rather surprising move, Jane Gallop accuses Irigaray of playing the dutiful daughter to the Symbolic Father(s), Freud and Lacan, when it may have been more appropriate to see Kristeva in this role. In the second half of this chapter, I will argue that Irigaray attempts to create a position for women beyond Freud's circumscribed alternatives in her project of outlining an (impossible) genealogy of women. Unlike Kristeva, Irigaray refuses the Father's Name, risking, it could be argued, a psychosis, but subverting the preordained space within which women are confined in the (masculine, phallogocentric) symbolic order.

The semiotic and symbolic

Kristeva's general model of signifying practice is derived from Lacan's integration of Freudian psychoanalysis and structural semiology. Her conception of the semiotic and the symbolic functions operating in psychological, textual, and social life⁴ seems to be based on the distinction Freud developed between pre-oedipal and oedipal sexual drives. The semiotic and the symbolic are two modalities of all signifying processes (Kristeva 1984a: 22-3) whose interaction is the essential even if unrecognized condition of sociality, textuality, and subjectivity.

The 'semiotic' must be understood in its etymological rather than in its Saussurian sense: 'distinctive, mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace (sic), figuration' (ibid.: 24). It can be correlated with the anarchic pre-oedipal component-drives, and polymorphous erotogenic zones, orifices, and organs. In the terminology of metapsychology, it consists in the facilitations and neural pathways traversed by pre-oedipal wishes - that is, the psychical primary processes (ibid.: 24). The semiotic is the order of the sexual drives and their articulation (1976: 66; and

1984: 43). It provides the *matter*, the impetus, and the subversive potential of all signification. It is the 'raw material' of signification, the corporeal, libidinal matter that must be harnessed and appropriately channelled for social cohesion and regulation.

Yet, in their 'raw', a-symbolic operations, these infantile drives do not have the stability of copulative heterosexuality, or definitively separated, privileged, or hierarchized (phallic) organs and pleasures. They are indeterminate, capable of many (even contradictory) aims, sources, and objects. In agreement with Freud, Kristeva describes the semiotic as 'feminine', a phase dominated by the space of the mother's body.

She defines this space, following Plato's *Timaeus*, as the semiotic *chora*. It is a space or receptacle, an undecidably enveloped and enveloping locus from which the subject is both produced and threatened with annihilation. The *chora* defines and structures the limits of the child's body and its ego or identity as a subject. It is the space of the subversion of the subject, the space in which the *death drive*, i.e., the compulsion to repeat, emerges and threatens to engulf the subject, to reduce it to the inertia of non-existence (Freud 1919b).

The space of the maternal *chora* is the *pre-imaginary* space from and in which the drives emanate and circulate. Their differentiation into component-drives, and the emerging distinction between self and other (Lacan's imaginary order) - also contribute to Kristeva's concept of the semiotic. Like Lacan's imaginary and Freud's pre-oedipal, she remains committed to their assumption that, even though this is a 'feminine' phase dominated by the mother, the mother is always considered *phallic*. 'She' is thus the consequence of a *masculine* fantasy of maternity, rather than women's lived experience of maternity.

As the addressee of every demand, the mother occupies the place of alterity. Her replete body, the receptacle and guarantor of demands, takes the place of all narcissistic, hence imaginary, effects and gratifications; she is, in other words, the phallus. (Kristeva 1984a: 47)

If the semiotic is pre-oedipal, based on primary processes and is maternally oriented, by contrast, the symbolic, Kristeva's second energetic organization within representation and the social, is an oedipalized system, regulated by secondary processes and the Law of the Father. Kristeva regards the symbolic as the condition of ordered, regulated, and rule-governed signification. It consists in the procedures which establish unities, whether at the level of the individual psychical experience, signifying and representational

practices, or social institutions and rules (including the state and its apparatuses) (1976). It is the domain of positions and propositions.

She relies largely on Lacan's model of the symbolic. For her, the symbolic is the stability which ensures a cohesive, unified speaking subject and a coherent, meaningful text. The symbolic is based on the 'repression' or subsumption of the chaotic semiotic fluxes, and their utilization under regulated conditions so that they are capable of functioning as ordered, meaningful signifying elements:

We shall call *symbolic* the logical and syntactic functioning of language and everything which, in translinguistic practices is assimilable to the system of language proper. The term *semiotic*, on the other hand, will be used to mean, in the first place, what can be hypothetically posited as preceding the imposition of the language, in other words, the already given arrangement of the drives in the form of facilitations or pathways, and secondly the return of these facilitations in the form of rhythms, intonations and lexical, syntactic and rhetorical transformations. If the *symbolic* established the limits and unity of a signifying practice, the *semiotic* registers in that practice the effect of that which cannot be pinned down as sign, whether signifier or signified. (Kristeva 1976: 68)

The semiotic is thus the rhythmic, energetic, dispersed bodily series of forces which strive to proliferate pleasures, sounds, colours, or movements experienced in the child's body. It is the repressed condition of symbolically regulated, grammatical, and syntactically governed language.

Like the repressed, the semiotic can return in/as irritations within the symbolic. It manifests itself as an interruption, a dissonance, a rhythm unsubsumable in the text's rational logic or controlled narrative. The semiotic is thus both the precondition of symbolic functioning and its uncontrollable excess. It is used by Kristeva seems fascinated with the avant-garde text, the 'texts' that Kristeva seems fascinated with the avant-garde text, the 'texts' of Mallarmé, Lautréamont, Artaud, Joyce, Schoenberg, Cage, Stockhausen, and even Grotto and Bellini. These 'texts', whether they are written, dramatic, musical, visual, or auditory are disturbing precisely because they provide a more direct expression of the semiotic than is usually possible in more conventional symbolic representational systems.

The symbolic is an order superimposed on the semiotic. It leads to the acquisition of a stable speaking, desiring position and the regulation and systematization of vocalization and libidinal impulses, as required by discursive production and social order.

The symbolic harnesses libidinal flows, regulating and 'digitalizing' them (see Wilden 1972: 168-70) to form signifying elements, discourses, and practices (see Kristeva 1984: 47).

The symbolic control of the various semiotic processes is thus, at best, tenuous and liable to breakdown or lapse at certain historically, linguistically, and psychologically significant moments. It results in an upheaval in the norms of the smooth, understandable, (in Barthes' term) 'readerly' text. The semiotic overflows its symbolic boundaries in those privileged 'moments' Kristeva specifies in her triad of subversive forces: 'madness, holiness and poetry' (1976: 64). These semiotic eruptions represent transgressive breaches of symbolic coherence or, put in other terms, the symbolization or representation of hitherto unspeakable or unintelligible phenomena, instances on the borders of the meaningful which reveal the coercive forces vested in the domination of the symbolic over the semiotic.

In short, the symbolic/oedipal/social mode owes a debt of existence to an unspeakable and unrepresentable semiotic/maternal/feminine. The symbolic cannot even acknowledge, let alone repay, the debt that the oedipal and the conscious owe to the pre-oedipal and the unconscious. This debt is the social equivalent of the debt the subject owes to a female corporeality which remains unrecognized in its autonomy.

This basic distinction between two kinds of psychical or libidinal circulation, and signifiatory structure underlies even the most recent of Kristeva's works. Her orientation has changed markedly and her more recent texts no longer seem oriented to the socialist revolution or to Marxism, at least not in recognizable forms. She now seems more interested in the details of the coupling of psychoanalysis and semiotics in the analysis of the transgressive features of texts and the borderline states of the subject.

Kristeva remains motivated by psychoanalytic concerns, those dealing with the individual's wishes, desires, passions. These are not considered in isolation from a more historical and social analysis (although there is some tension between these components). Her fascinating analysis of abjection in *Powers of Horror. An Essay in Abjection* (1982a) and her recent speculations in *Tales of Love* (1987), are modifications, elaborations, and specifications of features (under)developed in her earlier works. They are elaborations of the holiness, madness, and poetry at the centre of our cultural values and practices - a madness based on the subject's inability to accept its own corporeal limits (abjection), a holiness unable to tolerate the ambiguity of amorous devotion (ecstasy), and a poetry unable to accept its own constitutive sonorous materiality.

These threaten to break down symbolic norms. They are elaborations of a psychical primary narcissism, Lacan singles out as constructive of the ego, overlaid with Kristeva's own account of textual/symbolic functioning.

On Kristeva's model, all texts and all cultural products are the results of a dialectical process: the interaction between two mutually modifying historical forces. One is the setting in place, the establishment of a regulated system, or 'unity' – the symbolic (see 1976). Underlying and subverting this 'setting in place' is a movement of 'cutting through' or traversing, breaking down unities. In times of 'rupture, renovation and revolution' (1976: 69), which she identifies with the symptomatic eruptions of the avant-garde, the symbolic is no longer capable of directing the semiotic energies into already coded social outlets. Its subversive, dispersing energies transgress the boundaries or tolerable limits of the symbolic. Yet their disruptive energies cannot be sustained in a self-contained or a-symbolic semiotic. Sooner or later, depending on the extent of threat it poses, the semiotic is recodified, reconstituted into a new symbolic system which has incorporated and absorbed its subversive potential. The symbolic, like the 'return' of the repressed, challenges the borders of the symbolic through the work of the avant-garde, which poses a new transgression and a new recodification of the symbolic, and so on. These are struggles between powers and resistances on the margins of the symbolic, on the border between the paternal order and a (potentially psychotic) maternal imaginary. The materiality needed for various signifying systems must be denied or disavowed by these practices in order for them to function as such. The avant-garde text thus draws attention to its own repressed conditions (a repressed 'femininity'), and therefore poses a profound threat to the conventions governing it. It gestures towards its own repressed conditions in ways normally unavailable to more convention-bound significations.

Semanalysis and psychoanalysis

'Semanalysis' is the name Kristeva gave to her methodology in her earlier works. It does not refer to the study of signification (which is the realm of semiotics), but to the study of the processes which break down or subvert the production of meaning. It is a mode of analysis of the role of the speaking subject in signification; the speaking being's identity and boundaries are imperilled by the breakdown of symbolic organization. Semanalysis is the study of the simultaneous production and subversion of subjectivity in discourse.

As the name indicates, 'semanalysis' has its genealogy in semiotics and psychoanalysis. It is the study of the subversion of the subject and signification within signification itself. It is an attempt to bring to the notice of linguists, semiotologists, and those concerned with questions of representation, long-neglected questions of subjectivity and thus of social and psychical functioning usually considered outside their jurisdiction. She also attempts to bring questions of textuality and signification to those realms – particularly social/political theory and psychoanalytic or psychological theory – which have hitherto neglected them.

Her adherence to a Saussurian and a Lacanian framework is not unqualified. She remains critical of both (in so far as each has ignored the other), modifying, questioning, and rejecting some of their details even if she remains committed to their frameworks overall. Lacanian psychoanalysis remains, for all of her own researches, the fundamental methodological and conceptual grid she relies on. Her elaborations may depart from Lacan's, particularly in their temporalizations, but her allegiances remain clear.⁶

Her earliest works are based on Lacan's notions of the mirror stage and the castration complex. For her, these two moments provide the necessary conditions for the subject's acquisition of a speaking position. They are two 'thetic' phases in the processes of signification:

the mirror-stage produces the 'spatial intuition' which is found at the heart of the functioning of signification – in signs and in sentences. From that point on, in order to capture his image unified in a mirror, the child must remain separate from it, his body agitated by the semiotic motility . . . which fragments him more than unifies him in a representation . . . Captation of the image and the drive investment in this image, which institute primary narcissism, permit the constitution of objects detached from the semiotic *chora* . . .

... The sign can be conceived as the voice that is projected from the agitated body (from the semiotic *chora*) onto the facing *imago* or onto the object, which simultaneously detach from the surrounding continuity. (1984a: 46–7)

The mirror stage provides the conditions for the child's detachment from its lived experience. This is necessary if signification is to be possible or desirable for the child. If it lives only in/as the immediacy of the *chora* no experience can be represented by a sign or by anything other than itself. Any sign or representation would function simply as another pure presence, another immediately lived experience and not a delegate or representative of another

(absent) experience. This detachment from the immediacy of need brings with it the possibility of substitution, and thus of symbolization. For Kristeva, this sets down the conditions of differentiation, signification, and the principle of substitution (and thus presence and absence), making a signifier present in the absence of a desired object.

Castration provides a second order threshold or condition for the constitution of the speaking subject. If the mirror stage detaches the child from its lived experiences of fragmentation, the specular image provides it with a representation or substitute that is based on wholeness and unity. Castration severs the child from the (specular) image of wholeness, separating it from too close an identification with the image of the (phallic) mother, the image through which the child attempts to displace its experiences of fragmentation.

The discovery of castration . . . detaches the subject from his dependence on the mother, and the perception of a symbolic function - *the* symbolic function. . . . Thus ends the formation of thethetic phase, which posits the gap between the signifier and the signified as an opening up towards every desire but also every act, including the very jouissance that exceeds them. (ibid.: 47)

The constitution of the ego in the mirror phase, in short, is the precondition of the semiotic, the (maternal) order of the signifier; the severing of the subject from the maternal, castration, is the precondition of the symbolic, and of the constitution of the domain of the (conceptual) signified.

Her adherence to a Lacanian perspective is not only at the level of analogy. The speaking subject is not simply the Lacanian split subject transposed into the 'medium' of language. Rather, Kristeva takes Lacan's conception of the subject, and some of his central methodological insights (e.g., about the illusory mastery of the *coqito*, the symbolic positioning of subjectivity, and the 'logic' of unconscious representations) to rework conventional views of literary and artistic production so that they are more amenable to a Lacanian perspective. In other words, she will use Lacan as a methodological grid for her general semanalytic project.⁷

Key Lacanian concepts and principles form the categories and framework Kristeva relies on in her investigation of the destabilization of signifying conventions. These adherences are too numerous to elaborate in detail here. We should simply note that the Lacanian categories of infantile development and linguistic functioning (the Real, imaginary, and symbolic; need, demand, and desire), unconscious functioning (metaphor and metonymy, the conditions

of representability, dream and symptom-interpretation), psychical positioning in the symbolic (as neurotic, psychotic, narcissistic) and libidinal economy (desire, the circuits of the drive, the *objet a*, the phallus), and psychical 'identities' (phallic mother, symbolic Father, masculine hierarchized gentility, feminine passivity) are all essential elements in Kristeva's semanalytic endeavours.

Her relation to Lacan remains complicated and ambiguous: she takes his conceptual apparatus and reading techniques as starting points for developing her own methods and objects of investigation. She takes psychoanalysis as itself symptomatic of a socio-political and intellectual tradition dominant in our culture. She regards psychoanalysis as a privileged discourse, able to function as a critical and criteriological tool by which other discourses, including linguistics, can be examined. Yet she is highly critical of many of Lacan's commitments on at least the following issues.

1 Unlike Lacan, Kristeva remains insistent on the historical and social specificity of signification and subjectivity. While there may be a conceptual space in Lacan's account for the inclusion of concrete historical determinations, Lacan himself rarely includes them, preferring a more imperious, metaphysical, and universal style. For Kristeva, however, the social and historical determination of individuals and signifying practices is always essential.

A signifying economy within an artistic practice . . . not only operates through the individual (biographical subject) who carries it out, but it also recasts him as historical subject - causing the signifying process that the subject undergoes to match the ideological and political expectations of his age's rising classes. . . . One cannot understand such practice without taking its socio-economic foundations into account; nor can one understand it if one chooses to reduce it solely to these foundations thereby bypassing the signifying economy of the subject involved. (Kristeva 1980: 232)

2 In contrast to Lacan, for whom the imaginary order functions in a visual register, for Kristeva, the dual narcissistic and identificatory structure of imaginary relations is synaesthetic, involving all the sensory registers without any receiving a special emphasis. If the imaginary is a visual order, it is also, she wants to claim, organized by the structure of vocalization (a sonorous register), and by touch, taste, and smell as well. These provide the conditions not only for language acquisition, but also for all signifying practices. Kristeva's analyses of music, painting, and cinema as well as the linguistic text made it clear that the preconditions of these cultural practices also provide the

preconditions of verbalization. Lacan, in short, concentrates too heavily or exclusively on verbal language at the expense of other modes of signification:

science will no doubt establish the objective basis (biophysical and biochemical) of colour perceptions; just as contemporary linguistics, having discovered the phoneme, is seeking its corporeal, physiological and, perhaps, biological foundation. Psychoanalytic research will then make it possible, proceeding not only from the objective basis of perception and of the phases of the subject's passage through chromatic acquisition parallel to linguistic acquisition, to establish the more or less exact psychoanalytic equivalents of a particular subject's colour scale. (These phases would include the perception of such and such a colour at a given stage; the state of instinctual drive cathexes during this period; the relationship to the mirror phase, to the formation of the specular 'I', relationship to the mother; et cetera.) (ibid.: 222; see also 1987: 40)

3 Where Lacan insists on a definitive break between the imaginary and the symbolic, which are separated by the rupture caused by castration, the intervention of the third term, and the repression of oedipal/pre-oedipal desires, Kristeva posits more of a continuity. For example, she will position 'primal repression' at the pre-mirror phase, which, in more orthodox psychoanalytic terms is usually situated at the resolution of the child's oedipus complex:

a repression that one might call 'primal' has been effected prior to the springing forth of the ego, of its objects and representations. The latter, in turn, as they depend on another repression, the 'secondary' one, arrive only *a posteriori* on an enigmatic foundation that has already been marked off. . . . (1982a: 10-11)

She will go so far as to posit a category of 'symbolic imaginary' organization prior to the oedipal structure – a contradiction in Lacanian terms (Kristeva 1987).

4 Consequently, it is not altogether surprising that Kristeva will introduce concepts, which, if they are not antithetical to Lacan's work, are not developed by him. For example, although Lacan does mention the imaginary father (the father with whom the child may identify in the mirror stage in much the same way as it identifies with the mother and its own specular image), he gives no special emphasis to the masculinity or paternity of this other. By contrast, Kristeva posits an imaginary father, distinct from Lacan's symbolic Father (or Freud's primal father) who does not embody the Law so much as represent the ideal possibilities of love for the child. She

insists that the imaginary father, rather than the phallic mother (it is not entirely clear what difference there is here!) provides the mediation or third term necessary for the child's accession to the symbolic:

In order for [the human subject to speak and learn] . . . there must exist what I . . . name a 'father of individual prehistory': a sort of conglomeration of the two parents, of the two sexes, which is nevertheless to be considered as a father – not one severe and Oedipian, but a living and a loving father. Why father and not mother, when one knows the mother to be she who first attends to us, giving us our first kisses, our first loves? Because we are thereby permitted to pose an intra-psyche and social instance that is not the physical envelope of the mother, which exists in too great a proximity to the infant and risks provoking short-circuits leading to inhibition and psychosis. This 'imaginary father' – the zero degree of our archaic loves – plays the role of the loving third to which the 'I' in the process of constitution identifies; it permits the investing of our drives in the symbolic, the dissociating of the somatic from the psychic and consequently, the creating of a space of play, of the gift, of exchange, beyond separation and absence. (1984a: 21)

The imaginary father provides the link between the child's semiotic immersion in maternal care, and a social position, by opening the child to a world of love. She refers to the concept of the 'father of individual prehistory' Freud invokes in his study of Little Hans. Instead of Lacan's 'subsumption of the loving relation under maternal care, and incorporation of the phallus into the mother's unconscious, Kristeva separates (natural?) nurturance from (imaginary, and eventually symbolic) love:

[Freud] in fact dissociates idealization (and with it the amatory relationship) from the bodily exchange with the mother and child, and he introduces the Third Party as a condition of psychic life, to the extent that it is a loving life. If love stems from narcissistic idealization, it has nothing to do with the protective wrapping over skin and sphincters that maternal care provides for the baby. (1987: 34)

5 Kristeva's work on pre-oedipal, narcissistic, and identificatory relations, maternal dependences, and corporeal pleasure provides an orientation that is underemphasized in Freud and Lacan, and which owes a debt to the work of Melanie Klein and D. W. Winnicott. Kristeva will place within the pre-oedipal, maternal phase all of the preconditions for symbolic functioning. Concepts

like her notions of abjection, amorous desire, negativity, the semiotic, the maternal *chora*, etc. testify to pre-oedipal, and in some cases, pre-mirror stage processes and relations, generally neglected in psychoanalysis, and left unelaborated by Freud and Lacan.

What I wanted to do was two things. First, to make more detailed the archaic stages preceding the mirror stage because I think that the grasping of the image by the child is the result of a whole process. And this process can be called *imaginary*, but not in the specular sense of the word because it passes through voice, taste, skin and so on, all the senses yet doesn't necessarily mobilise sight. (Julia Kristeva in Conversation with Rosalind Coward, 1984b: 22-3)

She will more carefully distinguish the introjection of maternal and paternal imagos than Lacan, focusing in considerably more detail on the imaginary pre-structuring of the symbolic, where Lacan, like Freud, sharply separates the pre-oedipal from the oedipal.

These differences from Lacan and Freud remain at the level of revisions, modifications, details, which, if they question psychoanalytic doctrine, leave its framework and fundamental assumptions intact and indeed beyond question. This becomes readily apparent when Kristeva relies upon Freudian and Lacanian conceptions of masculinity, femininity, sexuality, and maternity—those elements of psychoanalysis increasingly questioned by feminists. It is to this I will now turn.

Maternity or the avant-garde

Kristeva considers the semiotic as a feminine and maternally structured space. It pre-dates the imposition of (oedipal) sexual identity. It is a pre-patriarchal or proto-patriarchal phase in which the *phallic* mother is pre-eminent. This period is the precondition for and the object sacrificed by the child in establishing a position as a speaking subject within the symbolic. In Lacan's understanding, the imaginary mother-child relation requires the mediation of a third, external term; in Kristeva's the imaginary mother-child dyad is also considered to be crippling, but the child's relation to the imaginary father and an intra- and intersubjective third term link the child around rather than through the mother to the symbolic. The third term between mother and child provides the (intrasubjective) agency of the ego-ideal, a pre-symbolic signifier representing the mother's capacity to love someone other than the child.

Although Kristeva designates this as a feminine and maternal

phase, and although she wishes to make clear an unspoken cultural debt to the maternal body, she disembodies the feminine and the maternal from women, and particularly from the female body. As she understands it, femininity is identified with a series of processes and relations that the pre-oedipal child of either sex experiences and wants before the imposition of sexual difference. It has no special or particular connection to the differences between the sexes. Admittedly, in her recent writings, Kristeva does acknowledge the specific and non-detachable alignments of sex and gender: she openly suggests that 'man's "feminine" is not woman's "feminine", and the woman's "masculine" is not the man's "masculine"' (1987: 224). Yet she sees this not as a consequence of the social meaning of sexually specific *bodies* (i.e. Irigaray's concept of morphology), but of the 'asymmetrical bond of the two sexes with the phallus . . .' (1987: 224). She makes explicit her suspicions regarding an androgyny which professes an ideal hybrid of masculine and feminine attributes by accepting this ideal as a mode of phallic co-optation of femininity: 'Absorption of the feminine by man, veiling the feminine in woman, androgyny settles its accounts with femininity—the androgyny is a phallus disguised as a woman: not knowing the difference, he is the slickest masquerade of a liquidation of femininity . . .' (ibid.: 71).

Instead of androgyny, Kristeva presumes Freud's postulate of a fundamental bisexuality in all desiring subjects, which ensures that men too (or especially) remain in a (repressed) relation to the feminine, semiotic, pre-oedipal phase. In this sense, although it is feminine relative to the symbolic order, the semiotic has no special relation to women.

If the feminine has no particular relation to women in Kristeva's understanding, more paradoxically, the maternal itself has no particular relation to women or the female body either! On her model, maternity is a process unregulated by any subject, especially not by a female subject. The subject of maternity exists no-where. Becoming a mother is both the culmination of femininity and the abnegation and denial of any female identity:

Within the body, growing as a graft, indomitable, there is an other. And no one is present, within that simultaneously dual and alien space, to signify what is going on. 'It happens but I'm not there.' Motherhood's impossible syllogism. (1980: 237)

Maternity effects a subject annihilation, the fading of sexual identity. It is the establishment of the grounds of *space* (and time) for the child. The *chora* is a nameless receptacle, an enveloping ground of identity which has no identity of its own. Pregnancy is

the overtaking of woman's identity and corporeality by a foreign body, an alien intruder, who reveals the illusion of corporeal mastery that the mother may project onto the fragmentation, the 'becoming-a-mother' (237) of her pregnancy:

the maternal body is the place of a splitting, which, even though hypostatized by Christianity, nonetheless remains a constant factor of social reality. Through a body, *destined to insure reproduction of the species*, the woman-subject although under the sway of the paternal function (as symbolizing, speaking subject and like all others), [is] more of a *filter* than anyone else – a thoroughfare, a threshold where 'nature' confronts 'culture'. To imagine that there is *someone* in that filter – such is the source of religious mystifications ... (ibid.: 238, emphasis added)

The maternal body during gestation, and the maternal *chora* during the child's infancy are conceived by Kristeva as subject-less corporeal spaces. They are not identities or roles for women (mother as womb, breast, partial objects rather than as subject). Yet they are the essential ingredients or elements required by the child's psychical movement from the imaginary to the symbolic. Kristeva suggests that the child must (retrospectively) fantasize these pre-imaginary spaces *as if* they were inhabited by a subject. This is her explanation of the child's recognition and acceptance of the mother's phallic status.

This then is a maternity which *women* as such can never inhabit. It is a maternity, a space, an energy, which, in so far as it is semiotic, cannot be spoken, *especially* not by mothers. If the semiotic is represented as feminine and maternal, it is nevertheless unable to be articulated by women:

If it is not possible to say of a *woman* that she *is* (without running the risk of abolishing her difference), would it perhaps be different concerning the *mother*, since that is the only function of the 'other sex' to which we can definitively attribute existence. And yet, here too, we are caught in a paradox. First, we live in a civilization where the *consecrated* (religious or secular) representation of femininity is absorbed by motherhood. If, however, one looks at it more closely, this motherhood is the *fantasy* that is nurtured by the adult, man or woman, of a lost territory. (1987: 234)

This may explain why in *Tales of Love*, Kristeva focuses her analysis of maternity, not on the experience of motherhood, nor on women's representations of maternity, but on phallogocentric textual

images, most particularly those of the Virgin Mother presented in Christian theology. For Kristeva, Christianity provides the 'most symbolic construct in which femininity ... is focused on Maternity' (ibid.: 234). The Virgin Mary is, for her, both the tamed, symbolic representation of a femininity bonded to maternity; and, at the same time, an 'enigmatic sublimation', a precondition for all artistic production. The image of the Madonna provides, though in different ways, an image for each of the sexes: she represents a dialectical tension between symbolic and social conformity and an excessive, semiotic *jouissance*. She asks:

What is there, in the portrayal of the Maternal in general and particularly in its Christian, virginal, one, that reduces social anguish and gratifies a male being; what is there that also satisfies a woman so that a commonality of the sexes is set up, beyond and in spite of their glaring incompatibility and permanent warfare? (ibid.: 326)

In so far as she is mother, woman remains unable to speak her femininity or her maternity. She remains locked within a mute, rhythmic, spasmic, potentially hysterical – and thus speechless – body, unable to accede to the symbolic because 'she' is too closely identified with/as the semiotic. 'She' is the unspeakable condition of the child's speech. Kristeva's position here remains surprisingly close to Lacan's conception of an unknowable feminine *jouissance*. When Lacan states that: 'the woman knows nothing of this *jouissance* ... So, as best we [male analysts] can, we designate this *jouissance* vaginal ...' (Lacan in Mitchell and Rose 1982: 146).

Kristeva seems to share in his view of a fundamentally unspeakable experience, pleasure, or corporeality. Yet, she has none of the biting humour and irony with which Lacan chastizes self-interested and largely aggressive male projections of their ideals of femininity. Moreover, Lacan seems to have more of an 'excuse' for his phallogocentrism: while many of his propositions about femininity and female sexuality are developed before the emergence of a mass-movement feminism (e.g., 'The Signification of the Phallus' was first presented as a paper in 1958), Kristeva's position is developed as a self-conscious stand within contemporary feminist politics.

In spite of her overall adherence to women's castrated and secondary position, Kristeva does not claim that this maternal, semiotic contribution is incapable of *any* representation. Like the contents of the unconscious, it is capable of indirect or oblique expression or evocation. This explains the privileged position she grants to the avant-garde text in her earlier writings and the figure of the Virgin Mary in more recent texts. By transgressing the

boundaries of the symbolic order, the avant-garde creates upheavals and ruptures which may enable what is usually unspoken to be articulated. Kristeva seems to accept that phallic subjects alone, only men, can re-present the unrepresented, subversive underside of the *chora* and the semiotic:

At the intersection of sign and rhythm, of representation and light, of the symbolic and the semiotic, the artist speaks from a place where she is not, where she knows not, He delineates what, in her, is a body rejoicing. (1980: 242)

The artist, poet, avant-garde transgressor is always male. Men alone can occupy the (unstable) position of speaking subject within and transgressive of the symbolic: he is the speaker/painter/musician who subjects the symbolic to its own excesses and possibilities of subversion. Only men occupy this position because only men can acquire a guaranteed unified and stable position within the symbolic order – a consequence of the decisive repression of their oedipal desires. It is only from a position *within* the symbolic that it can be ruptured or transgressed. It is only those who actually occupy the position of speaking/representing subject who can undermine or subvert the limits of representation. If women are not positioned as speaking subjects (but as spoken-for objects), it is not surprising that they are not in any position to transgress the limits of such an order. This seems a luxury only those with a stable, guaranteed position can afford.

The position of avant-garde transgressor is not without its risks for those men who undertake it. It is fraught with psychological dangers, ranging from fetishism to psychosis. A result of the boy's unwillingness to accept his mother's 'castration', fetishism is his refusal to separate from the mother according to the father's demand. The fetish object takes over the role of the missing maternal phallus. The fetishist remains in a direct relation to the maternal space, able to draw on its resources for literary and representational production. In so far as the fetishist maintains contradictory views of the mother's castration, in affirming her castration he can take up his symbolic position; yet in denying her castration, he is able to retain his primary investments in his pre-oedipal, maternal attachments. Psychosis is a more extreme and debilitating identification with the mother. In maintaining his relation to the mother through an identification with her, the son may foreclose – that is, fail to represent – the name-of-the-father – and thus not be able to be positioned within the symbolic with a stable, ongoing position. The 'I' remains unlocated, functioning outside the symbolic.

These are the possibilities the male subject faces in transgressing his appointed position as law-abiding phallic subject:

The modern text claims to find the repressed bearer of pleasurable overflow in woman – the mother. But at the same time these later 19th century texts . . . either fetishize the mother as inaccessible . . . or else perform an identification with it and themselves presume the place of the mother as repressed-unnamable: in this latter case, they verge on psychosis . . . (1976: 70)

Fetishism and psychosis are personal risks posed for the avant-garde. But there are also grave social and political risks involved in signifying practices. The avant-garde text risks co-option or recuperation in functioning as a 'safety valve' or outlet for what may otherwise have become a more disruptive political practice. In reconverting the semiotic back into a new symbolic, its energy is dissipated in the conservation and stabilization of the symbolic. It also risks the opposite extreme, fascism, in which the disruptive semiotic processes are rechannelled into both a (narcissistic) love relation with the charismatic leader, and to a rigidified body organization hierarchized in even tighter form through this identification.

Although exclusively male in Kristeva's terms, the avant-garde is nevertheless the best representative of the repressed, feminine semiotic order, accepting as it does the idea of the split subject, the materiality of language, and the role of sexuality and pleasure in signification. Kristeva seems to regard only men as writers or producers of the avant-garde. When she talks about women's writing, she claims that women tend to write in one of two ways. They may either produce books that are largely compensatory substitutes for a family, that simulate a family structure – novels of autobiography, romance, or family history – they produce stories, images or fantasies in place of an actual family. Or else, women write as hysterical subjects, bound to the body and its rhythms, necessarily unspoken even if represented:

In women's writing, language seems to be seen from a foreign land; it is seen from the point of view of an asymbolic, spastic body. Virginia Woolf describes suspended states, subtle sensations and above all, colours – green, blue – but she does not dissect language as Joyce does. Estranged from language, women are visionaries, dancers who suffer as they speak. (1981b: 166)

Because Kristeva positions men as representatives of a revolutionary struggle of sexual identity clearly related to feminist

struggles, she is able to ignore or discount any of the contributions women make to the establishment of new modes of signification. In her conception, the speaking subject is sexually neutral, a speaker who is both masculine and feminine, participating in both the symbolic and the semiotic. She disembodies femininity from women, and claims that the avant-garde explores femininity without noticing that femininity as expressed in men cannot adequately represent women's femininity.⁹ She elevates men, those men who risk their guaranteed positions as subjects in the symbolic, to viable representatives of the feminine. As a result, women are relegated to one of two positions: reduced to maternity, providers of the maternal *chora*, in which case they remain the silent underside of patriarchal functioning. Or they are viewed disjunctively as feminists, in which case their work is necessarily limited, given Kristeva's view of feminist struggles.

For Kristeva, feminism is usually a negative and reactive counter-struggle against sexism. It does not provide the materials needed for developing alternatives. Its function is to say 'no' to this or that view, opposing what exists, without actively contributing something new:

A feminist practice can only be negative, at odds with what already exists so that we may say 'that is not it!' and 'that's still not it'. In woman, I see something that cannot be represented, something that is not said, something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies. (Kristeva, in Marks and Courtivron, eds: 137)

Because women do not occupy the subject-positions accorded to men in a patriarchal symbolic order, that is, because women are positioned as castrated and men as phallic, women are not *inside* the symbolic in the same way as men. This is why feminism has the function of saying no – the only possible political gesture that may have some effect *from outside*.

Kristeva's mode of textual analysis, the analysis of the interplay of semiotic and symbolic processes, is tied, as she sees it, to modes of sexual differentiation *within* each sex and each text. This differentiation does not divide men and women into distinct categories, nor position them as 'identities'. It is concerned with elements internal to all subjects: 'This musical rhythm bursts out in laughter at the meaningful and demystifies not only all ideology but everything that aspires to be identical with itself' (1976: 65). Ultimately she regards feminism, in opposition to psychoanalysis, as a temporary rather than an interminable analysis, one that,

ideally, should aim at its own demise. In her view, feminism has aimed towards equality of opportunity, it has either (over-)valued maternity ('it involves less an idealized archaic mother than the idealization of the *relationship* that binds us to her, one that cannot be localized – an idealization of primary narcissism' (1987: 234) – an anaclitic relation to the maternal) or it ignores the 'real experience' of maternity, resulting in a rejection of maternity outright. For her, feminism should aim at the annihilation of *all* identity, especially sexual identity. Within such a feminism, which Kristeva regards as her own,

the very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to *meta-physics*. What can 'identity' or even 'sexual identity' mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged . . . What I mean is . . . the demassification of the problematic of *difference* . . . (1981a: 34)

Kristeva remains the dutiful daughter in so far as she enacts for herself and reproduces for other women the roles of passivity and subordination dictated to women by patriarchal culture and affirmed by psychoanalysis.

Defiant women

If the dutiful daughter pays homage to the father's Law, even in spite of herself, what place can be granted to the resistances of many women to the patriarchal expectations surrounding their social/psychical roles? If even resistances, such as the masculinity complex, can be read as confirmations of the dominance of the phallus, what hope is there for a transgression or upheaval of this dominance? By what logic are women considered *a priori* castrated, for all history and in all places? Even if it can be acknowledged that women today are put into a castrated position, or must function as if they are castrated, why *must* it be so always? Lacan and Kristeva seem to have no means of historicizing women's (and men's) psycho-social status. How, then, is defiance possible? By what means could a non-phallic yet articulable sexuality be granted to women?

Like Kristeva, Irigaray is clearly well-versed in the complexities of Lacan's position. And, like Kristeva, she takes it as both an object of investigation and as a method by which her investigations proceed. Like Kristeva, her work can be situated in the interstices of dominant discourses (especially philosophical discourses which

serve as a 'Master' discourse),¹⁰ sexuality or desire, and relations of power or domination. Irigaray brings together discourses, sexualities, and relations of power, in terms quite different from Kristeva's. Discourses or texts are not restricted to the poetic, literary or the avant-garde. Irigaray is concerned, among other things, with breaching the boundaries between fictional and theoretical texts, asserting one in the face of demands of the other. Sexualities, too, are not seen as blurred and fundamentally bisexual. While Irigaray cannot be seen as an advocate of a pregiven identity or essence, neither is she interested in the issue of the (bisexual) processes of sexual *differentiation*. For her, the question of sexualities must be bound up with the question of *two sexes*, - that is, with the question of sexual specificity. And the concept of power in Irigaray's work is conceived in terms different from Kristeva's.

For Kristeva, power relations are explained in terms of degrees of adherence to symbolic norms. The symbolic is the 'system' against which semiotic subversions are directed. As the unities comprising the state and its various instrumentalities, signifying practices and their norms, and subjectivity integrated under the illusory mastery of the ego, the conception of power she utilizes is a globalized, integrated totality. The oppression of women and the structure of patriarchy is merely one form of a long list of oppressions - class, race, religious - all of which are equally effects of the symbolic structure and are liable to cause ruptures within its operations. The avant-garde ruptures the symbolic to participate in the overthrow of racist, class, and sexual forms of oppression, even if it remains apparently unconcerned with them, and is still produced by (generally) white, western, middle-class men, men whose privilege relies on the oppression of these very groups. These men may shake the patriarchal, bourgeois, imperialist, and racist foundations of the symbolic by striking a blow at the functioning of texts and signifying practices. By contrast, while clearly acknowledging the relevance of class and racial oppressions, Irigaray is directed to the analysis and subversion of *women's* oppression, which for her, provides a perspective from which questions of race and class may be dealt with differently than in phallogocentric models. Her conception of power is that of patriarchal material practices and phallogocentric discursive procedures, including women's resistances to these male-dominated regimes.

Her aim seems to be the exploration of a new theoretical space and language which may be able to undermine patriarchal and phallogocentric domination of the sphere of representations and, more positively, to provide a mode of representation for women as

women. If, as she argues, women's bodies are inscribed as a lack or atrophy by dominant representational systems which leave no space for articulating a self-determined femininity, their limits need to be recognized and transgressed. Her interrogation of philosophical and psychoanalytic discourses, seeking their flaws and 'blindspots' (see 1985a: pt. I), her use of these paradigms against themselves is directed towards concrete political goals: the positive reinscription of women's bodies, the positive reconstruction of female morphologies, and thus the creation of perspectives, positions, desires that are inhabitable by women *as* women. This project is simultaneously and undecidably negative, (a reactive feminism of the kind Kristeva most readily identifies as feminist), and constructive (creating positive alternatives, viable methods of knowing, and means of representation for women's autonomy).

In opposition to Kristeva, Irigaray is interested in developing accounts of subjectivity and knowledge that acknowledge the existence of two sexes, two bodies, two forms of desire and two ways of knowing. Instead of a process of sexual differentiation functioning within each subject (obliterating or obscuring any significant differences between subjects), Irigaray directs herself to the question of sexual specificity of subjects. Before elaborating Irigaray's position, it may be worth briefly discussing some of the more immediate connections her work has to Lacan in particular, and to psychoanalysis in general.

Ironically, Lacan's name is never mentioned within the body of *Speculum of the Other Woman*, her most sustained discussion of psychoanalysis. Yet this is clearly a strategic move on Irigaray's part, a mimesis of Lacan's and Freud's relegation of the question of femininity to a side issue in the exploration of the oedipus complex and the name-of-the-father. She attempts to undo psychoanalytic phallogocentrism by insinuating the question of sexual specificity into its most central assumptions and propositions. I will first simply note some of the more obvious relations of influence of Lacan's work on Irigaray's; and then briefly mention some of the more serious disagreements between them.

I Irigaray is strongly influenced by what she regards as the explanatory power of psychoanalysis in relation to the construction and reproduction of patriarchal forms of subjectivity. Moreover, not only does it analyse the human subject, it is also able to make explicit the 'stakes' involved in *all* phallogocentric knowledges:

It is not a matter of naively accusing Freud, as if he were a 'bastard'. Freud's discourse represents the symptom of a particular social and cultural economy, which has been maintained

in the West at least since the Greeks. . . . what Freud demonstrates is quite useful. When he argues – for example, and according to a still organicist argument – that women's sex is a 'lack', that castration for her amounts to her perceiving that she has no sex, he describes rigorously the consequence of our socio-cultural system. Lacan, using a linguistic schema, concludes likewise, and repeats the same process, when he writes that woman is a lack in the discourse, that she cannot articulate herself . . . *In some sense, this is not false.* (1977a: 63–4, emphasis added)

Psychoanalysis is symptomatic of an underlying phallogocentric structure governing dominant discourses and cultures as a whole. In this sense, it has the value of openly saying what usually remains implicit. Moreover, it is useful in *feminist* terms as a mode of reading or interpretation, a form of deciphering texts. Irigaray resists the temptation to psychoanalyse subjects, real or fictional individuals, in her writings, and instead uses psychoanalysis as a mode of interpretation of texts, a device for the interrogation of knowledges. This is not entirely alien to Lacan's own attempts to destabilize a metaphysics of the *cogito* and its epistemological underpinnings. He counterposes the psychoanalytic *presumption* of knowledge (the analyst as the 'supposed subject of knowledge'), a fraudulent or imaginary lure, to philosophical certainty, demonstrating that certainty is a function of denial and disavowal more than knowledge (see Lacan 1953). Irigaray too will use psychoanalysis to highlight the aspirations and coercions of knowledge, including psychoanalysis; knowledge that poses itself as *sexually neutral*, as indifferent, universal, or disinterested, when in fact it is the product of men's self-representations.

2 Irigaray utilizes the Freudian distinction between pre-oedipal and oedipal, or the Lacanian distinction between imaginary and symbolic as key elements in her own project. Unlike Kristeva, who takes on these terms as they stand, and as it were applies them to a linguistic and textual context, Irigaray uses them as critical tools, a 'double-edged knife' to pose the question of a sexual difference conceived in terms other than those dictated by patriarchy. In other words, she will attempt to sexualize, to render specific to each sex the forms that its pre-oedipal and imaginary, or oedipal and symbolic takes. She asserts that psychoanalysis can only represent the imaginary and the symbolic from the point of view of the boy; it has no means available to elaborate what the imaginary and symbolic may be in the girl's terms. It is for this reason that both Freud and Lacan must presume a sexual neutral pre-symbolic

being.¹¹ The little girl must be considered the same as the little boy in order for their symbolic differentiation to be possible. Instead, Irigaray affirms the particularity and the unrepresented forms of pre-oedipal mother-daughter relations, and a feminine imaginary:

Freud discovers . . . the desire for the same, for the self-identical, the self (as) same, and again of the similar, the alter ego and, to put it in a nutshell, the desire for the . . . auto . . . the homo . . . the male, dominates the representational economy. 'Sexual difference' is a derivation of the problematics of sameness. . . . The 'differentiation' into two sexes derives from the a priori assumption of the same, since the little man that the little girl is, must become a man minus certain attributes whose paradigm is morphological – attributes capable of determining, of assuring, the reproduction-specularization of the same. A man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman. (1985a: 26–7)

3 Irigaray utilizes Freud's and Lacan's understanding of the unconscious, its economy, logic, and products, as an evocative metaphor of femininity itself, for what is repressed by and intolerable to the social order:

to say that woman's sexuality is naturally subject to processes of repression, sublimation etc., that's very doubtful. I would rather frame the following question: are women not, partly, the unconscious? That is, is there not in what has been historically constituted as the 'unconscious', some censored, repressed element of the feminine? (1977a: 70)

4 Irigaray harnesses the link that Lacan forges between psychical and linguistic processes. If language is the key to interpreting psychical life, and if the unity/cohesion of the ego, and the parameters and structures of the lived body also rely on signifying practices and symbolic representations, Irigaray's project is a re-traversing of the inscription, the 'intextuation' of subjectivity under the primacy of the phallic signifier. Like Lacan, she refuses to talk of women, sexuality, or desire in terms of any Real, nature, or givenness. She forgoes all recourse to anatomy to develop instead an understanding of the morphology, the social/psychical representations, and lived reality, of the female body, which is closely based on Lacan's understanding of the 'imaginary anatomy'. The female body and specificity she seeks is not a pure or given identity, lying underneath a patriarchal overlay. Rather she seeks an active rewriting, this time from women's points of view, of the female

body, and of the possibilities of the female body as a site for the production of knowledge.

In other words, Irigaray *assumes* psychoanalysis as the framework from which she can analyse other knowledges and representations (including those of psychoanalysis itself) examining their elisions and silences – examining them, that is, from the point of view of the repression of femininity. Psychoanalysis becomes a critical and deconstructive tool rather than a truthful or descriptive model.

Her disagreements with psychoanalysis must also be briefly indicated. They include:

a Where Freud and Lacan posit a sexual difference based on the 'a priori' of the same – that is, a difference, understood as opposition, binary division, or the presence and absence of a single term, Irigaray attempts to develop a difference understood as Saussurian 'pure difference' – a difference without positive terms. Instead of posing woman as -A in relation to man, defined as A (a logic which inevitably prioritizes the positive term), Irigaray seeks an altogether different space for woman, one not defined in relation to men, but in their own terms – a 'B' rather than a 'A'.

b Where Freud and Lacan claim universality, neutrality, and indeed a scientific status for psychoanalysis, Irigaray sees it as symptomatic of a historical order of male self-representations, an order that defines itself as 'truth'. She sees psychoanalysis as one of the more clear-cut and incisive examples of male specularization, and thus, as a body of knowledge clearly inscribed with perspectives and interests relevant to men. For example, the psychoanalytic insistence on the primacy of the phallus and the necessity of women's castration makes clear, not a truth about men and women, but the investments masculinity has in disavowing alterity, in denying even the possibility of an otherness outside their own self-definitions.

c Where Freud and Lacan take social and individual relations as their speculative objects, Irigaray takes psychoanalysis itself as one of her objects of analysis. Like Kristeva, she seems strongly influenced by Derrida's deconstructive strategies. Her work can be seen as a deconstructive reading of Freudian and Lacanian texts.¹²

d While taking Lacan's understanding of metaphor and metonymy seriously, Irigaray chooses to read him according to his own proclamations, that is, *literally*. Her troping functions as the trope of a trope: her writing position is that of a femininity, as posited by Freud and Lacan, a masquerade, the mimesis of mimicry, the textual *enactment* (not just articulation) of hysteria. Her strategies, in other words, contest psychoanalysis as a whole, subjecting it to

its own logic to see what resists its interpretive machinery and what is absorbed by its logic of sameness.

Both Kristeva and Irigaray affirm a polyvocality, plurality, and multiplicity lying dormant within prevailing representational systems – an uncontrolled, excessive textual force or energy. But, in opposition to Kristeva, Irigaray regards this as a space hitherto occupied only by one sex. Her aim is to enable women to claim some place as women, introducing a genuine plurality of alterity into a hitherto mono-sexual model. Her claim is that the masculine can speak of and for the feminine largely because it has emptied itself of any relation to the male body, its specificity, and socio-political existence. This process of evacuating the male body from (an oedipalized) masculinity is the precondition for the establishment of the 'disinterested' neutered space of male specularization. Within this (virtual or imaginary) space, the space of the ego, and its mirror-double, the male can look at itself from outside, take itself as an object while retaining its position as a subject. It gains the illusion of self-distance, the illusion of a space of pure reflection, through the creation of a mirroring surface that duplicates, represents, everything *except* itself.

Are we to assume that a mirror has always been inserted, and speculates every perception and conception of the world *with the exception of itself*. . . Does the subject derive his power from the appropriation of this non-place of the mirror? And from speculation? And as speculation constitutes itself as such in this way, it cannot be analyzed, but falls into oblivion, re-emerging to play its part only when some new effect of symmetry is needed in the system. (1985a: 205–6)

As the title suggests, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985a) attempts to traverse the Lacanian mirror of male self-representation which confirms woman in the position of *man's* specular double or alter-ego. His is a mirror, she implies, that can only reflect the masculine subject for whom it functions as a form of self-externalization. Her project, instead, like Alice's (A-Luce), is to pass *through* the looking glass into the 'wonderland' of women's own self-representations 'on the other side'. In place of the 'platitude' flatness, of the platonic mirror, Irigaray substitutes the speculum, the curved, distorted medium of women's self-observation and self-representation. Her 'mirror', the speculum, surrounds, and is surrounded by, the contours and specificity of the female body. It is not a device of self-distance, but of self-touching, an implicated rather than disinterested self-knowledge. It represents the 'other

woman', not woman as man's other, but another woman, altogether different from man's other.

Phallogentrism and sexual difference

Irigaray uses the term, 'phallogentrism' to object not only to the over-valuation of the male sex organ, but to the continuing submersion of women's autonomy in the norms, ideals, and models devised by men. Phallogentrism treats the two sexes as if they are two variations of the one sex. Whenever two sexual symmetries are represented by one, phallogentrism occurs. It occurs when the not necessarily comparable differences between them are reduced to a similarity, which renders them commensurable, and, not surprisingly, positions woman as man's inferior, the 'castrated sex'.

If knowledges and systems of representation are phallogentric, then two discourses, two speaking positions, and perspectives are collapsed into one. As the sexual other to the One sex, woman has only been able to speak or to be heard as an undertone, a murmur, a rupture within discourse; or else she finds her expression in a hysterical fury, where the body 'speaks' a discourse that cannot be verbalized by her.

The patriarchal symbolic order leaves no space or form of representation for women's autonomy. It effaces women's earliest formative relations, particularly through the 'inexorable' repression of the pre-oedipal mother-daughter relation – which leaves women without a pre-history and a positive identificatory model; it places social constraints and systems of meaning on women's behaviour, through intimidation, threats, inscriptions, barriers – materially imposed on women which drive many to a possibly self-destructive hysteria. Irigaray's counter-strategy against women's containment within an image and a logic that renders them mute and hysterical is the revival or reclamation of the hysteric's ability to mime, to displace the Real with its simulacrum. The hysteric mimes, and thus exceeds, the patriarchal requirements of femininity. So too Irigaray mimes, and thus exceeds the strategy of the hysteric: she places herself at the pivot point of the speculum's inversion of the subject's relation to its specular image.

The centre chapter of the book, 'La Mystérique', its point of self-speculation, is half-way through the turning inside-out of phallogentrism. This half-way point, the point at which the mirror, in being held up to itself, folds in on itself to become the curved speculum, is represented by a composite enigmatic feminine figure, the 'mysteric' (1985a: 191). This figure is undecidably the mystic, that female character within theological discourses who exemplifies

piety and devotion, and a self-contained pleasure, an inexplicable *jouissance* (as Lacan suggests); the hysteric, who expresses in somatic terms women's relegation to the role of commodities and objects; and at the same time, the mystery, the enigma in the terms in which femininity is conceived in male speculations. The 'mysteric' is the name she gives to a discourse or a movement where masculine consciousness and self-consciousness is no longer master:

This is the only place in the history of the West in which woman speaks and acts so publicly. What is more, it is for/by woman that man dares to enter the place, to descend to it, condescend to it, even if he gets burned in the attempt. (1985a: 191)

This is Irigaray's response to Lacan's treatment of St Teresa as the object of male speculations on female *jouissance*. Teresa is excessive, but not that excess that man must utilize to find a link with his Maker. If her touch enlightens, illuminates male speculation, it also burns:

And if 'God' has already appeared to me with face unveiled, so my body shines with a light of glory that radiates it. And my eyes have proved sharp enough to look upon that glory without blinking. They would have been seared had they not been that simple eye of the 'soul' that sets fire to what it admires out of its hollow socket. A burning glass is the soul who in her cave joins with the source of light to set everything ablaze that approaches her hearth. Leaving only ashes there, only a hole; fathomless in her incendiary blaze. (ibid.: 197)

The ecstasy, the ex-stasis, the outside-itself attributed to women by male speculation – including psychoanalysis – is in fact the phallic refusal to accept an otherness not modelled on the same. If Lacan eulogizes the *jouissance* of St Teresa, it is because this fantasy of a simultaneously phallic and 'supplementary' *jouissance* 'beyond the phallus' reconfirms the phallus as the fixed reference point, the only given signifier for symbolic and sexual representation. Irigaray instead makes clear that if this *jouissance* is 'beyond the phallus' it is not, for that matter, insignificant. This is not a *jouissance* that woman cannot know or say; rather, it is a *jouissance* that Lacan cannot hear for he does not know how, or even where, to listen. The valorization of certain modes of representation, the fantasy of an-other subject like the self-same – woman as the incoherent or silent counterpart of man – and the disavowal of his own position as listener makes the male interlocutor unable to hear other than what he wishes to hear:

Woman never speaks the same way. What she emits is flowing, fluctuating. *Blurring*. And she is not listened to, unless proper meaning (meaning of the proper) is lost. Whence the resistances to that voice that overflows the 'subject'. Which the 'subject' then congeals, freezes, in its categories until it paralyzes the voice in its flow.

'And there you have it, Gentlemen, that is why your daughters are dumb.' Even if they chatter, proliferate psychically in works that only signify their aphasia, or the mimetic underside of your desire. And interpreting them where they exhibit only their muteness means subjecting them to a language that exiles them at an ever increasing distance from what perhaps they would have said to you, were already whispering to you. If only your ears were not so formless, so clogged with meaning(s), that they are closed to what does not in some way echo the already heard. (1985a: 112-13)

Could Narcissus have heard Echo speak in her own words? Or is he capable of hearing, as well as seeing, only himself? No longer content to *merely* repeat, Irigaray does, however, mime: like the hysteric, her reading/deconstruction of psychoanalysis is a parody of Lacan's reading of Freud. Or really, a parody of the hysteric's parody of Lacan's reading: a second order *disimulation*. Yet to understand how Irigaray inverts Lacan (Lacan claimed that he himself was the 'perfect hysteric', see Mitchell and Rose 1982: translator's footnote 6, 160-1; and Clément 1983: 66-7), a more detailed understanding of her relations to Lacan's conception of language will be useful.

Femininity and language

Irigaray does not aim to create a new women's language. Her project, rather, is to utilize already existing systems of meaning or signification, to exceed or overflow the oppositional structures and hierarchizing procedures of phallogocentric texts. She stresses their possibilities of ambiguity, their material processes of production and renewal. She affirms the plurality and multiplicity, dormant in dominant discourses, which cover over and rely on the inclusions and exclusions of femininity and its associated attributes. She refuses the 'either/or' logic of dichotomous models by presenting the feminine as a mode of occupying both alternatives, exerting a 'both/and' logic of difference in its place. To speak *as woman* is already to defy the monologism of discursive domination under phallogocentrism.

Her assault on patriarchal language consists in showing that those discourses which present themselves as universal and neutral, appropriate to all, are in fact produced and maintained according to male interests. In questioning this neutrality, Irigaray poses the question of sexual enunciation: of who speaks, for whom, and with what interests. Men - philosophers, psychoanalysts, scientists, writers - have spoken for women for too long. Women remain the objects of speculation, the source of metaphors and images necessary for the production of discourse, but disavowed in its pronouncements, while they are denied access to positions as producing subjects: 'A language that presents itself as universal, and which is in fact maintained by men only, is this not what maintains the alienation and exploitation of women in and by society' (Irigaray 1977b: 67). The domination by one sex of the right to speak is in part an effect of its capacity to achieve a distance from its object of analysis. The masculine is able to speak of and for women because it has emptied itself of any relation to the male body. The male body as such must be renounced when the boy gives up his oedipal and pre-oedipal pleasures in exchange for the hierarchization accomplished by the phallus. The mirror-image reflected to the pre-oedipal, imaginary subject is regarded as sexually neutral, or 'masculine'. But its neutrality or indifference to the child's sex is not a plausible hypothesis, given the *meaning* the child's body already has for the mother and father. The establishment of the ego through its visual representation in the mirror-image forms the preconditions for the alienation required for language, in the first instance, and for knowledge and truth in the second. The evacuation of the male body is the condition required to create a space of reflection, of specularization from which it can look at itself from the outside. This distance is the space necessary for *metalinguage* or metadiscourse, the space of hierarchized reflection. Metalinguage distinguishes between language as object and language as the means of analysing this object. This discursive separation into logical levels is an attempt to unify and order terms, positioning them into their 'proper', unambiguous places, subsumed under a knowing, masterful gaze. While capable of reflecting on language as object, metalinguage is not capable of self-reflection, it cannot observe itself, without creating a higher order meta-metalinguage.

Irigaray refuses to concede the 'logic' of this ordering, and the imposition of these boundaries and borders. Where such borders exist, they are a form of solidification of the fluid polyvocality and ambiguity constitutive of all language. The distinction between these levels has evolved, in part, as an attempt to resolve the problem posed to truth by the existence of paradoxes. If we take the

classical liar's paradox, 'I am lying', it is true only if it is false, and false only if it is true. In an attempt to resolve and make sense of such paradoxical assertions, philosophers of language (such as Bertrand Russell) will divide the statement into two distinct levels. The paradox is generated because the statement is undecidably part of object- and meta-language. 'I am lying' is a statement both referring to an 'I' (at the object-level) and about the processes of making a statement (at the meta-level). By distinguishing the object- from the meta-language the paradox can be neutralized: 'I am lying - except in uttering this statement.' This distinction has evolved as an attempt to justify the languages of science and truth from the language of their objects of investigation. This rigid confinement of terms, phrases, sentences, propositions, etc. is an attempt to curtail the possibility, outlined by Saussure, of any linguistic relation of 'pure difference.' This an attempt to constrict and narrow meaning, to organize singular, hierarchical principles to master the wayward reliance of language on a constitutive ambiguity. This move is *isomorphic* with oedipalized male sexuality, and is alien to femininity defined as the 'other' of the masculine:

a feminine language would undo the unique meaning, the proper meaning of words, of nouns: which still regulates all discourse. In order for there to be a proper meaning, there must indeed be a unity somewhere. But if feminine language cannot be brought back to any unity, it cannot be simply described or defined: there is no feminine meta-language. The masculine can partly look at itself, speculate about itself, represent itself and describe itself for what it is, whilst the feminine can try to speak to itself through a new language, but cannot describe itself from outside or in formal terms, except by identifying itself with the masculine, and thus by losing itself. (Irigaray 1977b: 65)

A language that considers itself readily translatable, capable of being formalized in the terminology of logic, in the form of axioms, deductions, conclusions, theorems, and aims to limit the play of multiple meanings so that only one clear, precise meaning exists is analogous to oedipalized male sexuality (which puts in place of the pleasures of the whole body/language system, the primacy of one organ/meaning). In effacing the play of materiality and corporeality, of signification, such a language is 'reduced' and 'purified'. It is a servile language reduced to the manipulative control of the knowing subject. Language becomes the expression of pre-existing ideas and rational thought, a language without play or pleasure. While Lacan is not guilty of eliminating pleasure from discourse

and even though he specifically claims 'there is no metalanguage' (1970) nevertheless his disclaimer is directed elsewhere.¹⁵ He remains committed to a position that, while implicated in what it says, denies its sexually coded enunciative position. His discourse is nevertheless a discourse about other discourses, a theorization of the language and language-like behaviour of others.

To acknowledge the *independent* otherness of feminine pleasure and sexuality beyond the service of orgasm and production involves giving up the coercive control and self-definition the masculine and the meta-theoretical provide for themselves. In claiming that there are other forms of language and modes of articulating pleasure, Irigaray makes clear the violent appropriation by masculine representational and libidinal systems of a field that is heterogeneous and capable of rich plurality. A language isomorphic with an autonomous non-reductive femininity and pleasure would have to overcome this prevailing self-understanding of masculinity.

That *elsewhere* 'of feminine pleasure can be found only at the price of crossing back through the mirror that subtends all speculation... the issue is not one of elaborating a new theory of which woman would be the *subject* of the object, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are excessively univocal. Which presupposes that women do not aspire simply to be men's equals in knowledge... but rather repeating/interpreting the way in which within discourse the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, as imitation and negative image of the subject, they should signify that with respect to this topic, a *disruptive excess* is possible on the feminine side. (Irigaray 1985b: 77-8)

While Irigaray does not speculate on what a feminine language should be, she does imply what it cannot be: it cannot be based on phallogocentrism - singular meanings, hierarchical organization, polar oppositions, the division into subject-predicate form, a commitment to the intertranslatability of concepts. These values represent the privileged self-distance of masculinity and its denial of the material residue impervious to rational control; they are correlative with the elevation of male sexuality at the expense of femininity:

Nothing is ever to be *posited* that is not also reversed and caught up again in the *supplementarity of this reversal*... we need to proceed in such a way that linear reading is no longer possible: that is, the retrospective impact of the end of each word,

utterance, or sentence upon its beginning must be taken into consideration in order to undo the power of its teleological effect, including its deferred action. That would hold good also for the opposition between structures of horizontality and verticality that are at work in language. (Irigaray 1985b: 79-80)

Her concentration on those phallogocentric discourses which comprise the history of philosophy is a consequence of her methodology. She will focus on the reading of key texts, including those of Freud and Lacan, with the aim of showing their elisions, repressions, paradoxes, and unspoken assumptions. These assumptions, these blind-spots within patriarchal knowledges, are invariably associated with the ways in which masculinity, femininity, or male and female, are conceived. Discourses refuse to acknowledge that their own partiality, their own perspectivity, their own interests and values, implicitly rely upon conceptions of women and femininity in order to maintain their 'objectivity', 'scientificity', or 'truth' - that is, their veiled masculinity.

If this is the case, then Irigaray's project of developing a space in and from which women may speak for themselves, makes explicit the hitherto ignored sexualization of discursive positions - the degrees to which texts and representations do or do not adhere to the symbolic norms regulating them. In order to make the trajectory more overt, I will turn to her rearticulation of the mother-daughter relation and her reinscription of women's eroticism.

The genealogy of women

One of the key, if unspoken, questions throughout Irigaray's work on psychoanalysis is: why is the mother considered phallic? Why does the child regard her as phallic? and why does she herself take on this position?

Irigaray claims that within the Freudian schema of the familial, oedipal triangle, the child is always represented on the model of the son; and the mother is only understood in some relation to the phallus. This implies that, in our culture, the child, boy or girl, does not have an adequate representation of the *two sexes*. It is confronted with the male sex, and, given the woman's submergence in maternity, with a mother. There is no representation of the female sex. It thus makes perfect sense that the boy would consider his mother phallic. But the girl?

It is indispensable that the child, girl or boy, have a representation of the *two sexes*. . . . But in the traditional conception of

the family, in fact, he or she doesn't have this. Because if the mother is uniquely *mother*, the child has no image of woman, and thus of sexual difference. (1979: 40)

The mother/daughter relation is the 'dark continent of the dark continent, the most obscure area of our social order'. To 'enlighten' its blackness would pose a threat to the social order which has taken so much trouble to cover it over. It covers over the debt culture owes to maternity but cannot accept. The son, for example, cannot accept the debt of life, body, nourishment, and social existence he owes to the mother. A whole history of philosophy seems intent on rationalizing this debt away by providing men with a series of images of self-creation culminating in the idea of God as the paternal 'mother', creator of the universe in place of women/mothers. Man's self-reflecting Other, God, functions to obliterate the positive fecundity and creativity of women. Born of woman, man devises religion, theory, and culture as an attempt to disavow this foundational, unspeakable debt.

The burial of women under the phallogocentric reduction to maternity is crippling for both mother and daughter. For the mother, it implies the constriction of her possibilities of self-definition and autonomy, her subjection to the Law of the Father, her subsumption under the name of her husband, and her giving up her identity as a woman. While she remains the condition of subjectivity and culture, she herself remains mute, unrepresented, and confined to a given role, a 'mute substratum'. This constriction implies, furthermore, that she is left with few possibilities of personal development and expression. The mother is thus able to consider herself phallic, if she does, because her only socially valued role *as a woman* is bound up with maternity and with her role as the object of desire.

She is the mother who has *nothing but* food/love to give - food/love that risks choking or smothering the child, force-feeding it with herself, gaining her identity through it. This love, so painfully articulated in 'And One Doesn't Stir Without the Other' (Irigaray 1981a) describes a suffocation the child will sooner or later attempt to escape:

You have made something to eat. You bring me something to eat. But you give yourself too much, as if you wanted to fill me all up with what you bring me. You put yourself into my mouth and I suffocate. Put less of yourself in me and let me look at you. I'd like to see you while you are feeding me. Not to lose my/your sight when I open my mouth to you. And that you should still remain close to me while I am drinking you. But continue to be

on the outside as well. Keep yourself and keep me just as outside, too. Do not swallow yourself up, do not swallow me down in that which flows from you to me. I'd like it so much if we could be there, both of us. So that one does not disappear into the other, or the other into the one. (1981a: 11)

This constricted, suffocating motherhood is not the result of the mothers' phallic *lack*, but an excess that can find no other social avenue or validated outlet. This excess, or its reverse – the refusal to be absorbed, to give enough, which keeps the child clamouring for more (love, food, attention) – is not inevitable, but an effect of women's eclipse in maternity. Maternity under patriarchy curtails the mother's possibilities of expression; it also 'exiles' the daughter from her origins and her potential development as a woman. She has no *woman* with whom to identify. She is introduced to the sociocultural cycle of reproduction when she takes the mother's place, replacing her, symbolically 'murdering' her.

Her oedipus complex deprives her of direct access to the maternal body, and a positive evaluation of her sexuality and identity. It erases her potential as an active lover, situating her in a narcissistic, passive position as the love object of an active, phallic male lover. Her earliest – homosexual – attachment must be given up so that she is able to enter the circuits of sexual exchange, her pre-history is erased and her relation to the primal love object, to a body similar to her own, is lost.

Freud's account of the mother-daughter relation is not a false picture (except in so far as it is rendered eternal and unchangeable) for it describes what patriarchy requires of women. In opposition to Freud, Irigaray suggests that this model is neither logically nor culturally necessary. In particular, psychoanalysis does not allow a space for restructuring or reconceptualizing female relations, or re-inventing a body-to-body and woman-to-woman relation with the mother. For Irigaray, this possibility can be concretized only by a multi-directional quest – the search for a history that has been rendered invisible by the refusal to accord women a name and place of their own; as well as the construction of a future which involves the painful process of giving up the mother as haven, refuge or shelter in return for seeing her as a woman.

This may involve something of a provisional loss for women, for maternity is one of the few sites where women – daughters – are sheltered from the demands of sexual, political, and economic exchange. Yet this sacrifice of a maternal shelter also implies the possibility of a rejuvenation, a rediscovery of the identity shared by mother and daughter which may give to both a certain strength to

resist these circuits of exchange. The mother may give the daughter not just food, but words to nourish her; this gift will be reciprocated by the daughter's new found ability to speak *to*, rather than *at* her mother.

It requires a new kind of language in which both the mother's and daughter's identities as women can be articulated. It also implies restructuring of desire itself, so that the maternal body – the 'lost object' initiating the metonymic chain of substitutions (including language) – is not relinquished or lost, both a fusion with and a differentiation from the mother. It defies the patriarchal demand for a separation of mother from child, which introduces the symbolic order and socio-sexual exchange. This possibility is lyrically evoked in the concluding chapter of *This Sex Which is Not One*, translated as 'When Our Two Lips Speak Together', which supersedes the suffocating paralysis of 'And One Doesn't Stir Without the Other'. It announces a new relation between mother and daughter in which the demands for division, separation and singularity are rejected and replaced with a positive relation between the two women:

We are luminous. Neither 'one' nor 'two'. I've never known how to count. Up to you. In their calculations, we make two. Really, two? ... An odd sort of two. And yet not one. Especially not one. Let's leave *one* to them: their oneness, with its prerogatives, its domination, its solipsism: like the sun's. And the strange way they divide up their couples. With the other as the image of the one. Only an image. So any move toward the other means turning back to the attraction of one's own mirage. A (scarcely) living mirror, she/it is frozen, mute. Dedicated to reproducing – the sameness in we have remained for centuries, as the other. (1985b: 207)

Irigaray speaks indistinguishably as both mother and daughter; not an 'I' addressing a distinct 'you', but an I/you: a 'we'. This 'we' does not subsume one identity in the other. It is a fusion of identities without residue or loss. It is both speech and pleasure, sameness and difference, textuality and sexuality, the evocation of a space women are able to occupy as women without being silenced or mediated by masculinity. It is an exchange without debt, loss, or guilt, a space the feminine may reclaim for itself.

Seducer or seduced?

Lacan's flirtatious courtship of women, whether hysterics, analysts, or feminists, has not always succeeded in sexual conquest. Not all

those women who have worked on or with psychoanalysis have 'come across' with the answers he seeks. Not all are interested in his seductive ploys, his prancing with the women in order to know them better, to seduce them, to act the ladies' man. In *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction* (1982a) Jane Gallop describes Lacan's solicitous questioning of woman's desire as an ambivalently phallogocentric and a surprisingly anti-phallic gesture. He is both the Father embodying Law, and the delinquent or better, the pervert, who evades the Law, in seeking a pleasure outside its scope:

Feminists have been hard on the ladies' man, presuming that his intentions are strictly dishonourable. They're right. But should not feminism be working to undo the reign of honour, and all those virile virtues? In as much as feminists are hard on anyone, they betray an inappropriate (which is to say, all too appropriate and proper) phallicization.

[But] . . . he is no mere father figure out to purvey the truth of his authority: he also comes out seeking his pleasure in a relation that the phallogocentric universe does not circumscribe. To designate Lacan at his most stimulating and forceful is to call him something more than just phallogocentric. He is also phallogocentric. Or, in more pointed language, he is a prick. (Gallop 1982b: 35-6)

If, as Gallop suggests, Lacan is both phallus and prick, both authority and its excess, both phallogocentric and beyond the phallus, it is not surprising that his work has generated controversy and disagreement among feminists. Kristeva and Irigaray may be taken as representative of the kinds of differences and debates occupying feminists since reading or hearing his lectures.

While critical of details of his position, Kristeva, Mitchell, and others ultimately fall victim to his seductive display. Each actively affirms, not the excessive, self-deconstructive, *jouissant* Lacan, Lacan the 'floozy' as Gallop calls him (42), but Lacan the Law-giver. Each claims that the Father's Law or the oedipal interdiction is one of the necessary conditions for the existence of the social, in whatever form it may take. Each affirms that the child must be definitively separated from its immediate, maternal dependencies, which threaten it with suffocation or annihilation and the loss of an independent position or place in the social. And each affirms that, because of his purely cultural or signifiatory role in paternity, the father (or the Father's Name) is ideally placed to perform this operation. The institution of the Father's Law, while objectionable in some of its forms, is nevertheless regarded as the necessary

condition of stable discursive and social relations. In short, their adherences to psychoanalysis are framed (in various ways) in terms of the universality or cultural necessity of some oedipal-like structure.

In other words, the 'Kristevan' position, as it could be called, maintains an ambivalence towards the figure of the mother. The maternal relation represents nature, immediacy, pleasure, identification, blurring, or fusion of identities, and ultimately, entrapment, if it persists as the child's most direct and overwhelming relation. The mother is the potential devourer of the child's subjectivity and enunciative position, the crucial factor in psychosis, the source of all that, as culturally and personally threatening, has been expelled from conscious recognition. Again, while there may be disagreements about the form that the symbolic Father or Law-giver takes, the 'dutiful daughters' of psychoanalysis affirm that it must be someone *other* than the mother who introduces the law to the child, severing it from its crippling identifications and enabling it to take up a position outside her desire.

Ironically, then, those women seduced by Lacan, swayed by his arguments and by his manner, are not seduced by what Gallop has described as the prick; on the contrary, it is as Law-giver, Father, indeed as the subject-supposed-to-know that he is desired. If Lacan woos the women, it is only dutiful daughters, daughters true to the Father, embodiments of the Law, who answer his call. And *these* women who are obedient to the Law cannot tell him about what he wants to know - about women's desire, about *Was will das Weib?* It is as alien to a 'lawful' femininity as to a phallic masculinity. It is that *jouissance* in excess of the Law, the *jouissance* of the 'prick', not the phallus that he seeks to know (and master?)

But if Lacan takes on the role of symbolic Father for these women, what is his position for those other feminists who defy his claims? If Lacan remains phallus for the Kristevans, is he the prick, the penis beyond the phallus, for those wayward women I will designate by Irigaray's name (including Cixous, Kofman, and, with some hesitation, Gallop)? Even if they remain to some extent outside the framework of Lacan theory, is it the *jouissance* of his position that nevertheless attracts Irigaray, Cixous *et al.*? In other words, does Lacan manage, in a rather convoluted, and aggressive passion, to seduce these feminists as well?

This is a relevant question to ask of these feminists only if the ambiguous nature of seduction is understood. Seduction differs from rape in so far as the woman's desire functions as a kind of activity. In the seduction, in other words, it is unclear who is

seducing whom. The question that must be posed, then, is: does Lacan seduce the 'Irigarayans' (in spite of their protests)? Or is it that he is seduced by them?

Irigaray herself describes her relations to psychoanalysis, and the history of philosophy in flirtatious terms. Her seduction, like Lacan's, is strategic: a 'nuptial' strategy:

Thus it was necessary to destroy, but . . . with nuptial tools. The tool is not a feminine attribute. But woman may re-utilize its marks on her, in her. To put it another way: the option left to me was to *have a fling with the philosophers*, which is easier said than done. . . (1985b: 150)

It is a strategy for utilizing, u-tool-izing a 'machinery' hostile to one's interests so that it works against itself. Hers, in short, is the seductive strategy of the hysteric. Seduction is the strategy of the mistress, not the wife. Refusing to be the wife of philosophers (a self-annihilation, as Irigaray indicates, *ibid.*: 152), to tidy up after their own self-reflective 'truths', in her role as seducer, Irigaray does not take on the role of surrogate, either wife or mother. Instead, her role-model is that of the arch-mimic, the hysteric.

Dora is the most articulate of all Freud's studies of hysterics. Dora expresses and resists the Father's Law. She is made the object of a sexual exchange between Herr K., who will exchange 'his' 'object', Frau K., with Dora's father in return for a sexualized access to Dora. Dora is put into an impossible position: she is unable to remove herself from this unspoken contractual exchange the men have established; she is unable to say no to Herr K.'s advances with any authority (when she reports that he tried to kiss her to her parents, they do not believe her); and she is unwilling to say yes. What strategy does she develop? How is there a way out for her? She brilliantly manages to have the last laugh on all those who betrayed or used her. Above all, she uses the pre-eminently feminine strategy of seduction. She never actually says no to Herr K. She accepts his gifts, his letters, his attention, she cares for his children, she is 'interested' in him. She does not prevent him from his passions. Instead, she uses a well-worn feminine strategy: seduction. She actively takes on her passive position. She then refuses what Herr K. has presumed she has 'promised'. Or, in Gallop's terminology, she is a *prick-leaser*, the sexual strategy designed to give women at least something of their desires, without having to pay 'the full price'. She eggs Herr K. on, more or less encouraging him, only to say no at the last moment. And even then, her 'no' takes the form of corporeal spasms – a retching and choking when Herr K. kisses her. She uses the *verner*, the charms

and attributes of femininity, not to uphold the law but to gain some pleasure, even if this be at the expense of the man's dignity or self-image. In other words, like the women Cixous invokes at the beginning of her paper 'Castration or Decapitation' (1981), Irigaray knows that the best strategy for challenging the phallic authority of the penis is *laughter*, disinvestment of interest, indifference presented as interest or commitment.

Is the 'Irigarayan' strategy prick-teasing? Is it by flirtatious flattery that she can have her fling, and enjoy it too? If she seduces, is she not, in turn, also seduced? Or is her position that of *miming* seduction, the hysterical inversion of its goals? Prick-teasing, or rather, prick-deflating, a refusal to over-value the phallus through desire?

How is one to decide about Lacan's relations to feminism? Is he an arch-phallicocrat, the latest in a long line of misogynist thinkers? Or is he the prick who dares to speak its name, to reveal the self-deception behind the masculine aspiration to phallic status? Does his work affirm or undermine phallicism? Or does it do *both*?