

From *Speculum*, OE the Other Woman
Ithaca, Cornell UP, 1985

Any Theory of the "Subject" Has Always Been Appropriated by the "Masculine"

We can assume that any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the "masculine." When she submits to (such a) theory, woman fails to realize that she is renouncing the specificity of her own relationship to the imaginary. Subjecting herself to objectivization in discourse—by being "female." Re-objectivizing her own self whenever she claims to identify herself "as" a masculine subject. A "subject" that would re-search itself as lost (maternal-feminine) "object"?

Subjectivity denied to woman: indisputably this provides the financial backing for every irreducible constitution as an object: of representation, of discourse, of desire. Once imagine that woman imagines and the object loses its fixed, obsessional character. As a bench mark that is ultimately more crucial than the subject, for he can sustain himself only by bouncing back off some objectiveness, some objective. If there is no more "earth" to press down/repress, to work, to represent, but also and always to desire (for one's own), no opaque matter which in theory does not know herself, then what pedestal remains for the ex-sistence of the "subject"? If the earth turned and more especially turned upon herself, the erection of the subject might thereby be disconcerted and risk losing its elevation and penetration. For what would there be to rise up from and exercise his power over? And in?

The Copernican revolution has yet to have its final effects in the male imaginary. And by centering man outside himself, it has occasioned above all man's ex-stasis within the transcendental (subject). Rising to a perspective that would dominate the totality, to the vantage point of greatest power, he thus cuts himself off from the bedrock, from his

empirical relationship with the matrix that he claims to survey. To specularize and to speculate. Exiling himself ever further (toward) where the greatest power lies, he thus becomes the "sun" if it is around him that things turn, a pole of attraction stronger than the "earth." Meanwhile, the excess in this universal fascination is that "she" also turns upon herself, that she knows how to re-turn (upon herself) but not how to seek outside for identity within the other: nature, sun, God . . . (woman). As things now go, man moves away in order to preserve his stake in the value of his representation, while woman counterbalances with the permanence of a (self)recollection which is unaware of itself as such. And which, in the recurrence of this re-turn upon the self—and its special economy will need to be located—can continue to support the illusion that the object is inert. "Matter" upon which he will ever and again return to plant his foot in order to spring farther, leap higher, although he is dealing here with a nature that is already self-referential. Already fissured and open. And which, in her circumnavigations upon herself, will also carry off the things confided to her for re-presentation. Whence, no doubt, the fact that she is said to be restless and unstable. In fact it is quite rigorously true that she is never exactly the same. Always whirling closer or farther from the sun whose rays she captures and sends curving to and fro in turn with her cycles.

Thus the "object" is not as massive, as resistant, as one might wish to believe. And her possession by a "subject," a subject's desire to appropriate her, is yet another of his vertiginous failures. For where he projects a something to absorb, to take, to see, to possess . . . as well as a patch of ground to stand upon, a mirror to catch his reflection, he is already faced by another specularization. Whose twisted character is her inability to say what she represents. The quest for the "object" becomes a game of Chinese boxes. Infinitely receding. The most amorphous with regard to ideas, the most obviously "thing," if you like, the most opaque matter, opens upon a mirror all the purer in that it knows and is known to have no reflections. Except those which man has reflected there but which, in the movement of that concave speculum, pirouetting upon itself, will rapidly, deceptively, fade.

And even as man seeks to rise higher and higher—in his knowledge too—so the ground fractures more and more beneath his feet. "Nature" is forever dodging his projects of representation, of reproduction. And his grasp. That this resistance should all too often take the form of rivalry within the hom(m)ologous, of a death struggle between two consciousnesses, does not alter the fact that at stake here somewhere, ever

more insistent in its deadly hauteur, is the risk that the subject (as) self will crumble away. Also at stake, therefore, the "object" and the modes of dividing the economy between them. In particular the economy of discourse. Whereby the silent allegiance of the one guarantees the autonomy of the other, the auto-nomy of the other as long as no questioning of this mutism as a symptom—of historical repression—is required. But what if the "object" started to speak? Which also means beginning to "see," etc. What disaggregation of the subject would that entail? Not only on the level of the split between him and his other, his variously specified alter ego, or between him and the Other, who is always to some extent *his* Other, even if he does not recognize himself in it, even if he is so overwhelmed by it as to bar himself out of it and into it so as to retain at the very least the power to promote his own forms. Others who will always already have been in the service of the same, of the presuppositions of the same logos, without changing or prejudging its character as discourse. Therefore not really others, even if the one, the greatest, while holding back his reserves, perhaps contains the threat of otherness. Which is perhaps why he stands off-stage? Why he is repressed too? But high up, in "heaven"? Beyond, like everything else? Innocent in his exorbitant empire. But once you get suspicious of the reasons for extrapolation, and at the same time interpret the subject's need to re-duplicate himself in a thought—or maybe a "soul"?—then the function of the "other" is stripped of the veils that still shroud it.

Where will the other spring up again? Where will the risk be situated which sublates the subject's passion for remaining ever and again the same, for affirming himself ever and again the same? In the *duplcity* of his speculation? A more or less conscious duplicity? Since he is only partially and marginally where he reflects/is reflected? Where he knows (himself)? As likeness whose price can be maintained by the "night" of the unconscious? The Other, lapsed within, disquieting in its shadow and its rage, sustaining the organization of a universe eternally identical to the self. The backside of (self)representation, of the visual plane where he gazes upon himself? Therefore, resemblance proliferates all the more in a swarm of analogues. The "subject" henceforth will be multiple, plural, sometimes di-formed, but it will still postulate itself as the cause of all the mirages that can be enumerated endlessly and therefore put back together again as one. A fantastic, phantasmatic fragmentation. A de-struct(ura)tion in which the "subject" is shattered, scuttled, while still claiming surreptitiously that he is the reason for it all. Is reason feigned perhaps? Certainly, it is *one*. For this race of signifiers spells out again the solipsism of him who summons them, conyokes them, even if only to

disperse them. The "subject" plays at multiplying himself, even deforming himself, in this process. He is father, mother, and child(ren). And the relationships between them. He is masculine and feminine and the relationships between them. What mockery of generation, parody of copulation and genealogy, drawing its *strength* from the same model, from the model of the same: the subject. In whose sight everything *outside* remains forever a condition making possible the image and the reproduction of the self. A faithful, polished mirror, empty of altering reflections. Immaculate of all auto-copies. Other because wholly in the service of the same subject to whom it would present its surfaces, candid in their self-ignorance.

When the Other falls out of the starry sky into the chasms of the psyche, the "subject" is obviously obliged to stake out new boundaries for his field of implantation and to re-ensure—otherwise, elsewhere—his dominance. Where once he was on the heights, he is now entreated to go down into the depths. These changes in position are still postulated in terms of verticality, of course. Are phallic, therefore. But how to tame these uncharted territories, these dark continents, these worlds through the looking glass? How to master these devilities, these moving phantoms of the unconscious, when a long history has taught you to seek out and desire only clarity, the clear perception of (fixed) ideas? Perhaps this is the time to stress *technique* again? To renounce for the time being the sovereignty of thought in order to forge *tools* which will permit the exploitation of these resources, these unexplored mines. Perhaps for the time being the serene contemplation of empire must be abandoned in favor of taming those forces which, once unleashed, might explode in the very concept of empire. A detour into *strategy, tactics, and practice* is called for, at least as long as it takes to gain vision, self-knowledge, self-possession, even in one's decenteredness. The "subject" sidles up to the truth, squints at it, obliquely, in an attempt to gain possession of what truth can no longer say. Dispersing, piercing those metaphors—particularly the photographic ones—which have constituted truth by the premises of Western philosophy: virgin, dumb, and veiled in her nakedness, her vision still naively "natural," her viewpoint still resolutely blind and unsuspecting of what may lie beneath the blindness.

Now is the time to operate, before all is lost. That is, plow again those fields which had been assumed cultivated once and for all, but which now turn out to have merely lain fallow, capable of products that choke anything growing in their soil. The "subject" must dig his foundations deeper, extend the underground passages which assured the edifice of his determination, further dig out the cellars upon which he raises the monument of his identification, in order to prop up more securely his "dwell-

ing": the system of his relationship to self, the closure of his auto-representations, focus of his lonely exile as "subject." Man's home has indeed become these/his theoretical elaborations, by means of which he has sought to reconstruct, in an impossible metaphorization, the matrix and the way that would lead to or back to it. But by wishing to reverse the anguish of being imprisoned within the other, of being placed inside the other, by making the very place and space of being his own, he becomes a prisoner of effects of symmetry that know no limit. Everywhere he runs into the walls of his palace of mirrors, the floor of which is in any case beginning to crack and break up. This in turn serves, of course, to sublimate his activity, leading him to new tasks which for a time will distract him again from his specular imprisonment. A diversion from the depths of his madness, pretext for an increase in attentiveness, vigilance, mastery. The reason for the quakes must be sought out, these seismic convulsions in the self must be interpreted.

But man only asks (himself) questions that he can already answer, using the supply of instruments he has available to assimilate even the disasters in his history. This time at any rate he is prepared to lay odds again, and, give or take a few new weapons, he will make the unconscious into a property of his language. A disconcerting property, admittedly, which confuses everything he had long since assigned meaning to. But that, it seems, is not the most important thing at stake. The really urgent task is to ensure the colonization of this new "field," to force it, not without splintering, into the production of the same discourse. And since there can be no question of using the same plan/e for this "strange" speech, this "barbarous" language with which it is impossible to conduct a dialogue—read, monologue—the discovery will be set out hierarchically, in stages. Will be brought to order. By giving here a little more play to the system, here a little less. The forms of arrangement may vary, but they will all bear the paradox of forcing into the same representation—the representation of the self/same—that which insists upon its *heterogeneity, its otherness*.

Yet the fact that the dream can be interpreted only as a "rebus" should have persuaded the "reader" to turn it in all directions and positions, and not favor one type of inscription that would already prescribe a meaning to it: a linear, teleologically horizontal or vertical displacement, over a surface as yet unwritten, which it brands by cutting it up according to rules of repetition and recurrence, obeying processes that already paralyze the "body's" system of gestures within a given graphic order, etc. Why not rather have recalled those "pictures" made for children, pictographs in which the hunter and hunted, and their dramatic rela-

tionships, are to be discovered *between* the branches, *made out* from *between* the trees. From the spaces between the figures, or stand-in figures. Spaces that organize the scene, blanks that sub-tend the scene's structuration and that will yet not be read as such. Or not read at all? Not seen at all? Never in truth represented or representable, though this is not to say that they have no effect upon the present scenography. But fixed in oblivion and waiting to come to life. Turning everything upside down and back to front. If, that is, the interpreter-subject did not desire "this" (the id) to continue sustaining the proliferation of images (of self), as a *trompe-l'oeil* backcloth for the same's show, for a theater of the identical.

Dreams are also riddles in that—during "sleep," and in order to "keep" asleep—they recast the roles that history has laid down for "subject" and "object." Mutism that says without speech, inertia that moves without motion, or else only with the motions of another language, another script. Dream pictography, dream choreography, phonography, and pornography which compensate for the present *paralysis* of the sleeper. Who will/would awake—perhaps?—only if the "child," faced with such "riddles," did not have the overweening desire to "see" an other and same figure and form than the one that is already present for him. If it were enough for him to be entranced, let us say, by a *double syntax*, without claiming to regulate the second by the standard of representation, of re-presentation, of the first. If he were not "wounded," threatened by "castration," by anything he cannot see directly, anything he cannot perceive as like himself. Did not feel, as a result, the need to invent a new "theory," yet another in the series of optical instruments which, by means of the second—or hundred and second—sighting, moves in around the "manifestations" of the unconscious, under the protection of technological distance. Prosthesis, which assists the horrified gaze to construct, laboriously, "consciously," concept by concept, the rationality of his repression. His established good. Session after session, in a procedure that is also regulated by visual—rememorative—laws, he repeats the same gesture reestablishing the bar, the barred. While all the while permissive, listening with benevolent neutrality, collecting, on a carefully circumscribed little stage, the inter-dict. The lines between the lines of discourse. But he restricts himself to reframing, re-making, or "analyzing" its contours, re-stratifying its stages, so that order, good "conscious" order, may prevail. Elsewhere.

Now, let us imagine—for what else is there to do when rereading Freud but imagine a response, or else admit one's inability to survey such

an imagination—let us imagine that man (Freud in the event) had discovered that the rarest thing—the most exciting as well as the most scientifically rigorous, the most faithful to factual materiality and the most historically curative—would be to articulate directly, *without catanomy*, what we are calling these two syntaxes. Irreducible in their strangeness and eccentricity one to the other. Coming out of different times, places, logics, "representations," and economies. In fact, of course, these terms cannot fittingly be designated by the number "two" and the adjective "different," if only because they are not susceptible to comparison. To use such terms serves only to reiterate a movement begun long since, that is, the movement to speak of the "other" in a language already systematized by/for the same. Their distribution and demarcation and articulation necessitate operations as yet nonexistent, whose complexity and subtlety can only be guessed at without prejudicing the results. Without a teleology already in operation somewhere. But had the man Freud preferred the play, or even the clash, of those two economies rather than their disposition in hierarchical stages by means of one barrier (or two), one censorship (or two), then perhaps he would not finally have cracked his head against all that remains irreducibly "obscure" to him in his speculations. Against the non-visible, therefore not theorizable nature of woman's sex and pleasure. Whatever the explorations he attempts and which tempt him concerning this "dark continent," he always refers back to some still blind and incomprehensible "horizon" of investigation. And there, in what he recognizes as outside the range of his systematic prospecting (beyond the self?), Freud is in fact indicating a way off the historico-transcendental stage, at the very moment when his theory and his practice are perpetuating, in the mode of enunciation and the drama of enunciating, that very same stage, which we may now call the *hystero-transcendental*. Announcing by this re-mark, by this effect of repetition—re-petito principii—of recapitulation and, without his knowledge, of mimicry, that his breath is privileged. And he is out of breath.

For, when Freud reaffirms the incest taboo, he simply reannounces and puns back in place the conditions that constitute the speculative matrix of the "subject." He reinforces his positions in a fashion yet more "scientific," more imperious in their "objectivity." A demonstration he clearly needed himself if he is to "sublimate" in more universal interests his own desire for his/the mother. But as a result of using psychoanalysis (his psychoanalysis) only to scrutinize the history of his subject and his subjects, without interpreting the *historical determinants of his constitution of*

the "subject" as same, he was restoring, yet again, that newly pressed down/repressed earth, upon which he stands erect, which for him, following tradition though in more explicit fashion, will be the body/sex of the mother/nature. He must challenge her for power, for productivity. He must resurface the earth with this floor of the ideal. Identify with the law-giving father, with his proper names, his desires for making capital, in every sense of the word, desires that prefer the possession of territory, which includes language, to the exercise of his pleasures, with the exception of his pleasure in trading women—fetishized objects, merchandise of whose value he stands surety—with his peers. The ban upon returning, regressing to the womb, as well as to the language and dreams shared with the mother, this is indeed the point, the line, the surface upon which the "subject" will continue to stand, to advance, to unfold his discourse, even to make it whirl. Though he has barely escaped the ring, the vault, the snare of reconciling his end and his archives, those calls, resurgent, of his beginnings. Though that he-who-is-the-cause is barely keeping his balance. But since he now knows the reason for his wobbling. . . . And, after all, the acquisition of new riches is certainly part of this? Overdetermination, deferred action, dreams, fantasies, puns. . . . Language, by adopting its/these "annexes"—also ocular, uterine, embryonic—adds to its wealth, gains "depth," consistency, diversity, and multiplication of its processes and techniques. Was language once believed threatened? Here it is dancing, playing, writing itself more than ever. It is even claimed that language is "truer" than in the past, reimpregnated with its childhood. A consciousness yet more consciously pregnant with its relationship with the mother.

Whereas "she" comes to be unable to say what her body is suffering, Stripped even of the words that are expected of her upon that stage invented to listen to her. In an admission of the wear and tear on language or of its fetishistic denial? But hysteria, or at least the hysteria that is the privileged lot of the "female," *now has nothing to say*. What she "suffers," what she "lusts for," even what she "takes pleasure in," all take place upon another stage, in relation to already codified representations. Repression of speech, inter-dicted in "hieroglyphic" symptoms—an already suspicious designation of something prehistoric—which will doubtless never again be lifted into current history. Unless it be by making her enter, in contempt of her sex, into "masculine" games of tropes and tropisms. By converting her to a discourse that denies the specificity of her pleasure by inscribing it as the hollow, the intraglio, the

negative, even as the censured other of its phallic assertions. By hom(n)osexualizing her. By perversely travesty'ing her for the pedantic, sodomizing satisfactions of the father/husband. She shrieks out demands too innocuous to cause alarm, that merely make people smile. Just the way one smiles at a child when he shouts aloud the mad ambitions adults keep to themselves. And which one knows he can never realize. And when she also openly displays their power fantasies, this serves as a re-creation to them in their struggle for power. By setting before them, keeping in reserve for them, in her in-fancy, what they must of course keep clear of in their pursuit of mastery, but which they yet cannot wholly renounce for fear of going off course. So she will be the Pythia who apes induced desires and suggestions foreign to her still hazy consciousness, suggestions that proclaim their credibility all the louder as they carry her ever further from her interests. By resubmitting herself to the established order, in this role of delirious double, she abandons, even denies, the prerogative historically granted her: unconsciousness. She prostitutes the unconscious itself to the ever present projects and projections of masculine consciousness.

For whereas the man Freud—or woman, were she to set her rights up in opposition—*might have been able* to interpret what the overdetermination of language (its effects of deferred action, its subterranean dreams and fantasies, its convulsive quakes, its paradoxes and contradictions) owed to the repression (which may yet return) of maternal power—or of the patriarchy, to adopt a still prehistorical point of reference—whereas he might have been able also to interpret the repression of the history of female sexuality, we shall in fact receive only confirmation of the discourse of the same, through comprehension and extension. With "woman" coming once more to be embedded in, enclosed in, impaled upon an architectonic more powerful than ever. And she herself is sometimes happy to request a recognition of consciousness thereby, even an appropriation of unconsciousness that cannot be hers. Unconsciousness she is, but not for herself, not with a subjectivity that might take cognizance of it, recognize it as her own. Close to herself, admittedly, but in a total ignorance (of self). She is the reserve of "sensuality" for the elevation of intelligence, she is the matter used for the imprint of forms, gage of possible regression into naive perception, the representative representing negativity (death), dark continent of dreams and fantasies, and also car-drum faithfully duplicating the music, though not all of it, so that the series of displacements may continue, for the "subject." And she will serve to assure his determination only if she now seeks to reclaim his property from him: this (of his) elaborated as same out of this (of hers) foreclosed from specular(iza)tion. The same thing will always be at

stake. The profitercing will barely have changed hands. A barrer solution that she would adopt out of the void of her desire. And always one step behind in the process, the progress of history.

But if, by exploits of her hand, woman were to reopen paths into (once again) a/one logos that connotes her as castrated, especially as castrated of words, excluded from the work force except as prostitute to the interests of the dominant ideology—that is of hom(m)osexuality and its struggles with the maternal—then a certain sense, which still constitutes the sense of history also, will undergo unparalleled interrogation, revolution. But how is this to be done? Given that, once again, the “reasonable” words—to which in any case she has access only through mimicry—are powerless to translate all that pulses, clamors, and hangs hazily in the cryptic passages of hysterical suffering-lateness. Then. . . . Turn everything upside down, inside out, back to front. *Rack it with radical convulsions*, carry back, reimport, those crises that her “body” suffers in her impotence to say what disturbs her. Insist also and deliberately upon those *blanks* in discourse which recall the places of her exclusion and which, by their *silent plasticity*, ensure the cohesion, the articulation, the coherent expansion of established forms. Reinscribe them hither and thither as *divergencies*, otherwise and elsewhere than they are expected, in *ellipses* and *eclipses* that deconstruct the logical grid of the reader-writer, drive him out of his mind, trouble his vision to the point of incurable diplopia at least. *Overthrow syntax* by suspending its eternally teleological order, by snipping the wires, cutting the current, breaking the circuits, switching the connections, by modifying continuity, alteration, frequency, intensity. Make it impossible for a while to predict whence, whither, when, how, why. . . . something goes by or goes on: will come, will spread, will reverse, will cease moving. Not by means of a growing complexity of the same, of course, but by the irruption of other circuits, by the intervention at times of short-circuits that will disperse, diffract, deflect endlessly, making energy explode sometimes, with no possibility of returning to one single origin. A force that can no longer be channeled according to a given *plan/e*: a projection from a single source, even in the secondary circuits, with retroactive effects.

All this already applies to words, to the “lexicon” (as it is called), which is also connected up, and in the same direction. But we must go on questioning words as the wrappings with which the “subject,” modestly, clothes the “female.” Strifled beneath all those eulogistic or de-

nigratory metaphors, she is unable to unpick the seams of her disguise and indeed takes a certain pleasure in them, even gilding the lily further at times. Yet, ever more hemmed in, cathected by tropes, how could she articulate any sound from beneath this cheap chivalric finery? How find a voice, make a choice strong enough, subtle enough to cut through those layers of ornamental style, that decorative sepulcher, where even her breath is lost. Strifled under all those airs. She has yet to feel the need to get free of fabric, reveal her nakedness, her destitution in language, explode in the face of them all, words too. For the imperious need for her shame, her chastity—duly fitted out with the belt of discourse—, of her decent modesty, continues to be asserted by every man. In every kind of tone, form, theory, style, with the exception of a few that in fact rouse suspicion also by their pornographically, hom(m)osexual excess. Common stock, one may assume, for their production.

The (re)productive power of the mother, the sex of the woman, are both at stake in the proliferation of systems, those houses of ill fame for the subject, of fetish-words, sign-objects whose certified truths seek to palliate the risk that values may be recast into/by the other. But no clear univocal utterance, can in fact, pay off this mortgage since all are already trapped in the same credit structure. All can be recuperated when issued by the signifying order in place. It is still better to speak only in riddles, allusions, hints, parables. Even if asked to clarify a few points. Even if people plead that they just don't understand. After all, they never have understood. So why not double the misprision to the limits of exasperation? Until the ear tunes into another music, the voice starts to sing again, the very gaze stops squinting over the signs of auto-representation, and (re)production no longer inevitably amounts to the same and returns to the same forms, with minor variations.

This disconcerting of language, though anarchic in its deeds of title, nonetheless demands patient exactitude. The symptoms, for their part, are implacably precise. And if it is indeed a question of breaking (with) a certain mode of specula(riza)tion, this does not imply renouncing all mirrors or refraining from analysis of the hold this plan/e of representation maintains, rendering female desire aphasic and more generally atonic in all but its phallomorphic disguises, masquerades, and demands. For to dodge this time of interpretation is to risk its freezing over, losing hold, cutting back. All over again. But perhaps through this specular surface which sustains discourse is found not the void of nothingness but the dazzle of multifaceted speleology. A scintillating and incandescent concavity, of language also, that threatens to set fire to fetish-objects and gilded eyes. The recasting of their truth value is already at hand. We need only press on a little further into the depths, into that so-called dark cave

which serves as hidden foundation to their speculations. For there where we expect to find the opaque and silent matrix of a logos immutable in the certainty of its own light, fires and mirrors are beginning to radiate, sapping the evidence of reason at its base! Not so much by anything stored in the cave—which would still be a claim based on the notion of the closed volume—but again and yet again by their indefinitely re-kindled hearths.

But which "subject" up till now has investigated the fact that a *convex mirror* concentrates the light and, specifically, that this is not wholly irrelevant to woman's sexuality? Any more than is a man's sexuality to the convex mirror? Which "subject" has taken an interest in the anomalies produced by the conjunction of such curvatures? What impossible reflected images, maddening reflections, parodic transformations took place at each of their articulations? When the "it is" annuls them in the truth of a copula in which "he" still forever finds the resources of his identification as same. Not one subject has done so, on pain of tumbling from his ex-sistence. And here again, here too, one will rightly suspect any perspective, however surreptitious, that centers the subject, any autonomous circuit of subjectivity, any systematicity hooked back onto itself, any closure that claims for whatever reason to be metaphysical—or familial, social, economic even—to have rightfully taken over, fixed, and framed that concave mirror's incandescent hearth. If this mirror—which, however, makes a *hole*—sets itself up pompously as an authority in order to give shape to the imaginary orb of a "subject," it thereby defends itself phobically in/by this inner "center" from the fires of the desire of/for woman. Inhabiting a securing morphology, making of its very structure some comfortable sepulcher from whence it may, possibly, by some hypothetical survival, be able to look out. (Re)g(u)arding itself by all sorts of windows-on-wheels, optical apparatuses, glasses, and mirrors, from/in this burning glass, which enflames all that falls into its cup.

But, may come the objection,—defending again the objective and the object—the speculum is not necessarily a mirror. It may, quite simply, be an instrument to *dilate* the lips, the orifices, the walls, so that the eye can penetrate the *interior*. So that the eye can enter, to see, notably with speculative intent. Woman, having been misinterpreted, forgotten, variously frozen in show-cases, rolled up in metaphors, buried beneath carefully stylized figures, raised up in different idealities, would now become

the "object" to be investigated, to be explicitly granted consideration, and thereby, by this deed of title, included in the theory. And if this center, which fixed and immobilized metaphysics in its closure, had often in the past been traced back to some divinity or other transcendence invisible as such, in the future its ultimate meaning will perhaps be discovered by tracking down what there is to be *seen* of female sexuality.

Yes, man's eye—understood as substitute for the penis—will be able to prospect woman's sexual parts, seek there new sources of profit. Which are equally theoretical. By doing so he further fetishizes (his) desire. But the desire of the mystery remains, however large a public has been recruited of late for "hysteroscopy." For even if the place of origin, the original dwelling, even if not only the woman but the mother can be unveiled to his sight, what will he make of the exploration of this mine? Except usurp even more the right to look at everything, at the whole thing, thus reinforcing the erosion of his desire in the very place where he firmly believes he is working to reduce an illusion. Even if it should be a transcendental illusion. What will he, what will they, have *seen* as a result of that dilation? And what will they get out of it? A disillusion quite as illusory, since the transcendental keeps its secret. Between empirical and transcendental a *suspense will still remain inviolate*, will escape prospect, then, now, and in the future. The space-time of the risk that fetishes will be consumed, catch fire. In this fire, in this light, in the optical failure, the impossibility of gazing on their encounters in flame, the split (schiz) founding and structuring the difference between experience and transcendental (especially phallic) eminence will burn also. *Exquisite/ex-schizoid crisis of onto-ontological difference*. What manner of recasting all economy will ensue? To tell the truth, no one knows. And, to stay with truth, you can only fear the worst. For you may fear a general crisis in the value system, a foundering of the values now current, the devaluation of their standard and of their regimen of monopolies.

The copulative effusion, and fusion, melts down the mint's credit with each moment of bliss. Renewals and redistributes the accepted stakes: between two crises, two explosions, two incandescences of fetish mineral. And it is no easy matter to foresee whether, in that game, the one—the man?—who has recouped the biggest pile of chips will be the winner. It is equally possible to imagine that the one—the woman—who has spent her time polishing her mine will carry the day. Since the abrasion of the stores entrusted to the reflecting surface renders that surface more likely to set aflame the supplies and capitalizations of the one who, under cover and pretext of seduction, puts his riches on display.

But, will come the objection once again—in the name of some other objectivity—we are not fed by fire and flames. Maybe. But then neither are we by fetishes and gazes. And when will they cease to equate woman's sexuality with her reproductive organs, to claim that her sexuality has value only insofar as it gathers the heritage of her maternity? When will man give up the need or desire to drink deep in all security from his wife/mother in order to go and show off to his brothers and buddies the fine things he formed while suckling his nurse? And/or when will he renounce (reversing roles so as better to retain them) the wish to preserve his wife/child in her inability, as he sees it, to produce for the marketplace? With "marriage" turning out to be a more or less subtle dialectization of the nurturing relationship that aims to maintain, at the very least, the mother/child, producer/consumer distinction, and thereby perpetuate this economy?

To return to the gaze, it will be able to explore all the inner cavities. Although, in the case of the most secret, it will need the help of ancillary light and mirror. Of appropriate sun and mirrors. The instrumental and technical exploitation of sun and mirror will have shown the gaze, proved to it, that those mines contained no gold. Then the gaze, aghast at such bareness, will have concluded that at any rate all brilliance was its own preserve, that it could continue to speculate without competition. That the childish, the archaic credit accorded to the all-powerful mother was nothing, was but fable. But how is one to desire without fiction? What pleasure is there in stockpiling goods without risks, without expenditures?

You will have noted, in fact, that what polarizes the light for the exploration of internal cavities is, in paradigmatic fashion, the *convave mirror*. Only when that mirror has concentrated the feeble rays of the eye, of the sun, of the sun-blinded eye, is the secret of the caves illumined. Scientific technique will have taken up the condensation properties of the "burning glass," in order to pierce the mystery of woman's sex, in a new distribution of the power of the scientific method and of "nature." A new despecularization of the maternal and the female? Scientificity of fiction that seeks to exorcise the disasters of desire, that mortifies desire by analyzing it from all visual angles, but leaves it also intact. Elsewhere. Burning still.

Korē: Young Virgin, Pupil of the Eye

And now there is no longer any difficulty in understanding the creation of images in mirrors and all smooth and bright surfaces. For from the communication of the internal and external fires, and again from the union of them and their numerous transformations when they meet in the mirror, all these appearances of necessity arise when the fire from the face coalesces with the fire from the eye on the smooth and bright surface. And right appears left and left right, because the visual rays come into contact with the rays emitted by the object in a manner contrary to the usual mode of meeting; but the right appears right and the left left, when the position of one of the two concurring lights is reversed; and this happens when the mirror is concave and its smooth surface repels the right stream of vision to the left side, and the left to the right. Or if the mirror be turned vertically, then the concavity makes the countenance appear to be all upside down, and the lower rays are driven upwards and the upper downwards.

—Plato

Every effort will have been made, however, to keep the eye, at least the eye, from being destroyed by the fires of desire. Wisdom, at its very beginnings, warns against looking directly at the sun, for fear of burning up the membrane at the back of the eye, screen for production and projection of forms in the eye's camera obscura. Finding an economy of light in all its dazzling brilliance, without risk of combustion and death, marks humanity's first steps into philosophy. And just as the sun, even in eclipse, must be observed only *indirectly*, in a mirror on pain of blindness, even so the spirit will serve as an additional reflector that helps us to look upon the Good. In the strictest sense, mortals cannot look upon Good.

[The epigraph is from Plato's *Timaeus*, 46a–c. All translations from Plato are from *The Dialogues of Plato*, tr. Benjamin Jowett, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953]. "Young maiden, pupil of the eye," is the beginning of the *Greek-English Lexicon* [Liddell and Scott, 1968] entry for the word *korē*.—Tr.]