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Other than *Other*:

Explorations Beyond Dualism

Stella Gaon

A Thesis

in

The Special Individual Program

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Other than *Other*: Explorations Beyond Dualism

Stella Gaon

This thesis posits that the Cartesian "cogito," the 'self' *qua* thinking 'thing,' is both necessarily and contingently related to men. It is necessarily related to the extent that it is premised upon a particular interpretation of the male body, and it is contingently related insofar as this interpretation is founded on an ideology of male supremacy. Further, I demonstrate that the equality/difference debate in feminist theory of the 1970's and early 1980's reflects this paradox.

I then consider the psychoanalytic theory of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray. I suggest that the value of their work, and particularly of the project of *écriture féminine*, is that it radically challenges the Cartesian concept of 'self.' Moreover, it does so on the basis of a new interpretation of the female body. I conclude by suggesting that these French feminist reformulations of subjectivity are theoretically significant, and that they have important implications for the future of feminist practice and political thought.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir made the astute observation that the concept of "Woman,"

> is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other (de Beauvoir 1974, xix).

Ever since then feminist theorists have grappled with the meanings of, and relation between, the concepts of "man" and "woman." Judith Butler, for example, notes that the terms "female" and "woman" "gain their troubled significations only as relational terms" (Butler 1990, ix) and, in a similar vein, Sandra Harding points out that "once essential and universal man dissolves, so does his hidden companion woman" (Harding 1986a, 647).[1]

Indeed, within the Western philosophical tradition the concept of 'woman' has never been considered separately from the concept of 'man' (Allen, 1985). It is therefore troublesome that while the redefinition and deconstruction of 'woman' has been a central concern in feminist theory, relatively little attention has been paid to the concept of 'man'.[2] In other words, feminist theorists are concerned with the relationship of embodied women to the concept of

'Woman', but rarely with what is arguably the prior relationship of embodied men to the concept of 'Man'.

This trouble, to use Butler's term, is very specific; among English-speaking feminist theorists, an impasse evolved regarding political strategy: are the apparent differences between men and women to be applauded or eradicated? Michèle Barrett phrases the problem this way:

> Should the aim of feminism be to address that which defines women's condition at the present time, seeking greater material rewards and enhanced cultural validation? Or should feminist politics be directed towards a more fundamental eradication of the differences on which that condition is based? (Barrett 1987, 29).

I argue that this impasse can be traced directly to two different interpretations of the sexist challenge that implicitly underlines all feminist theorizing; namely the claim that "man is superior to woman." At issue here is the question of whether the term "man" refers to a cultural or a *natural* category. My thesis is that the social identities of men (hereafter referred to as "masculinity"), and their biological and anatomical specificity (hereafter referred to as "maleness"), are collapsed in the Western ideology of 'Man'. What is required, therefore, is a deconstruction of this concept.

To this end, Chapter 1 returns to Descartes' formulation of the 'self' as an entity explicitly equated with the reasoning mind. Then, on the basis of feminist research in epistemology, I examine the way in which the

Western conception of reason has been identified and challenged as a masculine attribute. Third, I consider how this particular idealization of masculinity may relate to the male body. Specifically, I contend that Mary O'Brien's description of "male reproductive consciousness" corresponds precisely to the Cartesian ideal of the (masculine) 'self' that is characterized by a specific mode of reason.

At this point my thought diverges from O'Brien's, in that I contest the universality of her claims. Specifically, on the basis of Judith's Butler's insights I argue that the so-called 'natural' body is never (entirely) prior to cultural inscription, and that it therefore cannot function as a pre-discursive truth. However, I do not agree either that cultural inscription is therefore entirely prior to the materiality of bodies. Rather, my conclusion is that the meanings of maleness as a biological phenomenon, and masculinity as a social and cultural phenomenon, are fundamentally interdependent in the Western philosophical tradition and in Western culture generally. In brief, the inherent paradox of the concept of 'man' is that it is founded upon an ideological reading of the male body.

Chapter 2 highlights some of the problems this conceptual complexity has caused in the context of feminist theory. I contend that insofar as the term 'man' has functioned until very recently as a relatively unproblematized category, theoretical contradictions have

been unavoidable. Thus the sexist formulation "men are superior to women" has given rise to a series of debates. These debates, which I characterize as the "equality/ difference" impasse, hinge on whether it is men as a sexed group, or the category of masculinity/gender, that is socially valued. In fact, I argue, political strategies among Anglo-American feminists - particularly during the 1970's and early 1980's - have depended upon the assumption made regarding the relationship between men as a sexually specific group (maleness) and social ideals of masculinity. As I demonstrate in this chapter, feminists have supposed that men are either 'naturally' predisposed to incarnate the characteristics which constitute masculinity, or they are not.

For example, the first interpretation is that masculine attributes are considered to be of more intrinsic value than feminine attributes because they are exclusive to men. This is to say that whatever is considered necessarily or essentially male is attributed more value than whatever is considered necessarily or essentially female. In this sense I call this an "ontological" reading; I will show that it assumes a relationship of embodied men to ideals of masculinity that is necessary, essential and prior to culture. If this is the case, these feminists argue, the aim of feminism should be to deal with women's theoretical and material subordination by "seeking greater material

rewards and enhanced cultural validation" for women as a sexually specific group.

The second understanding of the claim that men are superior to women is that men are characterized as superior because they have had the opportunity to develop and exhibit qualities and traits which are considered more valuable in the first place. In other words, 'superiority' resides in a given set of characteristics that are culturally coded as 'masculine', and that vary substantially in different contexts; it only contingently resides in men. Contrary to the first interpretation, then, this "constructionist" reading (Thiele 1989, 9) presupposes a radical disjunction between embodied men and masculinity as a social and cultural ideal. On this view, one way to deal with women's subordination is to work "towards a . . . fundamental eradication of the differences on which [women's] condition is based," so that women may identify with this ideal as well.

I conclude this chapter with the suggestion that feminist theory must move beyond the Cartesian formulation of the 'self' altogether, and that feminists would do well to reconsider the entire paradigm of subjectivity. In my view, such a reconsideration opens the way toward a less problematic politics. On this basis, I turn in Chapter 3 to a consideration of the postmodern feminism of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray.

In particular, I posit a correspondence between the deconstruction of the masculine model of the 'self' undertaken in Chapter 1, and French feminist attempts to reformulate subjectivity through the lens of psychoanalysis. I suggest first that Kristeva challenges on a profound level the coherence of the hypothesized 'self'. In the process, moreover, she offers an insightful critique of the way in which marginalization and repression function on a psychic level, and thereby motivate oppression on a material level. Secondly, I argue that Irigaray's project of "writing the (female) body" is important for feminists because it provides an alternative to the idealized and misrepresented male body that I describe in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3 thus highlights the ways in which both of these theorists re-open a pivotal debate within feminist theory - the question of whether feminists should base political strategies on the hypothesis of women's equality and fundamental sameness to men, or whether we should continue to fight for the recognition of women's 'difference'. By deconstructing both categories, 'man' and 'woman,' I argue, Kristeva and Irigaray make way for something new. In other words, a reconceptualization of subjectivity points to the possibility of a logic that is 'other' than the logic of the 'masculine self' assumed within and maintained by the Western analytic tradition. Thus the possibility of theorizing other ways of thinking,

of speaking, and indeed of being, are opened up by this radical critique.

CHAPTER 1

THE MASCULINITY OF THE CARTESIAN 'SELF'

As I have outlined above, the proposition that the masculinity of the Cartesian 'self' is both *necessary* (is preceded by the embodied men to whom it refers), and *contingent* (precedes the embodied men to whom it refers), requires a complex series of steps. In this chapter, therefore, I will begin by showing how the Cartesian concept of 'self' is fundamentally shaped by the way in which a particular concept of reason evolved within Western philosophy. What I will highlight, specifically, is the extent to which this concept of 'self' *qua* the reasoning mind is informed by Western notions of masculinity. I will then consider the extent to which these notions may be rooted in the material of the male body. As I will argue, the split between self and other, mind and body, may not only characterize masculine reason; it may also say something about the bodily experience of men. Before engaging in that discussion, however, it important to examine the philosophical expressions of this split.

While Descartes was by no means the first philosopher to articulate a separation between the mind and the body - in fact the Western philosophical tradition is founded on

the dualism of Pythagorean metaphysics - I will show that the Enlightenment thinker provides the basis for the particular self/mind/masculine equation that lingers as a problem within contemporary feminist theory. Evelyn Fox Keller, for instance, notes that although the roots of the "mind, reason, and masculinity" equation may be ancient, "the seventeenth century witnessed a "marked polarization of all the terms involved" (1985, 44).[3] Mary Hawkesworth's remark on this topic is also significant: "[t]he identification of conflicts experienced by many women between the contradictory demands of "rationality" and "femininity" stimulate a search for theoretical connections between gender and specific ways of knowing" (Hawkesworth, 1989, 535).

In order to substantiate my claim, therefore, it is necessary to look closely at the way in which the Cartesian 'self' is identified with what Descartes calls the mind (or "soul"), and is distinguished from the body, especially in key passages of *Discourse on Method and the Meditations* (Descartes 1968).

First, what is significant about Descartes' formulation of the disembodied 'self' is that it integrates the Platonic belief in a disembodied mind, with the Enlightenment belief in the knowability of the universe based on the power of rationality. In Plato's thought, the philosopher or "lover of wisdom" becomes 'wise' not merely through the application

of (his) reason, though this effort is necessary, but ultimately by achieving a "*vision* of the Good itself" (see Allen 1985, 66). For Descartes, on the other hand, revelation is no longer absolutely necessary; by starting with the simplest and most evident truths (1968, 174), "perfect" knowledge is ultimately attainable by a series of deductive steps.

After listing all of the various undertakings necessary to "give mankind a complete body of philosophy," for example, Descartes declines the task - significantly <u>not</u> on the grounds that he is too old, incapable, too ignorant or that he does not dare, but simply because, "this would require great expenditure beyond the resources of a private individual like myself" (1968, 185). It is in fact on this basis, as he explains in Discourse 6, that he has decided to publish his work. It is in order to share his findings, and,

> to urge good minds to try to go beyond this in contributing, each according to his inclination and his capacity, to the experiments which must be made, and communicating also to the public everything they learned; so that, the last beginning where their predecessors had left off, and thereby linking the lives and the labours of many, we might all together go much further than each man could individually (1968, 179).

Clearly there is an implied progression here; in Descartes' view philosophical pursuits lead inevitably to complete knowledge. As he phrases it,

> The last and chief fruit of these principles is that one will be able, in cultivating them, to

> discover many truths that I have not dealt with, and thus passing gradually from one to another, to acquire in time a perfect knowledge of the whole of philosophy and to rise to the highest degree of wisdom (1968, 186).

In this respect Descartes has revamped the Platonic model of the individual in the Enlightenment mould: the individual himself[4] (or at least in community with other individuals) is able to achieve wisdom, without having to depend on the grace of metaphysical entities, or on the necessity of spiritual revelation.

Secondly, what is significant about Descartes' model is that the mind, specifically as that which reasons, is said to constitute the 'self.' For to the extent that the Cartesian subject is defined as a disembodied 'thinking thing' (Descartes 1968, 105-106), there is an explicit and direct overlap between ontology and epistemology.[5] It is to this overlap that I would now like to turn.

Descartes' argument for the distinction between the mind and the body begins in the "First Meditation" - where, as is well known, he lays the ground for certain knowledge. First, he posits as doubtful everything he had previously supposed.[6]

> Now, therefore, that my mind is free from all cares, and that I have obtained from myself assured leisure in peaceful solitude, I shall apply myself seriously and freely to the general destruction of all my former opinions (1968, 95-96).

Beginning first with his physical senses, Descartes notes that he has often mistaken the sensory perceptions of dreams

with reality. The senses, therefore, provide no absolute certainty (1968, 96-97). Nonetheless, he believes that dreams must reflect reality to a certain extent, albeit in a potentially distorted form, and that, therefore, there are "simpler and more universal things which are true and exist" (1968, 97). He lists these as,

> Corporeal nature in general, and its extension, are of this class of things: together with the figure of extended things, their quantity or size, and their number, as also the place where they are, the time during which they exist, and such like (1968 98).

Even this conclusion is thrown into doubt, however, when Descartes considers the possibility that there is "some evil demon," who is equally "cunning," "deceiving" and "powerful," and who creates the illusion of all material reality (1968 100).

The "Second Meditation" opens with the search for one fundamental certainty in the face of these doubts:

> I suppose I have no senses; I believe that body, figure, extension, movement and place are only fictions of my mind. What then, shall be considered true? Perhaps only this, that there is nothing certain in the world (1968, 102).

This hypothesis leads Descartes to question even his own existence, but this he finds it possible to assert.

> [W]as I not, therefore, also persuaded that I did not exist? No indeed; I existed without a doubt, by the fact that I was persuaded, or indeed by the mere fact that I thought at all. . . . [O]ne must then, in conclusion, take as assured that the proposition: *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true, every time I express it or conceive of it in my mind (1968, 103).

To the extent that Descartes considers his intellectual experience of doubt to be more credible than, for example, a physical or emotional experience, there is clearly an unexamined value placed on rationality in the first place. In fact, the separation of the mind and body appears to be assumed from the start - the first thing to be questioned is corporeality. However, it is not my purpose to debate the logic of these or other points. Rather, I simply want to draw attention to the precise way in which the mind/body dualism is explicated in Descartes' work. It has so far been established only that Descartes' certainty of his existence is premised upon doubt. His next step will be to elaborate on the nature of this existence.

To this end Descartes turns his attention to what he calls the "soul" which, he seems to imply, animates his body.

> For in having in itself the power to move, to feel and to think, I did not believe in any way that these advantages might be attributed to corporeal nature; on the contrary, I was somewhat astonished to see that such faculties were to be found in certain bodies (1968, 104-105).

Again, it is clear that Descartes assumes, *a priori*, that "souls" and "bodies" are separate entities whose existence must be proven independently. Without examining this assumption, Descartes proceeds to a consideration of what this "soul" is.

Eating, walking and sensing - that is, the "power to move" that Descartes attributes to the soul - are all

bodily-related functions, and therefore potentially illusory. With "thinking," though, Descartes believes he has discovered "an attribute which does belong" to him. "This alone," he says, "cannot be detached from me" (1968 105).

> I am therefore, precisely speaking, only *a thing which thinks, that is to say, a mind, understanding, or reason*, terms whose significance was hitherto unknown to me (1968 105. Emphasis mine).

In this passage we can see most clearly the identification of existence with consciousness, and with rationality in particular. Moreover, in "Discourse 4," Descartes elaborates on this formulation:

> [F]rom the very fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed very evidently and very certainly that I existed; while, on the other hand, if I had only ceased to think, although all the rest of what I had ever imagined had been true, I would have had no reason to believe that I existed; I thereby concluded that *I was a substance, of which the whole essence or nature consists in thinking*, and which, in order to exist, needs no place and depends on no material thing; *so that this 'I', that is to say, the mind*, by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body, and even that is easier to know than the body, and moreover, that even if the body were not, it [this 'I'] would not cease to be all that it is (1968, 54; emphasis mine).

Thus we have in Descartes, not only a radical disjunction between the mind and the body, but an explicit identification of the rational mind with the 'self.'

For the purposes of this discussion, Descartes' reduction of the 'self' to reason is particularly significant. For if reason is the *sine qua non* of the

ostensibly generic individual or 'self,' then this version of the 'self' cannot be extricated from the way in which the concept of rationality has evolved within the Western philosophical tradition. In fact, I will argue, the Cartesian overlap between epistemology and ontology has profoundly shaped contemporary feminist discussion, insofar as one of the central questions of the Anglo-American debate is women's relation to reason.[7]

At this point, therefore, I would like to explicate the way in which the philosophical evolution of rationality has been analyzed by feminist theorists, especially by those who have drawn attention to the links between analytic reason and social ideals of masculinity.[8] For having argued that the Cartesian 'self' is equated with reason, I now want to highlight the way in which reason, over the last two thousand years, has been progressively narrowed to a particular form of abstract, analytic, discursive rationality, and overtly identified as an attribute of men (Lloyd 1984). What I will suggest is that feminist research on this issue confronts the gender neutrality of the Cartesian subject, by highlighting the ways in which that subject reflects an idealization of masculinity.

In an article that explores, among other things, the relationship between philosophical enunciation and the masculine/feminine dualism, for example, Rosi Braidotti points out that, "the feminine from Plato to Freud has been

perceived in terms of matter, *physis*, the passions, the emotions, the irrational" (Braidotti 1986, 47). She continues,

> From a feminist standpoint, the inadequacy of the theoretical model of classic rationality is that it is oblivious to sexual difference in that it mistakes the masculine bias for a universal mode of enunciation. The sexual neutrality it professes conceals a fundamental and unspoken phallocentrism (1986, 48).

In *The Man of Reason*, Genevieve Lloyd takes on precisely this issue:

> The maleness of the Man of Reason, I will try to show, is no superficial linguistic bias. It lies deep in our philosophical tradition. [...] The obstacles to female [women's] cultivation of Reason spring to a large extent from the fact that our ideals of Reason have historically incorporated an exclusion of the feminine, and that femininity itself has been partly constituted through such processes of exclusion (Lloyd 1984, ix).

In order to make her argument, Lloyd analyses Western philosophers' articulation of the concept of reason - particularly as it is framed within the context of a mind/body dualism - from the Pythagoreans, Plato and Aristotle, through Philo, Augustine, Aquinas, Bacon, Descartes, Hume, Rousseau, Kant and Hegel, to Sartre and de Beauvoir. What she finds is that,

> Notwithstanding many philosophers' hopes and aspirations to the contrary, our ideals of Reason are in fact male; and if there is a Reason genuinely common to all, it is something to be achieved in the future, not celebrated in the present (Lloyd 1984, 107).

The cause for this, according to Lloyd, is that from the earliest recordings of Western philosophical thought, rationality has been symbolically construed as "a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces," where 'the natural' is identified as female in the form of the "fertility of Nature":

> What had to be shed in developing culturally prized rationality was, from the start, symbolically associated with femaleness (Lloyd 1984, 2-3).

Lloyd argues that later refinements of the concept of reason reflect these early associations; for example, among the Pythagoreans, the term "Male" - on one side of the Table of Opposites - was construed as superior to "Female" - on the other side - because of "its association with the primary Pythagorean contrast between form and formlessness" (Lloyd 1984, 3).

From the beginnings of Western philosophy, then, maleness was aligned with clarity of thought and determinate form and attributed to men, while femaleness was aligned with the vague and with indeterminate matter and attributed to women. Moreover, themes of dominance, especially, "of mind over body or of intellect over inferior parts of the soul," were later developed as "ideals associated with maleness" (Lloyd 1984, 17). For Augustine, for instance, that "which presides as the masculine" part of the mind was responsible for limiting entanglements in images of material, temporal things, while for Aquinas, "woman is

naturally subject to man, because in man, the discretion of reason predominates" (Lloyd 1984, 32, 36).

Later, in the work of Rousseau, there is a more explicit description of the kind of reason men are said to have; the capacity for abstraction and generalization, and, notably, the reason required for the apprehension of the "principles and axioms of science," are said to be "beyond a woman's grasp" (Lloyd 1984, 75). It is on the basis of numerous examples of this sort that Lloyd concludes that, "Past ideals of Reason, far from transcending sexual difference, have helped to constitute it" (Lloyd 1984, 107-108).

It is important to look more closely at the equation between masculinity and the capacity for scientific thought, however, for it has been argued that modern science - particularly as it has evolved since the Enlightenment - has been the epistemological paradigm for the valued mode of rationality in a wide variety of domains. Margaret Benston, for example, says the "the methodology of present science is widely regarded as the model for rational thought" (Benston 1982, 48), and Sandra Harding contends that "scientific claims are *the* model of knowledge (Harding 1986a, 653). In Harding's view, feminist critiques of the natural sciences inspire apprehension, because of the recognition that,

> [W]e are a scientific culture, that scientific rationality has permeated not only the modes of thinking and acting of our public institutions but even the ways we think about the most intimate

> details of our private lives. . . . Neither God nor tradition is privileged with the same credibility as scientific rationality (Harding 1986b, 16).

Not only is scientific rationality the standard against which all reasoning is gauged, the presence of scientific method is considered as the ground for the validity of all knowledge. As Kathryn Pyne Addelson notes,

> We believe that the methods of science are the most rational that human kind has devised for investigating the world and that (practised properly) they yield objective knowledge. It seems to us that because there is only one reality, there can only be one real truth, and that science describes those facts (1983, 165).

It is therefore important to look at the precise way in which the ideology and authenticity of scientific methodology evolved, particularly during the seventeenth century when, according to Evelyn Fox Keller, a major shift occurred. As Keller's documentation shows, a series of debates took place just prior to the founding of the Royal Society in 1662. At that time two contending metaphysical systems were being proposed: the hermetic tradition, represented by the Renaissance alchemists, and the mechanical tradition, articulated by the founding Fellows of the Royal Society. The result of this contest, which was won by the mechanical philosophers, was a decisive shift in the ideology, practices and institutions of science; terms such as "mind" and "nature," "reason" and "feeling," and "masculine" and "feminine" were rigorously opposed to each other (Keller 1985, 44).

For the alchemists, for instance, "material nature was suffused with spirit," and knowledge was both the result and the expression of a metaphysical union of male and female principles (Keller 1985, 44, 48ff). The founding members of the Royal Society, on the other hand, voiced an ideological commitment to an explicitly and "unambiguously" masculine science which insisted on a radical division between knower and known, mind and nature, subject and object (Keller 1985, 59). For these early scientists, reason and the new science "provided a secure intellectual domain for masculinity," as well as protection from the perceived threat of all things feminine (Keller 1985, 60-61). As one of the chief proponents of this view, Joseph Glanvill, wrote in 1661,

> [W]here the *Will* or *Passion* hath the casting voyce, the case of *Truth* is *desparate*. . . . The *Woman* in us, still prosecutes a deceit, like that begun in the *Garden;* and our *Understandings* are wedded to an *Eve*, as fatal as the *Mother* of our miseries (Quoted in Keller 1985, 52-53).

In a sense then, both sets of terms - reason/feeling and male/female - were redefined and further distanced from each other through the institutionalization of scientific methodology. As Keller phrases it,

> If concepts of rationality and objectivity, and the will to dominate nature, supported the growth of a particular vision of science, they supported at the same time the institutionalization of a new definition of manhood (1985, 64).

Most significantly, the institutionalization of the mechanical philosophers' paradigm of modern scientific method meant the confirmation of "male potency"; 'Nature'

was "reduced to its mechanical substrate," and 'Woman' "to asexual virtue" (Keller 1985, 64).[10]

What this "potency" consisted in, most significantly, was a power over (female) nature, by virtue of (men's) separation from it. It is scientific method, in other words, that assures the scientist of (his) power. Moreover, as Margaret Benston argues, this model of the 'potent' scientist remains paradigmatic in the twentieth century (Benston 1982, 53-55; 61-64).[11] "The ideal scientific investigator," she says,

> is one who is able to be detached, unemotional, completely rational in approaching phenomena, and who is, in addition, skilled in the use of scientific instruments. In this traditional view of science, such an observer is one who clearly delineates and detaches his self from outside objects and, further, is someone who assumes the right of mastery over objects (1982, 57; see also Harding 1986b, 165).

Benston relates this characterization of scientific practice to an ideal of objectivity, insofar as a consideration of individual values is "forbidden as unscientific" (1982, 55).[12] Further, she says that the reduction of phenomena to quantifiable units - what she calls scientists' acceptance of an "impoverished reality" for research purposes - is "compatible with male norms rather than with female ones" (1982, 55).

> Men are not expected to mix emotions or aesthetics or concern for the objects of study with rational thought; the male/female split of traits, in fact, makes "pure" rationality the ideal for men, while leaving subjective factors as the feminine domain (Benston 1982, 55-56).

Benston herself refers only to "male and female roles," suggesting that men "who are brought up to deny their own emotions and to be separated from their own selves, find it easy to believe that a pure, isolated rationality is possible" (1982, 60, 64). However, as Mary Hawkesworth argues, many of the feminist approaches to epistemology are more specifically informed by "speculative psychological notions about a fragile, defensive male ego that impels men constantly to 'prove' their masculinity by mastering women, to affirm their own value by denigrating that which is 'other' "(Hawkesworth 1989, 540).

With regard to this assertion, Evelyn Fox Keller's analysis is certainly a case in point; she explicitly links the capacity for scientific thought to the emotional and psychosexual development of boys, using psychoanalytic theory to make her case (1985, 75-94). However, it is not my purpose here to enter into this debate on the social causes of the valuation of scientific objectivity. My intent, rather, is only to show that the self/mind/ masculine equation is confirmed throughout the history of Western philosophy and that, during the Enlightenment, this equation was significantly modified into something very close to its contemporary form.

In this respect, what is significant about this tradition according to such theorists as Evelyn Fox Keller, Susan Bordo, Phyllis Rooney and Margaret Benston (*inter*

alia), is the extent to which the term "masculine" has come to describe, "not a biological category but a cognitive style, an epistemological stance" (Bordo 1986, 451). As Keller summarizes the issue,

> The scientific mind is set apart from what is to be known, that is, from nature, and its autonomy is guaranteed . . . by setting apart its mode of knowing from those in which that dichotomy is threatened. In this process, the characterization of both the scientific mind and its modes of access to knowledge as masculine is indeed significant. Masculine here connotes, as it so often does, autonomy, separation, and distance . . . a radical rejection of any commingling of subject and object (quoted in Bordo 1986, 451).

Moreover, my concern is not, primarily, the epistemological issues that are being raised by these feminist philosophers of science. This particular characterization of reason as masculine is of importance to me here in view of the philosophical overlap between the epistemological and the ontological. For if the Cartesian 'self' has been equated with and reduced to the capacity to reason, and if reason - conceptualized ideally as dispassionate, detached and objective - has been attributed to men as among the ideals of masculinity, then the Cartesian 'self' itself, our contemporary legacy, is an idealization of masculinity. And, I contend, this specific idealization has evolved under the rubric of what I will call men's "essence" within the Western philosophical tradition.

The question remains, however, that if masculinity and reason have been closely aligned as an integral part of the humanist notion of the individual, what can we say of *women*? In other words, in light of the specific meaning that the term 'self' has come to have within Western philosophy - and within Western culture generally - feminists cannot engage in the fight for women's material or theoretical equality with men without considering a prior question: to what extent are these attributions of masculinity necessarily or exclusively tied to men, and to what extent are they only contingently "male" values, having little or nothing to do with biological differences that distinguish the sexes? In other words, is 'masculinity' a natural consequence of being a man, or is it merely a cultural imposition on people with male bodies?

As I argue in Chapter 2, North American feminists tend to take a stand on one side of this nature/culture divide or the other. What I would like to propose here, however, is that the masculinity of the Cartesian construction *both precedes and is preceded by* the embodied men in whom it is said to inhere. Specifically, I will advance the theory that the Cartesian concept of the transcendent, disembodied 'self,' the "cogito," is partially premised upon the material of men's bodies. In order to show what I mean by this, I will therefore turn now to Mary O'Brien's material and historical analysis of the biological process of

reproduction, and to her description of the ways in which consciousness of this process, what she calls "reproductive consciousness," is 'genderically differentiated' (O'Brien 1981, 31).

First, (following Hegel) what O'Brien suggests is that the process of reproduction is dialectically structured, in the sense that it is an instance of "separation" of a man from his sperm during copulation, "unification" of the sperm and ovum, and "transformation" of these united 'seeds' into a separate person (1981, 44; 27-28). In fact, as Bev Thiele observes, part of what distinguishes O'Brien's account of sexual differentiation from other feminist accounts, is precisely the insight that reproduction is not simply an event, but is part of a complex process (Thiele 1989, 10).

O'Brien identifies ten dialectical "moments" within this process: they are, "menstruation, ovulation, copulation, alienation, conception, gestation, labour, birth, appropriation and nurture" (O'Brien 1981, 47). However, men and women have significantly different relationships to these moments; "alienation and appropriation are male moments: copulation and nurture are genderically shared moments; all of the others are women's moments" (O'Brien 1981, 47-48).[13]

With regard to the first of the "male moments," "alienation," it is important to note that O'Brien has something very specific in mind; she is referring to the

"alienation of the male seed in the act of ejaculation" (1981, 51). In a further clarification, she adds,

> [W]e are not speaking here about some kind of psychological process, a sense of loss or something like that. Alienation is not a neurosis, but a technical term describing separation and the consciousness of negativity. . . . Consciousness, we have argued, resists alienation, the separation of the thinking subject from the world and from the experience of the world and the negation of the self. It is in this sense that we speak of the alienation of the seed. Men experience themselves as alienated from the reproductive process. . . (O'Brien 1981, 52).

O'Brien points out that there is a female form of alienation as well; "the woman alienates the unified and transformed form of the originally opposing seeds in the act of giving birth" (1981, 31). But the bodily experience of labouring to give birth is a "synthesizing and mediating act":

> It confirms women's unity with nature experientially, and guarantees that the child is hers. Labour is inseparable from reproductive process in its biological involuntariness, but it is also integrative. It is a mediation between mother and nature and mother and child; but it is also a *temporal* mediation between the cyclical time of nature and unilinear genetic time (1981, 59).

In O'Brien's view, woman's reproductive consciousness is therefore "continuous and integrative," for the labour of childbirth confirms genetic coherence and species continuity (1981, 59). In this sense, the moment of labour not only distinguishes female reproductive consciousness from that of males, it also distinguishes female temporal consciousness.

For men the experience of reproduction is profoundly different. Significantly, there are contradictions within it - most notably that the moment of inclusion *in* the process of reproduction (copulation) is simultaneously a moment of exclusion *from* it (alienation). Secondly, paternity, unlike maternity, is an abstract concept. It is the (more or less) uncertain *belief*, not the certain bodily experience, that a particular man is the father of a given child.[14]

Now, O'Brien points out that her analysis should not "be construed as implying some kind of rejection of any notion of affection, warmth, and love between people and children." Rather, she says, she is trying to show the *general*, not the *particular*, "relationship between the biological substructure and the social superstructure of reproductive relations. . . " (1981, 57).[15] With this 'general' goal in mind, what is of consequence is that the uncertainty of paternity means that men are both free to choose fatherhood and, at the same time, unable to confirm it on biological grounds. It is therefore confirmed by force of contract.

The third contradiction that O'Brien identifies is that the alienation of man's seed in the act of copulation renders him separate from genetic continuity - "which he therefore knows only as idea" (O'Brien 1981, 53). In her view, this separation gives rise to a "consciousness of

discontinuity," in marked contrast to female reproductive consciousness.

> The significance of the alienation of the male seed, then, lies in resultant forms of male reproductive consciousness. This is a consciousness of contradiction, a series of oppositions which must be *mediated*. Men are separated from nature, from the race and from the continuity of the race over time (1981, 53).

Similarly, O'Brien writes, "Male reproductive consciousness is splintered and discontinuous, and cannot be mediated within reproductive process" (1981, 59).

The second "male moment," that of "appropriation," - "the assertion of a proprietorial right to a child which nature has omitted to provide for male parents" (1981, 58) - is in direct response to the first: "Over against the alienation of the seed we find posed, in the first instance, the moment of appropriation of the child, the almost universal mode of paternal mediation" (O'Brien 1981, 53). Moreover, since the assertion of paternity, unlike the assertion of maternity, cannot be made on biological grounds, it must be made on ideological and social grounds - specifically, in cooperation with other men. To this end, the political concept of paternal "right," developed and institutionalized in the public realm, is brought to bear against man's simultaneous inclusion in, and exclusion from, the phenomenon of procreation.

The institution of marriage is one of the more obviously successful ways in which men have regulated

reproduction and thereby verified paternity. However, according to O'Brien, it is not in itself an adequate answer to the problem of men's separation from the continuity of the race over time. As she argues,

> Historically, men have clearly felt compelled to create principles of continuity, principles which operate in the public realm under male control and are limited only by men's creative imagination (1981, 61).

In this sense, "appropriation" is only one aspect of a complex series of mediations - including the split between the public (male) and the private (female) realms - that men have made on the basis of their reproductive consciousness. Together, these mediations comprise what O'Brien calls the principle of "male potency."

> Historically developed paternity represents a real triumph over the ambiguities of nature. It is achieved by masculine praxis, a unity of knowledge and activity integrated in an act of will, and objectifying the idea of paternity in the social reality of patriarchy. Men understand themselves as sharing a power over nature, a potency to give to their dualistic reproductive experience a unity which defies nature's injustice while it treasures her gift of freedom (1981, 49, 60).

As we have already seen, Evelyn Fox Keller and others have related the 'potency' of the male scientist to a rigid distinction between knower and known, mind and nature, subject and object; it is man's ostensible *separation from* nature that confirms his power *over* it. What O'Brien adds to this characterization of masculinity, however, is the possibility that this separation is premised upon the material of men's bodies. For example, O'Brien says there are,

> problems of *dualism* which is the persistent motif of male philosophy. Under this general category, we find a whole series of oppositions which haunt the male philosophical imagination: mind and body, subject and object, past and present, spirit and matter, individual and social, and so forth (1981, 34),

and she wonders "if the masculine reproductive consciousness is not a possible basis for the dualistic preoccupation of male-stream thought" (1981, 34).

O'Brien's analysis suggests a qualified "yes" to this question; it may be true that what is being held up as "masculine" (and then implicitly or explicitly universalized as "human") is indeed in some sense sex specific. To phrase this another way, we might say that to a certain extent there is a necessary relationship between the social identities and the bodily experiences of men. But I would like to distinguish my own view from O'Brien's perspective. She argues that there is a transparent relationship between male reproductive consciousness and the male praxis of patriarchal thought and institutions. My own belief is that the philosophical construction of the 'self' as disembodied "mind" is a *metaphorical* formulation of "male reproductive consciousness," rather than its necessary *result*.

To substantiate this perspective on the epistemological and ontological implications of male reproductive consciousness, I will engage with a series of problematic points in O'Brien's argument, which have to do with the universality of her claims.

First of all, O'Brien insists that female reproductive consciousness is "a universal consciousness, common to all women." For O'Brien, pregnancy signifies the unity of the potential represented by menstruation, and the actual represented the childbirth. All women, she says, carry this consciousness, whether or not they all give birth, for female "potency" is "culturally transmitted" (1981, 50). On this basis, O'Brien maintains that female reproductive consciousness, grounded as it is in "female experience," can give rise to a new, potentially feminist "standpoint of women" (1981, 188; 194).

The problem with this argument is that it blurs precisely the distinction between cultural and bodily experiences that O'Brien herself tries to clarify. Indeed, it seem to me that for women who have not given birth, such benefits of being female as an inclusion in the reproductive process, an experience of genetic continuity, and a mediated relation to nature, are almost as abstract as they are for men.[16] As we have already seen, O'Brien says it is precisely the abstract nature of paternity - that fatherhood is an idea rather than a biological experience - that the institutionalized forms of "appropriation" are supposed to mediate. Yet the recognition of menstruation as potentially related to childbirth seems to me almost as abstract.

If women who have not had (or who cannot have) children also 'know' their potential potency as *idea* - if it is in

this respect similar to so-called 'male potency,' then O'Brien's explanation of the way in which reproductive consciousness is "genderically differentiated" does not entirely hold up. It is not, or not only, the reproductive consciousness of men and women that can be opposed, but the reproductive consciousness of men and mothers. But I do not think this problem requires undue emphasis. Insofar as there is a philosophically significant difference between men who cannot mediate this alienation biologically, and women who have not (or not yet) done so,[17] an opposition between male and female "reproductive consciousness" is tenable in a general sense.

What is not as apparent is the claim that female reproductive consciousness can be posited as an experiential "standpoint" of all women. What I mean by this is that, for O'Brien, female reproductive consciousness is not only about a biological capacity to give birth - which is experienced by the vast majority of women - but about the actual *process* of giving birth. If neither the "alienation" of childbirth, nor the "mediation" of reproductive labour, are experienced by women who have never borne children, then the consciousness that O'Brien is attributing to all women is simply not universal. For this reason, it is important to draw attention to the complex ways in which the reproductive process is lived, if we are to unravel distinctions between the materiality of sexual differentiation, and the cultural

transmission of gender identity. The first is an unavoidable condition of human existents, the second is a contingent result of sociality and ideology, and the two together are only meaningful within particular contexts.

For this reason, I would contend that although female reproductive consciousness, as O'Brien has described it, cannot unproblematically ground a *female* standpoint - not all women experience reproductive continuity by giving birth (although most expect to) - its metaphoric utility for a *feminist* standpoint should not be overlooked. Thus, just as a consciousness of duality and separation from nature and from cyclical time has made its way into social practices as well as into philosophy and political and social theory, so an assertion and affirmation of an integrative and continuous mode of consciousness may lead in new theoretical and political directions. As I will argue in Chapter 3, it is my view that the work of a number of French feminists points precisely in this direction.

For now, however, I want to note that what we are talking about is not consciousness *per se*, but modes of consciousness. The difference is profound. Rather than posit, as O'Brien would, (reproductive) consciousness as an immediate or somehow unproblematic result of a set of biological givens, I am contending that men's "alienation" from the reproductive process has been identified within Western philosophical discourse as the only significant

difference between the sexes. Thus an ideological reading of biological specificity - man as only "alienated" from reproduction - informs a description of consciousness - mind as separate from and as master of body or nature, for example.

This point can be seen more clearly in the context of a second problem in O'Brien's theory: the hypothesis that the historical 'discovery' of physiological paternity was the event that "triggered a transformation in male reproductive consciousness" (1981, 21). First of all, feminist historians have provided evidence that points to the possibility that the discovery of paternity occurred long before anything that has been called "patriarchy" was established.[18]

Secondly, as Sandra Harding argues, the problem of dualism, and particularly the mind/nature split, does not seem to have arisen for the men of certain African cultures. As we have seen, the 'self' is conceptualized in the West as "autonomous, individualistic, self-interested, fundamentally isolated from other people and from nature, and threatened by these others unless the others are dominated by the 'self' (Harding 1986b, 171). In many African world views, on the other hand, the 'self' is conceptualized in a way that corresponds to the Western definition of femininity; the individual is understood as,

> . . . dependent on others, as defined in relationship to others, as perceiving self-

> interest to lie in the welfare of the relational complex. Communities are relational complexes that are ontologically and morally more fundamental than the persons that are individuated through their positions in the community. Nature and culture are inseparable (Harding, 1986b, 171).

Now it is important to note, as Harding does, that the term "African" is itself Eurocentric, insofar as it "tends to paper over the vast differences between the histories and present projects of the hundreds of indigenous African cultures" (1986b, 173). Moreover, the characteristics identified here may be a result of colonization (and, hence of "feminization") as much as of anything else. Secondly, this example of an alternative conceptualization of the (masculine) 'self' should not be construed as indicating that "appropriation" has not taken, or cannot take, place within a variety of African cultures. Yet these issues need not be decided in order that we may posit the possibility of an acknowledgement of biological paternity without the occurrence of the reproductive consciousness O'Brien sees as its outcome.

Indeed, in light of these striking exceptions, it would seem that physiology, far from signifying the same thing universally, signifies different things in different historical and cultural contexts. In other words, it is plausible and even likely that the meaning of, and the male response to, men's "alienation" is socially mediated rather than a brute consequence of biology.

Perhaps O'Brien relies too heavily on Hegel's definition of human consciousness as that which resists alienation. She assumes that paternity is necessarily experienced as biological alienation, that men have felt compelled to mediate this separation from nature ever since they discovered it, and that they have always done so in ways that oppress women. But it is also conceivable that men were able either to live with "nature's injustice," or that they developed other, less violent ways of addressing it.

Regarding both of the problems I have identified, problems of the universality of a specific form of male and female reproductive consciousness, what O'Brien overlooks is what I will call the "symbolic dimension" of biological difference. In other words, regardless of the biological differences between men and women which can be indisputably proven, the precise meaning and significance of those differences is always specific to a context and is therefore contingent.

Taking this logic to its extreme, Judith Butler poses a third, and more fundamental, challenge to O'Brien's formulation; in a sense, she turns O'Brien's argument inside out, making a cogent case for the possibility that it is the ontological status of sex (rather than gender) that should be disputed (Butler 1990; see also Riley 1988). In other words, O'Brien's goal is to relate cultural norms of gender

to biological givens of sex. Butler's enquiry, on the other hand, takes as its focus "gender and the relational analysis it suggests" in order to challenge the assumption that sex and bodies are somehow natural and prior to cultural inscription (1990, xi, 147).

Specifically, she takes issue with the proposition that, "there is a natural or biological female who is subsequently transformed into a socially subordinate 'woman', with the consequence that 'sex' is to nature or 'the raw' as gender is to culture or 'the cooked'." Instead, Butler insists, "sex," as a "political" designation "proves to be always already 'cooked'. " (1990, 37-38) This claim is supported by two especially compelling arguments.

In the first place she uses psychoanalysis to draw our attention to the "phantasmatic nature of desire," highlighting the extent to which desire "always exceeds the physical body through or on which it works" (1990, 71). Butler argues that the cultural taboo on homosexuality results in unacknowledged homosexual desires that factor into the development of heterosexual gender identity. According to Freud, she says, boys must choose "not only between two object choices," but between "the two sexual dispositions, masculine and feminine."

> That the boy usually chooses the heterosexual would, then, be the result, not of the fear of castration by the father, but of the fear of castration - that is, the fear of "feminization" associated within heterosexual cultures with male homosexuality (Butler 1991, 59).

This moment of repudiation of the father (in this case) as an object of desire, regardless of its cause, founds what Freud calls "gender consolidation" (Butler 1991, 59). However, because this desire is disallowed culturally (i.e. "prohibited"), it is never resolved within the psyche. Unlike the loss of the object of heterosexual desire which is 'grieved' in a process of "mourning," then, the lost object of homosexual desire is internalized through a process of identification that Butler calls the "melancholia of gender identification."

> The melancholic refuses the loss of the object, and internalization becomes a strategy of magically resuscitating the lost object, not only because the loss is painful, but because the ambivalence felt toward the object requires that the object be retained until differences are settled (1991, 61-62, 69).

Significantly, Butler argues, the prohibition against homosexuality is necessarily prior to the prohibition against incest, insofar as both boys and girls enter into the Oedipal drama already "disposed" to have heterosexual incestuous aims. On this basis, Butler contends that "the taboo against homosexuality in effect creates the so-called "primary" heterosexual "dispositions" by which the Oedipal conflict becomes possible" (1991, 64). Far from being foundational, then, heterosexual "dispositions" are "traces of a history of enforced sexual prohibitions which is untold and which the prohibitions seek to render untellable" (1991,

64). In this way, heterosexual desire is at once constituted, naturalized, and inscribed on the body:

> If gender differentiation follows upon the incest taboo and the prior taboo on homosexuality, then "becoming" a gender is a laborious process of becoming naturalized, which requires a differentiation of bodily pleasures and parts on the basis of gendered meanings. . . . [S]ome parts of the body become conceivable foci of pleasure precisely because they correspond to a normative ideal of a gender-specific body (1990, 70).[19]

In the context of this discussion, what is important is the possibility that Butler raises that the lost love object is 'incorporated' through a 'literalizing' of,

> . . . the loss *on* or *in* the body, and so [the incorporation in the form of the erogeneity of specific parts] appears as the facticity of the body, the means by which the body comes to bear 'sex' as its literal truth. The localization and/or prohibition of pleasures and desires in given "erotogenic" zones is precisely the kind of gender-differentiating melancholy that suffuses the body's surface (1990, 68).

Clearly, what Butler calls the "phantasmic nature" or "imaginary condition" of desire does not relate directly or specifically to O'Brien's thesis - that the biological process of reproduction is the material ground of male and female reproductive consciousness. For although Butler's contention that some parts of the body are "brought to life" while others are "deadened" sheds some light on the nature of sexuality, it does little to challenge the biological differences O'Brien has identified. On a more general level, however, Butler's argument does inspire a certain

degree of scepticism regarding O'Brien's claim that biological facts give rise to particular forms of consciousness; that is, to male and female reproductive consciousness. For what is at issue here is precisely the contingent nature of our bodily experiences, and on that subject Butler's analysis has something to say.

Moreover, Butler's challenge to the natural differences between the sexes is based on more than these infinitely arguable psychoanalytic theories. In the second place, that is, she applies Foucault's "critique of the category sex" to scientific research on the DNA sequence and the chromosomal basis of sex differentiation, to show that the male/female binary is itself discursively produced. Specifically, she refers to a group of researchers at MIT, who based a 1987 research study on the speculation that "a good ten percent of the population has chromosomal variations that do not fit neatly into the XX-female and XY-male set of categories" (1990, 107).[20] However, these phenomenon are not used as an opportunity to open up the binary framework of sex and gender. Instead, as Butler shows, this research evidences the way in which "cultural assumptions regarding the relative status of men and women and the binary relation of gender itself frame and focus the research into sex determination" (1991, 109).

According to Butler, incongruities between XX or XY chromosomes on the one hand, and the primary and secondary

sexual characteristics of the opposite sex on the other, inspired MIT's researchers to find a more reliable basis than the chromosomal or anatomical indicators of sex differentiation. To this end, Dr. David Page and his colleagues postulated a "TDF," or "testis-determining factor" in the form of an undetectable stretch of DNA that had moved to somewhere other that its customary location on the chromosomes. With rather puzzling circularity, however, the evidence for this hypothetical "master-gene" - which serves to reduce a variety of ambiguities to a decidable either/or - is precisely the external genitalia that was first deemed an insufficient indicator of sexual difference.

Moreover, as Butler points out, "femaleness is always conceptualized in terms of the absence of the male-determining factor, or of the passive presence of that factor. . . .[I]t is definitionally disqualified as an object of study." (1990, 108). On these bases it is clear that this study determined nothing that was not already presumed. On the contrary, the research of Page and associates reinforces ideas about sexual differentiation, and particularly about the binary structure in which it is invariably conceptualized.

Butler convincingly argues that sexuality in general and the erogeneity of certain bodily parts in particular is largely a result of the inscription of ideological norms of gender. If, moreover, the binary division of sex categories

is itself questionable, then O'Brien is overlooking important cultural and historical determinants of reproductive consciousness in her dualistic and universal formulation. Clearly, the meaning of biological experiences of the process of reproduction cannot be decided apart from the context in which those experiences are lived, and O'Brien's analysis implies that it can.

However, while Butler's argument is certainly compelling in many respects, it seems to me that her thought evidences what Roy Bhaskar calls the "epistemic fallacy" of conflating things with our descriptions of them - of, in other words, reducing "being to knowing" (Bhaskar 1989, 118). For example, when Butler takes Foucault to task for "maintaining a body prior to its cultural inscription . . . [and thereby appearing] to assume a materiality prior to signification and form," she loses sight of what Bhaskar, in another context, calls the "inherent ambiguity or bipolarity" of terms like "causes," "laws" and "facts." As he says,

> "The principle of the existential intransitivity of objects, that things in general exist and act independently of their descriptions, must be complemented by the principle of the historical transitivity of knowledge, that we can only know them under particular descriptions. But it does not follow from the principle of the historical transitivity of knowledge that we cannot know that what is known exists and acts independently of those descriptions (Bhaskar 1989, 152).

If we apply Bhaskar's scheme to Butler, we can see that she is conceptualizing the "fact" of materiality as

something dependent upon what Bhaskar calls the "human activity of creation," rather than as something that is "merely *sustained* or *transformed* by humans" (Bhaskar 1989, 55). According to Butler herself, Foucault seems to be maintaining this distinction. In an article published three years before *Gender Trouble*, Butler writes, "Foucault no more wants to dispute the material of anatomically discrete bodies than does Wittig, but asks instead how the materiality of the body comes to signify culturally specific ideas" (1987, 138).

In fact, Butler's initial position is to my mind much more tenable than that expressed in *Gender Trouble;* in the earlier article she writes, "Surely differences do exist which are binary, material and distinct, and we are not in the grips of political ideology when we assent to this fact" (1987, 135). Insofar as Butler no longer "assents" to a body prior in any way to cultural inscription, she has lost sight of what Bhaskar calls the 'ambiguity' or 'bipolarity' of facts. The materiality of biology - the biological process of reproduction, for example - cannot itself be construed as a "human creation," although the experience and knowledge of it is always, necessarily, socially mediated.

It can be argued, therefore, that even though bodies may be to some extent "already gendered" (Butler 1990, 111), it is also possible to assert, paradoxically, that concepts of gender - at least the 'masculine' gender - may also be

'always already sexed'. In other words, I will both follow Judith Butler's lead, and take a position that opposes it. For on one hand it seems to me that O'Brien's reading of male and female "reproductive consciousness" is informed by contemporary Western constructions of gender, and therefore cannot be considered to reflect a prediscursive or an ahistorical ontological foundation for feminist claims.

At the same time - that is, despite some significant qualifications of O'Brien's theory of the philosophical significance of reproductive consciousness - however, I nonetheless maintain that it is not just the concept of masculinity, but the male body that functions on a symbolic level and in a foundational way. For it does seem that men's reproductive consciousness, as an experience of alienation from the reproductive process, has come to figure in both theory and practice as the basis of notions of masculinity in contemporary Western culture. In this respect the male body, men's "sex," is prior to the masculinity or "gender" with which men are inscribed.

To return to the original question, then, which has to do with the relationship of biological maleness to cultural masculinity, the hypothesis that men experience themselves as alienated from the reproductive process does seem to be borne out by male-stream, philosophical descriptions of "Man" as radically separate from (bodily) nature. As we have seen, Descartes' work offers a particularly explicit

example of the equation of the 'self' with the incorporeal mind, and feminist theorists have shown that ideals of autonomy, separation and distance are firmly entrenched in the ideologies of masculinity.

Yet we need not view the relationship between biological maleness and masculinity (philosophical and cultural ideals) in terms of a one-to-one correspondence as O'Brien does. As I have argued, this view requires the problematic postulation of a transparency that is clearly unfounded - both within the context of O'Brien's own argument, and in light of Butler's demonstration that "the body" is socially-mediated to a large extent.

What we <u>can</u> postulate is a more indirect relation: that certain men at certain historical moments may have experienced their involvement in the reproductive process as an unmediated and indirect experience of natural continuity of the species, and that this experience of distance provides the model - the *metaphor*, in other words - for philosophical notions of the transcendent mind. Further, insofar as this transcendence and autonomy of the mind and masculinity has been considered superior to the supposed immanence of the body and femininity, men's claims to superiority are partially grounded in men's sexual specificity. In other words, men's problematic participation in the process of reproduction is the

motivating material condition of their claims to superiority.

But secondly, it follows that social and historical norms of "masculinity" also mystify the specificity of male biology by taking the reproductive part for the whole. In other words, the paradox is that if only specific aspects of male embodiment inform the Cartesian conceptualization of the 'self' - those associated with men's experience of and relation to the reproductive process - and if, further, those aspects are precisely the ones which differentiate male from female embodiment, then what has occurred is a selective naming of the male body - a naming which conforms to what Jacqueline Rose would call a "pre-existing hierarchy of values" (1986, 66).

In this sense there is also an ideological determination of the Enlightenment notion of the 'self' that is <u>prior</u> to any experience of male embodiment; that is, specific sexual and reproductive characteristics of males served as the basis for personality characteristics which were then not only coded as a superior, but said to constitute men's entire essence, if not the essence of humanity itself.[21] Thus it would also follow that the ostensible superiority of men has more to do with culturally valued characteristics than it does with anything that is exclusive to men.

My hypothesis, then, is that masculinity is both necessarily *and* contingently related to men - necessary to the extent that some of it is modeled on male anatomy/biology, and contingent to the extent that much of it is an ideological construct. For this reason the theorization of gender as either natural *or* cultural will necessarily give rise to contradictions within feminist theory. As we shall see in the next chapter, it is this particular paradox that has confounded contemporary feminist discussions of women's "identity."

CHAPTER 2

THE EQUALITY/DIFFERENCE DEBATE

In the introduction to this thesis, I suggested that it is incumbent upon feminists to pay attention to the relationship between maleness as a material phenomenon, and masculinity as a cultural ideal. Specifically, I have argued in the preceding chapter that men's sexual essence and their socially-constructed gender are profoundly inter-connected in Western thought, and that there is, therefore, no unproblematic way to consider either of these factors of male identity independently of the other. In my view, however, many feminist theorists have implicitly done just that.

The purpose of this chapter is to show that certain feminist theorizations of women's identity - by which I mean the consideration of the relationship between women (femaleness) and cultural norms of femininity - do not address adequately the paradoxical relationship between maleness and masculinity. Further, I will argue that this oversight results in serious problems within their theories.

The issue, I have indicated, is that in order to make coherent claims about women which refute sexism on a theoretical level, feminists have to determine the basis of

men's ostensible superiority. The question at stake is whether the characteristics designated as "superior" necessarily or 'naturally' arise from a purported male *essence*, or whether they are merely socially-constructed, and therefore contingent, masculine *values*. But although a position on this nature/culture question often grounds feminist refutations of sexism,[22] North American feminists have often simply taken a stand, rather than debated the issue. While I will support this assertion momentarily, I want to note now that the tendency to take a stand on one side or the other has brought with it two, related difficulties.

The first is that if the relation between natural maleness and cultural masculinity can be formulated as a paradoxical interdependence as I have argued, rather than as a simple, one-way relation or non-relation, then the assumption of an either/or stand will necessarily give rise to a series of contradictions on both sides of the divide. Moreover, if my theory is tenable, then not only will contradictions ensue on the level of theory, but these will in turn give rise to problems within feminist politics (see Alcoff 1988, 411-412).

The second difficulty caused by theorists' tendency to assume, rather than debate, the relationship of natural maleness to cultural masculinity, is that this relationship is then abstracted in the form of an assumption about the

relationship between sex and gender generally. In other words, the way in which sex is assumed to relate to gender for men - and it bears repeating that this assumption is more often implicit than explicit - is said to be equally true for women.[23] On the contrary, however, I will argue that if the Western ideology of 'Man' *qua* 'self' is premised upon a fundamental interdependence of what I have called "essence" and what I have called "value," we will see that sex is not linked to gender in the same way for women as it is for men.

To return to the first point, then, what I have in mind when I say that North American feminists tend to take an either/or stand, is what I have called an "ontological" reading of male superiority in the first instance, and a "constructionist" reading of this claim in the second.[24] By an "ontological" reading, I mean the understanding that men as a sexually distinct group are socially valued above women as a sexually distinct group, on the basis of 'natural', biologically specific differences - that is, differences which are prior to cultural inscription. This position is most often assumed, at least tacitly, by those I will call the "cultural" feminists[25] - who contend that women deserve, in Michèle Barrett's words, "enhanced cultural validation and greater material rewards" on the basis of women's *difference* from men.[26]

A "constructionist" reading, on the other hand, is usually the basis of "liberal" feminist theory.[27] On this view, it is the socially-constructed category of masculinity, not men, that is attributed with value (i.e., superiority). Moreover, liberal feminists contend, there is nothing in nature to bar women from achieving equality with men; it is the social construction of, and constraints against, women - not their biological specificity as females - that has prevented women from assuming the title "human" on *equal* footing with men. And it is the opposition between this liberal approach, and what I have called the cultural feminist approach, that constitutes what I will refer to as the "equality/difference" debate in North American feminist theory (Barrett 1987, 29).

Since the work of the Continental feminists has become more accessible to English-speaking feminists, this debate is, arguably, no longer central in contemporary feminist theory. Linda Alcoff and Teresa de Lauretis, for example, identify cultural feminism and post-structural feminism as the two primary, and opposing, feminist positions (Alcoff 1988, 406-407; de Lauretis 1987, 2). However, I would argue that the cultural feminist approach and the liberal feminist approach occur at the same historical moment (early 1970's to mid-1980's), and that this "post-structural" approach - especially as derived from Lacanian psychoanalytic theory - is a more recent (mid-1980's) reformulation of the issues at

stake in the Anglo-American debate (Barrett 1987, 38). In this sense it qualifies as a third response, which I will address directly in Chapter 3.

At this point, however, it is necessary to recall the earlier debate, in order to unravel the paradox that lies at its heart. Specifically, I suggest that the two terms introduced above, "essence" and "value," *both* function as variables in the formulation 'men are superior to women.' Yet in each of the feminist positions described, only one of the terms is open to debate. Now this is not to say that the other term is absolutely 'fixed', or that the 'variable' term is always consistently maintained within a given argument. But I do want to propose that these variables are never questioned *at the same time*. To show what I mean by this, I will turn now to a closer look at cultural and liberal feminist theory.[28]

In the first instance, I have argued, an ontological interpretation of the issue of men's claims of superiority is put forth by cultural feminists. This is to say that the cultural feminist approach of (re)presenting more positively a series of characteristics which historically have been associated with women, follows from the belief that so-called 'masculine' characteristics are innate (or "essential") to men.

On this view, for example, it is argued that men are valued above women because they are 'naturally' (more)

rational or (more) independent or naturally (more) aggressive (etc.), and it is these values which should be critiqued. In this sense, the factor I have called "essence" is fixed - or at any rate not deeply debated - in order that the factor I have called "value" can be opened for interrogation (see Alcoff 1988, 408).

In a text that argues for the ethical value of women's "different voice," for example, Carol Gilligan argues that women's moral development can provide "an alternative conception of maturity":

> The psychology of women that has consistently been described as distinctive in its greater orientations toward relationships and interdependence implies a more contextual mode of judgment and a different moral understanding. Given the differences in women's conceptions of self and morality, women bring to the life cycle a different point of view and order human experience in terms of different priorities (Gilligan 1982, 2).

Advocating such characteristics as responsibility, caring, intimacy and connection, Gilligan therefore calls for a reinterpretation of women's experience that would attribute equal value to a feminine moral code.

Interestingly, Gilligan suggests she is not making any ontological claims about the differences she is discussing, and indeed, for her argument, all that is necessary is that ethical differences between men and women can be said to obtain (1982, 2). However, it seems to me that a certain essentialism is unwittingly presumed. In particular, she highlights the myth of Persephone which, she says, serves to

undercut the distortion of developmental psychologists' exclusive celebration of "separation, autonomy, individuation and natural rights." This myth, she says, reminds us that,

> [N]arcissism leads to death, that the fertility of the earth is in some mysterious way tied to the continuation of the mother-daughter relationship, and that the life cycle itself arises from an alternation between the world of women and that of men. Only when life-cycle theorists divide their attention and begin to live with women as they have lived with men will their vision encompass the experience of both sexes and their theories become correspondingly more fertile (Gilligan 1982, 23).

In this passage it is clear that Gilligan does not think it is simply the accident of socialization that has given rise to women's "different voice"; rather, her model evokes the ideal of an essential, heterosexual complementarity between the sexes.

In a similar vein, Annis Pratt has documented what she calls the "archetypes" apparent in women's writing, in order to show that "women's fiction reflects an experience radically different from men's" (Pratt 1981, 6). Analyzing a series of fictional works by women writers, Pratt finds five principal archetypes which recur with more than coincidental frequency: "the green-world epiphany, the green-world lover, the rape trauma, enclosure, and rebirth." These archetypes, moreover, find counterparts in "the Demeter/Kore and Ishtar/Tammuz rebirth myths, Arthurian

grail narratives, and the Craft of the Wise, or witchcraft" (1981, 170).

According to Pratt, what is significant about these fictional patterns is that they indicate women's attempts to articulate an "authentic" or "total" self that has been thwarted and repressed within patriarchal culture. In Pratt's view there is a manifest tension in the fiction she examines between what "any human being might desire" and "society's prescriptions concerning gender," which results in a "radical alienation" for women on an existential level (1981, 6). This tension gives rise to such literary characteristics as an "alinear, cyclical, timeless consciousness," and "a patterning of objects and images according to arrangements that seem illogical to the normative perspective" (Pratt 1981, 169; 9-11). At the same time, however, she says there is also something subversive in the patterns that emerge. For it is to transcend, not merely to express, patriarchal restrictions of female authenticity, that women must look to archetypes that differ significantly from those which express men's experiences.

On this basis, she quotes with approval Carl Jung's view that the effect of participating in the Eleusinian mysteries was to,

> . . . extend the feminine consciousness. . . . An experience of this kind gives the individual a place and meaning in the life of generations, so that all unnecessary obstacles are cleared out of the way of the life-stream that is to flow through her (Pratt 1981, 170; second ellipse is Pratt's).

In fact, the celebration of femininity is among the female desires expressed by the archetypal repositories listed above, for Pratt adds that narratives of ancient feminine rituals "have uniquely feminine overtones" and "perennial appeal for women" (1981, 171). Thus, as was the case with Gilligan, there is again a tacit belief in some sort of authentic feminine essence; these archetypes stem from a "buried feminine tradition" which can potentially provide "clues to a power capable . . . of turning our wastelands once again into fruitful orchards where men and women can walk in amity and equality" (Pratt 1981, 169; 12).

Interestingly, Pratt is not alone among the cultural feminists in stressing the feminist value of ancient fertility rites, particularly as practised in (hypothesized) pre-patriarchal cultures. According to Heather Jon Maroney, many feminists of the 1970's returned to the overlooked experience of motherhood as the ground for the theorization of women's experience (Maroney 1985, 43-44; see also Webster 1975). Thus, within radical lesbian ideology, she says, matriarchy was adopted "as an idyllic and strategically useful myth" (1985, 44). From this perspective,

> Matriarchal society and motherhood are thought to be cooperative, natural, sex positive and permissive, peaceful and able to integrate males on a basis of equal exchange. In contrast, patriarchy is hierarchical, ultimately technologically rational, sexually repressive and violent for women. . . ." (Maroney 1985, 47-48).

Indeed, in a comprehensive investigation of motherhood as both "experience" and "institution," Adrienne Rich writes of the feminist desire to unbury a pre-patriarchal past in which female biology might have been "a source of power" (Rich 1986, 85). While cautioning that the historical verification of such a society may never be provided, Rich agrees that "a critical exploration backward in time can be profoundly radicalizing" (1986, 86). To this end, she refers to such writers as Elizabeth Gould Davis, Robert Graves, J.J. Bachofen and Robert Briffault, who have theorized the existence of "an ancient, Arcadian matriarchal world" in which female power was both acknowledged and celebrated (Rich 1986, 86).

> Throughout most of the world, there is archeological evidence of a period when Woman was venerated in several aspects, the primal one being maternal; when Goddess-worship prevailed, and when myths depicted strong and revered female figures. In the earliest artifacts we know, we encounter the female as primal power (Rich 1976, 93).

According to Rich, the original aim of her text was to examine motherhood from a feminist point of view. Her project was in resistance to a series of ideas, and most especially in resistance to "the ascription of a higher intrinsic human value to men than to women" (1986, ix). For the purpose of this argument, it is therefore significant that in trying to revalue maternity from a feminist perspective, Rich attributes to women a universal and fixed sexual essence.

> I have come to believe, as will be clear throughout this book, that female biology - the diffuse, intense sensuality radiating out from clitoris, breasts, uterus, vagina; the lunar cycles of menstruation; the gestation and fruition of life which can take place in the female body - has far more radical implications than we have yet come to appreciate. . . . In order to live a fully human life we require not only *control* of our bodies. . . ; we must touch the unity and resonance of our physicality, our bond with the natural order, the corporeal ground of our intelligence (1986, 39-40).

For it is precisely by fixing essence in this way that Rich argues to increase the social validation of women. Moreover, the logic of her argument implies a fixed male essence as well. In other words, if matriarchal - or what Rich calls more generally "gynocentric" - cultures exemplified a celebration of women's natural power of fertility and "transformation" which patriarchal cultures deny, and if sex inequality and patriarchal power-relationships "simply did not exist" in these ancient societies, then Rich is implying that patriarchy itself - the institutionalized oppression of women - is an expression of male essence (1986, 93-9).

Mary Daly, in fact, makes an argument of this kind. In a somewhat contradictory formulation, she agrees with Anne Koedt that "male and female roles are learned," and at the same time asserts that in both men and women sexually specific essence obtains:

> [T]he biological male is the oppressor not by virtue of his male biology but by virtue of his rationalizing supremacy on the basis of that biological difference (quoted in Daly 1985, 124-125).

In Daly's view, the way beyond the oppressive structures of male-dominated society is to make "the qualitative leap toward psychic androgyny" by recalling such values as egalitarianism and "human felicity" that are an inherent part of our "gynocentric origins" (1985, 94-95).[29] Further, she claims that, " 'On top' thinking, imagining and acting is essentially patriarchal," and that the patriarchal structures women have internalized are "in some sense less real than our own dreams" (Daly 1985, 94; 136). Here the implication is that by having the courage to assert the specifically female dream of gynocentric culture, feminist women can bring to an end the oppression of "phallic morality" (1985, 97).

Now I do not want to suggest that the values put forth by these and other feminists should not be appreciated or fought for; certainly egalitarianism, power as transformative, cyclicality and inter-connection are much needed correctives to the limitations and restrictions, as well as the oppressive consequences, of male-stream thought. However, it is important to note that insofar as cultural feminists are only questioning the value of so-called 'masculine' characteristics, the <u>essence</u> of maleness remains intact.

In particular, the problem with making an assumption about sexual essence is that it begs the question of social construction. Specifically, I have already pointed out in

the context of Mary O'Brien's thought that the universalization of sexual essence is problematic, given that most of these "differences" prove to be historically and culturally specific.[30] In addition, however, the issue of an implied (and unsupported) essentialism gives rise to a number of theoretical difficulties in the cultural feminist position.

For instance, it strikes me that if the postulation of an inherent, universal female nature is premised upon the belief in a pre-patriarchal, gynocentric culture, then this contention is at the very least on uncertain ground. For insofar as the existence of such societies is ultimately indeterminable, the essence that these feminists seek to reclaim is immediately open to refutation. Secondly, the cultural feminist resistance to patriarchal oppression is weakened by the implied link between male biology and patriarchal social structures. For if it can be shown that such a link is debatable - particularly in light of the enormous variations among male-dominated societies both culturally and historically - then the argument for the validation of a natural female essence no longer holds up. In short, if male essence is not the problem, female essence is not the solution.

However, there is a more important theoretical difficulty with what I have called the ontological reading of male supremacy; most significantly, we must wonder about

the extent to which these so-called "feminine" qualities are conceptually derived from masculine characteristics as their opposites or complements. In other words, to what extent do these revalued differences relate indirectly to what Sheila Ruth (1987, 159) calls the "Western gender dichotomy"?[31] Is Gilligan's emphasis on caring and connection merely a nicer way of thinking about women's ostensible emotionality and lack of autonomy? Is Rich's reformulation of motherhood and the female body a way of salvaging value for women's so-called inability to transcend materiality?

It is important to stress that even if these last suggestions are legitimate, they do not invalidate the cultural feminist position. However, it is vital to be very cautious about claiming, even with pride, the conditions that have been thrust upon us, and to be careful not to discard too quickly the values that men have claimed for their own. In this sense, it is necessary to do more than reconstruct the category "woman" on the basis of a revalorized femininity - more than merely consider the old terms in a reversed way; we need also to question whether or not gender indeed follows from sex.

Significantly, the theoretical problems I have highlighted stem from a feminist perspective that is based upon an uncritical acceptance of one of the ways in which the relationship between masculinity and maleness has been formulated: it accepts masculinity as a natural phenomenon.

In other words, the elevation of femaleness and femininity to the greater positions within the dyads rests upon the tacit assumption that if men as a sex are naturally gendered as masculine, then women's gender-specific characteristics must also follow from sexual essence. In fact, the frequent assumption here is that males and females both have a (constant) sexual essence - that ontological (or indeed ethical or epistemological) claims can be made on the basis of differences that are observed between men and women.

As I have suggested, moreover, these are not purely abstract questions; the ways in which the problem of male dominance is understood seems to give rise to opposing, or at least conflicting, political strategies. For the cultural feminists who read the problem of men's claims of superiority as meaning that men are what is valued, for example, the logical imperative is that we should strategize about and fight for the revaluation of women. This argument, in turn, seems to give rise to the belief in the political efficacy of a feminist counter-culture (Barrett 1987, 30-31; Kristeva 1982). For example, for both Mary Daly and Annis Pratt (among others), the re-emergence of a female culture is seen as the antidote to the hierarchal, oppressive, and ultimately deadly powers of patriarchy.

However, as Julia Kristeva has pointed out,

> It has . . . become clear, because of the particular radicalization of the second generation [of feminists who came to the movement after May of 1968], that these protest movements, including

> feminism, are not "initially libertarian" movements which only later, through internal deviations or external chance manipulations, fall back into the old ruts of the initially combated archetypes. Rather, the very logic of counterpower and of countersociety necessarily generates, by its very structure, its essence as a simulacrum of the combated society or of power (Kristeva 1982, 46).

"As with any society," Kristeva contends, "the countersociety is based on the expulsion of an excluded element, a scapegoat charged with the evil of which the community duly constituted can then purge itself. . ." (1982, 45). In other words, if the goal is to determine once and for all what the 'true' feminine is - even in the name of feminism - then this politics cannot help but become as restrictive as any patriarchal system. For this reason, it is not only on the level of theory, but also on the level of political strategy, that the question of genderized values should not be considered independently of the question of sexual essence.

I suggested earlier that there is a second difficulty in the tendency to assume, rather than debate the relationship between masculinity and maleness. In the case of cultural feminism, this difficulty results from conceptualizing the issue in terms of difference. Now in this respect, feminist theorists are merely following the convention of male-stream philosophers who have posed the characteristics attributed to women as symmetrical *counterparts* to so-called masculine attributes. Yet a

closer look at what has been called "femininity" suggests that the very link between sex and gender may be organized in a radically asymmetrical way for men and women.

This is to say that, as I have argued, masculinity is a distortion in that it involves a reduction of 'Man' to one aspect of maleness, and an amplification of that aspect to the entirety of men's identities. First, then, masculinity is only partially related to maleness in Western culture, in that men's social identities involve the paradoxical interdependence of their natural sex and their cultural gender. Secondly, femininity has been construed as the negative pole of a positive masculinity (de Beauvoir 1974; Ruth 1987). Thus femininity is twice removed from any presumed essence, male or female. This is to say that it is grounded on (an already once-removed) *masculinity*, and *not* on the female body.

Autonomy, discontinuity, activity, separation and objectivity, in other words, are socially-valued 'masculine' characteristics that may have some basis in male biology, in that these alleged values may indicate a way in which men have interpreted their experience of the process of reproduction. However, associations with the feminine such as passivity, dependence and irrationality are so clearly the opposites of those merits already claimed my men, that it is difficult to sustain the assertion that they bear more

than an accidental relation to any experience of female essence.

On this basis, it would follow that while the gender of masculinity, as a partial reflection of the male sex, is *both* descriptive of *and* prescriptive for men, the gender of femininity bears only an accidental relation to the female sex. Femininity as it has traditionally been defined, then, is *only* prescriptive for women. To phrase this another way, it would seem that sex and gender are fundamentally interdependent in the case of masculinity, but relatively independent in the case of femininity. And in terms of the cultural feminist position, what this means is that the dualistic gender paradigm of male and female identity is itself deeply suspect, and should not be adopted - even in the name of a reformulated androgyny - too readily.

Ironically, the liberal feminist approach also accepts uncritically the Western philosophical construction of masculinity - but from the opposite side of the coin. In what I am calling the 'constructionist' reading of men's claims of superiority, liberal feminists begin with the assumption that what White Westerners call 'masculinity' is <u>not</u> related to maleness in an essential or "necessary" way.

In the tradition of liberal political theory in general, which is grounded on a notion of the independent and decontextualized 'individual' (Razack 1990, 400-401), this formulation of the problem of women's subordination

posits the gender of masculinity (and the value associated with it) as conceptually separated from the sex or essence of maleness. Thus, while cultural feminists question the values associated with masculinity, liberal feminists question the essence from which they are said to derive, in order to reclaim masculine values for women.

An example of this perspective, which stands on the equality side of the debate, is the argument that men have developed such characteristics as rationality, independence or objectivity because they have provided each other with the social and material conditions in which to do so. By the same token, women's characteristics - and, more importantly, women's purported lack of 'masculine' characteristics - are said to be contingent - that is, the consequence of social constraints rather than of female essence. On this basis, it is argued, a modification of social structures and attitudes would provide women with the opportunity to be (for example) rational or independent or courageous too.

In one of the earlier applications of liberal political theory to the issue of women's rights, for example, Mary Wollstonecraft offers a forceful petition for the encouragement of women's equal intelligence and rational powers (Wollstonecraft 1974). Very much in keeping with the Enlightenment belief in rationality, Wollstonecraft contends that "it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues

do not result from the exercise of its own reason" (1974, 45). In Wollstonecraft's view, "habits of virtue" render the individual "independent"; thus men's insistence that women's virtue lies in their dependence and weakness has, "no other foundation than. . . that utility men pretend arbitrarily to judge, shaping it to their own convenience" (1974, 45, 63).

Wollstonecraft claims that it is women's education, not their nature, that results in the appearance of weakness, arguing that uneducated military men evidence many of the same characteristics as women.

> [S]oldiers acquire a little superficial knowledge, snatched from the muddy current of conversation, and, from continually mixing with society, they gain, what is termed a knowledge of the world; and this acquaintance with manners and customs has frequently been confounded with a knowledge of the human heart. . . . Soldiers, as well as women, practice the minor virtues with punctilious politeness. Where is then the sexual difference, when education has been the same? All the difference that I can discern, arises from the superior advantage of liberty, which enables the former to see more of life . . . (1974, 47; first ellipse mine).

Now it seems to me that if observation is the basis of Wollstonecraft's assertions, then the similarities she is highlighting are much less significant than the manifest differences between "soldiers" and bourgeois women of that period. However, the point I would like to address is that, in this early text on women's equality, an adequate education is seen as the *sine qua non* of the virtuous, independent and rational individual, and Wollstonecraft is

very clear that in this there is no essential difference between the sexes.

As she repeats throughout this text, the virtues, the knowledge, and the means of acquiring these should be the same for men and women, for although women may be physically inferior to men, it does not follow that women need to become weaker still (1974, 41, 55; see also 54; 58; 63;). On the contrary, women should strive to reduce rather than to exaggerate observable differences of intellectual strength, in order that "mankind" as a whole be rendered more 'virtuous'. On this basis, she asserts, women should not be misled by the "bugbear" of the word "masculine"; in fact, the imitation of "manly virtues" is most laudable - if what is meant is,

> . . .the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennobles the human character, and which raise females in the scale of animal being, when they are comprehensively termed mankind . . .(1974, 41).

For Wollstonecraft, then, what is at issue is the factor of identity I have called "essence," while the equally problematic question of value remains uncontested. The ideal of masculinity, with its emphasis on reason and independence, is to be emulated by women, in order that they might attain the same level of (generic) 'humanity' that had hitherto been men's exclusive domain. Secondly, so-called 'feminine' virtues such as dependence, vanity and delicacy of sentiment are to be discarded as not worthy of the name

'virtue'. Clearly, for Wollstonecraft men have no more of an ontological predisposition for masculinity than women do.

Commenting on more recent articulations of this position, Alice Jardine offers the following summary:

> There are also those who deny it [difference], or, rather, who seek to defuse the power of difference by minimizing biology and emphasizing cultural coding: on some level, these responses are saying, "Woman would be the same as . . . if only" (Jardine 1985, xxv; her ellipse).

Indeed, this seems to be Simone de Beauvoir's point of view in her ground-breaking work on woman as paradigmatic "Other" (de Beauvoir 1974). A much more precise analysis than Wollstonecraft's *Vindication, The Second Sex* is a challenge to the determining force of sexual essence and, concomitantly, a call for women to strive for what she calls "the loftiest *human values*: heroism, revolt, disinterestedness, imagination, creation. . . ."(de Beauvoir 1974, 694; my emphasis).[32] While de Beauvoir does not ignore biological specificity, she persistently maintains that the important differences between the sexes - those which bar women from striving for "transcendence" - are circumstantial and therefore contingent, rather than essential.

> How could one expect her [woman] to show audacity, ardor, disinterestedness, grandeur? These qualities appear only when a free being strikes forward through an open future, emerging far beyond all given actuality. Woman is shut up in a kitchen or in a boudoir, and astonishment is expressed that her horizon is limited. Her wings are clipped, and it is found deplorable that she cannot fly. Let but the future be opened to her,

> and she will no longer by compelled to linger in the present (1974, 672).

Now de Beauvoir is not a "liberal" in the political sense of the term - she is in fact advocating what she calls "existential ethics" from a marxist perspective. However, she does share a series of important assumptions with contemporary liberal feminists (see Moi 1985, 98). Most significantly, the exaltation of the 'independent' (though in this case not decontextualized) individual who can somehow get beyond her (or his) gender, smacks of liberal bourgeois individualism. And, along with those who advocate equality for women in the liberal mode, de Beauvoir is convinced of the radical separation of sex and gender: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (1974, 301). Moreover, neither the liberal feminists, nor this French theorist, question the presumed gender-neutrality of the values they advocate.

On the contrary, de Beauvoir clearly rejects what she sees as the "truly feminine" - the "frivolous, infantile, irresponsible" or "submissive woman" (1974, xxvii) - leaving the goal of transcendence 'fixed' as an undeniable good. With this ideal in mind, de Beauvoir asserts,

> Once again: in order to explain her limitations it is woman's situation that must be invoked and not a mysterious essence; thus the future remains largely open (1974, 794).

If, as we have seen, for Annis Pratt and other cultural feminists "society's prescriptions concerning gender" bar

women from experiencing or expressing an authentic female *essence*, for Wollstonecraft and de Beauvoir these prescriptions hold women back from achieving the "loftiest human *values*." Similarly, in her ground-breaking work, *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan argues that,

> [I]f an able American woman does not use her human energy and ability in some meaningful pursuit (which necessarily means competition, for there is competition in every serious pursuit of our society), she will fritter away her energy in neurotic symptoms, or unproductive exercise, or destructive "love" (Friedan 1963, 374).

Friedan urges women - who Rosemarie Tong quite rightly distinguishes as "suburban, white, educated, middle-class, heterosexual house[wives] in the United States" (Tong 1989, 24)[33] - to see past "the feminine mystique," and to change their lives by educating or re-educating themselves in order to compete with men professionally as equal human beings (Friedan 1963, 372-375).

Two points are worth noting: first, the values applauded are the familiar ones: "spirit, courage, independence, determination. . . strength of character" and, most significantly, "self-reliance" and a sense of oneself "as an individual" - (Friedan 1963, 38). Secondly, in conjunction with this reclaiming of the masculine, we again find the challenge to sexual essence:

> The high incidence of cramps with menstruation, nausea and vomiting during pregnancy, depression with childbirth, and severe physiological and psychological distress at menopause have come to be accepted as a "normal" part of feminine biology. Are these stigmata . . . part of the

> fixed and eternal nature of women as they are popularly assumed to be, or are they somehow related to that unnecessary choice between "femininity" and human growth, sex and self? (Friedan 1963, 269).

While Friedan's belief in "human growth" is laudable, it is nonetheless clear that there are theoretical problems with a feminist theory that is positioned too firmly on one side of the nature/culture divide or the other. On one hand, unlike the cultural feminists, the liberal feminists do not make any assumptions about the specificity of sexual essence; it is precisely the ontological status of gender that is under dispute. In this regard the liberal feminist attention to the cultural and historical determinants of gender identity is an important contribution. Moreover, it is precisely through the lobbying and activism of these feminists that important strides have been made in terms of improving women's working conditions and increasing professional options.

On the other hand, however, proponents of a nominal 'equality' do tend to accept uncritically the values that have been associated with men. On this basis, I would argue, this approach is as limited as the other in its failure to examine closely the paradoxical nature of masculine identity.

Specifically, I have already argued that the "reason" these feminists would reclaim is by no means ideologically pure; on the contrary, the concept of reason itself

originated in Greek thought as that which transcends (feminine) matter and the body, and it evolved in conjunction with the Western ideals of autonomy, separation, individualism and objectivity that demarcate masculinity. Now this is not to imply that reason is a bad thing or, for particular projects, an ineffective tool.[34] Nonetheless, it is important to point out that the liberal feminist reconceptualization of the concept of 'woman' still derives from the complex of maleness/masculinity that underlines the concept of 'man'. The generic, in short, cannot be so easily presumed.

For the problem remains that by minimizing the theoretical importance of sexual difference, these theorists bypass the thorny question of whether or not women *can* truly achieve humanity in the way it has been defined. For example, we have seen that Wollstonecraft maintains the 'human' ideals of rationality and independence. Similarly de Beauvoir contends that "the tendency of the subject" is "toward alienation" (1974, 53) and Friedan sees an opposition between competing individuals as an inevitability of "serious pursuits." Each of these views, it seems to me, is based upon a notion of the individual as completely discrete and as necessarily opposed to others. Yet if, as I have hypothesized, this isolated and 'independent' self may be modeled on *male* experience (of the reproductive process, in particular), then there is a sense in which the so-called

"human" ideal itself is not only contingently masculine, but is also necessarily male. For this reason, as the cultural feminists have discerned, there is a need to question not only the fixity of biological essences, but the set of values to which these are said to be attached.

As was the case with cultural feminism, the one-sided nature of the liberal feminist approach gives rise to problems on the level of political strategy as well. In particular, if we read the problem of men's claims of superiority to mean that masculinity is what is valued (but that the characteristics that constitute it are only called 'masculine' because so far only men have exhibited them), then it would follow that we need to create social conditions in which women would have the same opportunities as men. This is certainly the proposal of the theorists discussed above. As I have just suggested, however, these conditions, even if present, would only offer women the option of attempting to achieve masculinity - a doubtful goal at best, insofar as it necessitates the reduction of women to a masculine norm. In other words, in this emphasis on the masculine, what significant differences between men and women might be lost?

Finally, within the context of my discussion of cultural feminism, I have also highlighted the problem of abstracting the relationship between sex and gender from that posited between maleness and masculinity. To phrase

this another way, it is my contention that particular assumptions about the relationship between maleness and masculinity ground both the liberal and the cultural feminist response to the issue of women's material and theoretical subordination. In particular, both the liberal and the cultural feminists explicitly or implicitly maintain that, for both men and women, nature (sex) precedes culture (gender). What these theorists disagree on, is the question of whether or not gender necessarily or only contingently follows from sex (for both men and women).[35]

While those on the 'difference' side of the divide tend to connect sex and gender, the equality theorists posit a radical distinction between the two. Neither approach, however, is without its difficulties. For just as I have asserted that we should question the dualistic paradigm of male and female gender identity assumed by cultural feminists, so too should we debate the unitary liberal paradigm of the generic individual.

Again, the issue at stake is whether or not sex (nature) is indeed related to gender (culture) in the same way for women as it is for men. Specifically, I have suggested that while there may be both a descriptive and a prescriptive component to male identity, there is only an accidental correspondence between femaleness and a prescriptive femininity. On this basis, while it would be undoubtedly beneficial to discard the negative attributes

associated with the feminine, the dismissal of the meaning or import of *femaleness* is a potential loss. Perhaps, rather, we would do well to reconsider the entire paradigm.

Such a reconsideration would provide, I think, a resolution to the equality/difference debate that was left behind sometime in the mid-1980's. For although the focus of the debate shifted with the advent of post-structuralism, it does not seem to me that the original discussion was ever concluded. On the contrary, I think we are still left with a contradiction between the celebration of women's culture(s) on the one hand, and the attempt to be "the same" as men on the other. At the same time, on the level of political activism, groups such as the Canadian National Action Committee on the Status of Women (N.A.C.) or the American National Organization for Women (N.O.W.), are still positioned squarely across from radical separatist groups such as the Quebec organization, *Amazones d'hier lesbiennes aujourd'hui*, or the American collective that publishes the journal *off our backs*.

From a philosophical perspective, what is especially interesting about this stand-off is the way in which, for both of these 'sides', the ideal of a self-transparent core or 'self,' "as an active and effective social and political agent," is never called into question (Barrett 1987, 33). Rather, the cultural feminist approach is to oppose the masculine model with a reformulated feminine 'self,'

'Woman,' who is embodied, and/or "nurturing, caring and non-competitive" (Bower 1991, 29) - who is, in effect, still related to 'Man' as his opposite or complement. Similarly, the liberal feminists also fail to question the preeminence of the implicitly masculine 'self' *qua* disembodied 'mind', calling instead for women's participation in this same masculine construct.

But at this stage of theorizing in the English academy, the operative assumption was that a stable, coherent and unified 'self' - and particularly that concept of the 'self' formulated by Descartes - could and should be reclaimed by women (Waugh 1989, 8-9; see also Phelan 1991, 132). Knotted at the very heart of the equality/difference impasse, then, is the way in which the issue of identity itself is conceptualized - particularly for women. For if what is assumed, *a priori*, is a Cartesian 'self' informed by a paradoxical male/masculine configuration, then the primary question for feminists can only be whether to reject the (masculine) Enlightenment 'self' in the name of (feminine) difference, or to accept it in the name of equality. And this question, in turn, has depended upon the way in which the question of men's purported superiority was understood.

Thus, those who believe that gender follows from sex, that is, the cultural feminists who believe that males are naturally masculine, tend to reject the masculine 'self' in favour of a revalorized feminine 'self'. Those for whom

gender can be distinguished from sex, on the other hand - the liberal feminists who believe that women can be 'masculine' too - tend to accept this concept of the 'self' as a viable model for women's identity. In both cases, however, a stand is necessarily taken on the issue of the relationship of maleness to masculinity *prior* to the determination of women's identity. In this sense, both positions are still bound to the original framework, and both are necessarily fraught with problems.

What I have called reconsidering the whole paradigm, then, requires a return to the most fundamental assumptions underlying the notion of women's identity - for example, assumptions about "reason, knowledge, or the self," and especially about dualism (Flax 1987, 626). For these concepts, as they have been constituted, give rise not only to theoretical contradictions, but impact on the level of feminist political strategy as well.

During approximately the last six years, this issue of "Woman's" identity has come into sharper focus in the Anglo-American tradition. For example, Sandra Harding has observed that,

> [O]nce we understand the destructively mythical character of the essential and universal "man" which was the subject and paradigmatic object of nonfeminist theories, so too do we begin to doubt the usefulness of analysis that has essential, universal woman as its subject or object - as its thinker or the object of its thought (1986a, 646).

However, Harding's application of this aspect of postmodernism does not ultimately offer a solution to the impasse between "maintaining that our biological differences ought to be recognized by public policy and insisting that biology is not destiny for either women or men" (1986a, 657, 662). Harding's conclusion, rather, is that because "we cannot resolve these dilemmas in the terms in which we have been posing them," we should instead "learn how to regard the instabilities themselves as valuable resources" for the invention of "a new kind of theorizing" (1986a, 664).

By the same token, Denise Riley's response to the question of how to understand the category "women" is that, in a nutshell, different political moments call for different political strategies.

> [F]eminism must be agile enough to say, 'Now we will be "women" - but now we will be persons, not these "women".' And, in practice, what sounds like a rigid opposition - between a philosophical correctness about the indeterminacy of the term, and a strategical willingness to clap one's feminist hand over one's theoretical mouth and just get on with 'women' where necessary - will loosen (Riley, p.113).

Again, the issue is merely flagged, not resolved.

Perhaps, however, the "new French feminisms" that have arrived from the Continent have more theoretical and political import than has so far been discerned. For on one hand, the French theorists' radical critique of such dualisms as mind/body and male/female has indeed destabilized the "analytic categories." On the other hand,

however, accusations of "essentialism" - the interpretation of French feminist theory as inextricably bound up with female biology - may have lessened the potential impact of this important work (see, for example, Jones 1985; Moi 1985; Alcoff 1988). In the next chapter, therefore, I will highlight what I see as the radical potential of French feminist approaches to female subjectivity, in order to show how those approaches shed light on the issues I have considered so far.

CHAPTER 3

RETHINKING THE 'SELF': POSTMODERN INNOVATIONS

As I have stressed in the first chapter of this thesis, it must be understood that the issue at stake for feminists is not biological or physiological differences *per se*, but the meaning these differences acquire within particular cultural and historical contexts. To substantiate this claim, I have posed Mary O'Brien's ground-breaking hypothesis that the reproductive consciousness of men and women are radically asymmetrical, against Judith Butler's compelling argument that so-called "nature," the body itself, is never prior to cultural inscription. In a reconciliation, then, of these two perspectives, I assume the interdependence, and the mutually-defining character, of the natural and the social. On this basis, what is at issue for feminists is what I have called the "symbolic dimension" of biological difference.

What is significant about men's unmediated alienation from reproductive continuity is that it has been interpreted ideologically - interpreted, that is, to mean that men are both separate from, and masters of, "nature" (including the natural world, women and the body, among others). In a philosophical expression of this version of masculine

identity, men are posited as absolute "mind" and (therefore) as transcendent, while women, as absolute body, are philosophically constituted as so much inert, passive matter (Ruth 1987, 157-158; Young-Bruehl 1987). Finally, within the framework of this mind/body dualism, it is the mind, and those attributes associated with it, that are said to constitute the 'self.'

I have therefore argued that the concept of the (masculine) 'self' idealized within Western philosophy is inextricably bound to partial aspects of male biology. Thus, such ostensibly gender-neutral concepts as the "self," the "individual" or the "human," and such ideals as "autonomy" or "objectivity" as the paragon of "reason" - that is, the very concepts borrowed for feminist theoretical ends - are already implicated in an interpretation of male experience.

The equality/difference framework leaves feminists in a no-win position. For by accepting the axiomatic idealization of authentic selfhood endemic to Western thought - and particularly to the project of Modernism (Finn 1988, 1) - both the liberal and the cultural feminist postulations of women's identity are thereby bound to a series of terms that have already been set. In other words, women's identity has been rescued from male-stream thought either as the same/equal 'humanity' of women, or as an ontologically different 'femininity'. But both feminist

reformulations of women's identity are necessarily, if unwittingly, juxtaposed against what I have identified as the male/masculine configuration underlying the Cartesian concept of the 'self.'

By opposing the two feminist positions face-to-face in this way, however, we reveal their shared assumption that the reasoning 'self,' the humanist 'individual,' is a viable starting point for feminism. For the purposes of this discussion, then, what is significant about "postmodern" theory[36] is its radical challenge to this fundamental presupposition. For what the postmodern feminists[37] did (especially those in France) was to turn the focus back to the issue of identity itself, by using psychoanalytic theory which destabilizes and challenges the concept of "the self" as unconscious fantasy - fantasy that is constructed in and through language.

In fact, I think this challenge to the Enlightenment 'self' grounds French feminist theorizing. As Jane Gallop remarks, "a difference, one of many," between French and American feminism, is that,

> [A]s a feminist goal Americans - like Nancy Chodorow - speak of building a "strong core of self," whereas French - like Josette Féral - talk of the "subversion of the subject." In question is not only a strong core versus a subversion/ dispersion of the core, but also a "self" versus a "subject." The "self" implies a center, a potentially autonomous individual; the "subject" is a place in language, a signifier that is already alienated in an intersubjective network (Gallop and Burke 1985, 106).

Refusing the Western, and specifically the Cartesian, formulation of the 'self,' theorists such as Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva begin by challenging the dualistic paradigm itself, in which the 'self' is constituted as the (masculine) transcendent mind (or "ego," in Freudian terms), in opposition to the (feminine) immanent body. Instead, as I will explain in this chapter, the question of 'Woman' is reconsidered in the light of Jacques Lacan's formulation of "the speaking subject" - which (or who) is always already masculine.

The benefit of using Lacan's analysis (particularly through the lens of these feminist theorists) in the context of my own discussion is that it allows for an understanding of the symbolic nature of subjectivity that O'Brien's analysis lacks. For although I do not agree with O'Brien that "female reproductive consciousness" is transparently related to *female* bodies, I have suggested that it might have *metaphoric* utility as an integrative, continuous and, as we shall see, a 'multiple' model for subjectivity.

What I have in mind is this: if we grant that a male/masculine configuration underlying the concept of 'self' informs both the cultural *and* the liberal feminist perspectives and, secondly, if we can demonstrate that the presupposed concept of 'self' is a "subject" constituted in and through language, then it is possible to circumvent the theoretical contradictions of the equality/difference debate

by posing a new model of subjectivity in its place. As I have indicated, I think Mary O'Brien's description of female reproductive consciousness provides such a model and that this, precisely, is its potential. However, I will demonstrate here that it is on the basis of research within the French tradition - especially with respect to the work of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray - that we can extend O'Brien's thought in this important and constructive direction.

It should be noted that the following discussion is not intended as a comprehensive engagement with what are clearly varied and complex ideas. On the contrary, for my purposes the focus will be very precise - only specific aspects of the thought of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray are germane to this argument.[38]

In particular, in "Women's Time" - arguably the essay of most interest to feminists (see Moi's comments in Kristeva 1986, 187) - Kristeva applies Lacan's psychoanalytic speculations on the relationship between language and the unconscious directly to the question of the future of feminist theory and practice. Interestingly, as Michèle Barrett has noted in another context, Kristeva's emphasis on discourse - her focus on the subject constituted in and by language - occasions a shift away from a politics based on the differences (or similarities) *between* women and men, to a new politics which "emphasizes the difference(s)

within the category of woman itself, as well as within the specific social existences of women" (Barrett 1987, 29, my emphasis; see also Bower 1991, 25).

In fact, I will highlight the way in which Kristeva's understanding of what she calls the "split subject," or "subject in process" (1982, 49, n. 27), informs her assertion that, "the very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to *metaphysics*" (1982, 51). In particular, I will show that Kristeva's psychoanalytic challenge to the universal, transcendent, and self-transparent 'self' of the Enlightenment is based on her understanding that "subjects" are not so much divided <u>from</u> other subjects (as in man/woman or self/other), as they are split between conscious and unconscious processes <u>within</u> themselves. In Kristeva's view, moreover, patriarchal society requires the projection of these two components of subjectivity - the conscious and the unconscious - on to men and women respectively.

Contemporary psychoanalytic insights thus ground Kristeva's political vision; in "Women's Time" she argues for what she calls "an *interiorization of the founding separation of the sociosymbolic contract*" (1982, 52; her emphasis). In order to show how this phrase encapsulates Kristeva's political vision, however, I will first provide an overview of some of the central psychoanalytic concepts involved. I will then argue that although Kristeva's

politics are problematic in a number of ways, her radical deconstruction of gender identity is of feminist value - particularly with regard to the problems I have identified in the Anglo-American feminist tradition. Kristeva opens up the possibility of a new way of thinking about subjectivity - she proposes a subject, that is, that is not founded on the exclusion of an "other."

By the same token, what interests me in the work of Irigaray is equally specific. Taking the deconstructive project further than Kristeva, Irigaray challenges the inevitability of the present constitution of the symbolic order by performing a feminine "Other" that corresponds to what O'Brien calls "female reproductive consciousness." What distinguishes Irigaray's performance of a "female" speaker from O'Brien's representation of women's consciousness, however, is that Irigaray's symbolic demonstration of woman *qua* speaking subject gives to (her version of) female corporeality not an ontological status, but a discursive or *symbolic* voice.

What Irigaray is doing, I think, is taking up the challenge to the Cartesian subject that Lacan and Kristeva, following Freud, initiate. In what I think is an unprecedented move, she proposes the possibility of "a symbolic system other than patriarchy" (1985, 73). The benefit of this is that Irigaray thereby offers a potential way to think about the category "Woman" that

neither complements/opposes the category "Man" (difference), nor posits a problematic sameness under the generic classification 'human' (equality). Rather, Irigaray articulates the possibility of what I am calling "other than *Other*." Again, what I would like to argue is that this project is a useful one, *not* because Irigaray has determined who or what women 'really' are, but because this alternative model of subjectivity, based as it is on a reading of the female body, takes us away from the man/woman dichotomy that has been previously assumed in feminist theory. In these ways, both Irigaray and Kristeva open up political possibilities that have not yet been thought.

Unlike Irigaray, who is providing a radical alternative to traditional feminine identities (as discussed below), Kristeva's proposal to feminists is of a profoundly deconstructive nature. In a frequently cited quotation, for example, she contends,

> The belief that "one is a woman" is almost as absurd and obscurantist as the belief that "one is a man."[39] . . . On a [deep] level . . . a woman cannot "be"; it is something which does not even belong in the order of *being*. It follows that a feminist practice can only be at odds with what already exists so that we may say "that's not it" and "that's still not it" (1981, 137).

This passage raises a number of questions which are central to this discussion. First of all, we need to ask why it is that "a woman cannot be." Similarly, on what basis does Kristeva contend that the belief that "one is a man" is even more "absurd"? Finally, why do these challenges to sexual

specificity result in a negative feminist politics ("that's not it"). By answering these questions, we will be able to see what Kristeva means when she says the "sociosymbolic contract" is 'founded on separation' (p. 85, above).

With regard to the first question, then, the reason a woman cannot "be" at this "deeper level" is that within the order of "the symbolic" - by which Kristeva means "language as nomination, sign and syntax" (1980, 136; 19) - the place of the feminine is constituted as a lack. Following Freud, Kristeva asserts that the mother, whose body is first known as "the receptacle and guarantor of demand," is subsequently seen to be "castrated" - or lacking the phallus (1986, 142, 101). Thus, says Kristeva,

> The discovery [*sic*] of castration . . . detaches the subject from his dependence on the mother, and the perception of this lack [*manque*] makes the phallic function a symbolic function - *the* symbolic function (1986, 101; Kristeva's emphasis).

Now it should be noted that Kristeva uses inverted commas when she introduces the word "discovery" (1986, 100), and therefore has something specific in mind. In particular, I understand her to mean that children only infer that their mothers have actually been castrated, but that this interpretation of female anatomy is *fantasized* as 'real'. For the child, then, the mother's ostensible castration is <u>experienced</u> as a "discovery." Moreover, Kristeva suggests that the hypotheses of "castration fantasy" and "penis envy" have explanatory value regarding

the discourses of neurotic men and women, and therefore tell us something about all men and women.

> [Castration and penis envy] are not the ideological fantasies of their inventor but, rather, logical necessities to be placed at the "origin" in order to explain what unceasingly functions in neurotic discourse. In other words, neurotic discourse, in man and woman, can only be understood in terms of its own logic when its fundamental causes are admitted as fantasies of the primal scene and castration, even if (as may be the case) *nothing renders them present in reality itself* (1982, 40; my emphasis).

To return to the importance of this "discovery," then, Kristeva sees it as "a decisive moment," because it motivates a separation of the child from "his" mother:

> [T]he subject, finding his identity in the symbolic, *separates* from his fusion with the mother, *confines* his *jouissance* to the genital and transfers semiotic motility on to the symbolic order (Kristeva 1986, 101).[40]

In plainer language, Kristeva is suggesting that discovery of the mother's 'castrated' condition has two effects: it stimulates the child's separation from her, and it shifts the location of the "phallus" to somewhere else; in other words, when it is discovered that the mother 'does not have it', the phallus is rendered transcendent. Thus the phallic function becomes a symbolic function when the mother is no longer seen as the guarantor of gratification.

> Castration is, in sum, the imaginary construction of a radical operation" which constitutes the symbolic field and all beings inscribed therein (1982, 41).

Moreover, insofar as the mother no longer represents plentitude, she is no longer seen as that which can fully

satisfy desire; desire will always exceed that which the mother can provide.[41] Thus the (imaginary) discovery of castration results in a gap between the mother and the plenitude that is projected to the phallus as transcendental signifier - precisely, that is, the gap between signifier and signified:

> The gap between the imaged ego and drive motility, between the mother and the demand made on her, is precisely the break that establishes what Lacan calls the place of the Other as the place of the 'signifier' (1986, 101).

On this basis, Kristeva claims, (the fear of) castration is "indispensable to the advent of the symbolic":

> This [imaginary construction of an] operation constitutes signs and syntax; that is, language, as a *separation* from a presumed state of nature, of pleasure fused with nature so that the introduction of an articulated network of differences, which refers to objects henceforth and only in this way separated from a subject, may constitute *meaning* (1982, 41; her emphasis).

Kristeva understands the generation of meaning in language, then, on the basis of two hypotheses: first, that "dependence on the mother is severed, and transformed into a symbolic relation to an other, [and that] the constitution of an Other is indispensable for communicating with an other" (1986, 102).[42] The second hypothesis is that this "Other" is the phallus as transcendental signifier (1986, 101). Further, the phallus functions as *presence* to the subject's (of language) *absence*":

> [A] system of finite positions (signification) can only function when it is supported by a subject and on the condition that this subject is a

> wanting-to-be [*manque à être*]. Signification exists precisely because there is no subject in signification (1986, 101).

Given the importance of the phallus in the symbolic order, it is significant that Kristeva does not seem to question why it is that "the penis which, becoming the major referent in this operation of separation, gives full meaning to the *lack* or the *desire* which constitutes the subject during his or her insertion into the order of language" (Kristeva 1982, 41; her emphasis). Kristeva herself says only that "the analytic situation indeed shows us" that this is so (1982, 41). Returning to Lacan, however, we find the following explanation:

> One might say that this signifier is chosen as what stands out as most easily seized upon in the real of sexual copulation. . . . One might also say that by virtue of its turgidity, it is the image of the vital flow as it is transmitted in generation (Mitchell and Rose 1982, 82).

If I understand Lacan correctly, he is saying that the phallus is the signifier of signifiers within the symbolic order because it is "most easily seized upon" during intercourse, and because erection (of the signifier?) is an image of the "vital flow" (of the male seed?) transmitted (by the penis?) during (procreative) sex. Is this to say, first, that the penis-as-referent becomes the phallus-as-signifier because the penis is mistaken for the phallus in the "real of sexual copulation"? And secondly, what exactly is this "vital flow"? Aristotle explains:

> Male is that which is able to concoct, to cause to take shape, and to discharge semen possessing the "principle" of the "form." . . . Female is that which receives the semen but is unable to cause semen to take shape or to discharge it (Allen 1985, 97)

Clearly, as Lacan's comments indicate, the male belief in the ejaculatory stuff of life diminishes not one whit.[43]

However, my primary purpose in highlighting these passages is not to debate with Lacan, but simply to show that, as Jacqueline Rose has remarked in another context, Lacanian criticisms of the symbolic order are "in another sense complicit with that order and any argument constructed on their basis is likely to be circular" (1986, 69).[44] With regard to Kristeva's reliance on Lacanian theory, for example, one could certainly take issue with her insistence that 'the' symbolic can only be phallic, or with her assertion that it is necessarily founded on a rupture from a state of (feminine) nature. As we shall see shortly, Irigaray addresses precisely these issues.

Whether or not Kristeva's thought is indeed implicated in phallocentrism, however, the point remains that insofar as the symbolic order is presently premised upon the phallus - the masculine signifier - as presence, the feminine is rendered absent. In fact, entry into the symbolic requires the active repression of the pre-oedipal connection to the maternal body. In the process of taking up a position within the symbolic, Kristeva says, the subject must repudiate connection to the mother:

> [T]he symbolic. . . constitutes itself only by breaking with this anteriority, which is retrieved as "signifier," "primary processes," displacement and condensation, metaphor and metonomy, rhetorical figures - but which always remain subordinate - subjacent to the principal function of naming-predicating. Language as symbolic function constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother (1980, 136).

The subject of language is therefore always necessarily split between the conscious paternal function of the symbolic, and the unconscious maternal "*chora*" - by which Kristeva means a potential "matrix space" or "receptacle" prior to signification and the Law of the Father (1980, 6, 133-134; 1986, 126, n. 13; 1982, 34).

> The *chora* is not yet a position that represents something for someone (i.e., it is not a sign); nor is it a *position* that represents someone for another position (i.e., it is not yet a signifier either); it is, however, generated in order to attain to this signifying position. Neither model nor copy, the *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm (1986, 94).

After the oedipal crisis,[45] the repressed maternal element, the *chora*, can only be expressed in language as "semiotic activity" (1980, 136) - that is, as "stylistic, rhythmic and 'poetic' ambiguities" (1986, 151). As Kristeva explains,

> [T]here is within poetic language a *heterogeneousness*, detected genetically in the first echolalias of infants . . . which is later reactivated as rhythms, intonations, glossalalias in psychotic discourse, serving as the ultimate support of the speaking subject threatened by the collapse of the signifying function; this heterogeneousness to signification operates

> through, despite, and in excess of it and produces in poetic language "musical" but also nonsense effects that destroy not only accepted beliefs and significations, but, in radical experiments, syntax itself, that guarantee of thetic consciousness . . . (1980, 133; 1986, 149-150).

In fact, the radical potential of the semiotic - poetic language as a socially disruptive force - has been one of Kristeva's most controversial proclamations (Jones 1984). For my purposes, however, what is important is the symbolic/conscious, semiotic/unconscious split that Kristeva posits within the subject (of language). More precisely, to take up the speaking position of *I*, the (male or female) subject must identify with the "role of the father," and repress what Kristeva calls the "role of the mother" (1986, 151, 154).

> Through language, the Oedipal phase introduces the symbolic agency, the prohibition of auto-eroticism and the recognition of the paternal function. As [Ernest] Jones. . . points out, the boy as well as the girl must renounce his or her own pleasure in order to find an object of the opposite sex, or renounce his or her own sex in order to find a homogeneous pleasure that has no *other* as its object (1986, 148; her emphasis).

With respect to this 'renunciation' repudiation of the mother's original role as guarantor of demand), the pre-oedipal semiotic is constituted as the absence upon which symbolic identity is founded. And it is on these bases - that the feminine is constituted as *both lack* and as an ultimate *absence* upon which phallic presence is based - that Kristeva contends that "a woman cannot be." Indeed, as Lacan phrases it, "she is incorrectly called *the* woman,

since, as I [Lacan] have stressed before, once the *the* of *the* woman is formulated by means of a not all, then it cannot be written. There can be no *the* here other than crossed through" (Mitchell and Rose 1982, 151).

With regard to my second question, it is now possible to see why it is "even more absurd" to posit that "one is a man." For while (the) woman, once seen to lack the phallus, is no longer the "all" or plenitude, the man, according to Lacan's analysis, must assume the identity as "having" that which Woman lacks in order to take up a position within the symbolic order. Yet insofar as signification requires the support of the subject as *lack* (p. 92, above), the identity of man as subject is no less of a fantasy. In other words, first, as we have seen, language is founded on a split between the repressed *chora*, the "unconscious, drive-related and transverbal scene" (Kristeva 1986, 153), and the conscious identification with the paternal function of the phallus as prohibition (Kristeva 1986, 148). Secondly, the phallus is an imaginary construct; that is, it is only ever a hypothetical place of plenitude, gratification and certainty posed against the subject's lack. It is in this sense that Rose claims that "the status of the phallus is a fraud," and that it has no value in itself but represents "that to which value *accrues*" (Rose 1986, 64. 66; her emphasis).

In Lacanian theory, the unity of the subject - the identity of man - is only ever an illusion produced and sustained by the order of language. Moreover, within this order the place of the woman is constituted as the excluded lack, thereby guaranteeing "unity on the side of the man" (Rose 1986, 71). In this sense, then, sexual identity - the so-called "difference" between men and women - is founded on the projection of the conscious and the unconscious on to men and women respectively. As I will argue shortly, Kristeva's political vision entails precisely the refusal of this formulation of sexual difference as the basis of personal identity.

For now, however, what I want to highlight is that both identities - "man" and "woman" - are fantasized and inevitably unstable (Rose 1986, 56-58). Thus the belief that one *is* a man or a woman, in Kristeva's formulation, is "absurd and obscurantist."

To return to the third question posed above, we can now see why Kristeva proposes a negative feminist practice. First, the problem that Kristeva identifies is what she sees as the inherent instability of male and female gender identity - and the instability of identity altogether. Secondly, the specific problem for women is an untenable choice: on one hand, women can gain access to history, politics and social affairs in order to either confront, or to participate 'equally' in, the present social order by

identifying with masculine values. Or, on the other hand, women can reject the masculine position by remaining as man's other - either "sullenly," condemned to mysticism, marginality or madness (1986, 155-156), or assertively, by constituting a "female society" as "a sort of alter ego of the official society, in which all real or fantasized possibilities for *jouissance* take refuge" (1982, 52, 45).

In fact, as I have argued above, a selective review of feminist literature in the Anglo-American tradition reveals precisely this kind of an impasse between the 'equality' and the 'difference' positions that Kristeva has identified. I have also suggested that English-speaking feminists have not so much resolved this difficulty as moved beyond it, leaving the problematic concept of the Enlightenment 'self' intact in the original debate. What Kristeva adds to this discussion, therefore, is a radical questioning of the very apparatus that constitutes identity as such.

It is, in fact, on this basis that Kristeva says a feminist practice can only be negative ("that's not it"). Given her view that the symbolic order condemns women to identifying with either the mythical "archaic mother," or with the prohibitive function of the father, Kristeva urges, "Let us refuse both these extremes" (1986, 156):

> [I]s it. . . that having started with the idea of difference, feminism will be able to break free of its belief in Woman, Her power, Her writing, so as to channel this demand for difference into each and every element of the female whole, and, finally, to bring out the singularity of each

> woman, and beyond this, her multiplicities, her plural languages, beyond the horizon, beyond sight, beyond faith itself? (1982, 51)[46]

Calling for "the constitution of a fluid and free subjectivity," Kristeva asks, "What can 'identity', even 'sexual identity', mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?" (1982, 51-52).

Thus, in the place of the belief in a coherent and stable identity, Kristeva proposes in "Women's Time" "a demassification of the problematic of *difference*" (1982, 52). For to the extent that language itself is understood to separate the speaking subject from pre-oedipal unity with the mother - from all forms of "fullfillment and totality" and "a pleasing, natural and sound state" (1982, 41; 46) - the symbolic order is founded on a "sacrifice." As she indicates elsewhere,

> [S]ymbolic and social cohesion are maintained by virtue of a sa ifice (which makes of a *soma* a sign towards an unnamable transcendence, so that only thus are signifying and social structures clinched even though they are ignorant of this sacrifice) and . . . the paternal function represents this sacrificial function. . . (1980, 138).

On this basis, she looks to a possible future in which the "struggle, the implacable difference, the violence [of the repudiation of the maternal] be conceived in the very place where it operates with the maximum intransigence, in other words, in personal and sexual identity itself, so as to make it disintegrate in its very nucleus" (Kristeva 1982:52).

In this sense, Kristeva is heralding a possible future in which the male/female dualism, which is played out materially ('externally', if you will) as an antagonism or rivalry between men and women, would be delegated to each individual and addressed on a personal/psychological level: "[T]his process could be summarized as an *interiorization of the founding separation of the sociosymbolic contract*, as an introduction of its cutting edge into the very interior of every identity, whether subjective, sexual, ideological, or so forth" (1982:52; her emphasis). For Kristeva's reformulated subject, then, the need to posit an "other" as the repository of all that is repressed - that is, the habitual scapegoating of women, Blacks, Jews, gays and lesbians, etc. - would be replaced by the conscious acknowledgement of, and responsibility for, "the potentialities of *victim/executioner* which characterize each identity, each subject, each sex" (1982, 52; her emphasis).[47]

Now Kristeva is very clear that even if such a process could be initiated on a wide scale, it is by no means an easy responsibility to assume. On the contrary, she says it "involves risks not only for what we understand today as 'personal equilibrium' but also for social equilibrium itself" (1982, 52). On this basis, she wonders if the possibility of "breaking free" of the belief in "Woman" is, "A factor for ultimate mobilization? Or a factor for

analysis?" (1982, 51) In either event, for Kristeva a radical destabilization of sociality is what is at stake in this ultimate refusal of the Cartesian 'self' and the man/woman dichotomy that she sees as its result.

As I have already indicated, however, Kristeva's extensive use of the Lacanian analysis of subjectivity gives rise to a number of problems in her political vision. First, it is clear that the entire edifice of the speaking subject as necessarily split is founded on an hypothesized repressed fear of castration, and most significantly, on 'the penis as the major referent in the operation of separation.' Thus Irigaray's challenge goes straight to the crux of the matter: "[W]hat meaning could the Oedipus complex have in a symbolic system other than patriarchy?" (1985, 73). In other words, as Jacqueline Rose points out, the mother can only be *seen* to be missing the phallus in the context of "an already assigned meaning" (1986, 66) and, in Irigaray's view, that meaning is contingent, not absolute.

On these bases, the problem with Kristeva's proposal that all subjects 'interiorize' the psychic violence of castration, is that it presumes the existence of the symbolic order as it is presently constituted - not as it might otherwise be. Indeed, for Kristeva it would seem that there can be no other order; for women,

> A . . . difficult, if not impossible, identification with the sacrificial logic of separation and syntactical sequence at the foundation of language and the social code leads

> to the rejection of the symbolic - lived as the rejection of the paternal function and ultimately generating psychoses (1982, 42; see also Jones 1984, 58).

It is, in fact, on this basis that Kristeva looks to poetic language, the expression of the repressed semiotic *chora*, as a potentially disruptive force - since the subject cannot refuse or step out of the symbolic without experiencing mental illness, the symbolic must be disrupted from within. In the first place, though, we have seen that this potentially revolutionary force is itself an *effect* of psychic repression caused by the subject's insertion into language, not a prediscursive psychic function that could somehow exist otherwise. But if there can be no "semiotic" without this particular symbolic order, then the 'revolution' is destined to failure. As Rose explains,

> [I]f Kristeva concentrates on the signs of that fragility [of speech] (troubles of phonological, syntactic and enunciating laws), she can only do so in terms of the order of language against which they break. The 'semiotic' can never wholly displace the 'symbolic' since it relies on that very order to give to it its, albeit resistant, shape (1986, 145).

In the second place, as Ann Rosalind Jones has suggested, there is a danger here of 'conflating cultural innovation with political change'. "For *whom*," in short, "does the poet call the finality of language into question?" (1984, 56; 60):

> Are grammar and memory publicly or permanently subverted by Modernist textual practice? Kristeva offers a new interpretative mode to critics of Modernism, but her focus on the psychogenesis of

> texts blinds her to issues of literary context and reception. This is a curiously private revolution: the poet, solitary, original and unique, and the critic/semiotician are the only participants it requires (Jones 1984, 60).

Thus there are at least two serious problems with Kristeva's analysis. First, Kristeva is taking on the phallocentrism of Lacanian thought, in that she does not challenge the necessity of the phallus as transcendental signifier. As a result she presupposes the existence of the very symbolic order she analyzes. Secondly, her response - the textual strategy of using poetic language to 'override the constraints of transcendental rationality' (1980, 139-140) - is of questionable political efficacy (see also Felski 1989).

Yet we need not throw the baby out with the bath water; I think it is important to keep in view Kristeva's radical proposal that 'identity' is never coherent or stable, and that the fantasy of coherence is maintained at the cost of denying whatever is rendered "other" within a given social context, and projecting it onto a subjugated group. For feminism, what this means is that any form of identity politics - including the so-called 'natural' identity of sexual specificity - is inherently contradictory. Instead, as Judith Butler argues, "The tacit constraints that produce culturally intelligible 'sex' ought to be understood as generative political structures rather than naturalized foundations" (1990, 147).

Most significantly, therefore, I think Kristeva's reformulation of subjectivity as unstable and indeterminate opens up possibilities for feminist theory and practice that are foreclosed by the binary structure of the equality/difference debate. For as we have seen, the framework of that debate, and the terms with which it begins, result in an untenable choice between a revalorized femininity or a problematic (masculine) sameness. In light of Kristeva's proposal - that 'otherness' itself inheres in every identity - on the other hand, we can shift the feminist focus away from the question of whether to accept or reject the universalized concept of 'man-as-human' as a model for women, to the much deeper question of how we might otherwise 'be'.

Insofar as Kristeva initiates this inquiry, then, her analysis can be used constructively by feminist theorists. In particular, we can take from this analysis the understanding that within the symbolic order the 'self' is constituted as the fantasy of a coherent and stable identity - a fantasy that is maintained through each subject's refusal to acknowledge his or her own other(s). To this idea I will add the argument made in Chapter 1 (above) - that this same 'self' is partially premised on the phenomenon of the male's problematic participation in the reproductive process. On the basis of these two thoughts we can now ask the following question: what happens to the

symbolic order if the female body is taken as a starting point, rather than as that which is interpreted in relation to the definition of "man"?

In other words, Kristeva and other psychoanalytic theorists indicate that the symbolic order both reproduces, and is reproduced by, a particular configuration of gender identities within particular social structures. Secondly, male gender identity is said to be the primary determinant of that order. Third, female gender identity is constructed as masculinity's other. But: if masculinity is never purely symbolic but is, rather, rooted in the material of men's bodies, then something interesting must necessarily happen to that order - throwing into radical question the social relations and structures which it both supports and is supported by - if female corporeality is given its own discursive and symbolic voice.

However, Kristeva herself does not pursue this question - for that investigation we will have to turn to Luce Irigaray. In fact, in my view, what is most significant about Irigaray's work is that she is effecting the same kind of symbolization of the female body for femininity (and for subjectivity) that, I have argued, occurs with masculinity. In my reading, she is beginning with such partial aspects of women as the actual form of the female body, and her own descriptions of female sexuality and, from these, performing an alternative discursive subjectivity.

First of all, it is important to note that for Irigaray, as for Kristeva, "There is no simple manageable way to leap to the outside of phallogocentrism, *nor any possible way to situate oneself there, that would result from the simple fact of being a woman*" (1985, 162). What I understand by this is that for Irigaray, following Lacan, both men and women are constituted by the symbolic order - which encompasses language itself and representation in general. As I have explained, within this order the feminine is constituted as absence, while the phallus is said to signify presence. To the extent that the phallus is conflated with presence in language ("logos," or the word), and to the extent that this conflation serves as the centre and locus of meaning, Derrida has coined the term "phallogocentrism." However if, for Lacan, "men and women are only ever in language," and if there is "no pre-discursive reality" to which one might return (Rose 1986, 73, 80; Irigaray 1985, 88)), then women *qua* absence are still *in* language. In other words, if woman *is* as a 'not' - as the negative of phallic presence - women are nonetheless not "outside" phallogocentrism, nor could this be a "simple" or "manageable" move.

In the face of this apparent *cul de sac*, however, Irigaray makes what I have called an unprecedented move: she proposes, and in fact demonstrates, the possibility of a symbolic order that is not premised upon the phallus. For

example, Irigaray points out that since the phallus is (or is said to be) the transcendental signifier in the symbolic order, subjects have only been able to speak, or to hear, with reference to it; the feminine cannot be spoken in a way that will be heard as coherent:

> "She is indefinitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she *is said to be* whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious. . . not to mention her language, in which "she" sets off in all directions leaving "him" unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad *from the standpoint of* reason, inaudible for *whoever listens* to them with ready-made grids, with a fully elaborated code in hand (1985, 28-29; my emphasis, ellipse in original).

As the italicized phrases indicate, what Irigaray is talking about is the way in which the feminine is constructed in and through the symbolic as the (masculine) subject's 'other'. Indeed, as I argued in the preceding chapter, femininity is twice removed from any presumed 'nature', in that it is opposed to an idealized version of men as its negative, and *is not* based upon the female body. Moreover, given the constitutive nature of discourse, the erasure of female specificity has a very particular result. As Irigaray says,

> [T]he articulation of the reality of my sex is impossible in discourse, and for a structural, eidetic reason. My sex is removed, at least as the property of a subject, from the predicative mechanism that assures discursive coherence (1985, 149).

Irigaray takes issue, however, with Kristeva's assumption that the only alternative to the logic of the symbolic order is psychotic babbling, and explicitly

proposes another mode of symbolization in its place. In particular, she emphasizes the necessity of 'hearing differently', and contests the 'freezing' or 'immobility' of "phallocratic" syntax as the (exclusive) representation of truth: "Yet one must know how to listen otherwise than in good form(s) to hear what it [that woman-thing] says" (1985, 111). Specifically, she adds,

> 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 (1985, 112; see also 1985, 29).

On the same basis, she writes,

> In what is said in analysis, one may indeed, on the traditional model of the theoretical, privilege a certain "visible" element, which goes hand in hand with truth and proper meaning . . . My ear may then be what discriminates, and identifies, and classifies, and interprets this "visible" element; it may be at the service of perception from a distance, and privilege what is "well formed." Or it may let itself be *touched differently* (1985, 147; her emphasis).

It is, in fact, in order to demonstrate an alternative syntactical logic - hearing and saying 'otherwise' - that Irigaray finds linguistic experimentation necessary; within the logic of *this* symbolic order, the feminine as difference is "lacking, repressed, censured" (1985, 132). On this basis, she anticipates a radical otherness that disrupts and escapes the logic of the "Same":

> [W]hat a feminine syntax might be is not simple nor easy to state, because in that "syntax" there

> would no longer be either subject or object, "oneness" would no longer be privileged, there would no longer be proper meanings, proper names, "proper" attributes . . . Instead, that "syntax" would involve nearness, proximity, but in such an extreme form that it would preclude any distinction of identities, any establishment of ownership, thus any form of appropriation (1985, 134).

With regard to this alternative syntax, it is important to note that it is not presented as though its expression is a revolutionary activity in itself. While I will return to this point shortly, I will say now that Irigaray's primary purpose seems to be to confront psychoanalytic 'truth' by demonstrating an alternative mode of discourse. In my view, therefore, Irigaray does not see 'poetic' or 'fluid' expression as the only or the best way to effect social change. Indeed, in her article "And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other," Irigaray speaks from the position of the pre-oedipal imaginary in order to challenge the Lacanian account of the infant's ostensible desire for symbiotic unity with the mother:

> We would play catch, you and I. But who would see that what bounces between us are images? That you give them to me, and I to you without end. And that we don't need an object to throw back and forth at each other for this game to take place. I throw an image of you to you, you throw it back, catch it again (1981, 62).

For Irigaray, the female infant's relationship to the mother is an endless exchange; the mother is not desired as a fixed object to be consumed or, ultimately, repudiated. In fact, she sees repudiation as an unfortunate and unwanted

consequence of the mother's implication in the symbolic order.

> [I]f you turn your face from me, giving yourself to me only in an already inanimate form, abandoning me to competent men to undo my/your paralysis, I'll turn to my father. I'll leave you for someone who seems more alive than you (1981, 62).

Clearly, this response to the mother is not Irigaray's ideal; on the contrary, she specifies that, "what I wanted from you, Mother, was this: that in giving me life, you still remain alive" (1981, 67).

Irigaray's experimentation in language comes into play on this basis - that relationship, at least between mother and daughter, can be understood as 'intersubjective' rather than in terms of a pronounced self/other distinction. For instance, as Carolyn Burke points out,

> [Irigaray's] use of a double subject (*tu/je*) reaffirms the desired mutuality of female relations in writing. In this text ["When Our Lips Speak Together"] which attempts to embody female difference, however *tu* and *je* are not fixed persons. Fluid and changing, they are at once two lovers, two aspects of the self, and more, as the reader is gradually drawn into an exploration of plurality (1980, 67-68).

Thus Irigaray does not exactly blur the grammatical distinction between subject and object either - in her terms, "They are not distinct, which does not mean that they are blurred" (1980, 72-73).[48] She asks, for example, "What would I do with you, with myself, wrapped up like a gift? You keep our selves to the extent that you share us. You find our selves to the extent that you trust us" (1985,

206).[49] As I understand this, what she is trying to effect in language is a back and forth movement *between* subjects, rather than a fixed identity for either the (female) self or the (m)other.

There is, in other words, an attempt in this text to perform an intersubjective relation that is neither absolutely severed (as are both the Cartesian and the Lacanian self-other relations), nor completely merged (as in Lacan's description of the imaginary) - a relation, perhaps, that reflects motion rather than fixity. For example, in contrast to 'paralysis', 'petrification' and 'immobilization', Irigaray proposes a female desire that is "always in motion," and describes "a pleasure that consists in moving, being moved, endlessly." (1985, 210)[50]

Now it is important to note that, given the importance Lacan attributes to the symbolic *qua* masculine, it is possible that what is "otherwise" meant by Irigaray does not depend upon the sex of the speaker. The very performance of an alternative discourse would achieve the desired disruption of hegemonic (and ostensibly masculine) discourse. As Jacqueline Rose phrases it,

> What goes under the name of *écriture féminine* is, on the one hand, the ultimate negative discourse: writing through the 'body' of the woman in violation of syntactic and sexual law. Unassimilable, by its own definition, to any representational or institutional norm, it deconstructs the dominant paradigm of sexual difference as the metaphysical binary upon which all forms of oppression finally rest (Rose 1987, 12).

In this respect, it is not relevant whether the disruption is initiated by a male or a female person. Indeed, it strikes me that this is exactly Kristeva's thinking; for instance, it would provide a basis for her claim that male writers can and occasionally do 'write the feminine.'[51]

Significantly, however, in Irigaray's work we find not just the challenge to phallic certainty that this kind of experimentation entails but, more directly, the attempted articulation of the female *body*. Specifically, she says the female genitals defy the logic of 'one' proper form because they are composed of two lips in continuous contact (1985, 1^T^U* For this reason, the "predominance of the visual, and of the discrimination and individualization of form [within the logic of masculine language], is particularly foreign to female eroticism" (Irigaray, 198', 25-26). She describes, for example, an alternative reading of the pleasures of this organ(s) which is not "one":

> Her sexuality, always at least double, goes even further: it is *plural*. . . . Indeed, woman's pleasure does not have to choose between clitoral activity and vaginal passivity, for example. . . . They each contribute, irreplaceably, to woman's pleasure. Among the other caresses . . . Fondling the breasts, touching the vulva, spreading the lips, stroking the posterior wall of the vagina, brushing against the mouth of the uterus, and so on (1985, 28; third ellipse in original).

In direct opposition to Freudian wisdom, then, Irigaray insists that women desire "something more and something else besides that *one* - sexual organ, for example - that you

[Freudian psychoanalysts] give them, attribute to them" (1985, 29).

This point is central to Irigaray's project. As we have seen, it is the desire for an unattainable phallic plenitude that constitutes the subject as *lack* in the first place, and the transcendental signifier is the fantasized place of certainty to which the subject (of language) always refers. Moreover, the individual becomes a speaking subject by identifying with the father - with he who is in the position of *having* the phallus. What Irigaray is saying, however, is that woman desires something other than the phallus - she knows specifically (and exclusively, Irigaray implies) female pleasures - and on this basis she is can be) *other* than the (masculine) subject's unspeakable 'Other'. Thus Irigaray explicitly contrasts the unity of the phallic linguistic subject, *I*, to the possible multiplicity of feminine subjectivity. For as she says, this "something else," this alternative economy of desire, would inform a different symbolic logic than that based upon the desire for the phallus.

> Woman's desire would not be expected to speak the same language as man's; woman's desire has doubtless been submerged by the logic that has dominated the West since the time of the Greeks (1985, 25).

This "different language," in a nutshell, is what Irigaray has in mind when she refers to "speaking (as) woman" (1985, 135).

But this brings me to a major point of contention regarding Irigaray's work: namely, her use of female physiology as the basis of her performance of an alternative subjectivity. For example, it is often argued that Irigaray's use of the female body as a ground for a new and decidedly feminist performance of subjectivity invalidates or at least problematizes her argument on the grounds of essentialism (Alcoff 1988, 407). That is, she is accused of reducing feminine identity to female biology. Furthermore - to take up Judith Butler's point (1990) - it is objected that the body itself is discursively constructed, and therefore cannot provide an ontological foundation (see also Riley 1991).

Yet these important points are not incongruent with my reading of Irigaray. In terms of the first objection, I think Irigaray would agree that the problem with essentialism is that it is a reduction of identity to biological specificity. And, in terms of the second objection, I think she understands fully that bodies are necessarily experienced from particular cultural and historical locations. In other words, both objections are valid only if we assume that Irigaray is presenting the female body as a transparent truth about women's identity. On the contrary, I would maintain that Irigaray is performing an alternative discourse in order to realize a so-far unspeakable subject - to make a place not only for

the 'feminine' in language, but for difference. She is most definitely not prescribing female identity as such.

For this reason, we need not be concerned here with such questions as the contingency of the body's truth. For it is my contention that this historically, culturally and otherwise contingent female body can serve as a *metaphor* for a possible subject, thereby subverting the metaphor of the (equally suspect) male body which, I have argued, is to some extent implicated in the symbolic order.

Irigaray's performance of feminine discourse, therefore, should not be confused with O'Brien's definition of female (reproductive) consciousness. For although both theorists relate a consciousness of continuity to the female body, both suggest the possibility of a different temporality, and both see the traditional philosophical preoccupation with dualism as somehow related to the male body, there are significant differences between their projects. For O'Brien, as we have seen, it is the female body itself - specifically experience of labouring to give birth - that gives rise to the other mode of consciousness she is describing. For Irigaray, on the other hand, the female genitals and an alternative sexuality can be the basis of a different syntactical logic - the basis, in other words, for a language that has a place for another subject.

Indeed, this subject need not be female. In fact, Irigaray posits the possibility of an "other" man as well,

although she does not wish to "appropriate" for herself what it is that he might say, or to anticipate the form an alternative male sexuality might take (1985, 135-136). In my view, then, what is radical about Irigaray's project is that she is undertaking exactly the same procedure that, I have argued, functions in the production of masculine identity. She is consciously beginning with the female body and elaborating from it, on a symbolic level - not a transparent identity of or for women (which would indeed make her vulnerable to the charge of essentialism) - but a symbolic representation of Woman qua speaking subject.

In this sense, I think Irigaray's articulation of the feminine is useful whether or not it is true in the sense of being timeless or otherwise fixed, and whether or not it accurately reflects women's ontology. By the same token, what is valuable about O'Brien's analysis is its metaphoric utility, not the extent to which it might be an accurate or 'true' representation of the biological differences between the sexes.

In the first place, then, I do *not* think the value of Irigaray's thought is that it provides an ontological foundation for feminist claims. In the second place, however, I am equally opposed to the suggestion that all 'difference' occurs in language alone, and that language is therefore the terrain for the revolution. The benefit I have in mind regarding both Kristeva's deconstruction of

identity, and Irigaray's new articulation of the female body, is of a different register entirely. It is that, to the extent that every political programme is premised upon some notion of subjectivity, the nature of the "subject" in question will determine directly the nature of the political demands made on its behalf, and the strategies proposed for their achievement. Moreover, it is inevitable that contradictions will ensue (and they have), if, in striving for the privileges and position of White, Western, middle-class men, women of various races, cultures and classes accept uncritically the notion of masculine subjectivity to which that position and privilege accrues. That contradictions will ensue is especially likely if - as I have argued - there is a necessary relationship between ideals of masculinity and the way in which men are embodied.

In this sense it is not only worthwhile, but absolutely crucial, that feminists deliberately envision a (speaking) subject - and indeed speak from a place - that is not either already masculine, or its derivative (that which is *not* masculine); doing so creates the conditions necessary to surmount these contradictions with more internally coherent demands, and for the development of more effective strategies for feminist politics. And Irigaray and Kristeva, among others, provide the means to do just that.

Insofar as a new model of subjectivity can take us beyond the theoretical and political contradictions of the

equality/difference impasse, then, postmodern theorizing is potentially valuable in ways that have been overlooked by feminists. Moreover, there are also wider political ramifications of this alternative to the Cartesian concept of the 'self.' In the next and concluding section of this thesis, therefore, I will highlight its potential importance for social and political thought.

CONCLUSION

As I have demonstrated, Kristeva posits a new mode of subjectivity entirely - one which is not premised upon the exclusionary requirements of identity, and which therefore subverts the dualistic self/other paradigm that has evolved within the Western ph losophical tradition. This new mode, she says, will come about when individuals "interiorize" the 'sacrificed' connection to the mother and thereby acknowledge the 'violence' on which every identity is founded. In other words, when men and women cease to attribute loss and lack exclusively to *women*, all subjects will know themselves to be both "guilty" and capable of experiencing *jouissance* (1982, 52).

In response to Kristeva, I take a two-sided position. On one hand, I agree with Irigaray that the symbolic order need not be premised upon the 'violence' Kristeva is describing - that is, on the fear of castration and the concomitant separation from the desired mother - the 'violence', that is, that is said to obtain in a social order in which men are valued above women. Indeed, the castration complex itself - the fear of losing the envy of) the penis that stems from the recognition of the mother's alleged 'lack' - is entirely premised upon an idealization

of men which pre-exists the subject's entry into language and, thereby, determines it.

On the other hand, it is true that men *are* valued above women in contemporary society, and that women *are* presently constituted as men's 'others.' From a philosophical perspective, what is at issue here is the broader question of 'otherness' - a question which is answered in Western society not only in terms of the supposed differences between men and women, but in terms of marginalization in general. Gays and lesbians, people of colour and Native peoples are only a few of the 'others' posed against White, middle-class, Western men. In this sense, I agree with Kristeva: there is a pressing social need to stop projecting otherness onto a given constituency, and for each of us to acknowledge the repressed otherness on which unified identity is founded.

For Kristeva, this radical refusal of identity would have a momentous social impact. In fact, she thinks that social cohesion *requires* the fantasy of identity Lacan describes, and she implies that society is ultimately incapable of such a profound change (Rose, 1986, 141-164). The limits of the symbolic as it is presently constituted are therefore as far as Kristeva is willing to go.

What is vital about Irigaray's work is that it contests the exclusivity of this symbolic order by offering an alternative in its place. As we have seen, she argues that

male sexuality holds a monopoly in psychoanalytic discourse - that Freud and Lacan presuppose the value of the male organ when they posit women's ostensible desire for the phallus. According to Irigaray, psychoanalysts have denied or misrepresented the specificity of female sexuality. From this perspective, desire need not refer to the phallus, for we need not presume "*One*" centre of erogeneity - the male sexual organ or the place of its purported 'lack'.

Furthermore, this censured female desire would inform an alternative syntactical logic; if the female body and its pleasures are taken as a starting point, language itself signifies in terms of an entirely different "economy" (of "endless exchange," for instance). The result, she implies, is the constitution of a completely different subject than the one presumed (and ultimately supported) by Lacan. Thus Irigaray anticipates an 'other' subject characterized by the plurality/multiplicity, fluidity, indefiniteness and continuity she associates with female morphology and sexuality.

These are far-reaching proposals. As I have argued, they mark the most useful direction in which we can take Mary O'Brien's observations on the "reproductive consciousness" of men and women. In other words, Irigaray's alternative reading of female morphology and sexuality can ground a new model of subjectivity. Similarly, O'Brien's description of the "continuous" and "integrative" quality of

female reproductive consciousness is an alternative to the model of the (masculine) 'self' that is said to be split from nature and from the body.

In light of the history of feminist theory and practice in the English-speaking world, there is a fundamental need for alternatives like these. For as I have shown, the Cartesian concept of the (masculine) 'self' involves a paradoxical configuration of the cultural and the natural - an interdependence, that is, of the social identities and the bodily experiences of men. Thus while the Cartesian 'self' need not be understood as exclusive to men, it is not entirely the reflection of historically contingent values, not entirely arbitrary, either. The feminist reliance on this concept has therefore resulted in a series of problems which are manifest as a stand-off between two general tendencies that divide on the axis of equality and difference. This stand-off can be circumvented if we begin from a different theoretical foundation altogether.

Yet social change cannot be brought about exclusively by speaking or writing 'otherwise,' and I do not believe that either Kristeva or Irigaray would make this claim. On the contrary, both theorists clearly recognize the need for political action. There is, in other words, no simple transparency between theory and (political) practice, although there is certainly and inevitably a relationship between the two. What we stand to gain from this important

theoretical work, then, is not a plan of action. However, it is something of equal importance: a clearer understanding of the assumptions underlying our political activities, and a basis on which to determine our future course. As Jacqueline Rose has remarked,

> [Psychoanalysis's] challenge to the concept of psychic identity is important for feminism in that it allows into the political arena problems of subjectivity (subjectivity *as* a problem) which tend to be suppressed from other forms of political debate (1983, 19).

It is on what must be clearly understood as a theoretical level, then, that these postmodern thinkers have something useful to say. As I have indicated, moreover, I think the value of postmodern feminist theory extends beyond the realm of so-called 'women's issues'. In my view, a subject that is other than man's *other* does not model relations of dominance - as does the ideal subject of the Enlightenment. In fact, throughout the history of Western philosophy we find articulations of the way in which the 'self' *qua* mind is said to rule nature, the body and women.

With this history in mind, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl traces the evolution of what she calls "monistic thought," and argues that "we can observe a tendency to establish corollations between images of the mind and ideal images of social-political organization." She continues,

> [T]he philosophical *esprit de systeme* has the effect that images are constructed that protect the hegemony of a part of the mind and also legitimate a mentally superior class or person. Mental monism and legitimations of political

> domination have mutually supported one another (1987, 216-217).

By the same token, Elizabeth Spelman argues that,

> [T]he conclusion of the argument [of Book I of Aristotle's *Politics*], which has to do with relationships *between* people - in particular, political relationships between men and women - is said to be based on what is known about relationships *within* people: in particular, relationships between the rational and irrational elements of the human soul (1983, 17).

Within this philosophical tradition, the Cartesian 'self,' the ultimate expression of dualistic thought, most readily supports the requirements of hierarchy. This quality has undoubtedly contributed to its lasting influence in male-stream philosophical thought. By the same token, there has been a great deal of resistance to such alternatives as Irigaray's 'performance' of a new subjectivity and O'Brien's description of a different mode of consciousness. For insofar as these formulations of subjectivity are not founded on binary oppositions such as absence/presence and feminine/masculine, they do not lend themselves so readily to justifications of the oppression of those who are constituted as 'others'.

Of course, this is not to say that we need only reformulate subjectivity for oppression to come to an end. It bears repeating that oppression calls for political action. But these new formulations, these performances and re-writings, can inform the *basis* on which we act. Perhaps, in the long run, they can lead to a mode of political

theorizing which supplants the way the Enlightenment subject has informed contemporary liberal political theory. To this end there is a radical potential in French feminist theorizing that has yet to be fully elaborated.

NOTES

1. Other recent contributions to this discussion include Alcoff (1988); Riley (1988); and Ferguson (1991).

2. Notable exceptions are Genevieve Lloyd (1984) and Mary O'Brien (1981).

3. This point will be developed shortly.

4. My use of the masculine pronoun here and elsewhere is intentional; it is being used literally (rather than generically) to indicate men.

5. According to Kathryn Pyne Addelson, "Parmenides said being and thinking are the same" over two thousand years before Descartes articulated any connection between the two (1983, 69). What interests me here, however, is a particular description of rationality that is directly linked to the development of science during the Enlightenment. This claim is substantiated below.

6. This, at least, is Descartes' claim. It is noteworthy, for example, that he never posits that there is no God - only that the (male) "author" of his existence may be malevolent rather than kind.

7. Mary Hawkesworth focuses on feminist considerations of this question (1989).

8. Some important contributions to this research include Harding and Hintikka (1983); Lloyd (1984); Keller (1985); Bordo (1986); Harding (1986a; 1986b); and Rooney (1991).

9. Phyllis Rooney makes this same point: from Greek thought onwards, "The path of reason, the path to knowledge and truth, will involve in some way a transcendence of the 'feminine'." (1991, 80)

10. On this point Keller refers to Brian Easlea, who has written that "scientific power over natural processes" gives scientists "a *real* means of displaying their virility

and of reassuring themselves of 'superior' masculinity" (Keller 1985, 64, n. 17).

11. But see Hawkesworth, who takes issue with the conflation of all reasoning with one particular conception of rationality (1989, 542).

12. On the theme of the illegitimacy of personal experience as it pertains to philosophic method, see especially Finn (1982).

13. In an article that applies O'Brien's analysis to the kinship theories of Levi-Strauss, Geraldine Finn understands the "genderic differentiation" of the experience of reproduction in a slightly different way: "men are included in only two of the moments: copulation and alienation" (1989, 26). Nonetheless, Finn's summary has been extremely useful for my own understanding of O'Brien's thesis.

14. To the best of my knowledge, it is still true that paternity can not be proven absolutely. That is, the blood type testing used to determine paternity indicates only that a given man is <u>not</u> the father of a particular child - medical science has not yet found a way to confirm that he <u>is</u> the father.

15. Bev Thiele calls this analysis "bio-social" (1989, 10).

16. This may even be true for some women who <u>have</u> given birth, as Sherry Simon pointed out to me. Thus bodily experiences are subject to significant variations. However, a full discussion of extent to which the bodily experience of pregnancy is socially mediated, is beyond the scope of this paper.

17. Instances of sterility notwithstanding, this group is in the majority among women.

18. See, for example, Eisler (1987) and Lerner (1986). Both of these texts document agricultural societies which domesticated animals and therefore, undoubtedly, had a rudimentary knowledge of the mechanics of reproduction. These societies flourished during the period of 7,000 to 5,000 B.C.E.

19. On this theme of sexual desire as constituted on the basis of cultural norms of heterosexuality (and as residing in particular bodily parts), see also Butler's discussion of Wittig in "Variations on Sex and Gender" (1987, 135-139).

20. In the context of this discussion, the appeal to empiricism may seem somewhat out of place; nonetheless, Butler's radical perspective on the constructedness of bodies does seem to fly in the face of common-sense notions of the "real" and therefore requires, at least in my view, further substantiation.

21. One of numerous examples is Aristotle's claim that the male's contribution to generation is formative, active and creative, while the female's contribution to generation is merely material (see Allen 1985, 95-103). This particular understanding of reproduction, which is clearly informed by a gender-political agenda, was used to substantiate various aspects of masculine identity - such as "potency", creativity and rationality - until at least the 18th century.

22. Of course, such a position is by no means the ground for all feminist th[illegible]. However, I do believe a stand on this question is a logical necessity for any theorizing which directly addresses the issue of women's identity. See Moi (1987, 4).

23. The corollary of this claim, ironically, is that even within feminist theory 'Man' has been the norm against which 'Woman' is determined.

24. See pp. 4-5, above.

25. I am following Linda Zerilli (among others), here, who notes that, "The celebration of female difference. . . marks cultural feminism on both sides of the Atlantic. . ." (1991, 1).

26. See p. 2, above.

27. Insofar as my concern is the issue of women's identity and the general problem of subjectivity, I will not be addressing socialist feminism here - the third major current of feminist theorizing during the period I am discussing - as it involves a series of problems that are peripheral to the focus of this argument. In particular, debates among socialist feminists have included such questions as the intersection of patriarchy and capitalism, reproduction interpreted through the lens of production, and sex as a form of class. See, for example, Tong (1989, 39-69; 173-193). However, a detailed analysis of socialist feminist theories would undoubtedly uncover both positions on the issue of the link between masculinity and maleness (i.e., relation and non-relation) that I have identified.

28. These are only general designations for the purposes of this argument. Thus, while very few feminist theorists fall exclusively into one of these two categories, the terms do designate two general tendencies, which this discussion will highlight.

29. Although Daly is using the same sources as Rich, she is less cautious in attributing historical validity to the postulation of "a universally matriarchal world which prevailed before the descent into hierarchical dominion by males" (1985, esp. 92-95).

30. See p. 31 and following, above.

31. Ruth is referring here to the Pythagorean table of opposites and its historical development and modification within the Western philosophical tradition.

32. De Beauvoir is very clear that "women simply *are not* men", and it is in this sense that I say it is the determination, not the existence, of sexual essence that is at stake (1974, xvi; her emphasis). Yet there is a problematic tension between her belief in the physiological and anatomical specificity of the sexes, and her insistence that "woman, like man, is a human being" - "free and autonomous" (1974, xxvi, xxxiii). In fact, I think de Beauvoir's analysis of the psychological and biological differences between the sexes undercuts her own argument. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss this difficulty at length. For an interesting consideration of de Beauvoir's problematic analysis of biology, see Moi (1986).

33. Tong provides a more extensive discussion of Friedan's initial and recent views (1989, see especially pp. 22-28).

34. This thesis could not have been written without it, for example.

35. Compare, for example, the argument of Judith Butler (1991), who contends that culture precedes nature. Interestingly, Butler also overlooks the possibility that the culture/nature configuration may be different for men and women.

36. Following Geraldine Finn, I am using the term "postmodernism" to designate "those movements of thought and action which have lost faith in modernism: in Science and Technology and enlightenment Reason, and in the projects of human emancipation which supposedly motivates and directs them" (Finn 1988, 1).

37. Many theorists use the term "post-structural feminism" to refer to the same area of thought. See Alcoff (1988, 407), for example. In *Gynesis*, on the other hand, Alice Jardine uses the word that is used in France, "modernity", rather than the American coinage "postmodernism", to signify "those writing, self-consciously, from within the *epistemological* crisis specific to the postwar period" (1985a, 22, 23). Further to my comments above (n. 36), my use of the term "postmodern feminists" corresponds to Jardine's definition.

38. Although the wide dissemination of Kristeva's and Irigaray's work in the English-speaking world has undoubtedly contributed to their influence on this side of the Atlantic, the following discussion need not be limited to these two. On the contrary, many of my comments could undoubtedly be applied to others working within this tradition. However, such an application is beyond the scope of this paper, and will have to wait for another venue.

39. Kristeva's qualification is this: "I say "almost" because there are still many goals which women can achieve: freedom of abortion and contraception, day-care centers for children, equality on the job, etc. Therefore we must use "we are women" as an advertisement or slogan for our demands" (1982, 137).

40. It is not clear to me whether the "his" of this paragraph is intended generically (as is required in French when referring to both males and females), or literally - to mean boys rather than girls. I am inclined to suggest that, on the basis of Lacanian theory, Kristeva assumes the speaking subject necessarily takes up a masculine position within the symbolic order. At the same time, however, if this abstract "child" can be either a girl or a boy, then Kristeva seems to be implying a parallel between male and female sexuality - do both sexes 'confine *jouissance* to the genital'?

41. Jacqueline Rose summarizes this point: "When the child asks something of its mother, that loss will persist over and above anything which she can possibly give, or say, in reply. Demand always 'bears on something other than the satisfaction which it calls for', and each time the demand of the child is answered by the satisfaction of its needs, so this 'something other' is relegated to the place of its original impossibility" (Rose 1986, 55; footnote omitted).

42. As Leon Roudiez explains, "the [lowercase] "other" has either commonplace or philosophical meaning (e.g., what exists as an opposite of, or excluded by, something else). When capitalized, the "Other" refers to a hypothetical place

or space, that of the pure signifier, rather than to a physical entity or moral category" (see the Introduction to Kristeva 1980, 17). Jacqueline Rose elaborates: "Subjects in language persist in their belief that somewhere there is a point of certainty, of knowledge and of truth. When the subject addresses its demand outside itself to another, this other becomes the fantasied place of just such a knowledge or certainty. Lacan calls this the Other - the site of language to which the speaking subject necessarily refers" (1986, 55-56).

43. For another contemporary version of Aristotle's hypothesis, compare de Beauvoir: "The individual's specific transcendence takes concrete form in the penis and it is a source of pride. Because the phallus is thus set apart, man can bring into integration with his subjective individuality *the life that overflows from it*. It is easy to see, that the length of the penis, the force of the urinary jet, the strength of erection and ejaculation become for him the measure of his own worth" (1974, 53; my emphasis).

44. Indeed, as I understand it Lacanian theory is perfectly circular: an ideological interpretation of the male sexual organ in the first place (as a symbol of what is most valuable) initiates a psychic trauma (recognition of the mother's 'lack' and subsequent repudiation of her). This trauma in turn provokes the entry into language - the symbolic system which reproduces in individuals the propensity to interpret the male sexual organ through the lens of patriarchal ideology.

45. The "oedipal crisis" refers to the psychic 'moment' of entry into the symbolic order. This 'moment', which structures the unconscious, is fantasized as a 'rupture' - a profound break from what is then (ie. <u>after</u> the subject has entered language) imagined as pre-discursive unity with the mother (thus the psychic realm Lacan designates as the "imaginary"). What is also imagined is that this unity was disrupted <u>by</u> the entry of the phallus (when in fact, if I am reading Lacan correctly, the unity itself never existed and is but an illusory effect <u>of</u> langauge). In this sense the phallus functions as prohibition and, in Lacan's analysis, the Freudian theory of "castration" takes on a much more complex meaning. For it is the rupture itself that (the fear of) castration symbolizes.

46. By the term "faith" I understand a reference to what Kristeva elsewhere calls "religion": the "phantasmic necessity on the part of speaking beings to provide themselves with a *representation* (animal, female, male, parental, etc.) in the place of what constitutes them as

such, in other words, symbolization - the double articulation and syntactical sequence of language, as well as its preconditions or substitutes (thoughts, affects, etc.)" (1982, 50; her emphasis). See also "About Chinese Women" (excerpted in Kristeva 1986).

47. On this theme of projecting the denied (or "abject") aspects of oneself onto an 'other' race, sex, or group, see especially Susan's Griffin's discussion in "The Way of All Ideology" (1982).

48. Interestingly, the line quoted above is slightly different in the Carolyn Porter translation: "One cannot be distinguished from the other; which does not mean that they are indistinct" (1985, 209).

49. Again, there is a discrepancy between Porter's translation (quoted above), and Burke's: "What could I do with these selves, yours and mine, wrapped up like a gift? You keep both of us as much as you open us up. We find ourselves as we entrust ourselves to each other" (1980, 70). It strikes me that Burke has attempted to "distinguish" in English precisely the ambiguity that the phrase "you keep our selves" contains.

50. See especially "The Mechanics of Fluids," in which she explores this theme in greater depth (1985, 106-118).

51. Kristeva pays particular attention to the writings of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Antonin Artaud and James Joyce (1980, 142). And, by the same token, Hélène Cixous draws attention to the work of Jean Genet as an example of "feminine writing" (1981, 248-249, n. 3).

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