National College of Art and Design
Fine Art Painting

PATRIARCHAL LANGUAGE AND THE CONCEPTION OF THE PLAYFUL

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ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

I believe that we need to restore the sentimental and the Carnivalesque to modernist history - with all the banality and all connections to subversion and ethical appeal.

Doing so, we restore literature to its place within a history of rhetoric. Acknowledging the sentimental (and the ciolence of writing), we might also readmit the queries about the relationship between intellectuals and a feminine sensibility. We need to conceive the question of a feminist authority (rhetoric). We have been provided with a history of demonizing the the female body and condemning female hysteria which press questions of social virtue in theology.

I want freedom to violate the conventions of desire because I am to curtail my own productivity, because I am to unbalance the relationship between the critical and creativity of my thesis as 'text' and not 'work', I am increasingly interested in the rapport between things screened and unscreened advocating mans willingness to stifle violence (contentions of power and hsppiness). The word which marks a passing over the limits of acceptable feeling for Freud is not obscene, but sentimental. From my point of view while saluting mans dream of happiness I anticipate a moment when beauty becomes withdrawal and unrepresentability or death. I soak my feet in the blood running out of the cut off head of Medusa. Moving my thesis in the direction of theories of emancipation, I may plummet from the madness of words to their grim rational. It is my conviction that within this rationale it is possible to work out another calculus of mischief.

CHAPTER ONE

> Discredited by modern opinion, loves sentimentality must be assumed by the amorous subject as a powerful transgression which leaves him alone and exposed by a reversal of values then, it is this sentimentality which today constitutes love's obscenity.
>
> Roland Barthes, A Lover's Discourse

This sentimental is what Richard Bathes calls an unwarranted discourse. Modernism inaugurated a reversal of values which emphasized erotic desire, not love anarchic rupture and innovation rather than the conventional appeals of sentimental language. Modernism reversed the increasing influence of women's writing, discrediting the literary past and especially that sentimental history.

Women themselves participated in this unwarranting. When Louise Bogan writes about what modernist poetry achieved, she begins:

> Formal poetry in America in the year 1900 seemed benighted in every sense: it was imitative, sentimental and genteel. (10, p. 196)

In the United States this reversal against the sentimental helped to establish beleaguered avant-garde intellectuals as a discursive community, defined by its adversarial relationship to domestic culture. Multiple issues of class and gender of power and desire, were contained in this opposition to the sentimental. The richness and complexity of the sentimental were disguised in the process. So was the powerful operation of domestic fiction that Nancy Armstrong has taught us to see. Barthes makes visible the modernist

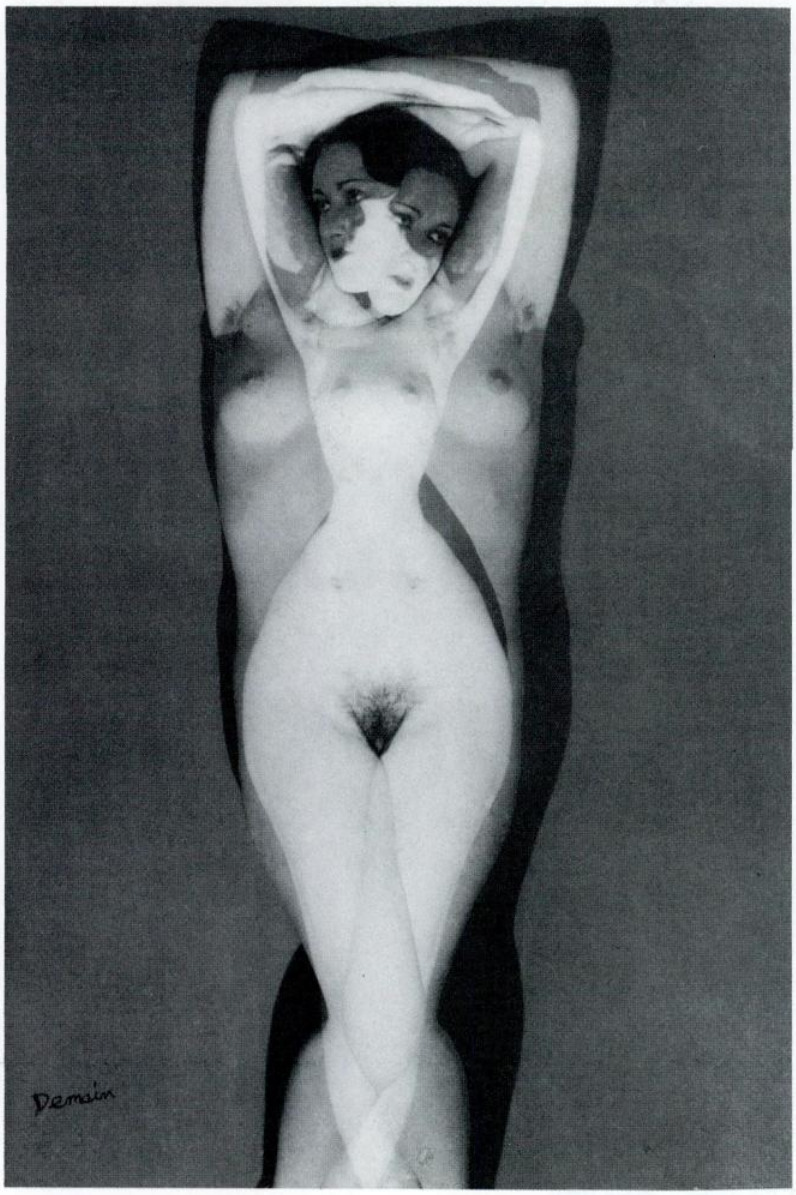


Figure 1

move, relocating the lover's discourse outside the discourse of history, not in the body of a woman but in the body of a text, in figure.

He is returning to the bodily as the location of pleasure - to write the body, neither the skin, nor the bones nor the nerves but the rest: an awkward, fibrous shaggy, revealed thing, a clown's coat. To evade the bodily is to reproduce a structure of oppression which has made of women's bodies that point of vulnerability and of guilt. To speak of the bodily risks a similar reproduction. At a pretty trite level, it is clear there is no escape. This should not surprise us; one cannot simply walk out of patriarchy and shake off its effects.

Cixous tries to subvert the discourse of patriarchy to open it up to contradiction and to difference, still retaining the possibility of shared recognition which make a political movement of and for women possible.

The modernist Annie Dillard replaces subjectivity with style practising, I think, not a genderless discourse but the "gynesis" Alize Jardine describes, withdrawing from political attitudes at the same time that she displays scientific nonfiction with poetic language and with laughter. The resurrection of the epostolary novel in Alice Walker's "The Colour Purple" on the other hand frankly calls up the old sentimental traditions. Writing and advocating a 'Womanist' prose, Walker reconnects with the community of women and

braves the condemnations of serious literature by turning to the vernacular.

Now that feminist scholars have given us back so many of our ancestors, it is time to elaborate on one's critique of the modern, restoring the old progressive discourses to modernity together with the other versions of the secular, the vernacular. Perhaps we can take full advantage of the provisional rhetorical and parodic element of the sentimental. This is not outside or in opposition to modernism but rather an extension of attention to the uncanny sentimentality it has always tried to deny.

Is there something wrong with the rhetoric of heightened emotion? According to Ann Douglas this prepared the way for a twentieth-century mass culture dominated by consumerism and emotional appeals, a mass culture which critical reason ought to fear. A condition for the freedom of play. The scene of little Eva's death in Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin produces our narcissism and our nostalgia, christianity beginning to function as camp, the sentimental undermines the serious. From such a perspective not only sentimental novels, and not only women's traditions, but the whole of twentieth-century mass culture seems neither interesting nor subversive but rather diseased. The crisis of representation which began in the nineteenth century had everything to do with the crisis in representing women, or the object

of desire, the notion of an essentialist subject, the mistaken idea that women are all alike. Wollenstonecraft declares:

> Women subject by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refuse unsensual feelings, and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life . . . (25, p. 55)

The adoration of the angel in the house becomes the adoration of images, or texts. The adoration in the garden becomes an angel that sobs, caught in a tree (Angel: bearer of Archaic Knowledge and Wisdom). In the twentieth century feminists have increasingly asserted women's right to pleasure. Lesbian women were able to free themselves from the woman's role and find support and love in the company of women, which offered some protection against the violence of attacks on women breaking sexual codes. Women such as Louise Bogan were isolated, not in spite of their heterosexuality but because they challenged the conventions of marriage and family. Narration in the twentieth century amounts to a rejection of certain kinds of discourses: the sentimental because it insists on material power, the religious because it encourages weakness and self-abnegation, the romantic when it hysterically embodies the unconscious rather than sublimating and projecting and objectifying. The word which marks a passing over the limits of acceptable feeling for Freud is not obscene, but sentimental. But from the point of view of my thesis, the sentimental

made unrepresentable becomes the unconscious. Freud introduces the sentimental - that is, love - into the heart of reason where mother love is forbidden, and so he sets the scene for the return of the repressed. A new idea of free love which today constitutes loves obscenity. The posture of idolatry suggests the resemblance; modernism was still caught in a gendered dialectic which enclosed literature, making the text the object of a naturalized critical gaze.

Separating the sentimental from the erotic is analogous to separating cultural reproduction from economic production. The appearance in the eighteenth century of a Clarissa whose sensibility made her desirable, marked a new definition of value articulated primarily by friction, value which is no longer external, a matter of aristocratic display, but internal, a matter of the heart, and of qualities of mind.

The sentimental woman replaced not only the aristocratic family but also other images of difference - the popular, the vernacular, the carnivalesque. The degradation of sentimental writing, made to represent the emotional fakery of women's pleadings has covered over the transgressive content of the sentimental, its connection to a sexual body and its connection to the representation of consciousness.

Each of the deliberately disconnected textual moments in Roland Barthes's A Lover's Discourse calls

Fig. 2

up a sentimental past in literature, like a ghost caught in a tree. And the lover's discourse constitutes not Barthes but the lover, a figure with whom Barthes may then be identified. This imaginary lover unsettles the intertextual reservoirs. Embodying a subject of a discourse within literary history, the lover speaks the conventions which define the conduct of the lover. By removing all transgressive explanation, narration, exhortation and commentary, Barthes emphasizes the disconnection between this rhetoric of pathetic figure and the arguments of political and economic history, a disconnection that had through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries come to separate the gendered realms of public and private knowledge. This warranting has resisted the powers of reproduction to restore difference and give authority to transgression.

The sentimental is a turning point for narratives of sociability. Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho and Wollstonecraft's Maria do not argue the idea that there are overwrought emotions. The gothic begins with that assumption and then works to classify and make distinctions. In the eighteenth-century concept of sociability, for example in Hume and Adam Smith, the place of passions undergoes a change, a decline. In Richardson, Stern and later novels such as Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield, there is a development from sympathy, from a conception of passion as hypochondria

and hysteria - that is, a turn from pathos as a rhetorical asset to pathos as not only diseased, and isolated but feminized.

The development of the gothic novel from the late eighteenth century to Wuthering Heights testifies to an ambivalence about the emotions, marking precisely this turn from that which is the basis of the social to that which threatens the social. Perhaps I am suspecting a maternal irony. The maternal need not be complicit with a patriarchal family structure but rather with woman as powerful embodying her desire for consequence.

Judith Newton states that:

> it was the grounding of insight in intimate personal experience that made critiques of 'objectivity' and analyses of the construction of the subject so passionately a matter of concern - it was our subjectivity after all. And it was our passion that put these matters first on the theoretical agenda. (13, p. 140)

Stepping outside, negotiating the between, the woman is to carve out a new space of representation that will not fit into old grids. Women, Cixous argues, must steal what they need from the dominant culture, but then fly away with their cultural body to the in between, where new images, new narratives and new subjectivities can be created. Cixous began by theorizing the possibility of a model of sexual difference not based on exclusion or hierarchy, and relating this to a model of subjectivity based on openness to the Other rather than obliteration of the Other. The inner need to write is finally stronger than the pressures on her to silence.

Writers like Gauthier or Cixous or Irigary describe the invention of another language system that redresses women's exclusion, that will mime the rhythms of women's bodies, permit feminine excess, express women's needs.

"To invent a language that is not oppressive, a language that does not leave speechless but that loosens the tongue", says Annie Leclerc in Parole de femme. A speech that preserves what Adorno calls "the hope of the name" the hope of making new use of the empty delectable space between the name and that which we ask the name to delineate.

For Chantal Chawaf this hope is for redeemed feminine orality:

> We need languages that regenerate us, warn us, give birth to us, that lead us to act and not to flee. For me the most important thing is to work on orality. If a music of femininity is arising out of its own oppression, it materializes through the rediscovered body. (19, p. 184)

Here we find a renewed faith in language, a new "hope of the name" - but only insofar as that name is transgressive and resonates within a nonpatriarchal system. As Cixous insists in "The Laugh of the Medusa": "If woman has always functioned within the discourse of man, a signifier that has already referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sound, it is time for her to dislocate this

within to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of". (26, p. 109)

The French feminist 'word play' has the capacity to draw our attention to the role of emancipatory strategies as the help to enact our liberation from a "further tongue".

For Freud and Geertz play is a force that socializes and makes transgression safe; it sanctions the expression of hostilities in a context that reinstates repressions rather than questioning them. For example, in Lucille Clifton's "Admonitions" we see how, within the context of women's writing, Freud and Geertz's theories might form the basis of a negative aesthetic of play. The speaker's tone is ludic but her high spirits reinforce an undertone of pain:

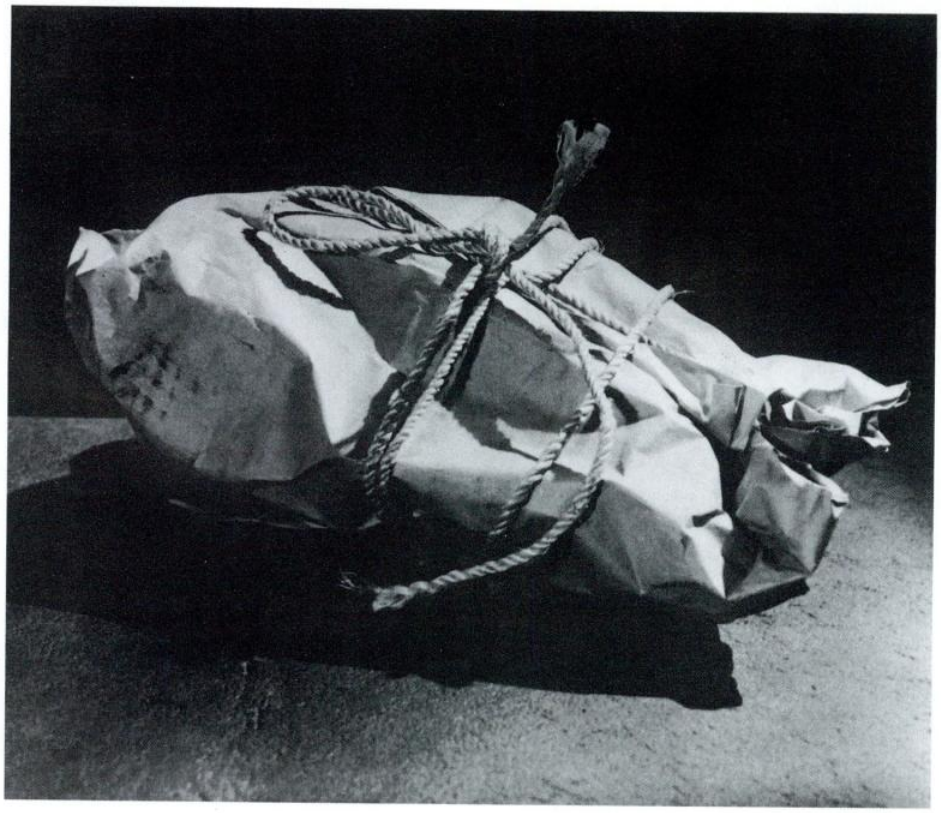


Fig. 3

boys
i don't promise you nothing
but this
what you pawn
i will redeem
what you steal
i will conceal
my private silence to
your public guilt
is all i got

girls
first time a white man
opens his fly
like a good thing
we'll just laugh
laugh real loud my
black woman

children
when they ask you
why is your mama so funny
say
she is a poet
she don't have no sense
(27, p. 18)

If we feel dignity in "Admonitions", it is because Clifton's speaker inhabits a lifeworld so constrained by the desires of the dominant culture that she can only preserve her integrity by clowning. The point of her poem is to relay this constraint; thus her laughter does not resemble the subversive laughter Cixous and Kristera celebrate.

As Terry Eagleton notes, "carnival is often a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art. As Shakespeare's Olivia remarks, "there is no slander in an allowed fool". (10, p. 54)

One may want to resist a feminist aesthetic of the value of play because then what is so valued is robbed of its worth. By an assessment of the value of play what is valued is admitted only as an object for man's estimation. Heiddeggar's project was to free persons and things so that they can be themselves.

> Freedom understood as letting beings be, is the fulfilment and consummation of the essence of truth in the sense of the disclosure of beings.

It seems that much deconstructive study of the behaviour of man has led to the conclusion that the free person is a vain illusion. The pleasure of revealing the culturally determined nature of behaviour has doubtless been the impetus behind much semiotic analysis, but one would be mystified by the demystification itself if one thought that descriptions

of semiotic analysis were in any way inspired by the prospect of liberating men. What the semiotic, structuralist and deconstructive analyses accomplish is a dissolution of the subject. "The goal of the human sciences", says Levi-Strauss, "is not to constitute man but to dissolve him". (17, p. 119) (New forms might not be revolutionary but can be emancipatory.) In Less Guerilleres the games Wittig's warriors inherit from an earlier, misogynous culture remain painful, even when the players laugh uproariously: The game consists of posing a series of questions, for example, who says I wish it, I order it, my will must take the place of reason? Or who must never act according to their will? Or else, who is only an animal the colour of flowers? There are plenty of others such as, who must observe the three obediences and whose destiny is written in their anatomy? The answer to all the questions is the same. Then they begin to laugh ferociously slapping each other on the shoulders. Some of the women, lips parted, split blood.

This association of play with violence, and with the helpless semiosis often who spit blood, must be taken seriously.

For Gadamer, play undermines the solidity of the Cartesian subject, it involves a 'to-and-fro motion' in which the player is absorbed, and "the burden of the initiative, which constitutes the actual strain of existence", removed. But Gadamer's optimistic description of play confirm the possible dangers of

"gaming" for literary women and their readers. If the lightheartedness that comes from the relief of the "actual strain of existence" sounds contagious, it should also sound dangerous, for when Gadamer's terms are applied to women's participation in the games of patriarchy, this relief grows oppressive:

> The attraction of a game, the fascination it exerts, consists precisely in the fact that the game tends to master the players . . . The real subject of the game (this is shown in precisely those experiences in which there is only a single player) is not the player, but instead the game itself. The game is what holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there. (14, p. 113)

If this is how play works, it is part of the nexus of power and constraint that Foucault describes as that "episteme", and it cannot offer useful an emancipatory strategy for women who wish to change the dominant culture.

My counterresponse is to ask - if the play impulse implicates women in patriarchy - why have "phallocritics" repressed or appropriated or ignored the play impulse in women's texts? I want to suggest that there is a political dimension to play that Freud, Geertz and Gadamer do not recognize.

To explore this dimension, I want to use The Land of Oz by L. Frank Baum to suggest that the repression of play within feminist theory mirrors the repression of women's play in the dominant discourse. In the following chapter I wish to attempt to undo this repression - to recapture the concept of "play" for a feminist polemic.

CHAPTER TWO

Fig. 4

In Milton's Paradise Lost the invocation "Let there be play" is equal in force to God's "Let there be light":

> The Sixth, and of Creation last arose
> With Ev'ning Harps and Matin, when God said,
> Let th' Earth bring forth Soul living in her Kind
> Cattle and Creeping things, and Beast of the
> Earth,
> . . .
>
> The grassy Clods now Calv'd, now half appear'd
> The Tawny Lion pawing to get free
> His hinder parts, then springs as broke from
> Bonds,
> And Rampant shakes his Brinded mane; the Ounce,
> The Libbard,and the Tiger, as the Mole
> Rising, the crumbl'd Earth above them threw
> in Hillocks . . .

This presumptive control from above, this direction of the playful activity of others by a booming male voice is typical. After all, in Western culture the founding myth of nature is masculine, as the ruling brotherhoods of phallocracy; fellowship of fools whose project is to fell the Tree of Life by forcing women to their knees and bringing down all of nature. And of the Western cult of the Virgin Mary - for the first time in human history the mother kneels before her son; she freely accepts her inferiority. This is the supreme masculine victory, consummated in the cult of the Virgin - it is the rehabilitation of woman through the accomplishment of her defeat. God cannot, but woman can call man to account for his genocidal behaviour. I direct my attention to Baum's The Land of Oz and its repression of girl's play. This text describes a boy's metamorphosis into a girl. Baum turns the hero of The

Land of Oz (Tip - the playful, revolutionary boy who disorders and recombines) into Ozma, the well-mannered girl who mouths maxims of high insipidity. Tip is the perfect bricoleur, and he achieves maximum pleasure in the objects he plays with. But when Baum reveals that Tip has been a girl all along, that he is really Ozma - although with a boy's sensibility and in a boy's body - Baum sets about to replace this boy who says 'no' to a world he dislikes with a girl who says 'yes'.

This story may seem an eccentric place to begin in an analysis of women's repression but, children's stories offer a good place to comprehend the dominant myths of a culture. This text is especially attentive to the unexpected connections between play and suffrage.

The central pleasure we experience in anticipating a recognition scene comes from our knowledge that the lost, long-sought person is not lost at all, but there, before our eyes, waiting for the moment of discovery to shine forth. In The Land of Oz, L. Frank Baum's sequel to The Wizard of Ox, this pleasure shines forth in the search for the lost Princess Ozma, daughter of the deceased "King Pastoria" and heir to his throne. The Wizard of Oz who botched Dorothy's flight back to Kansas is not such a bumbler in The Land of Oz. An adept in the white slave trade, he has sold Ozma to the wicked witch Mombi, who has enchanted the baby girl and

given her a defective-proof identity. For years the citizens of Oz have searched for the lost princess, but the land of Oz is not so much Ozma's story as the story of Tip, a young bricoleur who possesses an "elixir of life, a wonderful potion which allows him to bring his creations to life, and Jinjur, Baum's caricature of a suffragist, who leads a rebel army of women to conquer the Emerald City. While the stories of Tip and Jinjur seem disconnected, when the moment arrives for Glinda the Good to reveal Ozma's identity, we discover an oddity: Ozma, Jinjur and Tip share the same gender.

> "What did you do with the girl?" asked Glinda and at this question everyone bent forward and listened eagerly for the reply.
>
> "I enchanted her", answered Mombi
>
> "In what way?"
>
> "I transformed her into - into -"
>
> "Into what?" demanded Glinda, as the witch hesitated.
>
> "Into a boy!" said Mombi, in a low tone.
>
> !A boy!" echoed every voice: and then, because they knew that this old woman had reared Tip from childhood, all eyes were turned to where the boy stood.
>
> "Yes", said the old Witch, nodding her head: "that is the Princess Ozma - the child brought to me by the Wizard who stole her father's throne. That is the rightful ruler of the Emerald City!" and she pointed her long bony finger straight at the boy.
>
> "I!" cried Tip, in amazement. "Why, I'm no Princess Ozma - I'm not a girl!"
>
> Glinda smiled, and going to Tip she took his small brown hand within her dainty white one.
>
> (6, p. 58)

In Baum's text the border dividing "Ozma" from "Tip" is as emphatic and uncrossable as that boundary dividing Glinda's "dainty white" hand from Tip's boyish "brown one". Tip resists this return to femininity by insisting on the sacredness of the male/female border; he does not want to give up his homeorotic companionship with the Scarecrow or Tin Woodsman or his birthright of frolic.

Tip's special gift in The Land of Oz is his capacity to act as bricoleur; he is a child creator who can recombine whatever he finds into forms that alter the direction of his story. But when Tip is changed back into Ozma, this power of invention is arrested (until then, Tip's inventions are wonderfully preposterous and include a flying "gump", a creature made out of an antelope head, two sofas, a broomstick, and a pair of palm-front wings, as well as a contraption named Jack Pumpkinhead, made out of scraps of old lumber and a very ripe pumpkin).

From the beginning, Tip's preoccupations are stereotypically "boyish". Sent by Mombi to work in the fields or gather wood in the forest, "Tip often climbed trees for birds' eggs or amused himself chasing the fleet white rabbits or fishing in the brooks with bent pins".

While Mombi was out of view, Tip would lie upon his back between the rows of corn and take a nap. Tip slips "between the rows", digs up gophers instead of

weeds and "by taking care not to exhaust his strength, he grew up strong and rugged as a boy may be ".

Tip makes something designed to scare Mombi, a "terrorist text" with jointed hands and feet, and a huge pumpkin smile. Tip combines a deity's power of creating with Adam's of naming:

Fig. 5

> "I must give him a name" he cried. "So good a man as this must surely have a name. I believe", he added, after a moment's thought, "I will name the fellow 'Jack Pumpkinhead'".

If Tip names Jack, only Mombi can bring the pumpkin figure to life; she sprinkles it with a magic elixir and Jack wakes up, creaky and awkward. Ignoring Mombi's part in his awakening, he addresses Tip as "Father", whereupon Mombi decides that Tip has too much power; Jack Pumpkinhead will make the better assistant.

Medusa-like, she decides to change Tip into a marble statue, whereupon Tip and Jack run off with her "elixir of life" and have dazzling adventures.

With her power to make men hard and to create new life, Mombi is a fantastic version of "Mommy" and a grim version of the "eternal feminine". Her elixir of life is the symbolic equivalent of woman's reproductive power - and Tip's stealing of this power and his successful creation of the talking sawhorse and

crotchety gump bears witness to the dominant culture's convictions about which gender should 'own' creativity. But Tip's playfulness also has a metaphysical aspect. To understand this metaphysic one must construct a brief genealogy of the child at play.

According to Romantic myth children represent that portion of humanity still unspoiled by civilization. Closer to nature, the Romantic child shares nature's splendour while the civilized adult possesses "embers" of the child's sophistry and jouissance. This Romantic rendering of childhood has lost its conceptual power, and we have adopted Freud's descriptions of infantile sexuality and Piaget's notions of the child's rational development. According to Walter Benjamin even Freud and Piaget's myths of childhood must be replaced, for children represent something more urgent than untapped sexual ferocity or the undeveloped capacity for logical thinking. While Piaget focusses on what is gained as the infant becomes youth and Freud on the loss of the child's polymorphous perversity, Benjamin sees only the the child's creativity: for him the child is the best revolutionary. As children grow up, what is lost is their active, irascible power of improvisation and change. Child's play can be characterized by its peculiar creativity, its power to seize upon the shards of culture: to use the fragments of used-up life that society rejects, and organize these fragments in a completely new way.

> In using these things (children) do not so much imitate the words of adults as bring together in the artifacts produced in play, materials of widely differing kinds in a new intuitive relationship. (28, p. 151)

According to Benjamin, children are always transforming what is around them, and this transformation has "revolutionary power". As Susan Buck-Morss explains in her analysis of Benjamin, children's cognition is tactile and hence tied to action. Children refuse to accept an object's given meaning, but instead get "to know objects by laying hold of them and using them in a manner that changes their meaning". Although Levi-Strauss emphasises that the bricoleur acts in a world already "pre-constrained", and that bricolage has no revolutionary power since the elements that the bricoleur collects evoke an older mythos, Benjamin does not recognise this preconstraint. He believes that the bricoleur's power carries a disruptive initiative and agrees with Valery who says that

> children are absolute monsters of activity. You might say they're only conscious of all the things around them in so far as they can act on them, or through them, in no matter what way: the action, in fact, is all. (28, p. 160)

For Benjamin, the "triumph of cognition" Piaget celebrates in the adult signals the child's "defeat as revolutionary subject". However, the presence of children speaks eloquently in every generation about a new potential for emancipatory activity. "In children, the capacity for revolutionary transformation is

present from the start", Benjamin explains, and each generation is "endowed with a weak Messianic power". Since this emancipatory power is reborn in every generation, by stripping history of its metaphysical pretensions, we can redefine history as "the begetting of children, and as such, it is, always a return to beginnings". While Benjamin's conflation of the values of reproductive labour and child's play seems underanalyzed, his discussion of the potentially revolutionary value of the play impulse will help us understand what Ozma's loss of his/her ludic capacity means.

Ozma's crossing of genders would be no more than a piece of clever textual legerdemain if it were not for a subplot that brings Benjamin's vision of the revolutionary child and a feminist vision of women's empowerment together. Baum's text is simultaneously preoccupied with finding Ozma and with discovering a way for Tip and his comrades to conquer a woman's army that has taken over the Emerald City. On the road to the Emerald City Tip meets Jinjur, who has assembled a female "army of revolt" because "the Emerald City has been ruled by men long enough". Since this army is a heavily caricatured version of suffragist protest, Tip's task is simple for Jinjur's "army" tires quickly of power; they prefer the ease of conspicuous consumption to the nitty-gritty of battle. While Jinjur does reapportion the usual division of labour by

making househusbands of the men and taking her army of women to the streets, her revolutionary compatriots remain lovers of pretty objects, narcissistic self-adorners:

> the City glitters with beautiful gems, which might far better be used for rings, bracelets and necklaces; and there is enough money in the King's treasury to buy every girl in our Army a dozen new gowns.1 (6, p. 114)

Jinjur says, "So we intend to conquer the City and run the government to suit ourselves". With Ozma's return this period of wanton governance comes to an end:

> At once the men of the Emerald City cast off their aprons. And it is said that the women were so tired eating of their husbands' cooking that they all hailed the conquest of Jinjur with joy . . . the good wives prepared to delicious a feast for the weary men that harmony was immediately restored in every family.

While Baum trivializes Jinjur's revolutionary desire, the persistence of this 'feminist' plot is worth exploring.

The Land of Oz is organized around this battle between opposing genders - a battle over who owns creativity and who owns political. Once the division of reproductive labour is renegotiated in men's favour, the situation of female power in Baum's text remains volatile - the division of labour that makes male homoeroticism the source of reproductivity is threatened by Jinjur and her army. But when this army is overpowered and the text's anxiety about female powerfulness could come to an end the narrative begins to struggle once more with an unrest which is only resolved through Tip's transformation. Why is this unrest persistent?

First, Baum's manner of dealing with his revolutionary subplot is complicated by an even better story: Baum's mother was a suffragist who campaigned forcefully for women's rights. Not only does "Mombi's" covert alliance with the female rebels become clearer, but knowing that Baum has an ongoing concern with issues of women's empowerment invites us to rewrite his text in new terms.

If in Baum's terms to play is to be capable of revising one's culture by appropriating and reshaping reproductive and political power then from the point of view of the dominant sex/gender system, women's play is among those dangerous sign systems that must be repressed. In Baum's story, women's rebellious energy is coterminous with women's playfulness, and both impulses get excised simultaneously.

Fredric Jameson's notion of a "political unconscious" helps us see how this excision is coded in The Land of Oz. Jameson explains that Marxist (and I would add feminist) criticism encourages the rewriting of old hegemonic forms since these forms can now

> be grasped as a process of the reappropriation and neutralization, the cooptation and class transformation . . . of forms which originally expressed the situation of "popular", subordinate, or dominated groups. (14, p. 111)

Such revision is not permissible, but necessary,

- since by definition the cultural monuments and masterworks that have survived tend necessarily to perpetuate only a single voice in this class dialogue,

the voice of a hegemonic class, they cannot be properly assigned their relational place in a dialogical system with the restoration of artificial construction of the voice to which they were initially opposed, a voice for the most part stifled and reduced to silence, marginalized, its own utterances scattered to the winds, or reappropriated in their turn by the hegemonic culture.

In Baum's story these marginalized voices keep speaking: we see traces in his text of a "permanent struggle" between coexisting genders that is also an index of ongoing cultural revolution. Although the text's ideology of male dominance acts as a "strategy of containment" regressing what the dominant culture deems unthinkable, The Land of Oz gives us moments in which "the coexistence of various modes of production" and divisions of labour "become visibly antagonistic". In Jameson's view any text is a "field of force in which the dynamics of sign systems of several distinct modes of production can be registered and apprehended". The Land of Oz in particular offers a place for examining male appropriation of women's creativity. Baum's "innocent" text has a political dimension that coincides with its repression of women's playfulness; at the same time, because it dwells on the revolutionary potential of women, their violence and anger at cultural disenfranchisement, and works out a way to recode and to reappropriate that anger, the text covertly acknowledges its own repressiveness.

If Baum is intent on disenfranchising women, why does he give power back to Ozma? The Land of Oz is organised around a battle between genders over who owns creativity. Given Baum's misogyny, the forces of patriarchy are bound to win, but this is oddly difficult, for each separate victory leads to another compulsive male anxiety about defeat. The "unconscious" of Baum's text knows that women continue to represent, in real life and in fiction, a deprived cultural force whose repression must be ideologically coded again and again if women are to be kept in their "place". Thus Baum finally contains women's revolutionary impulses within a girl child who is empty of both the revolutionary desires of Jinjur and the playful desires of Tip. Ozma has no yearning for "otherness". She has been this "other" already; she has inhabited both genders.

The power of Baum's story seems at first to be its fantasied creation of a child who, like Tiresias, controls both roles at once, its real meaning is political; Baum makes it seem "natural" for women to give up the revolutionary power of transformation and play. By making continuity between male and female "zones" a fait accompli, Baum structures his story so that woman's desire disappears.

At the end of The Land of Oz the continuum between masculine and feminine identity is addressed and then repressed; as this continuum vanishes, the lives of two

very different children are mapped onto one another - possessed and not possessed by the same person. As the text simultaneously breaks the taboo forbidding men and women to perceive themselves as similar and reinstates that taboo, we find ourselves at that odd point in the territory of gender described by Lacan in "the famous parable of the two doors": a train arrives at a station. A little boy and a little girl, brother and sister, are seated in a compartment face-to-face next to the window through which the buildings along the station platform can be seen passing as the train pulls to a stop. "Look", says the brother, "we're at Ladies!"; "Idiot!" replies his sister. "Can't you see we're at Gentlemen?"

When Jane Gallop quotes this parable in The Daughter's Seduction, she expands Lacan's meaning and explains it in more detail:

> Because of the rule of the signifier over the signified, the two words "Ladies" and "Gentlemen", in the illustration above, constitute, by their very installation, the two doors, although, in some mythical prehistory prior to the signifier's arrival, the doors are identical. Similarly it is not the biological given of male and female that is in question in psychoanalysis . . . but the subject as constituted by the pre-existing signifying chain, that is, by culture, in which the subject must place himself. (12, p. 104)

We return to an emancipatory problem, to the fact that although sex/gender systems are socially constructed, they are no less potent for this constructedness. To know that we are controlled, our vision altered by the signifying chain, does not mean we can remove ourselves

from its meanings "merely by knowing that the second rest room exists somewhere outside" our field of vision. Nor is this division and alienation from this "other" room one we can tolerate. In telling the parable of the two doors Lacan is not just describing a structural fait accompli that insures society's successful partitioning of masculine and feminine fields of possibility into different locales. Instead he is describing a set-piece, a tragedy; he wants to acknowledge our inevitable situation of desire for the other and irrevocable inscription within that place of longing and conflict in which hostilities never cease because the signifier mediates our removal from the real. We must endure the constant perversion of our "needs" by the signifier's bludgeoning. As Gallop explains, "Desire is that portion of the prearticulated need which finds itself left out of the demand - the demand being the register of ethical discourse". In neither Lacan's nor Gallop's terms is it possible to struggle successfully against "the cultural constructs of male-dominated society" because the subject who struggles cannot, as Gallop says,

> consider as illusory the entire structure which makes the realms of Gentlemen and Ladies appear defined and absolute . . . That effort would place the feminist as observer in some sort of floating position outside the structure, a position of omniscience. (12, p. 109)

If we can neither float beyond the signifying structure (be Tip and Ozma at once) nor act wilfully

to "overthrow" the signifier's reign (revolt successfully with Jinjur) then what are our options? According to Gallop, "if patriarchal culture is that within which the self originally constitutes itself, it is always already there in each subject as subject. Thus how can it be overthrown if it has been necessarily internalized in everybody who could possibly act to overthrow it?" We are struck forever in the situation of Ozma's world - in which brown hands are opposed to white hands, swarthy skin to golden fragility, Tip's playful transformations to Ozma's inert maxims. Or are we?

One of the terms missing from Lacan's story, though incipiently present in Gallop's, is a theory of play - and an examination of the ways in which play can help psyches work, either collectively or individually, to transform the conditions of their socialization. To see what this absence means I propose a playful examination of Gallop's text. Her heady rhetoric in The Daughter's Seduction suggests one way to begin to "overthrow" some forms of "necessity".

At the beginning of The Daughter's Seduction Gallop describes her narrative strategy in a passage both tumultuous and enticing. She promises to enact a new kind of critical transgression: in a manner analogous to the dialogue between psychoanalysis and feminism, each chapter of the book stages the encounter between texts of at least two authors. This method is

a way of getting more out of the texts read, something that goes beyond the boundaries which an author might want to impose upon his or her work. The notions of integrity and closure in a text are like that of virginity in a body. They assume that if one does not respect the boundaries between inside and outside, one is "breaking and entering", violating a property.

In Lacan's parable the little boy and little girl are stuck in a form of verbal propriety; to overthrow the division of labour and language instilled by their society is impossible. The young lady who looks out the train window is blinded by the signifiers that surround her; she can look at the door marked "gentlemen", but she can never cross its threshold with propriety or be a man herself. But in The Daughter's Seduction Gallop posits another kind of relation to the father's game. She reserves for herself the action of "breaking and entering", of going into the wrong parables, peeping in forbidden windows, throwing open the wrong doors. Gallop's delightful trespass, her transgression of the sacrosanct space of "the two doors" disrupts the internalized boundaries of "patriarchal culture" and begins to envision "a different economy" in which feminist theorists seize the license to play.

- As long as the fallacies of integrity and closure are upheld, a desire to penetrate becomes a desire for rape. I hope to engage in some intercourse with these

textual bodies that has a different economy, one in which entry and interpretation do not mean disrespect or violation because they are not based upon the myth of the books or the self's or the body's virginal wholeness. But rather upon the belief that, if words there be or body there be, somewhere there is a desire for dialogue, intercourse, exchange. (16, p. 111)

Gallop takes on the stereotypical male role of raping, penetrating, and then she playfully revises that role, refusing the sadism of these stereotypes. But even if this playfulness is effective in The Daughter's Seduction, why should it be necessary to "theorize" it?

When a description of women's writing as "play" is left out of feminist theory, when we take the weight of patriarchy - its force and inevitably - too seriously, we miss a great deal of what goes on in women's texts. Our inherited sex/gender system is dangerous for women. But it is also a system that women writers have been working to deconstruct. To understand how play contributes to this deconstruction, we need to move from the metaphysics to the politics of play.

In Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud, Marcuse contends that we must rescue aesthetic experience from marginality and proposes Schiller's explication of the play impulse as an operational base. Schiller describes play as an impulse mediating between sensuous and form-giving or

rational experience. This mediation is necessary because, for Schiller, the "sensuous impulse" (which is essentially passive and receptive), is always overpowered by the "form-impulse" (which is essentially "active, mastering, domineering"). Culture grows out of this antagonism. As Marcuse says, "instead of reconciling both impulses by making sensuousness rational and reason sensuous, civilization has subjected sensuousness to reason in such a manner that the former, if it reasserts itself, does so savagely and invites reason to grow tyrannical and "impoverish" or barbarize sensuousness. For Marcuse these impulses can only be reconciled through the work of the "play impulse". As metaphysic, Schiller's ideas are less than systematic, but as a phenomenology of play that might lead to a politics, these ideas are worth pursuing. Schiller, according to Marcuse, is the first philosopher to attempt to find a sensuous solution to a political problem. Schiller wants to negotiate men's and women's liberation from "inhuman existential conditions". He asks that we "pass through the aestheticy", since it is his view that "beauty . . . leads to freedom". This theory is old; what is new about Schiller's system is that play becomes the medium of this liberation, and play is not playing with something or for something - it is the very rhythm of existence free from constraint.

Kristeva's model of the text as that site where law, reason and custom are challenged by the body's dense music has affinities with Schiller's description of the emancipatory value of sensuousness. As we have been for Kristeva it is the social violence of "Geist" that the play impulse must resist, the usurping tactics of mind and the sensuous drive. Like Schiller, she describes the text as a place where what is repressive and cumbersome becomes light: in Marcuse's paraphrase of Schiller, "man is free when the 'reality loses its seriousness' and its necessity 'becomes light'". For Kristeva, the function of the text is also to "lift" the repression that weighs on the text's participation in social struggle.

Moreover, in "Psychoanalysis and the Polis", Kristeva suggests that critics and psychoanalysts should indulge their playfulness frequently in order to give the work of analysis more volatile power. "The wise interpreter" must "give way to delirium":

> the dimension of desire, appearing for the first time in the citadel of interpretive will . . . opens up time, suspends stoic suicide, and confers not only an interpretive power but also a transforming power to these new unpredictable signifying effects which must be called "an imaginary". I would suggest that the wise interpreter give way to delirium so that, out of his desire, the imaginary may join interpretive closure, thus producing a perpetual interpretive creative force. (15, p. 79)

When Jane Gallop "gives way to delirium" her prose takes on, or appears to take on, a transformative power. How transformative this power is depends not on Gallop's playfulness, but on her audience's.

There is always a moment in history when these discourses obtain a general consensus not so much because they interpret the situation correctly (i.e. in accordance with the exigencies of the moment and developments dictated by the needs of the majority) but rather because they correspond to the essentially utopian desires of the majority. Such political interpretation interprets desires; even if it lacks reality, it contains the truth of desires. It is, for that very reason, utopian and ideological. Yet, as in analysis, such an interpretation can be a powerful factor in the mobilization of energies that can lead social groups and masses beyond a sadomasochistic asceois to challenge real conditions. Such a mobilizing interpretation can be called revolution or demagogy. By contrast, a more objective, neutral, and technocratic interpretation would only solidify or very slowly modify the real conditions.

It is in this dimension that writers like Cixous give us extra delight. Placing Cixous' ribald factions in the context of carnival gave us a new way to evaluate her textual politics. If we ignore Cixous' playfulness and call her pronouncements philosophically rigid rather than ludic we not only miss the best parts of her revisionary ethic, but miss the chance to participate in such an ethic ourselves. For Cixous, women's relation to philosophy must be insouciant: "am I in philosophy? I do not think so. I have a

Fig. 6

relationship to philosophy, but it is one of dialogue". It is a relationship of cultivated delirium:

> I would be capable of carrying on a philosophical discourse, but I do not. I let myself be carried off by the poetic word. Is it a mad word? Does it say something? I must say that my steed or my barge and my poetic body never do forget the philosophical rigor. So what is happening? Philosophy is like an accompaniment, but humorous . . . I take it into account but precisely as that form which I can take my distance. (19, p. 19)

The self-distance of play inhabits a space in which the player lives with an array of objects representing both dream potential and external constraints. The very dialogue orientation of a word among other words can create new and significant artistic potential in discourse.

The temporality of life's dialectic becomes a thematic foreground, as life becomes the "still life" of art and therefore becomes as well the reminder of death, like the skull in so many paintings about meditation, representing the subject's gaze into a mirror. The hero/heroine confronts Medusa and is turned to stone; not only the hero/heroine but the entire scene becomes "dead", unchanging. This is perhaps the moment not only of artistic seduction but also of the women's seductive encounter with women. The moment when the woman encounters the monster and is transfixed has been theorized within film theory. This is an extension of woman's condition within the gaze, so that the shared status as objects results in a moment of identification. When woman sees the other

woman, the monster, she is seized by an uncanny recognition. Here the alternative pleasures of beauty and feminine desire break up heroic looking and promise a horrified enchantment.

In Charlotte Bronte's transformative "Villette", Lucy watches men and can tell you what they are as seen by the woman they fail to notice. Lucy has watched men look at women, has studied the images of woman, the adoring mother, the efficient prison matron, the merciless flirt. There is probably nothing so subversive in the book as that afternoon in the Brussels museum when she scrutinizes the two faces of woman whom the male has fashioned, one for his entertainment, one for her instruction, Rubens' Cleopatra and the Academician's four pictures of the virtuous female. Lucy's deliberately philistine account of Cleopatra is enchanting:

> It represents a woman, considerably larger, I thought, than the life. I calculated that this Lady . . . very much butcher's meat, to say nothing of liquids . . . that affluence of flesh. She lay half-reclined on a couch . . . strong enough to do the work of two plain cooks . . . she ought to have been standing, or at least sitting bolt upright. She had no business to lounge away the noon on a sofa . . . an absurd and disorderly mass of certain upholstery smothered the couch, and cumbered the floor. (7, p. 279)

This "coarse and preposterous canvas", this "enormous piece of claptrap", as Lucy nominates the masturbatory fantasy she perceives in it, is the male unconstrained dream of an open and panting odalisque, the sheer carnality floating always in the back of his mind

inviting envy, inviting death. This is matched only by its obverse - the image of woman he would foist on the woman herself. Cleopatra is for masculine delectation only, and when Paul catches Lucy contemplating the painting he is deeply shocked: "How dare you, a young person, sit cooly down, with the self-possession of a garcon, and look at that picture?" A despot, as Lucy describes him so often, he is deeply offended, even affronted, that a young woman should see what he immediately settles down to gaze at. Paul forbids Lucy to look upon Cleopatra and forces her to sit in a dull corner and study several mawkish daubs the conventional mind has designed for her: a set of four, denominated in the catalogue, "La vie d'une". They were painted in a remarkable style, flat, dead, pale and formal. The first represent a "Jeune Fille" coming out of a church door, a missal in her hand, her dress very prim, her eyes cast down, her mouth pursed up - the image of a most villainous, little precocious she-hypocrite. The second, a "Mariee" with along white veil, kneeling at a pre-diev in her chamber, holding her hands plastered together, finger to finger, and showing the whites of her eyes in the most exasperating manner. The third, a "Jeune Mere" hanging disconsolate over a clayey and puffy baby with a face like an unwholesome full moon. The fourth, a "Veirve", being a black woman, holding by the hand a black little girl (black because in mourning) and the twain studiously surveying an elegant

French monument . . . All these four "Anges" were grim and grey as burglars, and cold and vapid as ghosts. What women to live with! insecure, ill-humored, bloodless, brainless nonentities! As bad in their way as the indolent gipsy giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers.

In this comic instance of sight taboo, the social schizophrenia within masculine culture, not only the hypocrisy of the double standard, but its purpose and intentions are exposed. It has converted one woman into sex symbol, flesh devoid of mentality or personality, "cunt" - thus for itself to gaze upon. And unto woman herself is reserved the wearisome piety of academic icons with their frank propaganda of serviceable humility, their potted passion.

Lucy invites the foregrounding of the enlightening icon figure of the honey-mad woman. This reminds us of the propensity women writers have to seek in situations of buoyancy and volatility.

In the following chapter I want to focus on moments of pleasure that involve ecstasy as well as suffrage. To point to a missing term in feminist criticism that of "orphic" gratification that does not repress but redresses and preserves women's struggles.

On board a wild ship taking Lucy to Labassecour, she comes up against the limits of language, however her philosophy is mercifully shaken, and what emerges is renewed mobility.

> Black was the river as a torrent of ink; lights glanced on it from the piles of building round, ships rocked on its bosom. They rowed me up to several vessels; I read by lantern light their names painted in great white letters on a dark ground; the Oxean, the Phoenix, the Consort, the Dolphin, were passed in turns; but the Vivid was my ship, and it seemed she lay further down.

For Wordsworth, London is an "endless stream of men and moving things" - a place of too many voices, too much language, of words which dizzy both ear and eye: "Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names . . ./With letters huge inscribed from top to toe/Stationed above the door like guardian saints. But while Wordsworth finds nothing but "blank confusion" in London's hectoring crowds, Lucy finds there a world of new writing; the white letters which show up against the dark river of ink bring to mind the fantasies of another woman writer who claims her texts are written in bold black and white: "I write", says Cixous, "in milk and night". Cixous is a honey-mad woman par excellence; a writer whose fantasies of writing as ecstasy and reading as serene self-engorgement overgo Lucy Snowe's more timid imaginings. "A desire for text. Confusion!" Cixous says in "La Venue a l'ecriture".

> What is happening to her? A child! Some paper! Drunkenness! I am overflowing. My breasts are overflowing! Milk. Ink. Time to nurse. And me? I too am hungry. The milky taste of ink! (19., p. 100)

Cixous' aphrodisiac desire for "text" seems a far cry from Lucy's aphasia, but the startling white letters

which rock upon the "bosom" of the river on which Lucy travels toward her worthy ship make a promise both violent and playful: "'The Vivid' started out, white and glaring, from the black night at last". On board this ship, Lucy begins to discover a new way of doubling the self by means of which a given thinker describes by analogical extension, some domain to which those ideas do not immediately apply. Words take up the energy of a desire for connection.

> I think it pisses God off if you walk by the colour purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it.
>
> Shug, in Alice Walker's, The Colour Purple

CHAPTER THREE

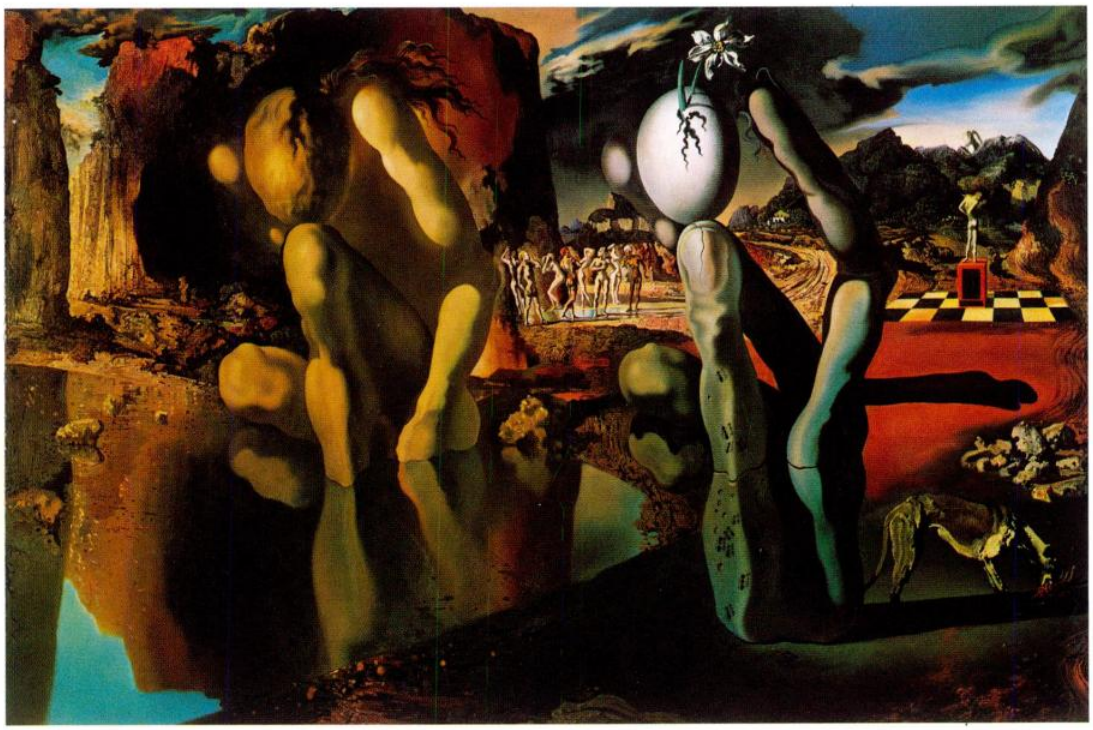
I hope to dispute the discovery that language is dangerous for women, to ask whether we can identify contents in which women speak of their pleasures and of their pain as delirious and positive. For Adarno, as for Kirsteva, the madness of words is a possible madness, it is always delirious; it has already strayed "from a presumed reality". If words remain concepts they can still "achieve what the concept prevents", for the flaw in each concept "makes it necessary to cite others; this is the font of the only constellations which inherited some of the hope of the name. Delirium has an elective affinity to dialectics, which as criticism of the system, recalls what would be outside the system; and the force that frees the dialectical movement in perceiving is the very same that rebels against the system. The mobility of delirium reveals the recurring responsiveness of thought to what is "inside" the system as well as its potential openness to what is "outside".

At this moment I write within the limits of a language which speaks with the pervasive voice of social norms. What do you feel to be the pedagogical responsibilities of those still engaged in "classical" university teaching? What alternatives can you propose to the great Enlightenment narrative of education as emancipation? I suggest that the pedagogical task, once stripped of its trappings, that of the great narrative of emancipation, can be designated by one

word: an apprenticeship in resistance. Resistance against the great narratives themselves (the liberal, the Marxist, the capitalist, the Christian, the speculative), against the way thought is treated in the postmodern technology insofar as they express the most recent application of capitalist rules to language resistance against every object of thought which is given to be grasped through some "obvious" delimitation, method, or end. For Derrida the honey-mad woman is already implicated in the processes she tries to escape:

> As much as women's studies has not put back into question the very principles of the structure of the former model of the university, it risks to be just another cell in the university beehive . . . On the other hand, the effort to put back into question the structured principles. . . which construct the university law, the academic law, that is to say in the end, the social law in general . . . one has the impression that the questioning of this principle is unequally developed in comparison to those studies which we could call "positive". (8, 104)

I am led toward Kristeva's tempting conclusion in Revolution in Poetic Language that works of art do not need to represent a "progressive ideology" since "the text fulfills its ethical function only when it pluralizes, pulverizes, musicates these truths, which is to say, on the condition that it develops them to the point of laughter. The founding of modern civilization on mob violence and patriarchal restraint finds its objective correlative in the act of beekeeping: "O Europe", the poem ends, "O ton of



honey". I offer life's speakers a habitat in the persona of the queen who abandons the hive and guards Weird Women who write in sand. The excess drones are disposed of, they do not offer any resistance against the workers' biting jaws. They find other inglorious end at the portals of the bee dwelling.

In Eros and Civilization Marcuse contrasts Prometheus, the wily trickster who creates culture at the "cost of perpetual pain", with Orpheus/Narcissus, the pleasure seeker and lower of fulfilment, who possesses "the voice which does not command but sings". A culture must follow the path of pain or of pleasure, Marcuse says, and he condemns those cultures that follow Prometheus. This suffering God may perform superhuman deeds, but Prometheus' actions also "promote and strengthen mundane reality, they do not explode it. In contrast, Orpheus and Narcissus "do explode" this reality; like Emily Dickinson's honey bee, these pleasure gods awaken and liberate "potentialities that are real in things animate and inanimate . . . real but in the un-erotic reality suppressed".

Most women bit the hard fruit of theory, like the fallen Lizzie in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" and jeopardize their voice, place it under erasure. In "Goblin Market" Lizzie loses herself in "the haunted glen" where "wicked quaint fruit-merchant men", give her fruits that feel "like honey to the throat/But poison in the blood". She sucks this fruit with the

Fig. 3

knowledge that is fecundity may destroy her own:

> She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
> Then sucked their fruit, globes fair or red,
> Sweeter than honey from the rock
> Stronger than man-rejoicing wine
> Clearer than water flowed that juice
> She never tasted such before
> How should it cloy with length of use?
> She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
> Fruits which the unknown orchard bore;
> Then flung the emptied rinds away
> But gathered up one kernel stone,
> An knew not was it night or day
> As she turned home alone. (21)

The pleasure-seeking honey-mad woman discovers oral pleasure in male theory. When the goblinmen bid Lizzie "taste/In tones as smooth as honey" and she does, her body loses its force and vigour; the cost of her pleasure is speechlessness. The rectifying frame of theory endorses the boundlessness of women, there is another sister in "Goblin Market". As Lizzie starts to pine away, her sister Laura decides that she, too, will risk the temptations of the goblin merchants to find her sister's cure. The goblin men torment Laura cruelly, and she returns from their wrangling covered, head to foot, in their juices. Upon entering Lizzie's room, she cries out to her sister:

> Did you miss me?
> Come and kiss me.
> Never mind my bruises,
> Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
> Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
> Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
> Eat me, drink me, love me
> Laura, make much of me;
> For your sake I have braved the glen
> And had to do with globin merchant men. (21)

Laura has gathered the forbidden fruit, which covers her body but has not been absorbed, and this "pulp" becomes an antidote to the goblin spell itself: "She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth/her lips began to scorch/That juice was wormwood to her tongue/She loathed the feast:/Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung".

As liminal substance, honey underlines the liminal character of orality itself - an orality I want to consider through the metaphor of the feast. Because the mouth is the site where that which is alien to the self is incorporated the feast according to Mikhael Bakhtin, is a time of "free interplay between the body and outside world", a time of victory over fear, for the feast celebrates the destruction of what the self encounters as threatening.

> In Rebalais and His World, Bakhtin tells us that
>
> next to the bowels and the genital organs is the mouth, through which enters the world to be swallowed up . . . All these complexities and orifices have a common characteristic; it is with them that the borders between one's own and other bodies and between the body and the world are breached. (5, 11)

In our preoccupation with the male writers' phallic power of "breaching" we tend to ignore the woman writer's double orality - her capacity for transforming boundaries, for defining her own loci of power. This breaching can be glorious, as in Mary Oliver's "Bluefish", in which the speaker identifies with

The angels
I have seen
Coming up
out of the water!
There I was,
drifting,
not far from shore
when they appeared,
flying
. . .
open mouthed
charging
like small blue
tigers after
some schooling
minnows, darkening
the water, ripping it
to shreds (20)

In Oliver's poem the angel of the house rises out of the depths of the sea to consume the world with pleasure, with glee:

They poured
like fire over the minnows,
they fell back toward the waves
like messengers
filled with good news
and the sea
held them in its silken folds
quietly
those gatherers
those eaters
those powerfully leaping
immaculate
meat-eaters

In Oliver's poem suffering is not the issue. These hungry bluefish are fed "with good news" and gently held by the "silken folds of the sea, and we are invited to take pleasure in the similitude between the speaker who drifts in this silky medium and her hungry cousins.

We need to allow our critical practises to foreground the woman writer's ability to redefine her own marginality - to revise her banishment to the

orders of culture - a power at work in Oliver's "The Honey Tree"

> And so at last I climbed
> the honey tree, ate
> chunks of pure light, ate
> the bodies of bees that could not
> get out of my way ate
> the dark hair of the leaves
> the rippling bark
> the heartwood. Such
> frenzy/But joy does that
> I'm told, in the beginning.

As Oliver's speaker goes honey mad, climbing the honey tree becomes an act of pure bodily joy, of visionary excess of consummate play between desire and the fulfilment of desire. The tree filled with honey becomes the site of vision and of liberation for the woman writer - a bodily liberation that releases the tree energy, the honey energy into the "rippling bark" of her poem.

In explaining the South American tale of the honey-mad woman, Levi-Strauss explains that it is woman's capacity to act out her hunger, to go stir crazy, sweet crazy, to eat too much honey, that provokes the need in cultures where this tale is repeatedly told, for imposed social order: table manners cooking rituals and birth rites are designed to introduce "order into a menacing laughter of disorder that has women at its center". Levi-Strauss adds, however, that this systematic control of women's minds and bodies never quite works, since woman remains, like honey itself, both natural and unnatural, "raw" and

"cooked" - something that does not fit on either side of the constructed division between nature and culture. Thus the honey-mad woman's consumption of honey is especially threatening to her culture because it reminds other members of her society that classification systems do not work, that these systems mask a fundamental ambivalence about the role of ideology in legislating our relation to nature and to one another. Society's very attempt to initiate a permanent order is disorderly doomed; only myth, with its endless transformations can work toward producing an "ordering of the world in which men communicate and women communicate". By telling tales about the honey-mad women should be punished for her oral excess, the societies Levi-Strauss analyses can endlessly enact and reinforce desired gender boundaries.

Mary Oliver rewrites Levi-Strauss' myth and makes the honey-mad woman a hungry visionary, free, invulnerable to social closure when she invents a honey-mad woman who locates herself at the "secretrip" of her own cultural system, the strength of the ideology that makes woman the site of exchange and consumption begins to change shape. In Oliver's poetry, women become appetitive, sexual, aggressive, joyous, exotic beings who steal language happily, who take on and shake off the roles of Satan or Adam or Eve at will, who limit the language by placing themselves at the point of commerce where old social practices change.

Later, maybe
I'll come here only
sometimes and with a
middling hunger. But now
I climb like a snake
I clamber like a bear to
the nuzzling place, to the light
salvaged by the thighs
of bees and racked up
in the body of the tree.

To go honey mad is the equivalent of going language mad. Coming down from the honey tree, coming down from the mountains where the writer has spent the day blackberry picking - "cramming the black honey of summer into my mouth" - the berry picker's lips are "streaked/black", her "fingers purple" while the she bear who eats too much sweetness is also stained on honeyed ink "honey and comb/she lipped and tongued and scooped out/in her black nails". The honey-mad poet finds within language the goods she needs.

Oh, anyone can see
how I love myself at last!
how I love the world! climbing
by day or night
in the wind, in the leaves kneeling
at the secret rip, the cords
of my body stretching
and singing in the
heaven of appetite

The honey-mad woman offers herself as Totem, as ancestress, as an explorer who gives us a map for defining a counter-tradition within women's writing, a tradition in which the woman writer appropriates the language "racked up" in her own body and starts to sing. A blissful consumer and purveyor of language the honey-mad writer is a symbol of verbal plenitude, of woman's capacity to rewrite her culture.

Fig. 9

In consuming honey so avidly she preempts this symbolization for by consuming a substance like herself she usurps her society's right to consume her.

I conclude that our exotic bodily images ensure the victory of laughter over fear. Through its somatic functions the body continually over-reaches its apparent patriarchal boundaries and devours the earth, overwhelming God's fixed and abstract order with man's own generative powers. This carnival face is sublunarly sensuous and genuinely violent, because it is the recollection of fun as well as primordial experience. In Bachton's penetrating analysis, carnival is revealed as the continuation of the 'primary process', the persistence of fun in the midst of happiness.

The carnival does not oppose one ideology with another, one unofficial picture of the cosmos to the authoritative tradition of theological and philosophical reflection. It reduced intellect to substance. Thus I will elegance into my text by oiling down my chapters. I must reiterate my claims in Chapter One that much deconstructive study of the behaviour of man is a vain illusion.

The pleasure to reveal the culturally determined nature of behaviour has doubtless been the impetus behind much semiotic analysis, but one would be mystified by demystification itself if one thought that the description of semiotic analysis was in any way inspired by the prospect of liberating man. I am in a

state of flux between these naked structures and my own naked body. With the conception of the Playful, the body, transformed into intellect, or love, or valour becomes pure sensuousness or death (the fearless recombining of the speculative self and the demonically attractive other, femme fatale).

I anticipate the arrangement of the honey-mad figure as an ongoing dismemberment which brings forth fruit stolen from some banished existence which must persist an existence where sadism is rendered innocuous.

Andrea Dworkin states that:

> The common erotic project of men destroying women makes it possible for men to unite into a brotherhood; this project is the only firm and trustworthy groundwork for cooperation among males and all male bonding is based on it.

I insist that woman is adequate for the last merging. So the next step is the merging of woman-for-woman love. This is on the brink of death. It slides over into death.

Ludicrous comment:

A won-man is only a won-man, but a
good cariboe is a paw into
the cunt of a genius

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