Fear and Envy: Sexual Difference and the Economies of Feminist Critique in Psychoanalytic Discourse

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The Argument

This essay examines Freud's construction of a mythical moment during early childhood, in which differences between male and female sexual identities are said to originate. It focuses on the way in which Freud divides fear and envy between the sexes, allocating the emotion of (castration) fear to men, and that of (penis) envy to women. On the one hand, the problems of this construction are pointed out, but on the other hand, it is shown that even a much-maligned myth may still provide food for thought.

Then, four critiques of Freud which have been articulated by prominent feminist psychoanalysts — Karen Horney, Nancy Chodorow, Luce Irigaray, and Jessica Benjamin — are presented, as well as the alternative visions of sexual identities which these thinkers have developed. The basic metaphors or economies guiding these visions of sexual difference are appraised in terms of their breadth and depth, with particular reference to their ability to acknowledge and integrate the presence of fear and envy as passions which are evoked but also repressed in the face of sexual difference.

From this angle, the contributions of Nancy Chodorow and Luce Irigaray are found to be more limited than those of Karen Horney and Jessica Benjamin, since the former two theorists allocate fear primarily or exclusively to men, as Freud has done, while they remain completely silent on envy. Differences in the scope or reach of the four feminist approaches are explained as a result of the theorists' differing perceptions of the social, political, and cultural position of women in patriarchal society.

Introduction

My dictionary says that the term "critique" derives from the ancient Greek *kritike* or *kritikos,* which refers to the ability to discern a difference. However, as is well known, it is possible to refer to difference either by making disapproving or denigrating judgements about something or somebody who is discernably different,

or by accepting or even valorizing difference, and thus appreciating that which makes others different, and those who are different from oneself.

This paper is devoted to a discussion of the various ways feminist critique is practiced within psychoanalytic discourse in relation to both *sexual difference* and *theories of sexual difference.* Generally, psychoanalytic theories postulate that in the first years of their lives boys and girls fantasize on the differences which they notice in the shape of their genitals, and that these early fantasies are crucial in the constitution of sexual identities and the conceptualization of the difference between the sexes. Psychoanalysts assume that these early fantasies of what it means to be a boy or a girl involve strong passions. Freud assumes that sexual difference evokes an insatiable penis *envy* in girls, while it marks boys by an overwhelming castration *fear* or anxiety.[1] Since these passions are repressed and become unconscious during the oedipal stage, Freud argues, they remain in their original infantile form and are not modified in later life, while exercising considerable power over the sexual behavior of men and women, and having a strong effect on their lives as a whole (see Arlow 1969).

In the first part of the paper I reevaluate some of Freud's claims concerning the origins and effects of sexual difference. Since Freud's views on femininity and masculinity have been widely discussed in the literature (e.g. Mitchell 1974; Brennan 1992; Sprengnether 1990), I make no attempt to provide yet another comprehensive and systematic exposition. Instead, I review only elements relevant for my subsequent argument, setting into relief those aspects which have been hitherto overlooked. For instance, what has been paid insufficient attention, so far, is that Freud's portrayal of the origins of conceptions of sexual difference presents us not only with a narrative on the origins of female envy, but also with an elaborate tale on the roots, nature, and effects of male fear.

My presentation of Freud's views on sexual difference sets the stage for the main body of the paper, which deals with four critiques of Freud, formulated by renowned psychoanalytic feminists. I have chosen to discuss Karen Horney, Nancy Chodorow, Luce Irigaray, and Jessica Benjamin because of their prominence and influence in the fields of psychoanalytic and feminist theorizing on sexual difference, and because each of them extrapolates her theory from a different psychoanalytic framework.

But although this paper provides a survey of landmarks in psychoanalytic feminism and its critical engagement with Freud, my aim is to go beyond a simple

[1] There is no clear-cut distinction between meanings of "fear" and "anxiety." Both terms denote an affect arising in response to the conscious or unconscious perception or fantasy of an impending traumatic situation, in which a person pictures himself or herself as completely helpless in the face of an overwhelming threat or danger. Generally, "fear" is used to denote a feeling which has more concrete content than "anxiety." However, with reference to fantasies of castration both terms can be found in the literature, i.e. "castration fear" as well as "castration anxiety." Often such differences are simply the result of the choice made in the translation of the German term *Angst*. In this sense, I use both terms throughout the essay as applying to more or less the same phenomenon, while keeping in mind that anxiety refers to a more amorphous feeling (see Freud [1926], 145–47; see Compton 1972 for a historical account of Freud's conceptualization of anxiety).

chronological summary of theories, such as can be found in much of the secondary literature. Instead, I deploy an analytic framework which reveals the principles underlying the critiques and theories presented, and allows a comparative and critical assessment of their merits and shortcomings. For this purpose I introduce the notion of *economy,* which I use on three levels:

(1) As I have mentioned above, psychoanalytic texts make empirical claims concerning the interpretation of sexual difference by young children. In the attempt to cope with difference, psychoanalysts argue, toddlers allocate to one sex the value of being or having "more" in some way, while the other sex, its anatomy and emotions, are seen as being or having "less". Thus, little children exercise a primal form of critique, if we are to believe this Freudian picture. The logic structuring these *subjective critiques* of children, that is, the principles according to which they are said to accord value to one sex and deny value to the other, constitute what I call a *first-order economy.*

(2) In addition to subjective, fantastic and childish economies of sexual difference, psychoanalytic texts also introduce the theorist's adult, scientific point of view. They present an allegedly *objective critique,* which is to allow a more accurate, complex and sophisticated assessment of the nature and relevance of physical and emotional features of masculinity and femininity and their biological, psychological, social and cultural origins and effects. As a rule such perspectives also involve judgements on the relative gains and losses which are incurred by both sexes through the adoption of fantastic first-order economies. I refer to this aspect of psychoanalytic theorizing on sexual identity as involving *second-order economies,* but as we shall see, these two levels of economy are not always completely separate from one another and there may be *glissades* leading from one to the other.

(3) Finally, a *third-order economy* comes into play when psychoanalytic theorists criticize the work of others and appraise it in terms of the cognitive and ethical gains and losses, such as is the case in the exercise of feminist critique. On the one hand, such *ideological critiques* are concerned with the truth-value of the theories criticized, since they claim that a certain ideology — phallocentrism, for instance — has blinded a theorist to the truth. On the other hand, these critiques also establish a connection between the truth of a theory and the contribution or damage caused by its espousal to a cause — which may be conceived as science or progress, political freedom, social equality, justice, emancipation, etc. Thus, phallocentric biases are not only said to distort the vision of truth in psychology, sociology, or history, but also to impede the political empowerment, equality, and emancipation of women.

This essay also offers an argument on the level of third-order economy. I seek not only to portray feminist critiques of Freud, but also to criticize the notions of sexual identity and difference postulated by Freud as well as those of his feminist critics. I cannot of course situate myself in some unstaked territory outside of all economies.

What, then, are the principles of my own economy of critique? In my view, the more inclusive an economy of thought and discourse, the better it can take note of the many significant facts involved in the constitution of sexual identities and thereby provide an intellectually fruitful picture of sexual difference. By acknowledging complexities, contradictions, and multiplicities in life, soul, and society, it may further empathy with others and awareness of one's own limitations, fostering a stance of mutuality and equality which allows the recognition of otherness as well as of similarities in difference.

I regard ethical and cognitive aspects of theorizing as correlated. To contend that there is a link between the truth value of critique and its ethical implications is contentious, to say the least, and I am not capable of justifying my position within the narrow confines of a few introductory remarks. But there is no doubt that I value *inclusive economies* more than *restrictive economies.* The more restrictive an economy of discourse, the narrower its perspective and the greater the danger of excluding from its field of vision levels and dimensions of human sexualities. For example, restrictive economies of thought tend towards monocausal constructions and monolithic arguments, which reduce differences and relations between the sexes to one basic denominator. It is difficult for restrictive economies of this kind to acknowledge difference within identity, i.e. to accept otherness as part of the self or on par with the self, and thus to be empathic towards others, recognizing and respecting their needs and rights on an equal basis. Other things being equal, it seems to me that both cognitively and ethically, a narrower economy of discourse entails more losses and less gains than one whose empirical and theoretical scope is wider.

However, I am also aware that social and psychological thinking proceeds within the limits of certain traditions, scientific paradigms or research programs, which necessarily focus attention in one direction while disregarding others, foregrounding some questions while downplaying the importance of others. Since thinking without any boundaries is impossible, there is no theory which does not incur some losses, and there are *typical losses* which are shared by all or most thinkers who belong to a particular school of thought.

What, then, are the cognitive losses that are typical of theories produced within the psychoanalytic frame of thought — such as is shared by Freud and his feminist critics? There is a psychoanalytic tendency to trace the origins of sexual identity to unconscious fantasies concerned with the body and to seek their origins in family dynamics during early parent-child relationships, and to phrase theories of sexual difference in a scientistic, universalist, essentialist, or naturalist mode. Psychoanalytic theorists tend to ignore the importance of historical specificities, such as ethnicity, culture, class, and political structures in the determination of gender patterns (see Chodorow 1995, 541). Because psychoanalytic thinkers tend to theorize about masculinity and femininity in categories which encompass only one dimension of gender, albeit an important one, I refer to their work as concerned with *sexual difference,* rather than the wider notion of gender, which always also involves sociological, cultural and political categories (see Nicholson 1994).

However, as some commentators have pointed out, there is also a significant aspect of psychic life on which feminist psychologists, including psychoanalysts, tend to remain silent (see Hayles 1986; Flax 1987; Sayers 1987; Burack 1994). In most feminist psychoanalytic theories, female rage and anger are either denied, discounted, or explained as originating in the subordination of women, thus implying that when patriarchy is abolished, it also erases the disagreeable features of the female psyche. Focusing on the failure of feminist theorists to adequately theorize female anger and aggression, Burack (1994) has stated, rightly, that "ambivalence towards the disagreeable passions and . . . an understandable desire in humans to deceive ourselves about their ubiquity, is inscribed in much of feminist theory" (ibid., 5).

However, while these critics of feminist psychoanalysis have spotlighted its silence or marginalization of hatred, rage, and aggression, there has been no analysis of the various ways in which feminist psychoanalysts neglected or excluded the similarly disagreeable passions of fear and envy. One major aim of this paper is to fill this lacuna. In my view, feminist psychoanalytic theories which neglect to bring to light also the repressed — i.e. rejected and denied — passions which are hidden in the female psyche, unmasking only the male psyche instead — betray their aim in two ways. First, they fail as *psychoanalytic* theorists — i.e., as theorists whose main aim should be to unmask that which lies hidden in the unconscious depths of the psyches of both sexes. As Freud declared, the notion of repression is "the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psycho-analysis rests" (Freud [1914], 16). Second, they fail as *feminist* theorists, since they create an illusory image of femininity and cannot provide women with the necessary psychic and social tools to confront and use their disagreeable passions for their empowerment (see also Burack 1994, 104).

1. Sexual Anatomy and Freud's Economy of the Gaze

As is well known, Freud assumed that until around the age of three girls are like boys from a sexual point of view. At this stage, when the boy's penis and the girl's clitoris become their center of attention, both of them gain their sexual pleasure predominantly from masturbation. He explains: "The little girl's clitoris behaves just like a penis to begin with; but, when she makes a comparison with a playfellow of the other sex, she perceives that she has 'come off badly'." In the beginning she assumes that with time "she will acquire just as big an appendage as the boys" (Freud [1924], 178). She may also explain her lack of a penis as a punishment. At a later stage she realizes that her anatomy is the natural condition of all females and comes to regard herself and women in general as castrated boys: "she begins to share the contempt felt by men for a sex which is the lesser in so important a respect, and, at least in holding that opinion, insists on being like a man" (Freud [1925], 253). Thus, Freud claims that not only boys, but also girls imagine the

clitoris as a stunted penis and that neither of them is aware of the existence of the vagina until puberty. In Freud's words, in this phase the antithesis is "between *having* a male genital and *being* castrated" (Freud [1923], 145; emphasis added).

Mythically rather than scientifically, he portrays this antithetical construction of sexual identity which places female sexuality below that of males in the eyes of the little children, as occurring in one constitutive moment. On the one hand, he depicts the instant as one in which girls suddenly become aware of the bigger size of boys' genitals in comparison with their own: "They notice the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, and *at once* recognize it as the superior counterpart of their own small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall a victim to envy for the penis" (ibid.). Since the sexual self-conception of women as inferior to men constitutes itself in one crucial moment, he also describes the girl's reaction to what she sees between the boy's legs as immediate: "She makes her judgement and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it" (Freud [1925], 252).

On the other hand, in his portrayal, when boys look at girls, they see nothing. Luce Irigaray stresses this aspect in Freud's economy of the gaze: "the little girl, the woman, supposedly has *nothing* you can see. She exposes, exhibits the possibility of a *nothing to see.* Or at any rate she shows nothing that is penis-shaped or could substitute for a penis. This is the odd, the uncanny thing, as far as the eye can see, this nothing around which lingers in horror, now and forever . . ." (Irigaray [1974] 1985, 47). According to Freud, this sight of a lack evokes tremendous fears in the little boy, who for the rest of his life will remain afraid — unconsciously — that his penis may be taken from him, i.e. that he may be castrated (Freud [1933], 86–87).

In terms of the economy of the gaze underlying Freud's argument, there are those who possess a visible treasure in their genitals and those whose whole sexual being is defined by an equally visible lack. In Freud's depiction girls are not only perceived by boys as castrated males — i.e. as defined by an absence — but also conceive of themselves as such, suffering a severe injury to their narcissism because of their apparent lack compared to male plenitude (Freud [1925a], 253). Envy, therefore, is a typical female emotion for Freud. In contrast, those who possess the cherished treasure feel complete; they cannot and do not envy those who lack it, since there is simply nothing in the other sex they possibly could experience as lacking in themselves and so wish for it. However, they are condemned to live in constant fear of losing what they possess. As we see, Freud turns male fears into emotions generated by the perfection and completeness of male bodies, while the absence of fear in women becomes a symptom of their irredeemable anatomical deficiency. In this tour de force Freud merges male narcissism and a critical pathos. He exposes male fright, while at the same time defusing it by turning women into castrated, admiring, envious "mirrors" of fearful but proud males. If women *qua* castrated men have nothing to fear, this is only because according to the economy of the gaze, they have nothing to lose, and if men are fearful beings, this is a sign of their physical wholeness.

The crucial moment of the gaze which forms the basis of Freud's economy of sexual difference is one of a whole series of mythical events posited in Freud's discourse, such as the primal parricide, which is placed in archaic times and supposed to constitute the origin of guilt feelings through the ages and civilization as a whole (see Brunner 1995, 156–65). It seems to me that Freud's construction can be understood as that of a primal moment of critique, as it were. For it is the moment in which boy and girl discern a difference concerning their sexual identity, and are forced to reevaluate the theory which guided them hitherto in their monist understanding of sexuality.

But in Freud's depiction, this reevaluation does not lead to a revolution in knowledge. In his portrayal, boy and girl enact a Kuhnian dynamics, as it were. When they realize that the monist paradigm of their "normal" science of sexuality is threatened by the empirical sight of undeniable difference, they avert the necessity of having to change their frame of reference from a monist to a dualist paradigm by a number of ad hoc moves. First, they deny the penis's absence in girls. Then, they adopt the unlikely hypothesis of castration. According to Freud, even when boy and girl will acquire further knowledge of anatomy and sexuality in the course of their lives, they will not substantially revise this early, infantile ad hoc explanation of difference (Freud [1937], 252). In other words, the primal moment of critique is also a moment of cognitive failure, whose potential for the creation of new knowledge cannot be realized. The mythical character of Freud's construction of this moment comes to the fore in the way in which it denies the very difference it posits — by turning girls into castrated men. This myth shrinks time and bans change.

Moreover, distinctions between infantile fantasy and adult theorizing within Freud's own discourse are also erased. He describes early conceptions of sexual identity and difference as "sexual theories [*Sexualtheorien*]" which are based on the "sexual researches [*Sexualforschung*]" of a "childish investigator [*infantilen Forscher*]" (Freud [1905], 197; Freud [1925b], 36–37). Speaking from the vantage point of the adult, with a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the relevant facts than is accessible to the childish investigator, Freud criticizes the cognitive constraints of these theories: "Children do not become clear for quite a long time about the differences between the sexes; and during this period of sexual researches [*Sexualforschung*] they produce typical sexual theories [*Sexualtheorien*] which, being circumscribed by the incompleteness of their authors' own physical development, are a mixture of truth and error and fail to solve the problems of sexual life" (Freud, [1925b], 36–37). For example, in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* he mentions specifically "two elements that remain undiscovered by the sexual researches [*Sexualforschung*] of children: the fertilizing role of semen and the existence of the female sexual orifice" (Freud [1905], 197). Instead of invoking terms which would make manifest that the boy's conception of masculinity and femininity, as well as the girl's self-perception as castrated, do not represent the real state of affairs — by calling them "castration fantasies" for example — he

goes on to refer to "the *fact* of her castration" (Freud [1931], 229; ibid., 233; emphasis added) or her "*discovery* that she is castrated" (Freud [1933], 126; emphasis added), when discussing the girl's early self-conception.

Freud never uses his adult knowledge of sexual anatomy in order to provide a comprehensive critique of the childish theories of sexual difference which he presents in his work. He fails, for instance, to develop a psychoanalytic theory of sexual difference and of male and female sexual identities along the dualist paradigm which suggests itself on the basis of adult knowledge of anatomy. On the contrary, his texts are marked by a continuous slippage from the first-order economy attributed to boys and girls in the early years of their lives, to the second-order economy which his theory is supposed to impose on the former. Thus the first-order, phallocentric childish sexual monism, which he posits as primary and elevates to the level of infantile "theory" and "research," becomes part of the second-order, adult psychoanalytic — i.e. scientific — truth.

However, while the phallocentric biases and patriarchal prejudices inherent in his discourse have been castigated and ridiculed in the feminist literature, little has been said there of his portrayal of the effects which castration fear has on men. As Freud puts it in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci, the boy's discovery that girls do not have a penis means that "henceforth he will tremble for his masculinity." Freud explains that this sight "can become a cause of ... impotence, misogyny and permanent homosexuality" (Freud [1910], 95–96). Since any glimpse of female genitals is supposed to remind a man in his unconscious of "the severest trauma of his young life," its sight will continue to signify the possibility of castration to him (Freud [1940], 190). Thus, Freud states categorically: "No male human is spared the fright of castration at the sight of the female genital" (Freud [1927], 154). Castration fear is often presented as the foundational prototype of all later anxieties, and Freud even goes so far as to present "the view that the fear of death should be regarded as analogous to the fear of castration" (Freud [1926], 130; but see also Freud [1933], 87).

His discourse inevitably presents males as caught in contortions caused by unconscious castration fears. For him, fetishism is one manifestation of the anxiety-ridden nature of male sexuality. He regards the fetish as a response to castration anxiety, a substitute symbol which serves to cope with the trauma of seeing nothing. It represents the absent female phallus, simultaneously acknowledging and denying the possible absence of the penis, disavowing and confirming an unbearable truth about women's bodies — and, in consequence, about male bodies — discovered by boys in their early childhood (Freud [1927], 152–57). Similarly, his four case studies dealing with males — Little Hans, Wolf Man, Rat Man, and his interpretation of the mad memoirs of Judge Schreber — provide a plethora of depictions of confused male psyches, warped at least in part by the wish to express their feminine side, but also incapable of acknowledging it because of the fear evoked by it. Finally, when Freud analyses male rescue fantasies and the appeal which prostitutes have for men, he concludes that "the behavior in love of

men in the civilized world to-day bears the stamp altogether of psychical impotence" and that modern men in general have a need "to debase their sexual object" (Freud [1912], 185–87).

Thus, while Freud's framework is decidedly phallocentric, it by no means idealizes men or the male psyche. Moreover, even though the simplistic structure and mythical nature of Freud's economy of the gaze has to be admitted, in my reading it also contains a number of interrelated propositions, which I still hold to be germane to theorizing about sexual difference:

(a) *Sexual identities are socially constructed*: to base the emergence of male and female sexual identities on seeing the genitals of the other sex means to acknowledge the fundamentally socially constructed, intersubjective nature of both masculinity and femininity. However problematic and mythical Freud's account may be, it presents boys and girls as attaining their sexual identities through a reciprocal form of social interaction — a mutual gaze. He postulates that we define ourselves as sexual beings by seeing others and in relation to them. It is in the presence of others, whose bodies differ from ours, that we attach meaning to the shape of our own bodies.

(b) *Emotions are socially constructed*: while Freud's theory does, of course, contain references to drives and other innate mental forces, the emotions invoked in Freud's tale of the origins of sexual identities are not natural, presocial, innate givens. They arise in the wake of an early experience of difference, and thus, like the boy's and girl's self-conceptions as male and female, fear and envy are also the result of a social interaction.

(c) *Each sex contains but also represses its internal other*: by presenting fear and envy as passions which are aroused by the gaze, Freud points to the difficulty of confronting sexual difference with an open mind. In fact, the passions kindled by the sight of difference are depicted as so offensive, frightening, and unacceptable, that they have to be repressed. As Freud explains, "it is the attitude proper to the other sex which has succumbed to repression" (Freud [1937], 251). However, by connecting sexual difference to the logic of repression, Freud implies that it involves an unconscious otherness which is denied because it is both desired and feared. Thus, in the mythical moment of the gaze the two sexualities are not only constituted as different from each other; both of them also integrate their opposites, albeit only as a repudiated and hence only unconscious possibility.

(d) *Fears always involve wishes*: In fact, I suggest a reading of Freud's myth in which not only female envy, but also male fear appear as wishes. This may be more obvious in the case of envy, a passion which arises from a feeling of lack, inferiority, or deprivation and aims at the appropriation of desirable objects or aspects of others. However, in Freud's discourse castration fear also hides a wish: the secret wish of men to be perfect, complete, masters of plenitude, which includes both having a penis and being castrated, i.e. being man and woman at the same time.

(e) *Theories of sexual identities are suspect*: Freud's theory counsels suspicion

concerning all theories of sexual difference and identity, since it suggests that they tend to be influenced by infantile, unconscious determinants. Ironically, Freud's own theory exemplifies what it warns of. I have pointed to the way in which Freud's purportedly scientific theory of sexual difference coincides with the infantile fantasies which it portrays, i.e. how his theorizing reproduces the imagination of the little boy. Thus, Freud's theory presents both a biased, mythical theory of sexual difference, and an instrument for its critique.

2. Genital Physiology and Horney's Economy of Size

As soon as Freud published his "scientific" truth on female sexuality, it came under severe attack from female psychoanalysts. Among others, Marie Maguire has pointed out that from the early 1920s to the early 1930s a large number of "prominent analysts wrote papers ... arguing vigorously with each other and with Freud. This debate, which centered on Freud's theory of female penis envy, set the agenda for discussions of sexual identity for the rest of the century" (Maguire 1995, 13). It is impossible to attempt here a detailed study of this fascinating debate; moreover, it has already been summarized from a number of angles in the secondary literature (Chasseguet-Smirgel, [1964] 1981, 1–46; Fliegel 1973; Garrison 1981; Maguire 1995, 13–31; Webster 1985). Instead, I devote this section exclusively to the way in which Karen Horney, a Berlin analyst, opposed Freud's depiction of female sexuality.

Horney was one of Freud's earliest feminist critics and can be regarded as the mother of psychoanalytic feminism. During the second half of the twenties and the first half of the thirties she published some twenty essays on feminine psychology, in which she took issue with the established psychoanalytic approach to women and femininity. At the Seventh International Psychoanalytic Congress in 1922, Freud chaired a session at which Horney questioned the assumption that women experienced their bodies as inferior, a claim which at that time had been articulated in the name of psychoanalysis by Karl Abraham ([1922] 1949). She suggested that "male narcissism" was responsible for the assertion that "one-half of the human race is discontented with the sex assigned to it and can overcome this discontent only in favorable circumstances." We do not know how Freud reacted to this statement, either at the time, or a year later, when Horney's paper appeared in German (Horney [1924]). However, as Zenia Odes Fliegel (1973) has pointed out, it is no coincidence that Freud published his first elaborate theory of femininity two years later, in 1924, when Horney's article was republished in English.

Horney agrees with Freud and Abraham that women experience penis envy, but refuses to trace it to a feeling of anatomical inferiority. Instead, she suggests a female counterpart to male castration fear, claiming that girls, not boys, are afraid of the father's destructive power. According to Horney, there is a "primal feminine fantasy" of having been sexually possessed by the father and having been wounded

during intercourse with him (Horney [1924], 43–44). Somewhat later, Horney ([1926]) refers to "the familiar fantasies that an *excessively large* penis is effecting forcible penetration, producing pain and hemorrhage, and threatening to destroy something" (ibid., 65–67; emphasis added). In addition, as the girl's oedipal fantasies fail to come true, she sees herself deserted by the father and becomes angry at him both for having hurt her and for having abandoned her. Horney ([1924]) also speaks of the girl's "womanhood" which has been "wounded" through the frustration she experiences in her oedipal attachment to the father (ibid., 51). At the same time, the girl feels guilty about her anger and hostility against the father.

Without delving much further into Horney's argument, let me just say that according to her, the girl resolves this difficult situation by identification with the "lost" love-object, i.e. the father, and by wishing to be a man like him, thus possessing herself the hurtful penis. In other words, if women want to be men, or like men, and to have penises, it is not because they experience their bodies as marked by a natural lack. It is evident throughout that Horney presents the female condition as more problematic than the male, but never as inferior to it.

Using Freud's own logic to unmask the master of psychoanalysis, she argues against him that "[t]he present analytical picture of feminine development (whether the picture is correct or not) differs in no case by a hair's breadth from the typical ideas that the boy has of the girl." Although she accepts Freud's claim that women envy the male possession of a penis, she opposes his notion of envy as a typically female emotion. As she states: "When one begins, as I did, to analyse men only after a long experience of analyzing women, one receives a most surprising impression of the intensity of this envy of pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood, as well as of the breasts and the art of suckling." In her view, male envy of women's "*physiological* superiority" in the context of reproduction and motherhood, generates in men an unconscious tendency to depreciate women, which has led to what she describes as the psychoanalytic "dogma of the inferiority of women." Moreover, since they feel that they play only "a relatively small part in the creation of living beings" men feel inferior to women and are constantly impelled "to an overcompensation in achievement" (ibid., 59–62; emphasis added). Thus, as Bernard Paris has observed, Horney reaches the conclusion that men, not women, suffer from a strong but unconscious feeling of inferiority towards the other sex, and therefore, that the unconscious envy of men "is more intense than that of women, which is indicated by the fact that they need to devalue women more than women need to depreciate them" (Paris 1994, 71).

Freud's explanation of male unconscious fears of castration is the second target of Horney's criticism. She points out that Freud's account of the origins of male fears of women is unconvincing: "A boy's castration anxiety in relation to his father is not an adequate reason for his dread of a being to whom this punishment has already happened" (Horney [1932]). She claims that men are unconsciously afraid of being insufficient and inferior vis-à-vis women. In order to allay these

fears and support their masculine self-respect, men invent strategic fictions, such as Freud did in his theory of castration anxiety. In his theory, she points out, any fright that men may experience when facing a woman is explained as derivative of the deeper unconscious fear of being castrated by the father. As she explains, masculine self-respect is "far more threatened at its very core by the admission of a dread of women than by the admission of dread of a man (the father)" (ibid., 136).

According to Horney, boys are primarily afraid of the vagina; but why should they be afraid of the female genital? Horney explains that this fear stems from the feeling in the phallic phase that the penis is insufficient to satisfy the mother. Wishing to penetrate her, the boy's fear is "of his own inadequacy, of being rejected and derided ... his original dread of women is not castration anxiety at all, but a reaction to the menace to his self-respect." It is in response to this feeling of inadequacy that the boy withdraws his libido from the mother and denies the existence of a vagina. This, she explains, is the phallic phase of which Freud speaks. It is not based on a lack of knowledge of female genitals, but on denial. As she puts it, the boy's "dread of women is not castration anxiety at all, but a reaction to the menace to his self-respect" which results from a feeling of inadequacy and insufficiency, since he judges "that his penis is much too small for his mother's genital." Thus, Horney comments: "I think that the anxiety connected with his self-respect leaves more or less distinct traces in every man and gives his general attitude towards women a particular stamp that either does not exist in women's attitude to men, or if it does, is acquired secondarily." Therefore, rather than a fear of castration, Horney argues, "the dread of being rejected and derided is a typical ingredient in the analysis of every man, no matter what his mentality or the structure of his neurosis" (ibid., 142–43).

In an essay published a year later she argues again that while little girls may express a wish for a penis, this fact alone is scarcely enough to warrant Freud's conclusions concerning the central role of unconscious penis envy in female psychology. She stresses not only that girls between the age of two and five already "exhibit specifically feminine traits," but also that "[i]n boys of the same age, we meet with parallel expressions in the form of wishes to possess breasts or to have a child" (Horney [1933], 150–51). Finally, adducing extensive medical evidence, Horney contends that "from the very beginning the vagina plays its own proper sexual part" in the development of girls (ibid., 157). However, she reiterates that girls, too, have an interest in denying the existence of the vagina, because they are afraid of its destruction through violent penetration by the father (ibid., 159).

This short survey of Horney's early work suffices to show that her theory ascribes to little boys and girls an *economy of size,* rather than the phallocentric, binary economy of the gaze which Freud had projected upon them, recognizing only presence and absence. In her view, children are strongly aware and deeply concerned by the physiological difference between the mature sex organs of the parent of the opposite sex and their own still-small genitals. Both boys and girls are driven by a fear of having inadequate genitals: boys feel that their penis is

insufficient to *fill* the mother's vagina and satisfy her, while girls are afraid that their vagina is insufficient to *contain* the father's penis and may be torn apart by his penis. By allowing the parental genitals to enter the children's field of vision and crediting boys and girls with the ability to make a distinction of size and develop crucial fantasies around it, she places at the center of her theory issues which have no place in Freud's scheme. Contrary to Freud's model of presence and absence, Horney's economy of size posits no *complete* and perfect bodies. She presents a greater size of sexual organs in women and men not only as a reason for envy by the other sex, but also as a cause of fear — thus introducing a notion of physical *excess* that has no place in Freud's binary economy.

Moreover, in contrast to Freud, Horney attributes not only unconscious fear, but also unconscious envy to both sexes. While men envy women for physical capacities with which nature has endowed them, and which come to the fore in their role as mothers, women envy men for possessing a penis, since its possession promises an end to their emotional confusion, as well as a way out of social subordination and cultural depreciation in a male-dominated world. Rather than constructing sexual difference by projecting on each sex one emotion as dominant and defining, Horney regards both fear and envy as central in the constitution of both sexual identities. Nonetheless, by postulating that the sexes differ in terms of the origins, contents, and constellations of these feelings, she also creates space for a nonhierarchical discussion of the psychological effects of sexual difference.

Finally, in her view it is the boys, not the girls, who are likely to suffer narcissistic injuries in early childhood, leading to a number of compensatory responses in adulthood, such as sexual conquests, which men need in order to prove that they are capable of possessing females and satisfying them. Another male response may be the devaluation and debasement of women, as well as the latter's portrayal as emotional and infantile creatures, which serves to lower women's self-respect (ibid., 145–46). As I pointed out earlier, Horney inludes Freud's theory in this category, depicting it as motivated unconsciously by the need to cope with a boy's narcissistic injury suffered in early childhood. Thus, Horney deploys her economy of size not only to account for the emergence of sexual identities, but also in order to divulge the unconscious male fantasy underlying the construction of psychoanalytic theories of sexual identities and difference. While Freud delegitimized feminist demands for equality by tracing them to female penis envy, Horney endeavors to unmask his opposition to the equality of woman as prompted, in the last instance, by an unconscious fear of insufficiency. In this fashion the polemic on masculinity and femininity — which agitated the psychoanalytic camp during much of the 1920s and 1930s — always involved accusations made by both male and female analysts, denouncing theorists of the other sex for being driven in their pronouncements on sexual identity by unconscious envy and fear, rather than clinical and theoretical considerations.

So far, Horney's approach has been presented as if it offers theoretical gains without incurring significant losses. However, by rejecting Freud's assumption of

a primal phallic monism, shattered in one mythical moment when boys and girls form their sexual identity by looking at the other sex, Horney also abandons some of the more fruitful, intersubjective, relational, and constructional aspects of psychoanalytic theorizing. In her discourse, sexual identity and knowledge of sexual differences, as well as the related fantasies, are depicted as fundamental givens and placed within a heterosexual essentialism, instead of being problematized.

By 1933 Horney suddenly ceased to address the subject of women. Her further theorizing took a different, more culturalist form which, however, she failed to apply to female psychology. Thus Freud's ([1933]) famous lecture, "On Femininity," remained without an answer from Horney. It reiterates the master's doctrine on sexual identity in his terms, putting a lid on the debate and allowing him to reassert his authority. On the whole, the controversy entered a stage of latency, as it were, and was rekindled only by the emergence of Second Wave feminism.

3. Female Intimacy and Chodorow's Emotional Economy

In the 1960s and early 1970s, feminist thinkers such as Betty Friedan (1963), Kate Millett (1970), Eva Figes (1970), and Germaine Greer (1971) rejected psychoanalysis, accusing it of biologizing female identity and legitimizing female inferiority by its notion of penis envy. Juliet Mitchell (1974) challenged feminist theorists to develop a more differentiated approach to Freud and psychoanalysis and called upon them to acknowledge the importance of early childhood experiences, sexual fantasies and the unconscious. She scolded feminists such as Millett for dismissing deeper dimensions of mental life, ignoring the role which fantasy plays in life and society, and instead assuming an empiricist social realism which regards all human thought and action as strategic and rational (ibid., 354).

When attempts were made to appropriate psychoanalysis for feminism in the second half of the 1970s, two main theoretical directions were followed: feminism and psychoanalysis were joined either by drawing on work of the Anglo-Saxon object-relations school, or in an argument within and against the Lacanian approach. The most prominent and influential example of the former fusion is Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), which had a strong impact on subsequent theorizing and on seminal feminist texts, such as Carol Gilligan's (1982) *In a Different Voice* and Sara Ruddick's (1989) *Maternal Thinking*. Of course, both object-relations feminism and Lacanian feminism have also been severely criticized by feminist thinkers from within and without the psychoanalytic camp (e.g. Spelman 1988, 80–113; Fraser 1997).

Thinkers associated with object relations, whose earliest contributions date back to the 1920s and 1930s, posit that from the very beginning of life infants desire to relate to others — whom psychoanalysts describe, in the wake of Freud, as "objects" — and do not primarily seek sensual satisfaction as Freud had stated.

They focus on the way in which infants construct internal, psychic representations of such external objects, endowing the former with lives of their own, as it were, by imbuing them with fantastic features which do not apply to their external counterparts, such as persecutionary aggression, omnipotence, complete badness, or pure goodness. Such fantasies are explained as the result of the passionate nature of early relationships and, in turn, presented as leading to further passions. Thus, although object relations theorists repudiate Freud's theory of drives, they by no means abandon the vision of early childhood as laden with intense emotions, which are banished into the unconscious by a number of defensive tactics. Object-relations theorists focus especially on mechanisms such as "splitting" (the mental separation of an external object into a "good" and a "bad" internal object), "projection" (the externalization of the features of an internal object onto an external one) and "introjection" (the inverse of projection).

Since the attempt to relate to others starts with birth, object-relations theorists place much greater emphasis on the preoedipal period than did Freud. At this early stage the mother tends to be the primary caregiver; hence her relationship with the child is a central issue in all object-relations approaches, while the father is rarely involved. In other words, while Freud's psychoanalytic theorizing on early childhood placed fantasies about the body, genitals and the father's castrating power in its center, object-relations theorists concentrate mainly on infantile passions and fantasies which refer to the mother (See Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983).

The departure of object-relations theory from Freud's bias against women, the central role accorded to the mother and the leading role which this approach achieved in the Anglo-Saxon world, explain much of its attraction for Nancy Chodorow, an American sociologist who underwent psychoanalytic training. However, as Cynthia Burack has demonstrated, Chodorow's Americanized and feminist version of object-relations theory is marked by a conspicuous absence of the sadistic, angry, and aggressive fantasies which figure prominently in texts of the British object-relations theorists, and can be found not only in Melanie Klein's writings, but also in Donald Winnicott's work (Burack 1993, 71–81; see for instance Klein [1928] 1988, 187; Klein [1932] 1989, 239; Winnicott [1964] 1987, 128; ibid., 155). In fact, as Burack stresses, in *The Reproduction of Mothering* Chodorow does not consider Klein to be an object-relations theorist at all (ibid., 72).

Moreover, envy plays no role in Chodorow's psychoanalytic theory, either in infancy, or in adult life. Although not pure bliss, the early childhood portrayed in her account is a calm affair that, even though it knows fear, is never perturbed by violent passions. Chodorow's theory of sexual identity and difference hinges on the mother's consciousness of her children's sex and her response to this difference. Chodorow argues that because mothers and daughters are of the same sex, mothers tend to experience daughters as more like themselves than sons. Hence, from the very beginning the mother-daughter relationship is characterized by mutual identification and close emotional involvement, which create fears in the

daughter, but which both sides are unwilling to abandon, since it also is highly gratifying. As she puts it: "patterns of fusion, projection, narcissistic extension, and denial of separateness . . . are more likely to happen in early mother-daughter relationships than in those of mothers and sons" (Chodorow 1978, 103). Chodorow explains that it is the narcissistic intensity of the preoedipal mother-daughter relationship, in which the girl is loved "as part of [the mother's] narcissistically defined self" (ibid., 112) — rather than a disappointment with the mother's lack of a penis, or fear and attraction to the father's larger genital — which brings about the girl's turn to her father, who "is likely to become a symbol of freedom from this dependence and merging. A girl is likely to turn to him, regardless of his gender and sexual orientation, as the most available person who can help her to get away from her mother" (ibid., 121). As Chodorow also puts it: "A girl's father provides a last ditch escape from maternal omnipotence, so a girl cannot risk driving him away" (ibid., 195).

In other words, the mother's power to satisfy the daughter's need for closeness is experienced as both pleasurable and frightening by the latter. It is precisely the father's distance, his lack of presence and dedication to parenting which makes him able to fulfill the role of the great liberator. However, contrary to Freud's depiction, in Chodorow's account there is no complete break with the mother; unconsciously she will always remain both the daughter's love object and the cause of her fears (ibid., 126–29).

There is a strong bipolarity which characterizes Chodorow's rhetoric. In her text, the mother has it all. She is powerful, an active presence, whose role is to give, care, and establish closeness, but who also evokes strong fears. On the other hand, the father always appears clothed in negative attributes, defined by the functions he fails to fulfill in comparison with the mother. He is characterized by a series of absences, he is distant from the family and detached from his own feelings. As she puts it: "fathers are comparatively unavailable physically and emotionally. They are not present as much and are not primary caretakers, and their own training for masculinity may have led them to deny emotionality" (ibid., 193).

Chodorow's discourse suggests that as a result of the asymmetrical organization of parenting in Western societies, preoedipal experiences of boys differ from those of girls. The mothers' narcissistic symbioses with daughters tend to be stronger and longer-lasting than with sons, who are moved out of the nest earlier and, in one way or another, become the mothers' sexual others, i.e. heterosexual love-objects. Moreover, in order to establish their self-consciousness as males, sons distinguish themselves from mothers not only as different persons, but also as belonging to a different sex. In this context, Chodorow points out, "[h]is penis and masculinity both compensate for his early narcissistic wound and symbolize his independence and separateness from his mother" (ibid., 122).

Like father, like son. In Chodorow's discourse the son's identity is also defined negatively, by absences and rejections, such as the negation of femininity, the repression of emotions, and the depreciation of women. As she puts it, because

fathers are generally absent from home and their main activity is located outside the family, "boys have difficulty in attaining a stable masculine gender role identification" (ibid., 185). Chodorow argues that for boys, "identification processes and masculine role learning are not likely to be embedded in relationship with their fathers or men but rather to involve the *denial* of affective relationship to their mothers" (ibid., 177; emphasis added). On the whole, she points out, "masculinity is defined as much *negatively* as positively" (ibid., 176; emphasis added). In order to establish it, the boy drastically denies his feminine sides "and *rejects* and *devalues* women and whatever he considers to be feminine in the social world" (ibid., 181; emphasis added). Less connected to the world and to his own feelings than the girl, seeking to realize a masculinity which remains elusive, the son grows up with a fragile sense of his masculinity, for which he compensates by the insistence on his superiority over women.

According to Chodorow, the gendered institution of mothering and the concomitant differences in the preoedipal experiences of boys and girls significantly affect them in their later lives. When, as adults, they get involved in heterosexual relationships, women are destined to be disappointed with men, since they always seek close relationships, while men endeavor to prove their masculinity. It is the mother, rather than the men themselves, who is blamed for this pattern by Chodorow: "When a boy's mother has treated him as an extension of herself and at the same time as a sexual object, he learns to use his masculinity and possession of a penis as a narcissistic defense. In adulthood he will look to relationships with women for narcissistic-phallic reassurance rather than for mutual affirmation and love" (ibid., 196).

In other words: men continuously display their penis because they have been emotionally castrated by their mothers. Thus, in the economy of Chodorow's theorizing men have nothing to fear, nothing to lose, and not much to offer to women beyond the biological role they play in procreation: they are absent as fathers, disappointing as partners, and even as sons they cannot serve as their mothers' narcissistic extensions. Since men cannot satisfy women's emotional needs, the latter tend to seek their fulfillment in important relations with other women, not only in mother-daughter relationships, but also in friendships among female peers. According to Chodorow, "[t]hese relationships are one way of resolving and recreating the mother-daughter bond and are an expression of women's general relational capacities and definition of self in relationship." Indeed, if one is to believe Chodorow, then "women's friendships are affectively richer than men's" (ibid., 200), and "the feminine inner object world is more complex than the masculine" (ibid., 193). Therefore, she points out that when heterosexual relationships break apart, "women have a richer, ongoing inner world to fall back on, and ... the men in their lives do not represent the intensity and exclusivity that women represent to men. Externally, they also retain and develop more relationships. It seems that, developmentally, men do not become as emotionally important to women as women do to men" (ibid., 198).

However, best of all, adult women can recover the lost paradise of their preoedipal infancy by becoming mothers themselves, i.e. by reproducing narcissistic unions with their own daughters. Indeed, it is the basic intention of Chodorow's book to explain the deep-seated urge of women to mother — without having recourse to an essentialist biology or a superficial social-learning theory. This is done, then, by attributing a strong unconscious urge to women, which leads them to reproduce an early, preoedipal narcissistic fusion which can take place only among women and in its full form only between mothers and their daughters. This psychoanalytic explanation, in conjunction with the social division of domestic labor, is to explain gender differences as we know them. In her view, it is "[w]omen's mothering" that "produces psychological self-definition and capacities appropriate to mothering in women, and curtails and inhibits these capacities and this self-definition in men" (ibid., 208).

I read Chodorow as presenting us with an inversion of Freud's monist male-female hierarchy, beset with analogous problems and blind spots — such as a monist and hierarchical conception of sexual difference. She replaces Freud's concept of penis envy, which served him as an explain-all of female behavior, by an equally ubiquitous and reductionist vision, which posits an unconscious female search for — and fear of — narcissistic fusion with the mother, in order to explain the psychology and social behavior of women, including their heterosexual desire. If one is to believe her, even coitus serves women in regaining their preoedipal union with their mothers. Drawing upon the work of Michael Balint she argues that "[f]irst, a woman identifies with the man penetrating her and thus experiences through identification refusion with a woman (mother). Second, she *becomes* the mother . . ." (ibid., 194; original emphasis). There seem to be no truly heterosexual relations for Chodorow; on an unconscious level women never escape from narcissistic fusion with their mothers — they merge with them even when they have sex with a man.

Moreover, for Chodorow there is no autonomous male identity. She portrays the latter as a secondary construction, precarious, built on the repression of femininity. In Chodorow's account men are castrated women, as it were, deprived by their mothers of the emotional potency which allows closeness and which mothers instill only in their daughters. Thus, men repress their own feelings, devalue femininity because of its emotional side, are afraid of women and disappointing in their relationships with them. As a result of their emotional castration, men invent politics and an ideology of male dominance, which ensures their success in the affect-denying world of capitalism. For Chodorow, politics and its patriarchal mechanisms of domination are but an avenue of escape from a haunting sense of inferiority vis-à-vis females. In other words, the political oppression of women is explained on the one hand by men's inner emptiness and, on the other, by women's possession of an emotional wealth which men lack.

Chodorow's argument builds on an *invisible economy of intimacy,* which inverts the Freudian hierarchy between the sexes, placing women in a superior

position in terms of their emotional capacities and richness, but does not supersede the strict hierarchization of sexual difference, which characterizes Freud's approach. As we have seen, Chodorow grades both sexes according to one principle: intimacy or emotional closeness. By depicting women as close to their own emotions and to other women while describing men as distant and alienated from their feelings, her economy grades women higher than men.

At the same time Chodorow, like Freud, claims that the possession of a treasure can instill fear, even though the logic of her argument differs from his. While Freud related male fears to a possible *loss* of their genitals, according to Chodorow, the loss feared by women is that of their self, which may be caused by a *surplus* or *excess* of intimacy with other women.

Moreover, Chodorow's economy recognizes no female fears of men. Since masculinity is only a secondary formation, constituted by the repression of femininity, it is not threatening. Thus, her frame of reference allows both men and women only to be afraid of women. Since in her scheme the daughter's femininity is constituted by closeness to the mother, it entails no repudiation or repression of an inner otherness, i.e. an unconscious masculinity. In contrast to Freud, for Chodorow repression is not directed at a sexual alterity contained in the unconscious, but always only at elements associated with femininity and the mother.

Finally, there is no room for envy in Chodorow's economy. Men do not envy women for their emotional richness because they are afraid of it, while women cannot find anything to envy in men, who are emotionally empty. Thus, women have nothing to fear of men and nothing to gain from them. Chodorow's declarations on the emotional life of women are marred by a profound contradiction. On the one hand, her writings continually inform women of their capacity for intimacy and closeness, which men are said to lack. On the other hand, her discourse is marked by a remarkable poverty of references to concrete emotions. Fred Alford (1990) has pointed out, rightly, that in Chodorow's text "there is . . . almost no mention — of the intense emotions, passions, with which Klein, Fairbairn, and Winnicott are concerned: love, hate, envy, rage, greed, fear. The dance of separation and connection is evidently too civilized for this" (ibid., 494). His judgement may be a bit harshly phrased, but in my view it is fairly accurate: "Though she uses the language of psychoanalysis, she is really talking about relationships as they are perceived by intuitive men and women in everyday life" (ibid., 496).

One may wonder, as Horney did in Freud's case, what is gained and lost by a perspective which denies fear and envy of one sex towards the other and generally flattens the psychoanalytic account of the unconscious. Chodorow provides women with a positive image of the female soul as filled with the capacity for intimacy, closeness, and solidarity, tainted only by a little fear of the mother. She does so by systematically neglecting to relate issues of sexual identity, and difference, to fear and envy — and other emotions and fantasies which may be disturbing and frightening, upsetting and embarrassing, sad and terrifying. At the same time, she also offers a kind of "sour grapes" consolation to women who feel socially,

economically, and politically marginalized, informing them that political and economic power is a sign of emotional castration, while a lack thereof evinces one's possession of an inner emotional treasure.

4. Female Morphology and Irigaray's Critique of all Economies

In 1974, the year in which Juliet Mitchell called for a feminist re-appropriation of Freud by Anglo-Saxon feminism, Luce Irigaray, a Belgian linguist and philosopher turned psychoanalyst, published a critical reading of Freud's writings on women. The publication of *Speculum of the Other Woman* led to her expulsion from the Lacanian *École Freudienne* as well as her dismissal from the department of psychoanalysis at the University of Paris VIII (Vincennes). Sadly, five decades after Freud elaborated his phallocentric vision of female sexuality, a woman analyst was excommunicated for criticizing the master's voice.

Today it is difficult to find anything particularly shocking in the critique of Freud which Irigaray formulated in 1974. Irigaray aims to disclose the way in which psychoanalytic discourse both posits desire as essentially masculine and denies the very possibility of a heteronomous female desire, i.e. a desire whose source and aim are feminine. As we see, even though her arguments differ from those put forward by Horney five decades earlier, she, too, criticizes Freud's male narrow-minded narcissism.

She points out that his text presents the feminine as the secondary notion in binary oppositions in which the male inevitably is the primary, such as in: "be/*become,* have/*not have* sex (organ), phallic/*non-phallic,* penis/*clitoris* or else penis/*vagina,* plus/*minus,* clearly representable/*dark continent,* logos/*silence* or idle chatter, desire for the mother/*desire to be the mother,* etc." Thus, she describes the female in Freud's discourse as a negativity, a function within a game "for which she will always find herself signed up without having begun to play" (Irigaray, [1974] 1985, 22; original emphasis). Of course, Irigaray takes Freud to task for defining sexual difference in terms of male sameness, thereby turning the little girl into a disadvantaged "little man who would have no other desire than to be, or remain, a man" (ibid., 26).

Exploring Freud's phallocentric conception of the girl's masturbation as exclusively focusing on the clitoris as a penis-equivalent, she argues like Horney that the little girl was bound to discover her vagina, "[w]hether through her mother's ministrations or through the rubbing of diapers or underpants, or when her hand searches for the 'little penis.' The pleasure gained from touching, caressing, parting the lips and vulva simply does not exist for Freud. He is unaware of it or prefers not to know about it" (ibid., 29). As Irigaray points out, within the confines of Freudian discourse there is no possible meaning in the pair of words "female libido." She adds, however, that "if the expression 'female libido' has no justification, this means also and at the same time that the strength of woman's sexual

impulses will be reduced" (ibid., 43). Irigaray argues that by presenting woman as a castrated man Freud inscribes "her in the law of the *same* desire, of *the desire for the same*" (ibid., 55; original emphasis). The girl has no desire for pleasures of her own; she has only one wish, to have a penis. This wish, of course, is not presented as a fundamentally female heterosexual desire, but as a form of envy, i.e. as hiding the deeper, unconscious aim of being like a man. In this context Irigaray also points to the striking parallels between Freud's description of the symptoms of depression or melancholia on the one hand, and his account of female penis envy on the other. In both cases Freud refers to a loss whose effect is to devalue the subject who suffers it, so that no process of mourning can take place which would allow a recovery from the experience of loss (ibid., 66–70). Finally, in a close reading of Freud's essay on his treatment of a homosexual woman, Irigaray shows that the sexual desire of a woman for another woman appears as a secondary derivative of female heterosexuality and, indirectly, as determined by male desire. She explains Freud's failure to establish a transference relationship with his patient by his inability to comprehend women other than as a negativity supporting male-dominated, phallic homogeneity (ibid., 98–101; Freud [1920]).

After her eviction from the Lacanian fold, Irigaray includes Lacan in her critique of the manner in which psychoanalysis silences female pleasure. As she puts it, "the truth of the truth about female sexuality is restated even more rigorously when psychoanalysis takes *discourse itself* as the object of its investigation". In contrast to Freud, Lacan does not take anatomy to be the mainstay of sexual identity and difference. As Irigaray points out, for him the sexes "are determined in and through language. Whose laws, it must not be forgotten, have been prescribed by male subjects for centuries" (Irigaray [1977] 1985, 87; original emphasis).

I shall digress for a few paragraphs into Lacan's concept of female sexuality in order to contextualize Irigaray's provocative alternative vision of female sexuality. In his comments on the constitution of sexual identity, Lacan sought to provide a corrective to both Freud's anatomistic construction of gender difference and the stress of Anglo-Saxon object relations theorists on preoedipal mother-child relations. In contrast to object relations theory Lacan regards the Oedipus complex as central, but in opposition to Freud he conceives of it in symbolic rather than empirical, social terms; although he also implicates a strong visual element in it. He depicts the oedipal stage as a crucial moment which fractures an early imaginary mother-child dyad and a presymbolic sense of infantile wholeness — the latter an illusionary result of the famous "mirror stage," which is central to his account of the constitution of identity (Lacan [1949] 1977).

In his view, the interruption of the mother-child fusion — Lacan seems to refer to a boy rather than a girl in this context — is achieved by the intervention of *le nom du père*, which phonetically can be heard both as the "no-of-the-father" and the "name-of-the-father". For Lacan the father represents the intrusive presence of a figure which is culturally constituted as paternal, i.e. as authoritative and

law-giving, but does not necessarily have to coincide with the biological father. On the one hand, the father says "no" to the boy, denying his status as the mother's complete and exclusive love object — her phallus, in Lacanian terms. On the other hand, he gives the boy a "name." He imposes the cultural grid — the symbolic order, as Lacan calls it — introducing the child to the rules of language, law, and sociality, bringing about the latter's internalization as the child's own rules. According to Lacan, in the absence of this paternal interference, the child is in danger of becoming psychotic. Albeit in a somewhat different fashion, Lacan's approach parallels Chodorow's in stressing the father's role as the child's rescuer from a dangerous and limitless narcissistic fusion with the mother, which would not allow the child to form a separate self.

In Lacanian terms, this escape from psychosis, which is effected by the child's recognition that he is not and cannot be the mother's phallus, also constitutes the child's symbolic castration. According to Lacan, this form of castration, which imposes a feeling of inadequacy on the son, who realizes he cannot give his mother complete satisfaction, is necessary to allow "the installation in the subject of an unconscious position without which he would be unable to identify with the ideal type of his sex, or to respond without grave risk to the needs of his partner in the sexual relation, or even to accept in a satisfactory way the needs of the child who may be produced by this relation" (Lacan [1958] 1977, 281).

Here we encounter a theme we know from Horney, who also regarded a fundamental feeling of inadequacy as constitutive of male sexual identity. Like her, Lacan holds such a feeling to be the precondition for the emergence of male sexuality and an acknowledgment of sexual difference. Of course, for Freud and Horney the castration complex and feelings of insufficiency were closely related to the male body — its anatomy or physiology. Lacan, however, refers to the phallus as that which the mother cannot have and the child cannot be — rather than that which the father possesses. Thus a number of Lacan's interpreters have attempted to deny that his notion of the phallus has any connection to the male genital. But as a feminist critic of Lacan has, rightly pointed out: "There is a sense in which all attempts to deny the relation between the phallus and the penis are feints, veils, illusions. The phallus, a signifier, may no longer *be* the penis, but any effort to conceptualize its function is inseparable from an imagining of the body" (Doane 1981, 27–28; original emphasis).

Indeed, even though the phallus signifies for both women and men desire and the power to satisfy, and its absence both enables and problematizes sexual desire in men and women, Lacan posits the typical male relationship to the phallus as one of "having" it, while he defines the female mode as one of "being" the phallus, i.e. a sexual object. Elisabeth Grosz has summed up the Lacanian account of what happens in the wake of the child's realization that it cannot remain the satisfying part of the mother:

> According to Lacan, the child must master the move away from being the phallus the mother desires — her phallus — to having it (if the child is a boy)

> or being it for someone else (if the child is a girl). To have or to be the phallus the child must enter the Symbolic order, acquiring a place as masculine or feminine. One can neither have nor be the phallus in oneself. It is not an attribute or property of a subject: only through an other's desire for the penis can a man have his possession of the phallus confirmed; and only through another desiring her body can a woman feel as if she is the phallus. This entails the symbolic equivalence of the man's penis and the woman's whole body: they are both objects of the other's desire. (Grosz 1992, 321)

Like Freud's story, Lacan's account turns women into an object of male desire; while men seek to possess the power to satisfy, women aspire to be this power. This implies that women's only pleasure is that of being a sexual object, not a subject.

If Lacan's sketch of the origins of sexual difference and identity is read as a diagnosis of the current cultural condition of women it can hardly be denied that it carries some historical or sociological truth. However, its structuralist language suggests less history and more abstract determinism, i.e. a definition of women's invariant existential or psychological condition. If this reading is accurate, Lacan articulates an extreme form of male narcissism, which more or less rephrases Freud's position, albeit in a more enigmatic terminology (see Leland, 1991).

In a seminal article, published in 1977 and entitled "This Sex Which is not One," Irigaray undertakes to construct a psychoanalytic discourse which draws upon Lacan, but undermines and displaces its phallocentric features by demonstrating that it is possible for woman to gain a sense of power, identity and sexuality without aspiring to be the phallus. At this stage Irigaray's program has become radical. As she puts it: "the issue is not one of elaborating a new theory of which woman would be the subject or the object, but to jam the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and a meaning that are excessively univocal" (Irigaray, [1977] 1985, 78). Grosz has pointed out that Irigaray does not aim at a true description of femininity, which she seeks to oppose to false, biased descriptions: "Her aim is quite different: it is to devise a *strategic* and combative understanding, one whose function is to make explicit what has been excluded or left out of phallocentric images" (Grosz, 1989, 110; original emphasis). It is in this spirit that Irigaray issues the following challenge to male — mainly Lacanian — theorizing about sexual difference: "Woman's autoeroticism is very different from man's. In order to touch himself, man needs an instrument: his hand, a woman's body, language.... And this self-caressing requires at least a minimum of activity. As for woman, she touches herself in and of herself without any need for mediation, and before there is any way to distinguish activity from passivity. Woman 'touches herself' all the time, and moreover no one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact. Thus, within herself, she is already two — but not divisible into one(s) — that caress each other" (ibid., 24).

In order to show how male models can be displaced, Irigaray inverts Freud's and Lacan's approaches by presenting the female body as perfect and complete, fully

self-sufficient in its ability to provide itself with pleasure, and not in need of anything — that is, not in need of a phallus — outside itself. As she explains, the female sexual organ "which has nothing to show for itself" escapes the male economy of the gaze. It "lacks a form of its own," and since it cannot be visibly designated as one organ, it "is counted as *none*" in the terms of Freud's anatomical economy of the gaze. However, it is precisely this "incompleteness of form" which endows woman with the ability to touch herself "without any possibility of distinguishing what is touching from what is touched." As Irigaray comments in italics: "*She is neither one nor two*" (ibid., 26; original emphasis). Later in the essay she argues that female sexuality cannot be limited to the two lips either. She asks rhetorically "So woman does not have a sex organ? She has a least two of them, but they are not identifiable as ones. Indeed, she has many more. Her sexuality, always at least double, goes further, it is *plural*" (ibid., 28; original emphasis) since "*woman has sex organs more or less everywhere* . . . the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined" (ibid., 28; original emphasis).

What Irigaray says is, more or less: if men have one, women have at least two, but who's counting? On the one hand her text is marked by a "return to Freud" — to invoke the motto under which Lacan placed his entire *oeuvre* — in that she places bodily shape at the center of female sexual identity. On the other hand, she also argues that the female body allows no clear distinctions, is fluid and plural, and defies phallocentric classifications. In an intriguing transformation and mimetic escalation of Freud's anatomical discourse Irigaray develops an image of the female body which is designed to reveal the limitations of phallocentric perspectives and to show that bodily images are not derived from an objective gaze at the "facts" as it were, but are imprinted with cultural assumptions and prejudices, political motivations and interests. Thus, Grosz (1989) interprets Irigaray's statement that "[w]e must go back to the question not of the anatomy but of the morphology of the female sex" as expressing the view that bodies are "bearers of meanings and social values, the products of social inscriptions, always inherently social" (ibid., 111–12).

Irigaray's discourse continually endeavors to undermine all male economies. In her view "[o]wnership and property are doubtless quite foreign to the feminine. At least sexually. But not *nearness*. Nearness so pronounced that it makes all discrimination of identity, and thus all forms of property, impossible. Woman derives pleasure from what is *so near that she cannot have it, nor have herself*. She herself enters into a ceaseless exchange of herself with the other without any possibility of identifying either. This puts into question all prevailing economies . . ." (ibid., 31; original emphasis). As we see, by subverting and transcending the Freudian dichotomies of presence and absence, possession and loss, Irigaray recasts femininity within a discourse which no longer opposes one to none but to many, allowing woman to be both singular and double, neither one nor two. In opposition to the phallic economy which idealizes solid singularity, Irigaray presents a fluid

conception of female identity, which allows for plurality. According to Irigaray, this sexual plurality also informs female language: "Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids.... For in what she says, too,... woman is constantly touching herself. She steps ever so slightly aside from herself with a murmur, an exclamation, a whisper, a sentence unfinished.... When she returns, it is to set off again from elsewhere" (ibid., 29).

Irigaray seeks to deconstruct the feminine as an inferior other within the phallic system. Her project is to find a language which makes it possible to speak (as) woman (*parler-femme*) in a way which expresses the plurality or mutuality of female sexuality and its autoerotic body. However, she also recognizes that "[t]here is no simple manageable way to leap outside of phallogocentrism" (ibid., 162). As she recognizes, there is always the danger that instead of displacing the gender hierarchy, her project might end up being understood as "reversing the economy of sameness by turning the feminine into *the standard for 'sexual difference'*" (ibid., 159; see also 32–33).

In her view, if this happens, it is a sign that her text has been taken too seriously and read in a phallic manner, as telling the singular truth of female sexuality. For her aim is not to tell the truth, but to counter dominant phallocentric representations by revealing their inherent biases and limitations: "To escape from a pure and simple reversal of the masculine position means in any case not to forget to laugh. Not to forget that the dimension of desire, of pleasure, is untranslatable, unrepresentable, in the 'seriousness' — the adequacy, the univocity, the truth ... — of a discourse that claims to state its meaning" (ibid., 163).

After the first English translations of her articles appeared, Irigaray was read and criticized by her American readers as putting forward an essentialist position. It is only in recent years that Irigaray's body-centered portrayal of female identity has come to be interpreted as a mimetic ploy, intended to shatter the phallocentric symbolic order by the force of laughter. Now her essays are read as parodically mimicking and hysterically exacerbating the way in which Lacan — in the wake of Freud — metaphorized the penis into the transcendental signifier of sexual desire, power and satisfaction. As one of Irigaray's feminist commentators states: "If Irigaray's lips speaking to themselves provoke a smile in the reader, so much the better: that response draws attention to the absurdity and pretentiousness of the phallus as a transcendental signifier. The irony with which the lips are offered is crucial; without it, Irigaray would be guilty of the phallocentric strategy of reversal" (Berg 1991, 68; for the history of essentialist and anti-essentialist readings of Irigaray, see Fuss 1990; Schor 1989; Whitford 1991).

Thus, Irigaray is understood as arguing that — since there is no language other than that which essentializes sexual identity — irony, parody, mimicry, excess, and exaggeration are the only weapons left to the powerless, that is, to those who otherwise are silenced by the phallogocentric order. Since woman cannot step outside the phallic system and adopt a language of her own, she can speak (as)

woman only "[b]y going back through the dominant discourse. By interrogating men's 'mastery.' By speaking to women. And among women" (Irigaray [1977] 1985, 119). In this fashion, Irigaray claims, it will finally be possible to find a way of speaking to men on equal terms. As she puts it: "Speaking (as) woman would, among other things, permit women to speak *to* men . . ." (ibid., 136; original emphasis).

There is no doubt that by inverting and mimicking male modes of thought and at the same time questioning the prejudices and biases immanent in the latter, Irigaray deploys a powerful instrument of critique and launches an intriguing challenge to established modes of thought. She not only suggests speaking (as) woman, but exemplifies in her own work what *parler femme* means, producing texts which are somewhat formless, plural, and which ambiguous, and play with themselves (see Grosz, 1989, 101; ibid., 127). That is, she both declares her opposition to binary categories such as one/many, serious/ironic, realistic/metaphoric, essentialist/constructionist, and adopts an elusive mixture of fragmentary and ambiguous styles which seek to eschew them.

Irigaray is not the first theorist who seeks to stand nowhere and everywhere at once, speak in one voice and many at the same time, who mimics voices of the mad — in her case, hysterics. Nor is she the first philosopher-linguist who leaves readers guessing whether her utterances are to be taken seriously or are meant as parody, thus offering her texts to contradictory readings. Long before her, Nietzsche produced the prototype for modern and postmodern radical critiques, rejecting all economies of thinking and all philosophical systems, while philosophizing with masks and aiming to transcend conventional theories of truth. Long before Irigaray he believed in the shattering force of laughter, published his ideas in the form of aphoristic thought experiments and posed his questions with a hammer, as he said, using it like a tuning fork to make the idols of philosophy ring with their hollow sound. Thus, it seems to me that when Irigaray declares that her aim is "to jam the theoretical machinery itself," rather than to oppose a female or feminist system to the established phallocentric ones, she articulates her critique of patriarchal modes of thought from a distinctly Nietzschean vantage point. Thus, Irigaray explicitly refuses to have her writings measured by the economic principles which I have adopted for my comparative analysis. Since I evaluate Irigaray's discourse in terms of gains and losses, i.e. by principles which she considers part of a male economy, I assume that from her perspective I am seen as seeking to dominate her discourse and to subject it to a phallocentric order.

However, I am not convinced by Irigaray's claim to transcend all possible economies. Like Horney and Chodorow before her, Irigaray rejects Freud's anatomical economy of the gaze. In my view, however, she substitutes for it an *economy of touching* which allows her to present the female body as having, being, and providing "more" than the male body. For it is only by means of her continuous references to a tactile economy that she is able to present the female body as plural in contrast to the singular phallic body; as having more sexual

organs, albeit shapeless and invisible ones; self-sufficient and without need of instruments in gaining pleasure; and, finally, capable of generating more enjoyment than the male body. Since she can touch herself, Irigaray argues, woman is enough to herself, since she is a two-in-one and has no need to touch another.

Moreover, as we have seen, feminist critics have severely criticized attempts to sever the Lacanian concept of the phallus from the male penis in order to free Lacanian theory from the accusation of phallocentrism. By the same logic I find it impossible to read Irigaray's metaphorization of the female body as anything but gynocentric. In fact, I am not sure whether the appeal of her texts for feminist readers lies in their critical potential, or whether their charm stems from their exuberance in the description of feminine sexuality and their celebration of the female body, which provides a narcissistic illusion of female self-sufficiency and perfection: "Why only one song, one speech, one text at a time? To seduce, to satisfy, to fill one of my 'holes'? With you I don't have any. We are not lacks, voids, awaiting sustenance, plenitude, fulfillment from the other" (Irigaray [1977] 1985, 209).

In Irigaray's texts the only feelings evoked by the female body are pleasure and satisfaction — there is no reference to unconscious fear or envy. And since the male body is superfluous and, in any case, only endowed with a meager organ in contrast to female plenitude, it can evoke neither fear nor envy. She presents women as pure subjects of the pleasure principle. In Freud's male and tragic vision of the world, life according to the pleasure principle is impossible. According to Irigaray, femininity allows the transgression of the laws of contradiction and grammar, to be plural and singular at the same time and continually immersed in the pleasures of the body. In her discourse the female is exclusively erotic: masturbating, full of desire, pleasure, and satisfaction.

Like Chodorow's theory, Irigaray's is free of references to affects and emotions which could contaminate and complicate the self-conception of women by introducing mean, unconscious elements, such as fear or envy, or both. Following Lacan, Irigaray regards the female voice as silenced by a phallocentric symbolic order; but against him, she seeks to make it audible. Possibly, because she regards the feminine as that which is repressed and made unconscious in the sociocultural sense of the word, i.e. excluded from the dominant masculine cultural and social order, she does not conceive of female repression. According to the logic of psychoanalysis, that which is repressed is thereby also freed from the control by the reality principle, which imposes laws of logic and grammar on the mind, as well as limitations on pleasure. Like Lacan, she conceives of women as those who *are* the cultural unconscious, but in consequence, it seems, women *have* no psychological unconscious of their own, i.e. no inner, repressed otherness, but only patriarchal biases and prejudices which have been implanted in the depths of their psyche from without.

I doubt whether such an approach does lead to an ethics of difference, allowing woman to speak woman-to-man. In my view, what Irigaray has created, rather, is

a masturbatory discourse, touching itself and gaining pleasure from its own words, without addressing the full emotional and sexual register of women and without the ability to speak to the other sex.

5. Intersubjectivity and Benjamin's Economy of Symbolic Spaces

Irigaray's work very much belongs to the French thinking of the 1970s and 1980s, even though its translations reached the shores of America with considerable delay. Moreover, its impact is felt mainly in the world of literary and intellectual discourse within the humanities; Irigaray had no noticeable effect on the psychoanalytic community, perhaps because she gives no account of the origins of sexual identity and difference, provides no theory of early childhood development, and makes no distinct clinical contribution.

Thus, while psychoanalysis in its Lacanian mould came to be significant in American university departments concerned with language, literature, cinema, and women studies, another psychoanalytic approach gained a foothold in clinical training centers in the United States in the course of the 1980s. This school of thought, a successor to British object relations and self-psychology — a mainly American school whose frame of reference had been developed above all by Heinz Kohut — declares itself to be "intersubjective." It replaces the image of the analyst as an objective, detached interpreter of the patient's discourse by a more interactive concept of psychoanalytic practice, which stresses mutuality, reciprocity and a strong involvement of the analyst's subjectivity, without, however, positing equality or symmetry between patient and analyst (see Aron 1996; Mitchell 1988; Stolorow, Brandchaft and Atwood 1987; Stolorow and Atwood 1992). Relying on extensive empirical observation and videotaped studies of mother-infant interactions, the intersubjective clinical approach constructs a picture of early childhood, in which the baby is an active social being already from the earliest stages of life, and has the ability to recognize others as persons with a subjectivity of their own (See Atwood and Stolorow 1984; Lewis and Rosenblum 1974; Stern 1977, 1985).

In this section I focus on the feminist application of the intersubjective approach which Jessica Benjamin (1988) introduces in *The Bonds of Love,* and which to a large extent relies also on the work of Donald Winnicott. She presents a view of the self as inevitably located in a spectrum of relationships, in which self and other recognize each other as distinct and yet interdependent subjects, who, while different from each other, are also capable of sharing similar mental experiences (ibid., 19–20). Without denying the relevance of the subject's unconscious inner world of fantasies, wishes and images, she stresses processes of reflexive recognition — which can be found in Winnicott's writings — in which self and other interact and can each find affirmation in the other. According to Benjamin: "the need for *mutual* recognition, the necessity of recognizing as well as being recognized by the other — this is what so many theories of the self have missed. The idea of mutual

recognition is crucial to the intersubjective view; it implies that we actually have a need to recognize the other as a separate person who is like us yet distinct" (ibid., 23).

Like Winnicott, she regards the infant as preoccupied with the exploration of the inner world of the parents and their voices, seeking congruence, and experiencing pleasure in this contact (Benjamin 1995, 34). Contrary to the more traditional Freudian account, which stresses satisfaction and safety, she regards the sharing of experiences between parent and child as central for development and differentiation. She explains conflicts which arise in the mind of the little child as caused by the infant's wish to be independent and, at the same time, feeling caught by his or her dependence on the parent's recognition, which is necessary to gain the strength for independence. Rather than attempting to resolve this contradiction, Benjamin presents the ability of parents and child to allow development in and through this paradox, while sustaining its tension, as the recipe for healthy growth (Benjamin 1988, 36).

Again, there is a Winnicottian sound to Benjamin's stress on the ability to sustain the tension of paradox as essential to healthy development, since this is a claim which Winnicott (1971) made in the context of his discussion of transitional phenomena; arguing "that paradox accepted can have positive value. The resolution of paradox leads to a defence organization" (ibid., 14). He insisted on this point repeatedly, emphasizing, as Benjamin does, that in the growth of children "a paradox is involved which needs to be accepted, tolerated, and not resolved" (ibid., 53). Moreover, Benjamin follows Winnicott in arguing that the frustration of the need to recognize and be recognized by others leads to pathological power struggles and aggression (Benjamin 1988, 27–28). In the 1960s Winnicott claimed that "[i]f there is no true recognition on the mother's part, then there must remain a vague fear of dependence. This fear will sometimes take the form of a fear of woman in general, or a fear of a particular woman, and at other times will take on less easily recognized forms, always including the fear of domination" (Winnicott [1964] 1987, 10). As he explained, he regards the child as dependent upon the mother for its sense of autonomy, which is obtained as a result of what he calls the mother's "true recognition." Like Benjamin, Winnicott interpreted the capacity for autonomy not simply as a consequence of the child's separation from the mother, but as a result of her recognition of the child's needs, i.e. inextricably interrelated with dependence on her.

Like Winnicott, Benjamin (1995) points out that even though we have a need to recognize the subjectivity of others and to be recognized by them in the same fashion, "recognition is a capacity of individual development that is only unevenly realized" (ibid., 30). As she states, "the early struggle for recognition . . . includes failure, destruction, aggression, even when it is working" (ibid., 23). In her view, pathologies arise when the attempt to tolerate tension fails, when opposites of the paradox cannot be integrated and a choice has to be made between omnipotence or loss of self, destruction or recognition, assertion or dependence. In such

instances, power struggles emerge, which result in domination or submission; that is, in forms of independence which refuse recognition to others, relationships with others which prevent independence, and, possibly, even in a denial of one's own self, which may stem from the sad belief that one will never be recognized by others. Benjamin stresses that such pathological psychosocial formations are based on a complicity of master and slave, such as can be seen in the sadomasochistic pattern of erotic submission and domination.

She suggests that her intersubjective approach can offer an alternative to Freud's phallic economy of male and female sexuality. Like other feminist critics before her, she regards the stylization of the penis into an emblem of desire as symptomatic of a male narcissism which devalues the female. Instead, she seeks a form of representation which allows "an *expansion* of that *space* where subject meets subject" (Benjamin 1988, 132; emphasis added). In her espousal of the spatial metaphor Benjamin again emulates Winnicott's rhetoric, in which spatial imagery played a highly significant role, such as when he developed the concept of a "potential space between mother and baby" (Winnicott 1971, 53). However, she attributes to this figure of speech a particularly salutary effect on women; as she puts it: "The significance of the spatial metaphor for a woman is likely to be in . . . this discovery of her *own, inner* desire, without fear of impingement, intrusion, or violation" (Benjamin 1988, 128).

Thus, her discourse explicitly builds on a *spatial economy,* which establishes an interrelation between an external space of mutual recognition and an internal space of desire. In both the internal and the external domain, what is at stake is symbolization — of recognition and desire; hence she speaks of "a *symbolic space* of intersubjectivity" (Benjamin 1995, 19; emphasis added). In this symbolic space the repressed, unconscious passions of early childhood become manifest in secondary forms. In her analysis of these processes, Benjamin's approach turns Kleinian, though with a feminist twist. In her view, "[e]rotic domination represents an intensification of male anxiety and defense in relation to the mother" (Benjamin 1988, 77). In order to explain male sadism against women she invokes as "the crucial motivation . . . envy of the mother's perceived power, or, in Klein's sense, envy of the breast; mother is able to withhold the goodness she alone contains. This envy has a double consequence, which forms the essence of male sadism: to simultaneously deny the mother's goodness and declare it bad, and to become oneself the powerful figure who can withhold or grant satisfaction" (ibid., 264–65, n36).

In Benjamin's scheme, envy is primarily dominant in the male unconscious, and caused by women's mothering, which, in the last instance, explains male sadism (ibid., 78). On the one hand, she stresses the mother's role in early childhood, in a manner similar to Chodorow's object relations approach. On the other hand, she introduces dramatic conflicts and dynamics of power, domination and submission, which are absent from Chodorow's discourse. Thus, she points out that if the girl's strong identification with her mother leads to their merging and a stress on

continuity, this also provides a fertile ground for female submission to men and the inability of girls to express sexual desire and become independent social agents. As she puts it: "Submission for women allows a reenactment of their early identificatory relationship to the mother; it is a replication of the maternal attitude itself" (ibid., 79). Since the mother tends not to assert her independence vis-à-vis her children, "the girl's sense of self" which is constituted by identification with the mother, "is shaped by the realization that her mother's source of power resides in her self-sacrifice" (ibid., 79). However, such a denial of female desire and autonomy has severe consequences: "If woman has no desire of her own, she must rely on that of a man, with potentially disastrous consequences for her psychic life. For Freud, woman is doomed to envy the embodiment of desire that will forever elude her, since only a man can possess it. Desire in woman thus appears as envy — perhaps only as envy" (ibid., 89).

Benjamin claims that already in the first two years of life a core sexual identity develops. However, she stresses that this foundation serves only "as a background for future gender ambiguity and tension, a repetitive baseline against which all the other instruments play different, often conflicting or discordant lines" (Benjamin 1995, 54–55). These ambiguities emerge at a later developmental stage, when identifications come to play a central role. As we have seen, according to Benjamin, boys and girls regard the mother as the person from whom all the goodness comes, but with whom fusion may also lead to a loss of self. In contrast, the father appears as a knight in shining armor, returning home sporadically from exciting events outside. On the one hand, Benjamin's image of the father's role in the family differs starkly from that of the oedipal, law-giving and forbidding figure who takes possession of the mother, around which Freudian and Lacanian visions are structured. On the other hand, Benjamin's rhetoric also contrasts with Chodorow's discourse, in which the father appears exclusively in negative terms while the mother is simultaneously desexualized and idealized (see Benjamin 1988, 91–92). She adds the father as a positive presence to the family and holds that when the father enters the picture, love for him "is used not merely to beat back the mother, to defensively idealize someone other than the mother, but to extend love to a second person." Moreover, she stresses that "the father, or any other second person, can be just as effective for the daughter as for the son in supporting the child's sense of being a subject of desire" (Benjamin 1996, 32). Parallel to Chodorow's claims concerning the close intimacy of mother-daughter relations, Benjamin also argues that the father's male narcissism will further the boy's identification with him.

With her stress on the father's presence and his desirable (imagined) qualities, Benjamin reintroduces female penis envy as a legitimate concept in feminist psychoanalysis, from which it had been banned with the advent of Second Wave feminism. Though Benjamin claims that there actually exists a phenomenon which can be called "penis envy," in her view, the girl's wish for the penis is not a self-evident response to a perceived anatomical deficiency. Rather, she uses the

term to describe "the wish of the toddler — of either sex — to identify with the father, who is perceived as representing the outside world" (ibid., 100). However, while fathers are more ready to encourage identification of boys, girls are in need of recognition of their desire, so as to enable their separation from their mothers (ibid., 95). As Benjamin puts it: "Little girls . . . express the wish for a penis . . . for the same reason that boys cherish theirs — because they see it as an emblem of the father who will help them individuate" (ibid., 109).

However, in her view both boys and girls wish to become independent without experiencing loss. Drawing on contemporary psychoanalytic research, Benjamin stresses that in the preoedipal phase children are "overinclusive." Like Horney, she presents both sexes as feeling envy, arguing that boys want breasts and girls want penises but are unwilling to give up their sexual identity. In her words: "They do not yet recognize the exclusivity of the anatomical difference; they want what the other sex has, not *instead of* but *in addition to* what they have" (Benjamin 1995, 53; original emphasis). It takes time until children come to understand that they cannot have all the organs and parental capacities they wish and with the increasing realization of gender difference there arises in both sexes a sense of loss, which Benjamin describes as a feeling of castration (ibid., 64).

Not only various forms of envy find their place in Benjamin's developmental scheme. She also seeks to account for the origins of fear, tracing it to the oedipal conflict between father and son. According to Benjamin, in this period the boy starts to perceive the father's potentially destructive power, in addition to his positive qualities. This duality evokes fear, which is split off in a defensive mechanism. As she explains, "fear and dread are split off from paternal power and welded onto maternal power. Insofar as the child perceives the father as powerful and threatening, he dares not know him, and has to displace the danger — onto the mother" (Benjamin 1988, 154). According to Benjamin, this process blocks the boy's further identification with the mother and leads him to a wholesale repudiation of femininity, which precludes any further relationships with women as equal subjects and instead turns them into objects to be scorned or idealized, and dominated.

Benjamin argues that much of psychoanalytically inspired social theory is also marked by a defense mechanism of this kind. Although she does not explicitly criticize Lacan, it is evident that he constitutes one of the targets of her critique, in which she points out that instead of acknowledging the murderous sides of paternal authority, the father tends to be idealized as a rational, progressive figure, necessary for the children's growth and development, since he saves them from complete immersion in a regressive narcissistic fusion with the mother. As she explains, this image is one which some social theorists and psychoanalysts share with children. It "purges the father of all terror and . . . displaces it onto the mother" (ibid., 136). Again, Benjamin's argument reflects the logic of Horney's reasoning. As the German psychoanalyst did in her critique of Freud, Benjamin points to a slippage from infantile fantasy to adult theorizing, in order to show

how the former vitiates the latter. At the same time, however, her stance is also diametrically opposed to Horney's, who sought to reveal Freud's concept of oedipal castration fear as an ideological cloak, hiding an unconscious male fear of the mother's genitals, and of sexual insufficiency, ridicule, and rejection. Benjamin's explanatory scheme inverts the relationship between these two levels. Possibly, because she is writing six decades after Horney — that is, after the mother has been portrayed by a series of prominent object-relations theorists as an agent of dangerous, unlimited fusion — she regards fear of the mother as that which is loudly proclaimed, and fear of the father as that which is present only surreptitiously. Without saying so outspokenly, Benjamin also opposes Chodorow in this issue, since in the latter's work there is no place for a fear of the father.

Finally, drawing on a suggestion made by Sandor Ferenczi in the 1920s, Benjamin gives a somewhat different meaning to Freud's concept of castration anxiety. She argues that it may be related to a fear of being "cut off" from the mother and an unconscious male envy of women's ability to give birth and to nurture, to which one has lost all connection (Ferenczi [1925] 1926; see also Freud [1933], 87). Ironically, Benjamin explains this feeling of castration as a result of the son's complete identification with the father, which turns the boy into a man, but thereby blocks his access to the mother, with whom he can no longer identify (ibid., 163).

In brief, the message of Benjamin's scheme is: too much closeness and identification with the father is not good for the boy, since it alienates him from the mother and thereby from his inner world. Of course, Benjamin phrases her version of the oedipal process in the categories of her basic metaphor, the spatial economy: "The boy who has lost access to inner space becomes enthralled with conquering outer space. . . . Intersubjective space and the sense of an inside is no less important for men's sexual subjectivity than for women's. In the oedipal experience of losing the inner continuity with women and encountering instead the idealized, acutely desirable object outside, the image of woman as the dangerous, regressive siren is born" (ibid., 163–64).

Benjamin's argument runs as follows: the male drive to dominate women derives from repressed envy of the mother's plenitude, and female submission originates in early identification with the mother's compliant attitude towards her offspring. While this situation impels men to sadistic and controlling enactments of their desire, women's submissiveness prevents the self-expression of female sexuality. Thus, they experience desire only vicariously, by being the willing object of male sexuality.

Benjamin's analysis is complex. It introduces sexual difference as a significant factor into a sophisticated development of object-relations theory, which merges elements from Winnicott with Kleinian components. Unlike other feminist applications of object relations theory, her work does seek to uncover female fears hidden in the unconscious. Thus Benjamin uses the tools of Freud's science of the unconscious to uncover not only the hidden origins of the male drive to subject

women, but also those of the female readiness to accept male superiority. She points to passions which are implanted in the girl's psyche by processes of identification, whose nature she regards as determined by the patriarchal construction of motherhood. Thus, Benjamin challenges what she describes as "a weakness of radical politics: to idealize the oppressed, as if their politics and culture were untouched by the system of domination, as if people did not participate in their own submission" (ibid., 9).

Although she is critical of simplistic feminist theorizing, her program is explicitly feminist, in its analytical focus on gender patterns and in its aim to enlarge the external space of recognition in order to liberate woman's internal space of female desire from male domination. For this purpose she urges that psychoanalytic discourse move beyond its dichotomic vision of sexual identity towards a notion which is more plural and decentered, and not constructed around one pivotal difference between man and woman. As she puts it in a recent article, "a broader view of gender identifications is necessary, one which transcends the simple, oedipal logic of opposites and recognizes the multiplicity of sexual life" (Benjamin 1996, 27).

She is cautiously optimistic concerning possibilities of change, both in contemporary psychoanalytic discourse and social life. In her view, the feminist movement and economic changes have restructured society to some extent, so that mothers are no longer exclusively at home, while the decline of male authority has allowed reflection on the problems of the original formulation of the Oedipus complex by Freud. Benjamin regards women's increased social status and freedom as the cause of both a change in the psychic development of children and in psychoanalytic theorizing. As she puts it: "As women achieve greater equality and mothers become equally important representatives of the outside, the desire for mother no longer evokes complete loss of self" (ibid., 179). Moreover, she proposes that "the changing social relations of gender have given us a glimpse of another world, of a space in which each sex can play the other and so accept difference by making it familiar" (ibid., 169).

In her view, in the contemporary Western world in which there is increasing equality of women, the playful bisexual identification of the preoedipal no longer has to be fully renounced. When Oedipus Rex is removed from his throne, it is possible to observe once again the multiple and flexible identificatory capacities of preoedipal life, which allows one sex to play the other without losing the knowledge of difference. This ability may be recovered, partially and symbolically, when both sexes adopt and represent the role of the other in their sexual relations, thus allowing for a benign experience of omnipotence, which according to Benjamin can constitute a source of creativity and enjoyment, and create a feeling of commonality across gender difference (Benjamin 1995, 69–70).

As mentioned above, I read Benjamin not only as a critique of Freud and male-centered social theory in general, but also as a critique — albeit not explicitly — of the way in which the object-relations approach was adopted in Anglo-Saxon

feminist thinking in the late 1970s and the 1980s. As I pointed out earlier, on the one hand she brings the father back into the psychoanalytic picture of early childhood, from where he had been evicted by the object relations theorists. On the other hand, she refuses to stylize him in an idealizing fashion. Moreover, her reinstatement of the father in the family is linked to the changing social role which she attributes to the mother, whom she no longer regards as a figure who is exclusively tied to the home. Thus, her vision presents us with parents who have come to resemble each other in terms of the social and psychological roles which they play in the family and in society at large.

Such an egalitarian vision of the family may also be seen as a strategic, political construction. Social and psychological theories are never only instruments of empirical description and causal explanation of their subject matter. Rather, they offer cognitive tools for human understanding and action, which may also function as catalysts and agents of change and innovation by suggesting new and hitherto unrealized visions of the realms they refer to. Nevertheless, I wonder how pertinent Benjamin's picture of social and familial change is beyond the range of a small segment of urban white middle-class families of educated professionals. In general, I am more skeptical than Benjamin concerning the short- and long-term prospects which the contemporary world offers its inhabitants for benign experiences of omnipotence and free play of gender roles.

In the first place, the realization of Benjamin's ethical and psychological ideal of an egalitarian intersubjectivity in which there is space for difference, depends on the utopian possibility of an economy of sexual identity in which there is no loss (see also Alford, 1990). Moreover, she suggests that nasty and mean passions can be overcome and superseded in a healthy development which, as Burack (1994) has commented "substitutes knowledge of otherness, reflectiveness about difference, and respect for the *real* other in place of passions 'that defy the ordinary rules of logic'" (ibid., 87). Thus, in the last instance, Benjamin holds life without fear and envy to be possible. According to her own theory, however, such a utopian vision is typical for infantile illusions about sexual identity, which belong to the preoedipal stage. One can therefore indict also Benjamin on the very charge of committing the fallacy of elevating childhood fantasies into adult psychological theories, of which she — and before her, Horney — accused male psychoanalytic theorists.

Conclusions

One way to sum up this essay is to recapitulate the five levels, instances or moments of critique in relation to sexual difference, which appear in this essay: (1) A mythical, primal moment of critique which Freud locates in early childhood. (2) Freud's (lack of) critique of this moment. (3) The tradition of feminist critique of Freud, which grew within the psychoanalytic community, in response to Freud's failure to construct a theory of sexual difference which is truly critical of young

children's fantasies. (4) The critique voiced by feminist psychoanalysts against other feminist readings of Freud. (5) My own critique of Freud and his feminist critics, which has guided my discussion.

From another angle, I can restate the four aims, which I pursued through this article. (a) My first objective has been to review Freud's construction of the origins of conceptions of sexual difference. Although the problems of its logic have been pointed out, I have shown that one may also undertake an attempt at more generous readings than Freud has been granted lately.

(b) The second goal has been, simply, to present some of the feminist voices which have made themselves heard within the discursive boundaries of psychoanalysis. Thus it has been made evident that from the very beginning, feminist psychoanalysts have never been silent, despite the price they sometimes had to pay for speaking out. However, as a field of discourse, psychoanalysis always included female and feminist voices alongside male and patriarchal ones.

(c) Third, it has been shown that the feminist voices in the psychoanalytic camp agree in their unanimous rejection of Freud's phallocentric economy of the gaze. But while they share this fundamental stance of refusal, they formulate their critiques and alternatives from radically different and often incompatible vantage points.

There are no established rules for the critical, feminist articulations of psychoanalysis. Some psychoanalytic feminists move away from the body towards a psychology of social relations, as has been done most explicitly in Benjamin's *spatial economy*. Others focus on bodily features in a more or less metaphorical mode, invoking an *economy of size,* as Horney has done, or an *economy of touching,* as I have found in Irigaray's writings. Chodorow introduces an *economy of closeness,* both in an intrapsychic sense, and with reference to relationships among women. Thus, invisible economies are invoked as well as visible ones, principles of scarcity as well as excess and abundance, size as well as touch, intrapsychic as well as interpersonal psychic spaces — even the subversion of all available economic principles has been attempted. Femininity is valorized at the expense of masculinity, and equality between the sexes is asserted. Female development is depicted as more conflict-ridden than male development, and vice versa, an image of female wholeness is presented, and gender ambiguity and multiplicity are posited. The mother is placed at the center of early childhood, the father is reintroduced, Oedipus is rejected and reasserted, penis envy is affirmed, reinterpreted, and denied — anything goes.

(d) My fourth endeavor has been to place the feminist psychoanalysts in their intellectual contexts and judge them by their ability to acknowledge unconscious fear and envy, which are evoked by sexual difference, both in women and men. From this perspective, I have found the work of Nancy Chodorow and Luce Irigaray to be somewhat limited, since the former allocates unconscious fears exclusively or primarily to men, while the latter has little to say about fear or any other disagreeable passion related to sexual identity. Chodorow and Irigaray are

by no means exceptions. For instance, a recently published feminist dictionary of psychoanalysis has no entry on "anxiety" or "fear" (Wright 1992).

How is one to explain this disavowal of female fear and envy, and the neglect of the mechanisms of defense involved? In my view, the intimidating social, cultural, and psychological circumstances which accompanied the emergence of Second Wave feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s — of which Irigaray's dismissal from her university position provides only one very minor example — led feminist theorists to appropriate psychoanalytic categories defensively, that is, as critical, theoretical and polemic instruments against patriarchy, while it made them afraid of revealing unconscious fears of women. Conceiving of themselves as involved in an uphill struggle against phallocentrism and patriarchy, they deploy psychoanalytic modes of thought primarily in *other-directed* critiques, designed to unmask the male psyche and the cultural and social mechanisms which divest women of their social, cultural, and psychological powers. Focusing on social conflict with men rather than intrapsychic contradictions in women, they deal with social oppression, as it were, rather than psychic repression. Writing from the vantage point of the subjugated, they attempt to uncover male weaknesses while constructing a positive image of femininity, in order to empower women by making them aware of their strength, abilities, and possibilities. Evidently, the more feminist psychoanalysis is itself defensively motivated and designed as part of a struggle against social, political, and cultural oppression and exclusion, the less it is ready to acknowledge female fears.

Thus, while feminist psychoanalysts like Irigaray and Chodorow present men as in some way more limited or inferior to women, the partiality inherent in their picture of sexual difference is very different from Freud's patriarchal prejudice. His phallocentric theory legitimizes the disempowerment of those who have a socially inferior status, by denigrating their demands for equality and emancipation. But feminist psychoanalysis aims at women's liberation and emancipation.

The feminist silence on the repressed passions of women may have sharpened the critical edge of feminist theorizing in the first two decades of the Second Wave, in which the contemporary feminist movement grew, and thereby it may have furthered political goals. But in the long run it reduces the vigor of feminist psychoanalysis. Feminist critique remains limited if it remains other-directed and fails to enquire into unconscious forces which have to do with female sexual identity and difference, and this may lead to female complicity in patriarchal dynamics of oppression.

As we have seen, the thinking of Horney and Benjamin contains more of such *self-reflective critique* than that of Chodorow and Irigaray, since the former two acknowledge the repression and effect of disagreeable passions such as fear and envy not only in men, but also in women. Benjamin's work appears especially promising in terms of the *economy of scope* whose principles I layed out in the beginning and by means of which I compare the theories discussed — although in my view it is too utopian and less innovative than some of its rhetoric suggests. One

of its main merits lies in its synthetic quality. Benjamin integrates a wide variety of psychoanalytic categories and frames of reference, takes note of the mother's role as well as the father's, gives an account of preoedipal development as well as oedipal conflict, acknowledges and explains male and female envy and fear, uncovers the unconscious roots of impulses to dominate as well as the willingness to submit, and combines a psychoanalytic focus on sexual identity with a social perspective on gender roles.

I interpret differences in the integrative capacity of feminist psychoanalysis theorizing as a result of the theorists' differing perceptions of the social, political, and cultural position of women in patriarchal society. While Chodorow and Irigaray's work reflects the feminist self-consciousness of the 1970s, Horney wrote before the advent of the feminist movement in its present form allowed an articulated conception of gender inequalities, heightening awareness of the manifold patterns of subjugation and thereby also reinforcing tendencies to defensive theorizing. Benjamin, however, assumes that the feminist movement has been successful, at least to some extent, and that the social position of women has changed in recent years. Critical self-reflection becomes more feasible when one writes from a perspective of gradual empowerment and social transformation. For it is obvious that the less one is afraid of real and imaginary forces of domination and exclusion threatening from without, the more one can allow oneself to acknowledge the power of unconscious fears and envy which loom within the mind.

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