The real metaphysical problem today is the word," Eugene Jolas proclaimed in his 1929 manifesto for *Work in Progress*. "The new artist of the word has recognized the autonomy of language" (79). In making the word "the real metaphysical problem today," James Joyce, like Nietzsche, challenges the assumptions underlying Western epistemology and metaphysics, including that of the phenomenalism of consciousness, by calling attention to their linguistic, rhetorical structures.\(^1\) That undoing entails, as Paul de Man has argued, the undoing of cognition. Jolas claimed that "when the beginnings of this new age are seen in perspective, it will be found that the disintegration of words, and their subsequent reconstruction on other planes, constitute some of the most important acts of our epoch" (79). For in disintegrating and then reconstructing the language, the new artist of the word destabilizes meaning, calls into question the referentiality of language, exposes its arbitrariness, its materiality, its status as rhetoric.

Joyce's revolution of the word is part of the totality of our era, reflecting the revolutionary decentering of epistemology by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thinkers; Jacques Derrida lists the most radical articulations of that decentering:

the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concepts of being and truth, for which were substituted the concepts of play, interpretation, and sign (sign without truth present); the Freudian critique of self-presence, that is, the cri-
tique of consciousness, of the subject, of self-identity and of self-proximity or self-possession; and, more radically, the Heideggerian destruction of metaphysics, of onto-theology, of the determination of being as presence. ("Structure, Sign, and Play" 250)

To that list Derrida adds James Joyce: Joyce "signs into a single work," he claims, "something like the necessity of an epoch," "the meaning of the langue of our time" (Panel, "Deconstructive Criticism of Joyce"). This rethinking of the concept of structure Derrida perceives as a "rupture" and a "redoubling":

that in which language invaded the universal problematic; that in which, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse...that is to say, when everything became a system where the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. ("Structure, Sign, and Play" 249)

In this interminable play of language, the world is always already writing, "is, was and will be writing its own runes for ever." And that world is a decentered one: "Is not the scene of writing," Hélène Cixous asks, "always decentered?" She claims that Joyce liberates signifiers from realism and from symbolism (the two poles Pound and Eliot prescribed, respectively, for Joyce's texts); he breaks the circle of what Barthes calls the "readable," the causal chain which guarantees the continuation of metaphysics (18, 21).

By emphasizing the politics of language as a material and social structure, Joyce effects a social revolution through his poetic revolution: "my action," he claims in a 1906 letter to Stanislaus Joyce, "is a virtual intellectual strike" (SL 125). His strike emanates from his position as colonized subject, as outsider, as exile: not only as social self-exile but also as linguistic alien. As Julia Kristeva notes, "To work on language, to labor in the materiality of that which society regards as a means of contact and understanding, isn't that at one stroke to declare oneself a stranger to language?" (Séméiotikē 1).

Joyce's dislocutory and translating process of writing the English language—his transforming English to "unglish"—subverts linguistically the hegemony of British culture and its language. The transnationalism of Finnegans Wake, a text written in the wake of the Irish Free State, disarticulates, rearticulates, and at the same time annuls what Philippe Sollers terms the "maximum number of traces—linguistic, historical, mythological, religious. In what he writes, nothing remains but differences, and so he calls into question all and
every community...” (108). In challenging the epistemological presuppositions of Western culture, in disrupting through his language the received symbolic order, Joyce exposes the ideologies of power informing language and other symbolic constructs; his revolutionary act is analogous to Catherine Clément’s description of the feminist action: “to change the imaginary in order then to be able to act on the real, to change the very forms of language which by its structure and history has been subject to a law that is patrilinear, therefore masculine” (131).

“The war is in words,” Joyce proclaimed in *Finnegans Wake* (98.34-35), and he wages “his penisolate war” in history, in writing, with his pen and his slate—and his penis. In converting syntax to “sintalks” (*FW* 269.3), does Joyce hope, as he wrote of the artist in his Trieste Notebook, “that by sinning wholeheartedly his race might come in him to the knowledge of herself” (Scholes and Kain 95)? What is the significance of this conjunction of sexuality and writing in the subversion of the symbolic order? What are the historical, political, and psychoanalytical implications of marking that sexuality by sexual difference? Michele Montrelay would argue that “orgasm in discourse”—the breaking, the disjointing of discourse, the articulating of discourse through a meaning which endlessly escapes—subverts such an order and that a specifically feminine sexual pleasure and the literary text result from that war in words:

> Orgasm in discourse leads us to the point where feminine jouissance can be understood as writing (*écriture*). To the point where it must appear that this jouissance and the literary text (which is also written like an orgasm produced from within discourse), are the effect of the same murder of the signifier. (234)

But the revolutionary subject, Julia Kristeva claims, is a subject—whether masculine or feminine—able “to allow the jouissance of semiotic motility to disrupt the strict symbolic order.” In disrupting the symbolic order by disrupting language, the new artist of the word calls into question the possibility, the very assumption, of knowledge—and posits its impossibility.

But all deconstructive discourses are necessarily inscribed within the circle of a language based on the very metaphysical concepts they intend to subvert. As Derrida points out, a metalanguage is a logical and linguistic impossibility: “We have no language—no syntax and no lexicon”—alien to the history of metaphysics: “We cannot utter a single destructive proposition which has not already slipped into
the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what
it seeks to contest" ("Structure, Sign, and Play" 250).

Caught within the history of metaphysics, feminist critiques of
phallogocentrism are thus necessarily determined by, frustratingly
limited by, the dominant male discourse. Phallogocentrism has tra-
ditionally stressed the principles of being as presence, of truth, of
identity, of sameness, and of visibility as conditions for representation
in language, assigning these principles to the male. Luce Irigaray
critiques the power of the "master discourse," the philosophical logor,
to eradicate the difference between the sexes in systems self-represen-
tative of a "masculine subject," to reduce all others to the economy
of the same. The female is then defined within that logic "as nothing
other than the complement, the other side, or the negative side, of
the masculine" ("Women's Exile" 63). She is a void, a hole in
representation. She is constituted as "not all": the phallic definition
poses her as exclusion. As construct, "woman" exists "only as excluded
by the nature of things which is the nature of words," according to
Jacques Lacan; if she is excluded from the nature of things, "it is
precisely that in being not all, she has, in relation to what the phallic
function designates of jouissance, a supplementary jouissance," an
excess of which she cannot fully know or speak ("God and the
Jouissance" 144-45). Yet it is in that very impossibility of acceding
to the symbolic that Philippe Sollers places Joyce's power as a writer:
"Joyce writes precisely from that radical negation of language. He
writes and speaks in that impossible place where there ought not to
be anything speaking or writing, and he brings it to a highly worked
sublimation. In other words, Joyce gets something to come which in
principle ought not to come." And Sollers claims that it is "this
saturation of the polymorphic, polyphonic, polygraphic, polyglotic
varieties of sexuality, this unsettling of sexuality, this devastating
ironicalization of your most visceral, repeated desires which leaves
you—admit it—troubled when faced with Joyce" (119, 120).

In a move similar to Joyce's reinscription of the sexual body into
the language of literature, Irigaray first argues that women lack access
to a language appropriate to the expression of their desire, that female
sexuality cannot be articulated within Aristotelian logic: "language
and the systems of representation," she says, "cannot 'translate' a
woman's desire." She therefore calls for a radical "disconcerting" of
language and logic, a deconstruction of the binary logic that privileges
the male, and for an opening of discourse to the sense of "non-
sense,” to the expression of what has always been constituted as other, as non-truth and non-being. Julia Kristeva believes that women should assume a negative function to the symbolic order: the revolutionary “woman” is any resistance to culture and language. And although Irigaray recognizes the necessity not to define “woman,” but to analyze how she is determined in discourse, she explores the possibility of a parler femme analogous to what she envisions as the multiplicity of female sexuality; its multiple tones and voices argue for no one female language, but for a plurality of languages. For Derrida, discourse that escapes the combinatory of the two sexes would be not a multiplicity of only female languages, but “incalculable choreographies” of sexually marked voices:

...I would like to believe in the multiplicity of sexually marked voices. I would like to believe in the masses, this indeterminable number of blended voices, this mobile of non-identified sexual marks whose choreography can carry, divide, multiply the body of each “individual,” whether he be classified as “man” or as “woman” according to the criteria of usage. Of course, it is not impossible that desire for a sexuality without number can still protect us, like a dream, from an implacable destiny which immures everything for life in the figure 2... Tragedy would leave this strange sense... that we must affirm and learn to love instead of dreaming of the innumerable. Yes, perhaps; why not? But where would the “dream” of the innumerable come from, if it is indeed a dream? Does the dream itself not prove that what is dreamed of must be there in order for it to provide the dream? (“Choreographies” 76)

Irigaray locates her writing within the ideological space of female desire, within the pre-Oedipal or the post-patriarchal, as if we could remember or imagine a space before or beyond the phallic economy. And Kristeva posits a language of the pre-Oedipal stage of the child’s relation to the mother: “semiotic discourse,” the gestural, rhythmic, pre-referential language of female jouissance, a language not necessarily limited to the female speaker or writer. Indeed, she claims Joyce as an important practitioner of that semiotic discourse. Irigaray fancifully imagines a different syntactic system—one that allows the expression of female “auto-affection,” “self-affection.” But she recognizes that this different language, which would allow us to “touch ourselves and be touched differently,” will never definitively be found.

Irigaray’s attempt to rethink the concept of woman without resorting to limiting or essentialist definitions enables her to critique
the conceptualization of women in phallogocentric discourse, but also logically forces her to acknowledge as figurative and conceptualizing her own analogy between female sexuality and women's language. Since sexuality is not innate, but develops in response to a culture's symbolic system, much feminist theory about a female language can be criticized as what Ann Rosalind Jones calls "an ideal bound up through symmetrical opposition in the very ideological system it intends to destroy" (369). The feminist critique reverses the valuation of the binary poles, but still participates in that male-female opposition, with man as the determining referent. Historically, as Derrida points out, "the determination of sexual difference in opposition" has been "destined, designed, in truth, for truth; it is so in order to erase sexual difference. The dialectical opposition neutralizes or supersedes the difference. However, . . . one insures phallocentric mastery under the cover of neutralization every time" ("Choreographies" 72).

A deconstructive strategy would first reverse the binary opposition, calling into question the hierarchical valuation of the one pole over the other. It would move beyond the "positional"—difference determined as opposition—to a transformation or general deformation of logic. But such a strategy would also recognize that the reversal and displacement remain implicated in the very structure of privilege and power it critiques.

Does Joyce inscribe the female body in his text? Can such an inscription escape the phallic economy? Carl Jung, not quite knowing how to deal with the intractable Ulysses, felt he could at least praise Joyce for the final monologue of Molly Bloom: "The 40 pages of non stop run in the end is a string of veritable psychological peaches. I suppose the devil's grandmother knows so much about the real psychology of a woman, I didn't" (III 629). Nora Barnacle had a more cynical view of her husband: "He knows nothing at all about women" (III 629). Molly is the quintessential male representation of the other: she is "the unsurpassable expression of the woman, an imaginary of the female 'flesh-without-word, the other who is assigned to that otherness, flesh, mystery, the inexpressible outside of the law and the speech of men, and is then asked to confirm, magically to say her reality as that" (Heath, "Language" 135). But as Christine van Boheemen points out, "A language of the essentially other, alias écriture féminine, is a logical impossi-
bility, based on the hypothesis of an original other (female) identity, and the illusion of expressing that in language—which is after all the very instrument and constitution of the logos/logic of difference.” Thus, although Molly Bloom is characterized as an emblem of “otherness” in *Ulysses*, a figure for the otherness of the text as a whole, she never does and never can speak for herself as other. Van Boheemen argues that “*Ulysses* seems *at once* to suggest the futility and logical impossibility of a language of the other, *and* to depend on the viability of the idea of making the other present in language for the coherence of its structure as fiction.” And she sees the conflation of “subject and object, self and other, in *the idea of the mother,*” in “amor matris: subjective and objective genitive” (*U-G* 9.842-43), as Joyce’s usurpation of the role of the other as he signs himself at once as spiritual father and mother of his text.

Is Joyce’s signature a “terrible mastering signature”—as Derrida phrased it (Panel, “Deconstructive Criticism of Joyce”)—because he signs into a single work something like the necessity of an epoch? Or because he usurps the role of the (m)other to write that signature? In the “‘Oxen of the Sun’ episode, Joyce parallels the birth of a male child with the birth of the English language—the English language, that is, as written by literary forefathers. In Stephen’s envisioning of the postcreation, the corruptible flesh born of the mother is transformed by the (male) artist into the incorruptible logos: “In woman’s womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away” (*U-G* 14.292-94). *Amor matris* may be the only true thing in life, but Stephen’s proclamations about creation, whether of art or of life, either ignore—or incorporate into paternity itself—the necessary maternal matrix. “(Male) linguistic ontogeny recapitulates (male) linguistic phylogeny,” Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar wittily note. “The borning ‘Boyaboy’ is his language, a patriarchal word made flesh in the extended *patrius sermo* of history, and though he is undoubtedly torn out of the prostrate *materna lingua* represented by silent Mrs. Purefoy, he is triumphantly flung, in a Carlylean birth passage, into ‘God’s air, the Allfather’s air’” (534-35). But paternity itself is as artificial a construct as the *patrius sermo* of history. “Fatherhood,” Stephen claims, “in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession,” a parthenogenetic usurpation of the maternal function, moving—biblically, patriarchally—“from only begetter to only be-
gotten” (U-G 9.837-39). “Creation from nothing,” it is a mystery founded, like the world it both forms and informs, “upon the void. Upon uncertitude, upon unlikelihood” (U-G 3.35, 9.841). The “attribution of procreation to the father,” according to Lacan, “can only be the effect of a pure signifier, of a recognition not of a real father, but of what religion has taught us to refer to as the Name-of-the-Father” (Écrits 199). Or, as Joyce in the Wake phrases the relationship between paternity and the law: “the farmer, his son and their homely codes” (FW 614.31-32). In this realm of the symbolic Father, who authors and signifies the Law binding the subject, paternity may well indeed be a “legal fiction,” a metaphor, sanctioned by its own law, for what cannot be named. And as Derrida argues, the concept of the father is constituted by language:

...the father is not the generator or procreator in any “real” sense prior to or outside all relation to language.... Only a power of speech can have a father. The father is always father to a speaking/living being. In other words, it is precisely logos that enables us to perceive and investigate something like paternity. (Dissemination 80)

As Derrida reads Socrates’ myth about writing in Plato’s Phaedrus, the logos, the living, spoken word, depends on the father who engendered him—the logos—for his very presence: “Without his father, he would be nothing but, in fact, writing.... The specificity of writing would thus be intimately bound to the absence of the father” (Dissemination 77). A logos committed to writing, according to Plato, is a son who is lost, orphaned, expatriated from the fatherland, no longer able (or perhaps willing) to repeat his origin. Writing is also patricidal: it takes the place of the father, “supplementing him and supplanting him in his absence and essential disappearance” (Dissemination 89). Outside the law of the father, writing as supplement transgresses that law while always remaining external to it. In substituting “the breathless sign for the living voice,” in claiming to exist “without the father (who is both living and life-giving),” writing as supplement and transgressor is clearly connected with death (Dissemination 92). Writing, as Derrida asserts, “menaces at once the breath, the spirit, and history as the spirit’s relationship with itself. It is their end, their finitude, their paralysis. ...it is the principle of death and of difference in the becoming of being” (Grammatology 25).
But the feminine subtends even the most phallogocentric theory of artistic creation. In Stephen Dedalus's myth about writing, where he "proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father" (*U-G* 1.555-57), the absent father speaks through the son. Stephen will have it that *Hamlet* is a ghoststory. What is a ghost? He answers his own question: "One who has faded into impalpability through death, through absence, through change of manners" (*U-G* 9.147-49). A ghost by absence, a ghost by death, speaking his own words to his own son's name. A murdered father, an unquiet ghost, speaks; his son hears and, although never fully certain of the authority of the voice he hears (significantly, a point Stephen never mentions), he ultimately acts on its authority. The father's ghostly voice is "a voice heard only in the heart of him who is the substance of his shadow, the son consubstantial with the father" (*U-G* 9.480-81). The son's actions are predicated on the death of the father—and, ultimately, on his own death: "through the ghost of the unquiet father the image of the unliving son looks forth" (*U-G* 9.380-81). The dead father speaks; in a specular logic of the same, the image of the dead son looks forth through the ghost of the speaking father.

The law the father has revealed may the *lex eterna*—that which Stephen hopes to be "the divine substance wherein Father and Son are consubstantial": "Hamlet *père* and Hamlet *fils*. A king and a prince at last in death, with incidental music" (*U-G* 3.49-50; 9.1034-35). Or it may be the law of dissemination, a sowing of infinite repetition, proliferation, and supplementation. And is not symbolization possible only through loss, absence, repression? In Plato's myth of Thoth, the Egyptian god of writing is opposed to his other—the father, life, speech, origin—by both supplementing and supplanting that other. Yet the figure of Thoth takes its shape from the very thing it resists and for which it substitutes. As Derrida points out, "The god of writing is thus at once his father, his son, and himself" (*Dissemination* 93)—or, as Stephen's algebraic theory proves, "Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and...he himself is the ghost of his own father." And in Plato's texts, this play of differences, this endless supplementation, is given a name: "The play of the other within being must needs be designated 'writing' by Plato in a discourse which would like to think of itself as spoken in essence, in truth, and which nevertheless is written" (*Dissemination* 163). Stephen describes something like this infinite
play of differences, this double movement of the supplement, when he speaks of the moment of artistic creation:

—As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies... from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image. And as the mole on my right breast is where it was when I was born, though all my body has been woven of new stuff time after time, so through the ghost of the unquiet father the image of the unliving son looks forth. In the intense instant of the imagination, when the mind, Shelley says, is a fading coal, that which I was is that which I am and that which in possibility I may come to be. So in the future, the sister of the past, I may see myself as I sit here now but by reflection from that which then I shall be. (U-G 9.376-85)

That Stephen should present the creation of art in a Penelopean analogy, with mother Dana as the figure of the artist (the Celtic mother-fertility goddess Danu, AE’s poem “Dana,” and the magazine Dana edited by W. K. Magee [John Eglinton])—both female and writing—may seem out of place in a theory of artistic creation that privileges the relationship between father and son. And of course that the figure of the artist is female remains unspoken. Gilbert and Gubar postulate the primordial self/other couple as the mother/child rather than man/woman or father/son. “If this is so,” they ask, “isn’t it also possible that verbal signification arises not from a confrontation with the law of the father but from a consciousness of the lure and the lore of the mother?” (537). Is it possible Stephen’s theory of artistic creation, of the sundering and reconciling of father and son, constructs an elaborate guard against the lure of the mother, the (m)other tongue? Although Stephen grounds his theory of Shakespeare in a certain origin and a certain identity, that grounding is destabilized, called into question, by the unknown, by what cannot be named, by the unconscious of the subject, by the discourse of the other. Is not this discourse of the other the discourse not only of writing and of death, but also of woman’s jouissance?

His account of the experience of Shakespeare’s life, the “experience” he has written, centers on one moment, the moment of maternal seduction. Although Shakespeare is “a lord of language,” his belief in himself has been “untimely killed”; emasculated by Ann Hathaway’s aggressive seduction, the artist is undone: “By cock, she was to blame. She put the comether on him, sweet and twentysix. The greyeyed goddess who bends over the boy Adonis, stooping to
conquer, as prologue to the swelling act, is a boldfaced Stratford wench who tumbles in a cornfield a lover younger than herself” (U-G 9.454, 257-60). Significantly, this moment of undoing—and artistic creation—entails the succumbing of the male body to sexuality, to female sexuality. As a fall into language, it acknowledges female jouissance as writing. By centering Shakespeare’s life on the “first undoing”—“No later doing will undo the first undoing” (U-G 9.459)—Stephen places the genesis of his art in the womb of sin of the fallen Eve, of the mother whose “strandentwining cable of all flesh” (U-G 3.37) around her children signifies no beginning or end. The myth of paternity entails an origin, a first creation, a creation from nothing: the telephone number to Edenville, to our place of origin, after all, is “‘Aleph, alpha: nought, nought, one’” (U-G 3.39-40). Eve’s belly without blemish may be “a buckler of taut vellum,” an empty surface for writing, as Stephen hopes, on which he may inscribe his “signs on a white field” (U-G 3.42, 414). But, as Maud Ellmann argues, the navel—the “scarletter on the belly”—tells another story, that has neither a beginning nor an end: “that neither flesh nor words can ever say where they come from, or claim a unitary origin” (101). Or, as the children query in Finnegans Wake, “Where did thots come from?” (FW 597.25), conflating the question of maternal creation with that of language and of knowledge. Selfpenning a letter to one’s other, then, is to recognize the limitation of the specular construct of the self as one, the coherence and mastery of “I,” and to acknowledge the scene on which that self is produced: the body of the woman (Heath, “Language” 137, 143).

Stephen would have it that the begetting of a son, the begetting of the logos and of the work of art, bypasses the maternal function. But in conflating writing with death, he unwittingly conflates it with the maternal. He centers Shakespeare’s life on that “first undoing,” when Ann Hathaway hath a will: the “lord of language” is “untimely killed” by the seduction of the maternal lover. And yet the discourse of the other is the discourse of the female who uses her sexuality, her sexual desire and desirability—“woman’s invisible weapon,” Stephen names it—to drive Shakespeare to his greatest creativity: there is, Stephen says of Shakespeare, “some goad of the flesh driving him into a new passion, a darker shadow of the first, darkening even his own understanding of himself” (U-G 9.462-64). Socrates may privilege the living logos, the spoken word, over writing as supplement and as death, in a fable in which the “play of the
other within being must needs be designated ‘writing’” (Dissemi-
nation 163). And Derrida may posit writing as absence, non-truth, 
non-essence, différance, and death against speech as presence, truth, 
providence, origin, and life as a pharmakon for “woman’s invisible 
weapon.” But Stephen realizes that even Socrates learned from the 
discourse of the other, from the (m)other tongue: “What useful 
discovery did Socrates learn from Xanthippe?” John Eglinton asks 
derisively.

—Dialectic, Stephen answered: and from his mother how to 
bring thoughts into the world. (U-G 9.233–36)

NOTES

1. Paul de Man defines what Nietzsche terms the “phenomenalism of 
consciousness” as “the tendency to describe mental events such as recollection or 
emotion in terms derived from the experience of the phenomenal world: sense 
perception, the interpretation of spatial structures, etc.” (107). A critique of this 
metaphysical construct would prevent us from transforming “consciousness into an 
authoritative ontological category” (109). De Man further claims that the pattern 
of argument Nietzsche directs against the concept of consciousness is “the same 
pattern that underlies the critique of the main categories that make up traditional 
metaphysics: the concepts of identity, of causality, of the object and the subject, 
of truth, etc.” (109).

2. FW 19.35-36. Stephen Heath makes this point in “Ambiviolences: Notes 
for Reading Joyce”: “For Joyce’s writing there is no break between world and book, 
for the world is always already writing (‘is, was and will be writing its own wrunes 
for ever’); words and things move together in the ceaseless production of ‘the 
world’” (67). And of the word.

3. In his Translator’s Note to Écrits, Alan Sheridan defines Jacques Lacan’s 
use of the term “symbolic” as designating “signifiers, in the sense developed by 
Saussure and Jakobson, extended into a generalized definition: differential elements, 
in themselves without meaning, which acquire value only in their mutual relations, 
and forming a closed order—the question is whether this order is or is not complete.... [I]t is the symbolic, not the imaginary, that is seen to be the 
determining order of the subject, and its effects are radical: the subject, in Lacan’s 
sense, is himself an effect of the symbolic” (ix). Jane Gallop defines “the symbolic” 
in Lacan’s work as the “register of language, social exchange, and radical intersub-
jectivity” (59).

Julia Kristeva posits two types of signifying processes: the “semiotic” and the 
“symbolic.” The semiotic process relates to the chora, a term Plato describes in his 
Timaeus as a “receptacle”: “an invisible and formless being which receives all 
things and in some mysterious way partakes of the intelligible, and is most 
incapable of comprehension” (51, quoted in Desire 6). In his Introduction to Kristeva’s 
collection of translated essays, Desire in Language, Leon S. Roudiez adds that the 
chora is “anterior to any space, an economy of primary processes articulated by 
Freud’s instinctual drives (Trieb) through condensation and displacement, and 
where social and family structures make their imprint through the mediation of the 
maternal body” (6). The chora’s articulation is “uncertain, undetermined”; it lacks
"thesis or position, unity or identity" (6). The symbolic process, on the other hand, refers to "the establishment of sign and syntax, paternal function, grammatical and social constraints, symbolic law" (6-7). The signifying process results from an articulation between the semiotic and the symbolic; the "speaking subject is engendered as belonging to both the semiotic chora and the symbolic device, and that accounts for its eventual split nature" (7).

4. Quoted in Moi 170. *Jouissance*, a term ubiquitous in recent French psychoanalytical, philosophical, critical, and feminist discourses, denotes ecstasy, both sexual and sublime; the enjoyment of rights and property; interest payable. Alan Sheridan distinguishes between "pleasure" (*plaisir*) and "jouissance" in his translation of Jacques Lacan’s *Écrits*: "‘Pleasure’ obeys the law of homeostasis that Freud evokes in ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle,’ whereas, through discharge, the psyche seeks the lowest possible level of tension. ‘Jouissance’ transgresses this law and, in that respect, it is beyond the pleasure principle’ (x).

5. The neologism, "phallogocentrism," underscores the complicity between logocentrism and phallocentrism. Logocentrism is the desire for a first cause of being and meaning; for a central presence as the locus of coherence and authenticity, and for full self-consciousness ("thought thinking itself"); phallocentrism places the male-identified subject at the center of intellect, perception, experience, values, and language. As Derrida notes, "It is one and the same system: The erection of a paternal logos... and of the phallus as ‘privileged signifier’ (Lacan)” (“Avoir l’oreille de la philosophie” 311).


7. *This Sex* 147. See also Carolyn Burke’s discussion of this point in “Irigaray through the Looking Glass.”

8. *This Sex* 147. See also Carolyn Burke’s discussion of this point in “Irigaray through the Looking Glass.”

9. "Orgasm in discourse leads us to the point where feminine jouissance can be understood as writing (*écriture*). To the point where it must appear that this jouissance and the literary text (which is also written like an orgasm produced from within discourse), are the effect of the same murder of the signifier.” In defining writing as the jouissance of a woman, Montrelay argues that what the woman is writing is the name: both the *nom du père* (the name-of-the-father) and the *non* (not, nothing) (234).

10. In the 1905 "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," Freud claims "we have learnt from psycho-analysis that the instinct for knowledge in children is attracted unexpectedly early and intensively to sexual problems and is in fact possibly first aroused by them... And this history of the instinct's origin is in line with the fact that the first problem with which it deals is not the question of the distinction between the sexes but the riddle of where babies come from" (60, 61; his emphasis on the riddle of birth as predating the question of distinction between the sexes is qualified in "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," 1925). Freud argues in his 1909 "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" that "Thirst for knowledge seems to be inseparable from sexual curiosity" (51). Little Hans's sexual curiosity about male and female sexual organs and about how and where children originate "roused the spirit of inquiry in him and enabled him to arrive at genuine abstract knowledge" (51). Heath, MacCabe, and Ellmann all discuss the link between the origin of children—"tots"—and of knowledge—"thoughts"—in this passage from the *Wake.*
WORKS CITED


