



**Textual (Re)constructions: Sexual Difference, Desire and
Sexuality in Contemporary Female Experimental Writing.**

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THESIS ABSTRACT.

My thesis is situated within a French feminist poststructural (psychoanalytic and linguistic) framework. It examines the textual (re)construction of the female subject in terms of sexual difference, desire and sexuality in recent experimental writing by women. The point of departure for my argument and analysis is the debate surrounding the Lacanian hypothesis that sexual difference is organised in relation to the symbolic phallus as universal and master signifier of desire, and that the speaking subject "I", constituted within the Symbolic Order of language and meaning, is male/masculine.

I have addressed the question of how female (sexed) and speaking subjects are constructed and signified within textual systems produced by contemporary female writers. Toward this end I have drawn on analytical methods, textual strategies of reading and writing, and theoretical insights of French feminisms, most notably the work of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. My textual analysis is two - fold. It examines both the construction of female subjectivity in language and meaning and the modes of writing (narrative techniques) employed by the writers. (i.e. it examines s(t)extuality). I have proceeded by reading intertextually between Irigaray and Kristeva and the texts I have chosen for analysis.

Where appropriate I have retained Kristeva's analytical method (semanalysis) which she developed predominately through her readings of male avant-garde literature. I have utilised my own readings of female experimental writing to challenge, critique and (re)formulate some of Kristeva's theoretical premises.

I have also drawn on Irigaray's theories and textual strategies of (re) writing a new Symbolic appropriate for a female (sexed) subject. Where I have found Irigaray's insights inadequate, I have mobilised some recent theoretical psychoanalytic developments from Teresa de Lauretis and Parveen Adams, particularly in examining lesbian writing, the construction of 'perverse' desire in female generated texts, and post-phallic (multiple and mobile) signification.

The texts I have examined in the body of my thesis were chosen in order to demonstrate, in the space available, a range of combinatory textual innovation and female subject-in-process construction(s). The overall trajectory of my argument/analysis moves from the deconstruction of a modernist avant-garde female (phallic) subject to the (re)construction of non-phallic, poly-signifying female (and male) subject(s). This includes heterosexual, bi-sexual, (female) homosexual, transvestite, fetishist and sadomasochistic subjects constructed within a variety of intertextual experimentations (e.g. fiction/philosophy, fantasy fiction/historical narrative, poetry/detective fiction etc.)

STATEMENT.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University. To the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

I consent to this thesis being made available for photocopying or loan if applicable and if accepted for the award of the degree.

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