



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

Jyanni Steffensen
M.A. (Women's Studies)
Women's Studies
City Campus
The University of Adelaide.

December, 1991.

Awarded 1992

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.	
French Feminisms and Jacques Lacan.	1
ONE.	
Clarice Lispector: The (Phallic) Subject Breaks Down.	24
TWO.	
Jeanette Winterson: (Re) writing A Fetishist (female) Villian.	46
THREE.	
Camille Roy: The Poetics of Lesbian Sadomasochistic Eroticism.	83
Hewson/Walker: The Undecidable (cherished) Object(s) of Desire.	99
CONCLUSION.	114
NOTES.	119
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	125

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.

Jyanni Steffensen

December, 1991.

I would like to acknowledge the guidance, advice, support and encouragement given to me by my thesis supervisor, Dr. Kay Schaffer (Head of Women's Studies, City Campus, University of Adelaide).

INTRODUCTION.

French Feminisms and Jacques Lacan.

French feminism, like structuralist and poststructuralist criticism in France, grew out of two different, but interrelated, disciplines: linguistics and psychoanalysis. The French feminists, notably Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva were participants in a radical deconstructive project that was designed to put into question- through Saussurean linguistics, Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis - the entire philosophical basis of language. They developed systems of analysis which were radically different to those which had been practised in Anglo-American studies. Their aim, rather than raising questions about the representation of women in writing, was an interrogation of the construction of subjectivity itself and the language through which it is symbolised.

Some French feminists sought to dismantle Western metaphysics utilising deconstruction theories formulated by Jaques Derrida. Derrida argued that the basis of Western thought is Phallogocentrism (i.e. 'man' is the central reference point of an epistemology built on a set of hierarchal oppositions, in which 'man' occupies the privileged

position). The French feminist theorists moved toward a deconstruction of feminine and masculine modes of writing associating the feminine with the non-rational, disruptive modes of writing found in modernist fiction and avant-garde poetry.

Central to all of the French feminisms is a knowledge of Lacanian theories of the subject as constituted in language. Jacques Lacan's theory posits that the phallus is the universal signifier of desire and furthermore that the "I" position (i.e. the speaking subject) which carries authority and self possession is male. Language, the feminists argue, in privileging the phallus, suppresses what is feminine, subjecting it to the symbolisation of a patriarchal system of naming and categorisation.

Irigaray and Cixous in particular develop reading and writing strategies derived from psychoanalysis and deconstruction which attempt to reveal and move beyond the construction of sexual difference and subjectivity posited by the Lacanian model. Their quest, utopian though it might seem, is to bring into being what is, as yet, unwritten. Cixous coined the phrase "to write the body", a phrase which drew suspicion because it is highly suggestive of a biological essentialism which feminism has seen as a major critical target. In practice, Irigaray's writing in particular works to deconstruct existing binary oppositions of male/female, rational/irrational, heard/silenced using the symbolism of fluidity and female sexuality to confront the

phallogentrism of Western philosophical writings, rather than construct an alternative women's writing which merely flows directly from the body. Cixous and Irigaray's writing practices, although they do not always involve readings of literary texts, can provide literary theorists with categories for creating a post-structural feminist practice where texts are read as discursive constructs rather than reflections of an individual author's experience.

Julia Kristeva is committed to developing analyses of the production of a sexed subjectivity. For her, the suppressed feminine emerges in (predominately male) writings of the modernist avant-garde which, by concentrating on language, construct a subject(ivity)- in- process. Kristeva's theories of textuality provide a point of departure for a specifically feminist reading of the textual productions of contemporary (female) experimental writers

The implications for women's writing, if one accepts the authority of the Lacanian hypothesis that women do not (can not?) exist as speaking (writing?) subjects in the Symbolic realm of language and meaning, would seem to further construe women as the mute, silenced "feminine" of both male subjecthood and Western metaphysics. In and as far as women do speak/write, one would assume that they take up a position within the order of language and constructed meaning. For me the question becomes: "How does a contemporary female "I" (speaking/writing subject in the symbolic of language and meaning)

construct a female sexed subjectivity - in- process?" As a way of addressing this question, I propose to mobilise post-Lacanian feminist psychoanalytical and textual theories to analyse the construction of sexual difference, desire and sexuality at work in several avant-garde (I prefer "experimental") texts produced by female writers since the mid-60's.

In order to provide a framework for my analysis of subject construction and positions in contemporary women's writing, I shall briefly describe the Lacanian and French feminist theoretical and analytic approaches. The main body of my thesis will both draw on the insights of these contemporary thinkers and critique, where necessary, some of what I consider to be their major oversights. I shall begin with the Lacanian model.

In Jacques Lacan's re-reading of Freud, patriarchy is shown to be inscribed in the very language through which the child learns to define itself and in which it is confirmed in its gender. According to Lacan, the child, prior to speech, experiences itself as diffused and undifferentiated from the world. It is an "hommelette", a "little man", which, like a broken egg, spills over and spreads itself with no fixed (ego) boundaries. The child experiences its being in the world as a flux and is dominated by ever changing drives (which Kristeva calls *pulsions*). An important transition stage (i.e. the mirror stage) occurs when the child is about six months of age. At the mirror-phase, the

child, shown its image in a mirror, recognises a self, which, because it is founded on an image, is imaginary. This imaginary self is supported by the mother whose gaze confirms the separatedness of the I/thou positions.

We have only to understand the mirror-phase *as an identification*, in the full sense which analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation which takes place in the subject when he (sic) assumes an image - whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytical theory, of the old term *imago*.¹

Castration provides a second order condition for the constitution of the speaking subject. Castration severs the child from the (specular) image of wholeness, separating it from too close an identification with the image of the (phallic) mother, the image through which the child attempts to displace its experiences of fragmentation. It is not, however, until the acquisition of language, when the child can make explicit its desires to another and enter into social exchanges, that this self becomes formulated, that is, named and defined by its entry into the Symbolic Order:

This jubilant assumption of his mirror-image by the little man, at the *infans* stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependency, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which *I* is precipitated in a primordial form before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the universal, its function as a subject.²

The Symbolic is marked by the law of structuration of meanings which Lacan calls the Law of the Father. In order to enter the Symbolic Order, some elements of the Imaginary that cannot be expressed within the Symbolic's formulations are repressed, and effectively silenced. It is at the level of the Imaginary that French feminists locate the "feminine".

As the child says 'I', it constructs a fiction of selfhood that depends on the syntax of the language into which it has been born. Lacan designates the 'I' position as male: "...whatever the success of the dialectical synthesis by which he must resolve as *I* his discordance with his own reality."³ The child's sense of identity is filtered through external views of itself formulated in a language where the 'I' position is male. Lacan's thesis is that language, shaped through the Law of the Father with which the boy identifies, reserves the 'I' position (i.e. the speaking subject [position] for one gender, relegating the 'other' to the negative pole.)

At the point of entry into the realm of the Symbolic, i.e. the acquisition of language, the subject becomes a divided or split self. The residue of the Imaginary which cannot find expression in words is repressed in the unconscious. In the Lacanian account of language acquisition, the phallus is the master signifier, in the face of which the feminine can only be defined as a lack. Lacan writes:

The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark where the share of the logos is wedded to the advent of desire. One might say that this signifier is chosen as what stands out as most easily seized upon in the real of sexual copulation, and also as the most symbolic in the literal (typographical) sense of the term, since it is the equivalent in that relation of the (logical) copula. One might also say that by virtue of its turgidity, it is the image of the vital flow as it is transmitted in generation.⁴

Whilst Lacan is conscious always of the subject constituted in and by language, nonetheless his own language usage poses certain problematics for a feminist reader. By his use of terms such as "he" and even "the little man", he might mean the subject in a universal generic sense. However, there is a certain linguistic sense in which these terms, connected to the words "phallus" and "turgidity" and the phrases "what stands out as the most easily seized upon in the real of sexual copulation" and "vital flow" connote very strongly the positing, by Lacan, of the subject as male or masculine.

If one were to read Lacan in this manner then sexuality also appears to be (normatively) heterosexual or, at least, penile dependent ("most easily seized upon in the real of sexual copulation"), and reproductively procreative ("as it is transmitted in the flow of generation."). Lacan argued that women can enter into the symbolic life of the unconscious only to the extent that they internalise male desire (phallic libido) - that she imagines herself as men imagine her.⁵

"... if the libido is only masculine, it is only from that place where she is whole, the dear woman - that is to say, from the

place where the man sees her, and only from there - that the dear woman can have an unconscious.⁶

'Woman' according to Lacan is to be excluded from the Symbolic as speaking subject: "There is no woman who is not excluded by the nature of things, which is the nature of words....."⁷, and furthermore "woman comes into play in the sexual relation only as mother."⁸

The French feminists whose work I will draw upon challenge the basic determinism of the Lacanian model, while employing its interrogation of subjectivity. If the subject is constituted as masculine, what constitutes the feminine in this system of thinking? Both Irigaray and Kristeva are committed to developing analyses of the production of a sexed subjectivity. Both focus on the relation obscured in Freud's and Lacan's work; the mother-child relation (for Kristeva) and the mother-daughter relation (for Irigaray). This Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalytic oversight will become crucial in examining the construction of a sexed subject position in relation to women's discourses (writing) in this study, as will the assumed proposition that *the* sexual relation is (necessarily) heterosexual.

Kristeva and Irigaray, although individually committed to post-Lacanian (feminist) analyses of subjectivity, have projects and positions which diverge from each other somewhat. Luce Irigaray has been engaged with the major works of Western philosophical thought, reworking ideas that go unchallenged in the writings of male

colleagues, illustrating the historical processes whereby the feminine has been defined and debased in male texts. Irigaray is interested in elaborating a theory of enunciation, a theory of discursive production which makes explicit the positions of woman as a speaking subject. Her project is committed to making explicit the sexualization of all discourses. In her first book (derived from her Ph.D. thesis), she makes her anti-Lacanian position clear:

We can assume that any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the 'masculine'. When she submits to (such a) theory, woman fails to realize that she is renouncing the specificity of her own relationship to the Imaginary. Subjecting herself to objectivization in discourse - by being 'female'. Re-objectivizing her own self whenever she claims to identify herself 'as' a masculine subject. A 'subject' that would re-search itself as lost (maternal - feminine) 'object'.⁹

She resists the temptation to psychoanalyse subjects, real or fictional individuals in her writings, and instead uses psychoanalysis as a mode of interrogation of texts, a device for the interrogation of knowledges - knowledges that pose themselves as sexually neutral, as indifferent, universal, or disinterested, when in fact they are the product of men's self-representations.

In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray demonstrates how the privileging of what is visible and therefore deemed positive (i.e. the penis elevated to the status of phallus in the Symbolic Order as master signifier) relegates 'woman' to absence in existing structures of

psychoanalytical and philosophical discourse. In re-reading Freud, she emphasises his effacement of the pre-Oedipal experience that relegates the girl-child's relationship to the Imaginary, and which therefore can find no expression in the realm of the Symbolic. In this respect a woman, silenced in discourse, is as Irigaray describes, in the position of the psychotic: "Spoken more than speaking, enunciated more than enunciating, the demented person is therefore no longer an active subject of enunciation he is the only possible mouthpiece for previously pronounced enunciations".¹⁰

Irigaray utilises the Lacanian distinction between Imaginary and Symbolic for her own project, using them as critical tools to pose the question of a sexual difference conceived in terms other than those dictated by patriarchy. She attempts to sexualise, to render specific to each sex, the forms that its Imaginary and Symbolic takes. She asserts that psychoanalysis can only represent the Imaginary and Symbolic from the boy's point of view; it has no means available to elaborate what the Imaginary and Symbolic may be in the girl's terms.

Irigaray harnesses the link that Lacan forges between psychical and linguistic processes. If language is the key to interpreting psychical life, and if the unity of the ego and the structures and parameters of the lived body rely on signifying practices and symbolic representations, Irigaray's project is a re-traversing of the inscription of subjectivity under the primacy of the phallic signifier. She sees the psychoanalytical

insistence on the primacy of the phallus and the necessity of women's castration, not as a truth about men and women, but the investment masculinity has in disavowing alterity, in denying even the possibility of an otherness outside their own definitions.

Like Lacan she refuses to talk of women, sexuality or desire in terms of any Real, nature or givenness. Rather she seeks an active rewriting of the female body and of the possibility of the female body as a site for the production of knowledge. Irigaray assumes psychoanalysis as a framework from which she can analyse other knowledges and representations, examining their elisions and silences - i.e. examining them from the point of view of the repression of femininity. Using these insight, she attempts to (re) write a female specific subject not premised on male representations of the suppressed "feminine". Psychoanalysis becomes a critical and analytical tool rather than a truthful or descriptive model.

She succeeds in her readings in undermining the neutrality of philosophical/psychoanalytical discourse, revealing the process by which the philosopher/ psychoanalyst talks about himself from the security of the subject position. In order to attempt to access the primordial experience of femininity, she suggests, it is necessary to work to disrupt the simple oppositions on which theoretical systems are predicated: "We have to reject all the great systems of opposition on which our culture is constructed. Reject for instance, the

oppositions fiction/truth, sensible/intelligible, empirical/ transcendental, materialist/idealist." ¹¹

Having uncovered the impossibility of articulating the feminine in existing structures of language, Irigaray initiates the search for another form of expression that might claim some privilege as feminine. She suggests that "writing women" will create that which is as yet is inexpressible, a female subject with the potential to create its own meanings rather than be caught in the "masquerade" of femininity: "Psychoanalysts say that masquerading corresponds to woman's desire. That seems wrong to me. I think the masquerade has to be understood as what women do in order to recuperate some element of desire, to participate in man's desire, but at the point of renouncing their own." ¹²

Irigaray's movement then is to confront and displace masculine definitions and limitations, and to attempt a reformulation of the Symbolic. In *This Sex Which Is Not One*, she deals with the problem of female sexuality and subjectivity not by answering questions, but by a continuing process of interrogation. A textual strategy developed by Irigaray and demonstrated most notably in the style and metaphor of "When Our Lips Speak Together", is to pursue the relationship between female sexuality and language to create a different Symbolic Order. ¹³ This poetic prose/philosophical text could be read as an attempt to reformulate, symbolically, the mother-daughter relation as a female subject/other female subject relation. Irigaray also makes use of

metaphors of fluidity to encompass the way her writing flows from a source - decentring and putting all fixed meanings into question: "The object of desire itself, and for the psychoanalysts, would be the transformation of fluid to solid?"¹⁴ To look for evidence of an *écriture féminine* then implies a text which disrupts expectations of form and genre, or dissolves boundaries, rather than any reflection of woman's experience.

The difficulty of attempting to use Irigaray's concepts as a way into literary criticism is that she concerns herself more often with a practice of writing than in theorising what is already written, unless of course the work is philosophical. *Speculum* constitutes a major critique of male traditional knowledges including those of Freud and Plato.

Irigaray's own texts enact a crumbling away of easy distinctions between the critical and creative, the poetic and theory, philosophy and fiction. However, some of her textual strategies and many of her theoretical insights can and will be utilised to trace recent shifts in the construction of female subjectivity and sexuality in texts written by women which attempt a movement beyond the masculine (phallic) speaking subject position.

Contrary to Irigaray, Julia Kristeva takes literary texts as an object of study. She examines them in terms of a politics of style that reveals the suppressed feminine in male writing, particularly in those whose sexuality places them outside the mainstream of literary convention, for

example, Marcel Proust and Jean Genet. She has developed ways of addressing the workings of a text's unconscious by applying Lacan's principle of the split subject and reinterpreting the Imaginary. For Kristeva, at the point where consciousness divides, the feminine is repressed into the "semiotic". This is a level of discourse which precedes symbolisation and the Oedipal structuring of sexuality. *Revolution in Poetic Language* presents a theory of the processes which constitute language and are also constitutive of the speaking subject. Setting out to understand the signifying process (*signifiance*), Kristeva transforms Lacan's distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic into a distinction between the *semiotic* and the *symbolic*.¹⁵ The interaction between these two terms (which are processes, not static entities) then constitutes the signifying process.

The Kristevan subject is a subject-in-process. Marked by the rhythms and patterns of sound that are the basic pulsions of the oral and anal drives, the semiotic continuum can be read, she argues, as the suppressed feminine. The semiotic is not an alternative to the Symbolic Order but a process at work within that structuration. If the symbolic embodies the Law of the Father, then the semiotic is that which may disrupt that order from within. In terms of textuality and the constitution of the subject, Kristeva explains the process thus:

These two modalities [semiotic and symbolic] are inseparable within the *signifying process* that constitutes language, and the dialectic between them determines the type of discourse

(narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry etc.) involved; in other words, so-called 'natural' language allows for different modes of articulation of the semiotic and the symbolic. ¹⁶

Kristeva defines the semiotic as both a space and a process, with an essential connection to the maternal body, which is the same for boys and girls. For the child to enter the Symbolic this maternal attachment must be suppressed. However, according to Kristeva, the attachment to the maternal body can never be fully repressed and can be read in textual constructions of the subject-in-process as the poetic dimension which disrupts (closure of unified meaning in) the Symbolic. Like Lacan, Kristeva posits the subject constituted in language as unstable.

In regard to the subject Kristeva, following Lacan, speaks in terms of the male child. The speaking subject in Kristevan theory is male. The Kristevan semiotic is linked to the pre-Oedipal primary processes, the basic pulsions of which Kristeva sees as predominately anal and oral, simultaneously dichotomous (life/death, expulsion/introjection), and heterogeneous. The endless flow of pulsions is gathered up in the *chora* (from the Greek word for enclosed space, womb). Of the signifying process Kristeva asserts that "our discourse - all discourse - moves with and against the *chora* in the sense that it simultaneously depends on and refuses it."¹⁷ This is also the space where "the subject is both generated and negated, the place where his unity succumbs before the process of charges and stases that produce him."¹⁸

For Kristeva, *signifiance* (glossing signification and significance) is a question of positioning. The semiotic continuum must be split if signification is to be produced. This splitting of the semiotic *chora* enables the subject to attribute difference and thus signification to what was ceaseless heterogeneity. Following Lacan, Kristeva posits the mirror phase as the first step that permits the constitution of objects detached from the semiotic *chora*, and the Oedipal phase with its threat of castration as the moment in which the process of separation or splitting is fully achieved.

Symbolic operations which enable the social subject to emerge are possible only because the mirror provides a spatial location, separate from the mother. Kristeva asserts that through the mirror stage, the child distinguishes itself from the world and substitutes images and representations for lived experiences. These images become raw materials for a network of signifiers. With the arrival of the Oedipal stage the child's separation from its lived experience is complete. The mirror stage initiates the field of signifiers. The castration complex generates signs which render signifiers meaningful. The subject becomes separate by way of always being confronted by an 'other':
"...the *symbolic* - and therefore syntax and all linguistic categories - is a social effect of the relation to the other, established through the objective constraints of biological (including sexual) differences and concrete, historical family structures."¹⁹ For Kristeva, a missing other (object) implies an impossible subject.

Kristeva agrees with Lacan's assertion that the phallus is the crucial signifier in the subject's acquisition of a voice. The law, represented by the phallus, calls for the child's renunciation of the m(other) and submission to authority greater than itself or m(other). The child must submit to the symbolic father, or phallic law giver. Once the subject has entered into the Symbolic Order, the *chora* will be more or less successfully repressed and can be perceived only as pulsion pressure on or within symbolic language: as contradiction, meaninglessness, disruption, silences and absences. Semiotic energy as awareness of the attachment to the maternal then hovers on the threshold of the (male) subject's position in the symbolic order, continually threatening disruption and dissolution:

Castration puts the finished touches on the process of separation that posits the subject as signifiable, which is to say separate, always confronted by an other: imago in the mirror (signified) and the semiotic process (signifier). As the addressee of every demand, the mother occupies the place of alterity. Her replete body, the receptacle and guarantor of demands, takes the place of all narcissistic, hence imaginary, effects and gratifications; she is, in other words, the phallus. The discovery of castration, however, detaches the subject from his dependence on the mother, and the perception of this lack [*manque*] makes the phallic function a symbolic function - *the* symbolic function. This is a decisive moment fraught with consequences: the subject, finding his identity in the symbolic, *separates* from his fusion with the mother, *confines* his *jouissance* to the genital and transfers semiotic motility on to the symbolic order. Thus ends the thetic phase, which posits the gap between the signifier and the signified as an opening up towards every desire but also every act, including the very *jouissance* that exceeds them.²⁰

According to Kristeva, the poet, 'avant-garde' transgressor is always male. Men alone can occupy the (unstable) position of speaking subject within and transgressive of the symbolic; they are the speakers/ writers/ artists who subject the symbolic to its own excesses and possibilities of subversion. She elevates men, those men who risk (through psychosis) their positions as subjects in the symbolic, to viable representations of the 'feminine'.

Women's writing, in Kristeva's theorising, is neglected except where it is used rather conventionally, as in the case of Sylvia Plath's *Ariel* to demonstrate madness and disadvantage. Kristeva claimed in 1974 that women tend to write in one of two ways. They either produce texts to substitute for a family - novels of autobiography, romance, or family history - fantasy substitutes for an actual family, or write as hysterical subjects, bound to the rhythms of the body, unspoken even if represented

In women's writing, language seems to be seen from a foreign land; it is seen from the point of view of an asymbolic, spastic body. Virginia Woolf describes suspended states, subtle sensations and above all, colours - green, blue - but she does not dissect language as Joyce does. Estranged from language women are visionaries, dancer who suffer as they speak. ²¹

The fact that this statement was made in an interview in 1974 suggests to me that it may be time to reformulate Kristeva's theories of textual production to account for more recent practices in women's writing. In

setting up "aesthetic practices" as her major concern, Kristeva's theory often privileges the textual over the sexual, relegating women and their texts to the silence of obscurity and indifference. This is a negative feature of Kristeva's work. For my own readings I wish to situate the analyses firmly within a feminist frame and concentrate on women as producer rather than as the product of writing. However her mode of textual analysis (semanalysis) which examines the interplay of semiotic and symbolic processes in signification, is related, as she theorises it, to modes of sexual differentiation within each sex and each text. Kristeva's poetics, with their emphasis on textuality rather than the intentions of the author or the experience of the characters as reflections of an external reality, are important to allowing me as a feminist reader to identify evidence for a suppressed feminine threatening to disrupt the symbolic order of texts, even those by female writers; and for making a case for contemporary women writer's textual construction of a subjectivity already consciously working undecidably, ambivalently and fluidly between a phallic symbolic and a maternal (semiotic) attachment. (i.e. as a bi-s(t)extual fetishist, a position that Kristeva confers only on the male avant-garde). It is the textual construction of a female (sexed) subject-in-process in the writing of the female avant-garde that Kristeva's analysis effaces and which my work will centrally address.

This has been a long digression through the propositions/positions of Lacan, Irigaray and Kristeva.²² This is by way of initially situating my

argument within the post-Lacanian/French feminist debate surrounding the 'universal' significance of the phallus in both textual production and subject-in-language formation. It is my intention to harness aspects of Kristevan theories and analytical methods, as well as Irigaray's concepts of an alternate signifying Symbolic for women, to read/analyse the discursive productions of contemporary female experimental writers. In other words, I will read intertextually between Irigaray and Kristeva and the texts chosen for analysis. I will, in the process, turn my readings of some of these texts back into Kristeva and Irigaray's propositions in order to challenge them and/or reformulate them in line with current textual movements in women's writing beyond the Lacanian French feminist debate.

The writers and texts I will examine are, in order of analysis:- Clarice Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.*, (1968); Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion*, (1988); Camille Roy's 'From "The Rosy Medallions"', (1990) and Hewson/Walker's *Cherished Objects*, (1988).

I chose these texts as representative, within the analytical space available, of a variety of female (sexed) subjectivities - textually (re)produced- within a broad Western philosophically and linguistically influenced context of discursive meaning production. I do not intend either an historically chronological comparison or a hierarchical/oppositional construction of lesbian/heterosexual texts or English-speaking/ non-English speaking texts. These texts construct a

multiplicity of female subjects in terms of sexual difference, desire and sexuality: female phallic subjects; heterosexual, lesbian, bi-sexual, fetishistic, sadomasochistic, undecidable masculine and feminine subjects; asexual subjects; non-phallic female and male subjects etc. On a textual level, the chosen readings also represent a variety of inter-textual, bi-textual and poly-textual (re)constructions. Throughout my text I will use "subject" and "subjectivity" to mean the (sexed) subject or the subject signified in terms of sexual difference. I am not suggesting that the textually constructed female subject is reducible to her sexed subjectivity alone. These terms rather designate the parameters of the psycho-linguistic framework within which these texts will be examined.

I will begin with Lispector by way of demonstrating a writing that is in many ways derivative of the male avant-garde textuality analysed by Kristeva. It is also somewhat derivative of the construction of a phallically signified (masculine) subject. This reading both locates my analysis initially within a Lacanian/Kristevan framework. However, there are certain suggestive ambiguities raised within this reading which I will utilise as a point-of-departure to move my reading of contemporary female experimental writers into a post-phallic signifying field.

The trajectory of my argument turns ('hinges') on the reading of Jeanette Winterson's text, *The Passion*. It is here that my analysis turns

both with and against Irigaray and Kristeva and some of their propositions. It also turns most definitely against Lacanian constructs. I will retain Kristeva's analytical method whilst challenging her theoretical premises that female writers are hysterical and that lesbian texts are culturally unintelligible. I will also read *The Passion* with Irigaray's vision of the constitution of a new Symbolic for women, whilst demonstrating the extent to which Winterson constructs a signifying system that moves beyond Irigaray's ideas of dual systems (one for each sex).

(Re)harnessing Kristevan theories of carnivalesque textual production as poly-glossic and poly-vocal, I will analyse Winterson's strategic move beyond dual systems of signifiatory logic into a poly-logical, poly-signifying poly- s(t)extuality. Winterson's construction of a fetishistic female subject works both with and against Kristeva's theorising of (male) avant-garde textual production. It also constitutes, for my theoretical and analytical development, an opening up of discourses into a field of infinite play of differences beyond both orthodox psychoanalytic models and oppositional or dual philosophical systems of thinking and constructed meaning. The work of Derrida, Irigaray, Kristeva, and sometimes Lacan, will constitute the poly-vocal field in which my argument is situated. I will call on their work where necessary to both ground my analysis and to push the limits of, and (re)formulate some of their hypotheses.

Finally, my readings of Camille Roy and Hewson/Walker will be used to consolidate my argument for the contemporary (re)construction of poly-valent differences, (re)signified, in female writer's experimental s(t)extual productions. These texts, which in many ways are more "experimental" in style, are more easily read following a detailed analysis of Winterson. They presume to some extent an always already familiarity with bi- or poly-s(t)extual production as well as the concept that female (as well as male) subjects are desiring, signifying, textually produced Symbolic subjects. What is more, I will demonstrate that they are not identical subject(s) to the one(s) theoretically posited by the Lacanian (unstable) masculine "I" or are in any way equatable with an unspeakable Imaginary "feminine" recuperable by a male Symbolic avant-garde subject. I will demonstrate that these textually produced subjects - both female and male - are stable and fluid between the Imaginary and the Symbolic (or the Kristevan semiotic and the symbolic), and readable (meaningfull) within a newly (female) constituted Symbolic.



ONE.

Clarice Lispector: The (Phallic) Subject Breaks Down.

The novel that I will analyse first, in order to demonstrate the construction of the (sexed masculine) subject, or perhaps the (potential) deconstruction of the Cartesian subject, is Clarice Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.*¹ Although not available in English until 1988, this text was first published (in Portuguese) in 1968, and the writer, although born in the Ukraine, lived in Brazil and is predominately thought of as a Latin American (woman) prose writer. However, the intertextual traces between Lispector's text and those of Franz Kafka, as well as its existential overtones, would locate it within a context of modernist experimental writing concerned with questions of Western philosophy. Whilst my reading of it might efface specific cultural differences (i.e. the text's "Brazilianess"), it remains temporally - 1968 is generally regarded as the 'beginning' of current French feminist theory - a point of departure from which to trace changes in the construction of the subject in terms of sexual difference that have occurred, and are occurring in women's writing within a broad Western context.

If texts, as Kristeva insists, do not merely reflect subjects, but construe them in process, then the position constructed for a female subject within Lispector's symbolic could be read as that of a phallic female - albeit unstable - "at war" with an (imaginary) female M(other).

Paradoxically, reading Lispector intertextually with Kristeva, within a Kristevan psychoanalytical and textual framework, becomes a matter of reading with/against Kristeva. Like Kristeva's male avant-garde writers, who alone could occupy the (unstable) position of speaking subject within the Symbolic in order to transgress it - thereby risking psychosis and loss of meaning - Lispector, (who is obviously a female writer), re-enacts precisely this textual signifying process without losing coherence.

In the view of Ronald W. Sousa, who translated *The Passion According to G.H.* from the Portuguese, Lispector is regarded in France as an important contemporary philosopher dealing with the relationship between language and human (especially female) subjecthood, rather than as a literary *cause-célèbre*.² Lispector's text poses something of a genre problematic. One could take the story as fiction, but it is a fiction which requires of the reader a speculation on philosophical problems in and through the narration of what we would traditionally call a "plot". The "plot" as such, is relatively simple. A (self-confessed) middle-class woman, known only as G.H., lives a pleasant, well-ordered existence in a well-ordered, aesthetically pleasing (to her) penthouse apartment. She has dismissed her maid. Whilst eating

breakfast she decides to spend the morning cleaning the maid's room which she hasn't entered since the maid's arrival. This room also doubles as a store-room for G.H.'s discarded or unused objects (clothes, suitcases etc.).

She expects to find the room dirty and chaotic, but on entering is surprised to find it otherwise. She is further startled by a charcoal mural drawn on the wall by the departed maid - a stylized outline of a naked man, a naked woman and a dog "more nude than dogs really are" (p. 31).³ Shock compounds when she opens the wardrobe and is confronted by a large cockroach. She is phobic about cockroaches although not aware of ever having seen one before. In a state of panic, she falls and is trapped between the open door of the closet and the bed.

She becomes paralysed by fear. However, in a jubilant moment, she experiences a desire to kill and slams the door on the cockroach. To her continuing horror, she merely squashes rather than kills it and is further alarmed when it begins oozing viscous white matter. To cut a longish story short, the protagonist/narrator eventually overcomes her fear by desiring to consume the cockroach. She does.

The reader might be alerted to the fact that women eating cockroaches does not suggest classical "realist" fiction. The narrative technique employed by Lispector works intertextually between "plot" construction and philosophical interruptions or textual ruptures, predominately

identifiable as existential and metaphysical (i.e. meditations on questions of Being/Nothingness, Nature/Culture and Truth/Error). Other binary constructs evident in the text, such as Self/Other, Identity/Difference and Male/Female (i.e. questions of sexual difference), have been the object of much French feminist psychoanalytical and philosophical interrogation and (re)construction.

Hélène Cixous is one French feminist who has focused intently, over some time, on Clarice Lispector's work. Cixous is one of the few feminist literary analysts - French or otherwise - who have concentrated on 'difficult' (avant-garde or experimental) writing by contemporary women. She is worth mentioning here because her work opens a neglected field of feminist textual engagement.

Verena Andermatt Conley, in her introduction to Hélène Cixous' *Reading with Clarice Lispector* states that: "Cixous discovers Lispector at a time when she studies questions of sexual difference in connection with what has been called libidinal economies, that is, the ways the body is engaged with and finding its limits in, a social world."⁴ In fact, Cixous reads Lispector's texts from within the general problem of the philosophy of the subject, in which she joins Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva in her questioning of the so-called rational "Cartesian" subject. Her insistence on joy and pleasure in reading Lispector is close to a French reading of the Heideggerian "subject", exposed to and traversed by the other. Cixous does not simply advocate a divided subject, nor

does she imply a return to some Anglo-Saxon *volontarisme* that would fight power with new repressions through univocal conceptualisations. Her gesture (readings) implies acceptance, tolerance and noncomprehension of the other. She wants to let alterity speak as alterity. She insists on an emptying of the self or of what she calls, summarily, the unified, narcissistic subject. Hers is not a subject that is being subverted but one that is exposed to the other.

Cixous' method of reading tends to parallel that of the Lispector's writing. She writes poetic/philosophical prose as a response to Lispector's texts. This method tends to leave any analysis of the construction of a specific female textual subject untouched. Certainly Lispector's textual subject is exposed to and traversed by the other (fiction by philosophy, G.H. by the cockroach), having initially been constructed as the (mis) recognised unified subject/self. The textual 'breakdown' of the subject when exposed to the other which occurs in *The Passion According to G.H.* could be read through the Lacanian insistence on the 'split subject' which is admirably (re)enacted in Lispector's writing. However a psychoanalytical reading through the Kristevan assertion of the semiotic pre-eodipal maternal attachment [m(other)] always already 'at play' in the Symbolic, or rather in this case threatening to, and eventually disrupting the Symbolic; and more importantly her notion of the even more archaic 'maternal abject' might be better utilised for my purposes. What is problematic for me as a feminist reader is the metaphoric equation of the other, traceable

metonymically through a series of displacements in this text, with the 'threatening' cockroach/M(other). (i.e. the Phallic or monstrous mother so beloved of male surrealist and avant-garde writers).

It is my intention to demonstrate that Lispector's textual Imaginary construction of the subject as Self/M(other), in which the unitary (phallic) self is under constant threat of dissolution from the repressed M(other) continues the psychoanalytical assumption that the subject is 'masculine', and that women exist only as mothers in the Symbolic Order. Lacan is provocative: "Woman comes into play in the sexual relation only as mother."⁵ This implies that women, as women, rather than as representing the maternal function (for men in the Symbolic Order) do not exist as speaking subjects (i.e. speaking in the first person "I" as a (sexed female) subject).

Lispector's subject, G.H. in fact does both construct and speak from a (traditional) masculine position. She, like the male avant-garde writers examined by Kristeva, names (represents) the abject maternal, the repression of which is essential for the existence of the (phallic) masculine subject.

The subject of this text could be read as phallic/masculine (i.e. a unified self with a speaking position in the Symbolic). It expels the 'other' (i.e. the maid). However the repressed/expelled 'other/maid' is not fully repressed and (re) encountered in the maid's room. The subject is

threatened, begins to destabilise. The final disintegration is precipitated by the confrontation with the cockroach (material body) which also refuses to be obliterated and which is metonymically, and abjectly, linked to the M(other).

Elizabeth Grosz summarises the situation thus:

The subject recoils from its materiality, being unable to accept its bodily origins, and hence also its immanent death.⁶

However, the horror (abjection) engendered by bodily fluids (cockroach matter/mother's milk) leaves unquestioned the assumption that woman signifies M(other)/body/nature. In terms of the construction of sexual difference in Lispector's text, differentiation is marked not between male and female subjects, but intrasubjectively between the phallic subject (regardless of sex) and Imaginary phallic mothers. This horror, according to Grosz, serves to tie women into a (presumably natural) maternity without acknowledging women's *sexual* specificity, a residual femininity unrepresented by maternity.⁷

Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection is crucial to the Lispector text in terms of demonstrating the construction of the (imaginary) unified self, the 'proper' body, the encounter with the M(other) and the breakdown of the phallogocentric subject.⁸ G.H. is philosophically phallogocentric: "The cockroach's [Mother's] much greater nature made everything that

came in there - name or person - lose its false transcendence" (p. 88).

The textual subject, G.H., though female, is constructed as phallogocentric, a (masculine) orderly (rational) Self, the rational Cartesian subject of philosophy. This transcendent, phallic self is signified in the text by the narrator being positioned within the symbolic of the text by the first person pronoun "I". The "I"/narrator retains mastery over the text throughout. In fact, the repetition of "I", is insistent in its excessiveness. It recurs at least once in almost every sentence. This "I" inhabits a (phallic) tower - "G.H. lived on the top floor of a superstructure, and, even though it was built in the air, it was solid..." (p. 60). - and fantasies that she does indeed possess the phallus, the signifier of (masculine) desire in the form of a "third leg":

"Something's missing that once was essential to me and is no longer. I don't need it any more, as though I had lost a third leg that until then kept me from walking but made me a stable tripod" (p. 4).

Although this passage which opens the text suggests that the narrator no longer has the 'phallus' after the confrontation with the M(other), it suggests that she had been in possession of it: "The person-idea that I had came from that third leg of mine....." (p.4).

I shall return to this textual ambiguity (i.e. having the phallus and no longer needing it) later. The interruption of the explicit meaning system of this text represented by these contradictions - there are others

-posit the possibility of the textual deconstruction of the phallic subject.

This (apparent) unified, independent, rational and phallic subject in a series of textual strategies is revealed in its dependence on both its others/objects and its abject condition, which in this case is (in)directly linked to the maternal body - the 'improper' body which the subject can not fully expel: "My true coherence was in fact rising up to the surface of me, like a pus -" (p. 50). "Which was difficult: because the neutral thing was extremely energetic, I spat and spat and it kept on being me" (p. 160).

Within a Kristevan psychoanalytic framework, attention is directed to the pre-oedipal mother-child relation or semiotic phase (the pre-linguistic conditions of symbolic functioning) and on the moments of instability and breakdown in the subject and the text. The semiotic phase is crucial to Kristeva's concept of abjection, which is the subject's reaction to the failure of the subject/object opposition to express adequately the subject's corporeality and its tenuous bodily boundaries. Her text, *Powers of Horror. An Essay in Abjection*, is an analysis of the ways in which 'proper' subjectivity is founded on the (impossible) expulsion or exclusion of the improper, the unclean and the disorderly. Lispector's textual subject, G.H. (re)enacts this tenuousness and breakdown of the (phallic) female subject when confronted systematically by 'repressed' others/objects (i.e. the maid), and the abject (the material Body of the cockroach/ the Mother which are all linked in

the text to 'femaleness'). The cockroach is referred to as "she" or as female: "There it is nevertheless, this neutral cockroach without a name for love or suffering. Its only differentiation in life is that it be either male or female. I had been thinking of it only as female since what is caved in at the middle must be female" (p. 85).

If the object is the counterpart of the subject within the symbolic, the abject which is neither subject nor object, signals their impossible and untenable identities. The abject, instead of stabilising the subject, signals its fading or potential disappearance and its tenuous, imaginary hold on the object. The maid, Jannair, escapes her position as object to G.H.'s subject: "What I hadn't expected was that the maid, without saying anything to me had fixed up the room the way she wanted it....." (p. 29).

G.H.'s moment of abjection does indeed occur at a point in the text in which the subject encounters an other/object which fails to fulfil a sufficiently oppositional position. Despite having been 'expelled', Jannair continues not only to constitute an absent presence in the text/room, but refuses to *be* the object against which G.H. constitutes herself as subject. Her textual inscription on the wall signals to G.H. Jannair's own subject position (subjecthood). In representing G.H. imagistically (in the mural), she has in fact taken G.H. as her object, "I looked at the drawing on the wall in which I was probably being portrayed I, the Man." (p. 32). Jannair constitutes herself as a subject -

what is more, a clean and orderly subject: "For the past almost six months- the length of time that maid had been with me - I had not ventured in there, and my astonishment came from finding a completely clean room." (p. 29).

Janair textually becomes a subject like G.H. - a female (phallic) subject: "And her posture as well: her body erect, slim, hard, smooth, almost fleshless, with no breasts, or ass." (p. 33). No longer a 'maid' who G.H. possesses the power to constitute as a mere unknown, unnamed object: " But her name.....of course, of course I remembered finally: it was Janair." (p .32)., Janair becomes a subject, with a name.

Georges Bataille, according to Kristeva, specified that the plane of abjection is that of the subject/object relationship and not a subject/other subject relationship.⁹ Abjection occurs when the object is incapable of stopping up the rim: a hole emerges there into which the subject may fall through lack of an anchor in the object. G.H. concurs: "At that time there was beginning to take place in me - and still I didn't know it - the first signs of the collapse of subterranean limestone caves that were falling in under the weight of stratified archaeological layers....." (p. 36). The text slides metonymically from other subject/object to abject object: "I now understood that the cockroach and Janair were the room's true inhabitants." (p. 41) The cockroach signifies as a sort of "phobic" object in the text, as does the M(other), also linked to cockroaches.

The subject continues disintegrating, becomes abject. According to Kristeva:

The abject has only one quality of the object - that of being opposed to I. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which, as a matter of fact, makes me ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is *abject*, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. ¹⁰

Kristeva considers abjection *both* a precondition and a threat to subjectivity. Subjectivity, the organised coherence of consciousness, does not have a guaranteed stability. Both Kristeva and G.H. would appear to understand it to be a perilous process of becoming in which the subject is teetering on the edge of an abyss threatening to draw the subject into its field of influence. This abyss marks the place of its birth *and* obliteration, posing both an internal and external threat to its stability. "An abyss of nothingness. Just a huge, empty thing: abyss" (p. 18). Some anchor or support is needed.

Lacan argues that this link or support is provided by the Name of the Father, which embodies and represents the law prohibiting incest and founding patriarchy. It is the linguistic representation of the Symbolic Order. Abjection is the underside of the Symbolic Order, what must be rejected or expelled, covered over or denied by it. Symbolisation and 'proper' social functioning demand a separation between 'me' and the

abyss that haunts, beckons and terrifies me. The abject pushes 'me' closer to its borders; it demonstrates to 'me' my necessary relation to corporeality, to animality and to death in spite of any pretensions toward the attainment of a transcendent consciousness or a 'sovereign' access to reason. The abject attests to the impossibility of clear borders and lines of demarcation between inside and outside, proper and improper, clean and unclean, order and disorder demanded by Symbolic functioning.

G.H. is obsessed with the relationship between the 'self' and the 'impure': "I opened my mouth in fright: to ask for help. Why? because I did not want to become impure like the cockroach" (p. 65). Her meditation on the 'impure' are linked in the text to Biblical prohibitions and taboos. Kristeva links this [biblical] taboo to the maternal also:

As I see it, biblical impurity is permeated with the tradition of defilement; in that sense, it points to but does not *signify* an autonomous force that *can* be threatening for divine agency. I shall suggest that such a force is rooted, historically (in the history of religions) and subjectively (in the structuration of the subject's identity), in the cathexis of maternal function - mother, women, reproduction.¹¹

Kristeva distinguishes three categories of the abject against which individual and social taboos are erected. These abjects relate to the categories of food, waste, and signs of sexual difference. In most Western cultures, eating cockroaches would certainly qualify as a dietary

abject. The signs of sexual difference, in patriarchal culture equivalent to the signs of femininity, castration, lack or deprivation, seem to be those least tolerable to a (masculine) ego that sees itself of the model of an autonomous, independent cogito. "I act like what is referred to as a finished person" (p.18).

This statement constitutes another moment of rupture or contradiction in Lispector's texts explicit system of meaning. It works against the grain of G.H.'s previous observation that she might no longer be a "finished" (unified) person following her confrontation with the dreaded cockroach. (i.e. she no longer is a "stable tripod" with a "third leg"). *The Passion According to G.H.* turns slightly with and against Kristeva's theory that only the male avant-garde could transgress this boundary, but can still, paradoxically, be read through the Kristevan notion of the semiotic rupturing the Symbolic of texts.

Kristeva theorises that abjection is perhaps produced in its most severe forms in the cultural horror of menstruation. She makes it clear that the horror of menstruation is not a horror at the boundary separating men from *women*; but rather, menstruation and the qualities associated with femininity are collapsed into the question of *maternity*. For the masculine phallic subject the maternal body represents the non-separate, the non-symbolic which must be repressed. The horror is of re-absorption by (imaginary) maternal power (i.e. the devouring phallic Mother).

The abject is signified in Lispector's text through G.H.'s 'phobia' (also a sign of abjection for Kristeva) about cockroaches and particularly the viscous white substance which oozes out of the squashed insect. This substance is linked metonymically in the text with "mother's milk", surely also a signifier for maternity or the maternal (fecund and unspeakable) body:

I had stopped sweating; I had dried completely out again. I tried to reason with my disgust. Why should I be disgusted by the mass that came out of the cockroach? had I not drunk of the white milk that is the liquid maternal mass? and when I drank the stuff that my mother was made of, hadn't I wordlessly, called it love? (p. 157).

This abject substance then, within a Kristevan framework, would signify the threatening boundary or threshold between life and death, as well as between male and female. It also marks an unspeakable debt that the individual and culture owe to the mother and the maternal body but can never acknowledge let alone repay. G.H. is ambivalent: "And mother's milk, which is human, mother's milk is prehuman by far, and it has no taste, it is nothing" (p. 136)

Within Lispector's text, there is a passage in which linguistic slippage links the abject (cockroach matter) directly to the maternal body (Mother). It begins by addressing the M(other) directly and ends by equating 'Mother' with cockroach (abjection):

Mother, I only pretended to want to kill, but just see what I have cracked: I have cracked a shell! Killing is also forbidden because you crack the hard husk, a heart that is thick and white and living like pus, comes out, Mother, blessed be you among cockroaches, now and in the hour of this, my death and yours, cockroach and jewel (p. 86).

For Kristeva the *fecundity* of femininity is too easily collapsed into notions of *castration* or lack in psychoanalytical theory which orient themselves toward a concept of the subject as a more or less 'finished product' the already socialised and oedipalised subject. Socialisation practices, culminating in the process of oedipalisation attempts to repress the (undecideably maternal and infantile) body-space (the semiotic *chora*) traversed by objects, with the law-like, normative functioning of the Symbolic Order.

Lispector's subject effects linguistic slippage again. G.H's Symbolic Order is semiotically disrupted. She "knows" the law, but slips at the end of the following passage. The last sentence is highly suggestive of the (M)other and female "I" (potentially) disobedient of Phallic Law.

But I also knew that ignorance of the law of irreducibility was no excuse. I could no longer excuse myself with the claim that I didn't know the law - for knowledge of self and the world is the law that, even though unattainable, cannot be broken, and no one can excuse himself by saying that he doesn't know it. Worse: the cockroach and I were not in the presence of a law to which we owed obedience (p. 89).

According to Kristeva, culture in general functions as such only by the expulsion of the social and personal horror of the body's materiality

and mortality. Literature and poetry represents a more or less successful attempt to *sumbilate* the abject. The abjection of self, she asserts, would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its very being. This abjection of self shows that all abjection is in fact recognition of the (imaginary) want on which any being, meaning, language or desire is founded: "Its signifier, then, is none other but literature."¹² The maternal, imaginary space returns unpredictably in dreams, phobias, psychoses and in forms of writing. G.H.'s imaginary space returns unpredictably in Lispector's writing. G.H. is phobic about cockroach/(M)others: "In my primeval horror of cockroaches, I had learned to guess their ages and dangers...." (p. 39).

For Kristeva, the time of abjection is a spasmodic, unmarked continual present, a time of timelessness, which is itself (timelessly) preserved in or as the unconscious. For G.H. it is also a timeless present: "But the instant, the very instant - the right now - that is unimaginable, between the right now and the I there is no space: it is just now, inside me" (p. 70). For Kristeva, it is the expulsion of the abject that grounds primal repression and hence the unconscious. It reappears, in a form of the 'return of the repressed', in symptomatic form at various times in adult life, and can be triggered accidentally or by chance. By chance, G.H. decides to clean the maid's room.

For Kristeva, the spaces from which the (proto-) subject has expelled the abject, regulated vocal exchanges inserts itself with the mediation of the oedipus complex and the Law of the Father. A final accession to the Symbolic Order comes when is positioned as the subject's by the use of the proper name, the Father's Name initially, for which the linguistic term "I" can be substituted. This "I" is the key to a position within discourse. The "I" of discourse is only possible on condition that the archaic, pre-oedipal maternal space is given up and the *proper* put in its place. "Through the mouth that I fill with words instead of my mother whom I miss from now on more than ever. I elaborate that want, and the aggressivity that accompanies it, by saying.³ For G.H. it is also a matter of words:

The scale suddenly had only one plate. On that side was my deep rejection of cockroaches. But "rejection of cockroaches" was merely a set of words, and I also knew that at the time when I myself died I too would be untranslatable into words" (p. 70).

Lispector's construction of an 'abjected' subject and Kristeva's theorising of the psychoanalytic meaning of the abject object are startlingly intertextual. They might have been "speaking" to each other. Their texts become closer:

KRISTEVA : "However, if not by incorporating a devouring mother, for want of having been able to introject her and joy in what manifests her, for want of being able to signify her: urine, blood, sperm, excrement. harebrained staging of an abortion, of a self-giving birth

ever miscarried, endlessly to be renewed, the hope for rebirth is short-circuited by the very splitting: the advent of one's own identity demands a law that mutilates, whereas *jouissance* demands an *abjection* from which identity becomes absent." ¹⁴

LISPECTOR: "What was worse: I still had to eat the cockroach, but without the aid of my prior exaltation, the exaltation that would have acted within me like hypnosis: I had thrown up my exaltation. And unexpectedly, after the revolution that is vomiting, I felt physically simple like a child. It would have to be in that state, like a child carelessly happy, that I would eat the cockroach mass" (p. 159).

KRISTEVA: "Along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk-cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not want to assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for "me", who am only in their desire, I expel myself, *I spit myself out*, I abject myself within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish myself. ¹⁵

LISPECTOR: "I dug my fingernails into the wall: now I tasted the bad taste in my mouth, and then I began to spit, to spit out furiously the taste of nothing at all, taste of a nothingness that nonetheless seemed to me almost sweetened with the taste of certain flower petals, taste of myself - *I spit myself out*, never reaching the point of feeling that I had

finally spit out my whole soul" (p. 160).

Lispector, like Kristeva, links the phenomenon of abject being to "our earliest attempts to release the hold of maternal entity even before existing outside of her." ¹⁶ This metaphor is repeated in *The Passion According to G.H.* in G.H.'s desire to, and fear of, leaving the room except through the cockroach/M(other). The mother becomes for the child the realm of the abject that must be constantly struggled against through identification with the Father in the Symbolic. The mother then becomes a 'phobic object': a form of the abject. The phobic object signifies an uncertainty over boundaries, and the tenuousness of the Symbolic.

Lispector poses some intricate and paradoxical problems in that the text subverts the Symbolic technically by dissolving genre boundaries undecidably between fiction/philosophy, whilst constructing within a still discernible "plot" a self/other dichotomy where the subject speaks from the symbolic masculine position which represents (sublimates/says) the 'feminine other' (monstrous maternal body) from within the safety of the boundaries of the Symbolic Order.

The text is constructed simultaneously to both articulate and control the horror of the mother via its narrative structure. The narrative is controlled by a protagonist/narrator who is sexed as phallic (i.e. the 'masculine' position). The 'feminine' is represented as the threatening

(phallic) and abject maternal body. However, like most experimental writing, there exist numerous ambiguities and contradiction operating within the text which might suggest a point of departure for a different textual representation of female subjectivity. Does consuming the cockroach/M(other) instead of being engulfed by it suggest a (re)embodied female subject?

Bare, as though prepared for only one person's entrance. And whoever came in would be transformed into a "she" or a "he". I was the person the room called "she". I had come in an "I", but the room then gave me the dimensions of "she". As though I were also the other side of a cube, the side that you don't see because you are seeing the front side (p. 52).

This passage constitutes another semiotic rupture in the explicit signifying (meaning) system of the "plot". It suggests to me the possibility of a textually constructed subject, either male ("he") or female ("she"), which is not a phallic "I" intrasubjectively threatened by a repressed phallic M(other). Given that Kristeva theoretically would not disagree that texts construe subjects in process, then her effacement of a female experimental writing is puzzling. The repeated phrase, "I spit myself out", uttered by both Kristeva and Lispector's G.H., must stand as one of the most startling points of (female) writer "intertextuality" (a phrase coined by Kristeva) ever encountered by a reader. Lispector's text could be read as the construction of a female phallic - albeit unstable - subject at 'war' with an Imaginary (repressed) Mother.

If fiction is the repressed 'feminine' of philosophy (Truth), then Lispector ably transgresses thethetic boundary between them without losing 'meaning'. Simultaneously, she constructs within her transformed Kafkaesque fiction/philosophy symbolic the 'story' of the phallic symbolic subject confronted by its "abyss" (separation from the maternal body) and its eventual transgression (eating the cockroach). Lispector contradicts Kristeva's theory of (male only) textual transgression whilst reconfirming the construction of the subject as 'masculine' threatened by a 'feminine' which is the M(other). Within Lispector's textuality, fluidity between the Kristevan notion of the semiotic and the symbolic is evident and "readable", but within her construction of a (sexed) subject, the female subject is 'threatened' by a female other. The question of what might constitute a female sexed subject within a symbolically constructed signifying system of meaning, other than one which represents 'the feminine' as phallic M(other), remains.

Lispector's text, whilst not entirely deconstructive, contains certain contradictory passages which suggest to me a point of departure for a further exploration of female generated textuality that might construct a different female subject-in-process. My next text, written by Jeanette Winterson, takes up the question of (female) subjecthood and phallic signification in a parodic, rather than abject, manner. Winterson's text, *The Passion* shifts the construction of the female subject from intrasubjective but intertextual to intersubjective and poly-textual.

Winterson (re) signifies the notorious Phallic Mother symbolically as a female (sexed) subject in relation to an(other) female subject rather than as a 'threatening' return of a repressed "feminine" Imaginary.

TWO

Jeanette Winterson: (Re)writing a Fetishist (Female) Villian.

The narration of Jeanette Winterson's, *The Passion*,¹ is split between Henri, a young soldier in Napoleon's army, and Villanelle, a Venetian transvestite who deals cards in a casino and whose webbed feet enable her to walk on water. In Venice, which might constitute a metaphorical locus of the Other (i.e. the place of the signifier) in this novel, this is a distinct advantage. This text is fantasy/fiction, structured narratively in four parts: 'The Emperor', narrated by Henri; 'The Queen of Spades', narrated by Villanelle; and 'Zero Winter' and 'The Rock', narrated co-jointly. Reading Winterson's text constitutes a pivotal point in the trajectory of my argument. *The Passion* could be read as a radical and comical deconstruction and (re) signification of the phallic (masculine) textual subject.

As well as reading *The Passion* intertextually, with and against, the Freudian/Lacanian myth of the Oedipal Family and the legendary phallic signifier, I will take short excursions through the symbolic modes appropriated by the writer - namely the Surrealist predilection for parody and psychosexual perversion and the carnivalesque text

(theorised by Mikhail Bakhtin and revised by Julia Kristeva).

Conceptually connected to this is Luce Irigaray's theory of femininity as masquerade. The locus of much of *The Passion* is Venice, "the city of disguises". Villanelle herself is a master of disguises who frequently masquerades as "having the phallus" (a female parody of masculinity in carnivalesque and psychosexually perverse, transvestite style).

Susan Rubin Suleiman in 'Daughters Playing: Some Feminist Rewritings and the Mother',² described Winterson's earlier writing as thematising "in a wonderfully comic way, the antipatriarchal impetus of feminist parody." Suleiman opens her essay with two epigraphs - a quotation from Winterson: "She said stories helped you to understand the world", and one from Sigmund Freud: "Humour is not resigned; it is rebellious."³ The epigrammatic linkage which opens Suleiman's text of Winterson and Freud seems suggestive of a certain amount of feminist humour. *The Passion* could be read as a parodic, feminist (re)writing of the psychoanalytical fantasy about the Oedipal Family.

Several other quotations, peripheral to the text, are also telling. The back cover offers a review:

Immense fertility - an allusive psychological fantasia with roots in Virginia Woolf and modern *realismo magico* Against Henri's story of public hero-worship is set a female narrative of private adoration, in the form of a tender lesbian love affair.
Observer .

The *Observer* reviewer reads the novel in terms of dichotomous structures ("male public/female private"), in opposition ("set against"). I would argue that Winterson's text constructs these binaries -The Emperor/The Queen of Spades; the oedipal Father-son/the pre-oedipal Mother-daughter - in order to deconstruct them. Moreover, the quotation between the dedication page which reads: "For Pat Cavanagh" - (is "Pat" a man or a woman?)- and the contents page suggests a slightly different textual strategy than that (re)constructed by the *Observer* writer:

You have navigated with raging soul far from the paternal home, passing beyond the seas' double rocks and now you inhabit a foreign land. Medea.

This classical quotation, resurrected in the present, suggests that this will be a post-patriarchal, (or in psychoanalytic terms a post-phallic) tale and also a post- dichotomy- as -opposition ("double rocks") fable. In fact Henri deserts the hero/Father with whom he initially identifies, and Villanelle abandons, but never forgets, the "tender lesbian" (woman/woman) relation. In "carnavalesque" style, underlined by the Venetian setting "the two texts [subjects] meet, contradict, and relativize each other."⁴ Julia Kristeva characterises the carnivalesque text as composed of nonexclusive oppositions producing a dialogic, rather than a monologic discourse. This discursive dialogism is characteristic of *The Passion*.

Kristeva (re)reads Mikhail Bahktin who theorised that Socratic dialogue, and other dialogical genres, derived from carnivalesque folklore (traditional European narratives of the people).⁵ The structures of the carnivalesque scene, according to Kristeva, were dialogical and defiant in relation to any official monologism claiming to possess a ready-made truth ("meaning"). "Its art is one of *articulation* of fantasy, *correlation* of signs."⁶ In Winterson's text, Venice is a fantasy city where "roles freely circulate" and anything, it seems, is possible. Monological Lacanian discourses do not deny that the phallus as master signifier is an unconscious phantasy. The correlation by Winterson of psychoanalytic discourses constructing Phallic Law and fantasy-fictions of psychosexually 'perverse' female desire could be read as opening up the field of signification for a textual female (or male) subject.

Given that this text is a psychological fantasy about male/female, identification/love and public/private spheres - a tale of social and familial Romance - then a psychoanalytic reading of how desire, sexuality and sexual difference are textually (re)produced would seem in order. Given that it concerns a boy and a girl in relation to their respective Imaginary families and fantastical Symbolic/social orders; and given the centrality of that other myth - Oedipus - as a psychoanalytic proposition concerning the economy of desire and sexual differentiation, the question of whether the Lacanian Oedipus complex is universal and how it might work in a female writer's text in the construction of a female subject is in order. Given that Winterson

does not re(construct) the abject mother/child relation of Lispector and Kristeva, but reworks the signification of the mother-daughter relation as woman/woman and/or lesbian "love relation", the question in my analysis could be formulated as: "How is Villanelle constructed in terms of the a female subject inhabiting a foreign land far from the paternal home?"

This novel traverses the boundaries of generic signifying systems between fantasy, realist fiction and historical narrative. The plot, (re)appropriated from these various systems of meaning and (re)written by Winterson, is readable within the poetic/fantasy dimension:

Henri joins the army because he admires Napoleon and becomes his personal "chicken chef". Villanelle, whose mother, in comic fashion bungles a ritual offering, is born with webbed feet. Legend has it that only Venetian boatmen have webbed toes and walk on water. She works at a casino, cross-dressed as a boy. One night at a carnival she falls in love with a masked woman: "It was a game of chance I entered into and my heart was the wager. Such games can only be played once." (p.94).⁷ This woman steals Villanelle's heart and keeps it in an indigo jar. The affair ends when the woman's husband returns from a business trip and Villanelle marries a rich, violent man. She leaves, but is recaptured and gambles at cards for her freedom. The deck is stacked and she loses. She is sold to General Murat and sent to work as

an officer's prostitute in Napoleon's army.

During the Emperor's march on Moscow, Henri becomes disillusioned and decides to desert both the army and "the little Father". He meets Villanelle who leads him back to Venice: "When we get through this snow I'll take you to the city of disguises" (p. 100). She convinces Henri to steal back her heart from her female lover. This he does. She refuses to give it to him. During a confrontation with Villanelle's former husband, Henri stabs him and cuts out his heart. This villain co-incidentally is Henri's former army superior, the Cook. Henri is incarcerated on an island for the 'insane'. Villanelle bribes the legal/judicial custodians of this institution to obtain Henri's release. She refuses to marry him though she is pregnant. Henri chooses to remain on the island. Villanelle keeps rowing her boat. She never forgets her - by now former - female lover.

The story, thus extracted from the narrative structure is relatively straightforward. It might be (mis)recognised as realist fiction except for the repetitive and fantastical linguistic/narrative signifier/ shifter "Villanelle's webbed feet": "I raised my head fully, my knees still drawn up, and saw Villanelle, her back towards me, a rope over her shoulder, walking on the canal and dragging our boats" (p. 129). This passage describes a narrative event in which Villanelle rescues Henri following the murder of the Cook. She reveals for the second time her extraordinary Venetian privilege and power (i.e. the ability to walk on

water). This ability might be read as a feminist parodic appropriation of Biblical and Phallic mythology. The first time that Villanelle "walks on water" occurs after the first night spent with her female lover:

I faltered at the slippery steps leading into the dark. It was November, after all. I might die if I fell in. I tried balancing my foot on the surface and it dropped beneath into the cold nothingness.
Could a woman love a woman for more than a night?
I stepped out and in the morning they say a beggar was running round the Rialto talking about a young man who'd walked across the canal like it was solid.
I'm telling you stories. Trust me (p. 69).

In realist texts women do not usually have webbed feet, or walk on water or rescue men. In (monological) psychoanalytical discourses it is often implied that males 'have' the phallus, in Biblical mythologies only Christ ever walked on water, and in Romance novels it is women who need to be rescued by the hero. Lesbian sexual relations are relatively infrequent in all such texts. Winterson appropriates from these traditional texts and mythologies, utilising parody as a form, I would argue, of feminist critical rewriting. One should not overlook her subversive rewriting of the (historical narrative) of the Napoleonic myth and her (re)construction of the male subject, Henri. Villanelle's webbed feet might be read in *The Passion* as a post-Lacanian signifier of power and privilege, and also as a mark of difference which operates as the signifier of desire between herself - a female subject - and her male and female other(s)/lover(s). In other words, this fantasy signifier is Villanelle's phallus. A girl with webbed toes lacks nothing in Venice.

Returning to Suleiman's comment on anti-patriarchal parodic writing, it is Winterson's predilection for phallic parody - she makes jokes about "Napoleon's balls" as well as constructing uncastratable signifiers for her heroine - coupled with her appropriation of a heterogeneous "polyglossic carnivalesque" textual form that I wish to discuss. Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work, including his writings on the carnivalesque discourses of Renaissance popular culture, inspired Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, suggested the notion that "parodic-travesty forms... destroyed the power of myth over language; they freed consciousness from the power of the direct word....."⁸ Kristeva's notion of intertextuality subsumes parody as one of its forms. Parody, according to Bakhtin had the salutary effect of establishing a distance between language and reality. Winterson's repeated parodying of the phallus dis-connects the linguistic conflation of the phallus from a real (male) referent (i.e. penis) simultaneously subverting monological Phallic Law by opening up the signification of desire onto a "scene" of "potential infinity". This carnival "scene" for Kristeva is a spectacle without a stage; a game where two texts meet, contradict and relativise each other. Kristeva theorises a carnivalesque discourse as one: "Disputing the laws of language based on the 0-1 interval, the carnival challenges God, authority, and social law; insofar as it is dialogical, it is rebellious."⁹ In Winterson's *The Passion*, the carnival scene is Venice, a city of disguises, masquerades and games. Villanelle, often in (masculine) disguise, plays at games of chance in the casino: "The ball

began at eight o'clock and I began my night drawing cards in the booth of chance. Queen of spades you win, Ace of clubs you lose." (p. 55). Sometimes she wins (the masked female object of her desire), and sometimes she loses (and is sold to the villain as object). She plays both texts of sexual difference, masculinity and femininity. Kristeva theorises the point: "A carnival participant is both actor and spectator; he loses his sense of individuality, passes through a zero point of carnivalesque activity and splits into a subject of the spectacle and an object of the game." (p. 78). I would argue that Winterson's textual "playing" with language, signification and meaning relativises the master/mistress discourses/texts of sexual difference, both the Lacanian model and a French Feminist/Lesbian one which might seek to erect a signifier of (female) desire premised on a semiotic conflation of (female) anatomy with an exclusive signifier. Kristeva theorises carnival as non-exclusive. Winterson constructs Villanelle as a comic (but serious) player in the Venetian carnival game:

Since Bonaparte captured our city of mazes in 1797, we've more or less abandoned ourselves to pleasure. What else is there to do when you've lived a proud and free life and suddenly you're not proud and free anymore? We became an enchanted island for the mad, the rich, the bored, the perverted. Our glory days were behind us but our excess was just beginning (p. 52).

A formerly rich (now "mad") female fortune-teller warns Villanelle: "You're a Venetian, but you wear your name as a disguise. Beware the dice and games of chance" (p. 54). Villanelle's 'name' is French, given

to her by her (step)father, (her 'real' Father/father is dead):

He gave me a French name too.
Villanelle. It's pretty enough.
I don't hate the French. I ignore them (p. 53).

Lacanian Law might construct the Proper Name as the Name-of-the-Father (i.e. the paternal function signified by the paternal phallus), but Villanelle's (step)father does not really care if she has a fantasy-phallus her(self): "He was a man of the world and not easily put off by a pair of webbed feet." (p. 52). Jacques Derrida asserts that the proper name is always and *a priori* a dead man's name, a name of death (the dead father). For Derrida, the deadness of the father ('s name) exists only with the burial, silencing the unnamed mother and repressing femininity:

No woman or trace of woman, if I have read correctly - save the mother, that's understood. But this part of the system. The mother is the faceless figure of a figurant, an extra. She gives rise to all the figures by losing herself in the background of the scene like an anonymous persona. Everything comes back to her, beginning with life; everything addresses and destines itself to her. She survives on the condition of remaining at bottom. ¹⁰

In *The Passion's* carnivalesque scene, Villanelle's (not dead) father gives her an (im)proper French name (for a Venetian). Her mother comically subverts a Venetian ritual and gives her webbed feet.

Villanelle mobilises her "enchanted" phallus to secure for herself a female lover. Is Villanelle the 'feminine' (elle in French) object of the

villian (Cook), or a "feminine" female villian (subject of desire)? Is her signifier of desire (webbed feet) masculine or feminine? As a (fetish) fantasy-phallus, could it be anything (have infinite potential)? Is Villanelle a Proper Name for a girl? Winterson's subject, Villanelle, repeats: "I'm telling you stories. Trust me."

Winterson begins her phallic parody in Chapter One, 'The Emperor': "I (Henri) first encountered her (Josephine) over the billiard table, where she was playing Monsieur Talleyrand, a gentleman not gifted with balls" (p. 34). This apparently "inconsequent" statement - Josephine and Tallyrand do not figure as major players in the text - is coupled with repetition ("games" and "balls", masked/veiled and "real" games with balls, such as billiards, recur throughout the text): "He (Napoleon) was the most powerful man in the world and he couldn't beat Josephine at billiards" (p. 13). Kristeva asserts that these figures - repetition and inconsequent statements which are nonetheless "connected" within an infinite context - are germane to carnivalesque language. Given Lacan's statement that the phallus "can play its role only when veiled"¹¹, Winterson's thinly disguised elliptical, metonymically connecting jokes about "masked balls" and Napoleon (a French Father) could be read as highly suggestive of a carnivalesque (low cultural or vulgar) textual strategy to subvert (monological) discourses constructing Phallic Law.

Many feminists have objected that the (masculine) linguistic associations between the word penis and the word phallus is itself a phallogocentric construct. Winterson plays textually with phallic signifiers in relation to both male and female subjects. Her transposition of the semiotic phallic signifier from penis to "webbed feet" and from male to female subject (i.e. it is Villanelle who 'has' the parodic phallus); and her construction of a female subject with psychosexually 'perverse' desires (i.e. by turns a transvestite, a lesbian and a bisexual) both acknowledges the male phallic/female castrated (mis)taken dichotomy/debate and also decentres a phallus/vulval opposition by substituting an(other) fantasy signifier which is neither (i.e. a fantasy-fetish).

In relation to phallic signification, Jacques Lacan argues that both sexes are constituted as sexually different, as sexed subjects, only with reference to this (master) signifier. Masculine and feminine positions are a function not of biology but the very structure of language i.e. either *being* or *having*. The two sexes are positioned as such in the mode of being (for the feminine) or having (for the masculine) the phallus:

But one may, simply by reference to the function of the phallus, indicate the structures that will govern the relations between the sexes.

Let us say that these relations will turn around a 'to be' and a 'to have', which, by referring to a signifier, the phallus, have theopposed effect, on the one hand, of giving reality to the subject in this signifier, and, on the other, of derealizing the relations to be signified. ¹²

Irigaray (re)reads this statement as:

But one may, by reckoning only with the function of the phallus, set forth the structures that will govern the relations between the sexes. Let us say that these relations will turn around a 'to be' and a 'to have'..... Paradoxically as this formulation may seem, we shall say that it is in order to *be the phallus*, that is to say, the signifier of the desire of the Other, that a woman will reject an essential part of her femininity, namely, all her attributes in the masquerade. *It is for that which she is not* - that is, the phallus, - *that she asks to be desired and simultaneously to be loved*. But she finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of the one - who is supposed to *have* it - to whom she addresses her demand for love. perhaps it should not be forgotten that the organ that assumes this signifying function takes on the value of a fetish.¹³

Elizabeth Grosz also argues that, in spite of Lacan's claims, the phallus is not a neutral term functioning equally for both sexes, positioning them both in the Symbolic Order. For her the word suggests a term privileging masculinity. The valorization of the penis/phallus and the relegation of female sexual organs to the castrated category of lack are effects of a socio-political system that also enables the phallus to function as the "signifier of signifiers", giving the child access to a (sexual) identity and speaking position within culture. For Grosz, the position of the phallus as a threshold signifier is symptomatic of an assumed patriarchal context in Freud's and Lacan's work.¹⁴ She outlines the process by which the phallus, a signifier, becomes associated with the penis, an organ. This involves the procedures by which women are systematically excluded from a positive self-definition and a potential autonomy. The relation each sex has to the

phallus qua signifier map the position(s) each occupies as a feminine or masculine subject in the patriarchal Symbolic Order. Moreover, this relation defines the structure of romantic relations between them. The misappropriation of the penis by the phallus happens when the penis is removed from its merely anatomical and functional role to the role of object, the *objet a*, in a circuit of demand addressed to the (m)other. It is then capable of taking on the symbolic role of signifier at the level of desire, an object of unconscious phantasy.¹⁵

Parveen Adams, who, in 1989, began to theorise the construction of 'perverse' lesbian sexualities (e.g. sadomasochism) as not being centred around the paternal phallus, states, rather more baldly that "in practice the boy and the girl will have a different relation to the phallus because of anatomical differences."¹⁶ She agrees that within a Freudian/Lacanian framework the Oedipus complex is theorised as the moment of differentiation into masculinity and femininity and that the Oedipus complex and its resolution turn around the question of castration, a lack, represented also by the phallic signifier. Both the boy and the girl have to submit to castration to allow the emergence of desire, that investment of the object with erotic value which makes the object relation possible. The object's erotic value is dependent on the question of who has the phallus. For Adams, the Freudian/Lacanian proposition posits desire as engendered by (anatomical) difference, or at least for her there is a sense in psychoanalytic theory in which sex (biology), sexual difference (sociological gender) and sexuality are

inextricably bound. Adams argues, that despite local variations (i.e. men may sometimes be said to be feminine and women may sometimes be said to be masculine), generic differences between men's relation to the phallus and women's remains, particularly in Freudian theory.¹⁷

It is precisely this "knottedness" of biology, sexual difference and desire which Winterson parodies so forcefully with her constructions of excessive, false and hidden phallic signifiers; (mis)taken sexual identities and 'perverse' or thwarted romantic relations as they emerge in Venice: "This is the city of mazes. You may set off from the same place to the same place every day and never go by the same route. If you do so, it will be by mistake" (p. 49).

Teresa de Lauretis in an essay on lesbian fetishism which she calls *perverse desire* - in contra-distinction to the traditional Freudian notion that female fetishism does not exist and that lesbians suffer from a 'masculinity complex' - notes that:

In all such [psychoanalytic] arguments, however, nearly everyone fails to note that the Lacanian framing of the question in terms of having or being the phallus is set in the perspective of normative heterosexuality (which analysis and theory seek to reproduce in the subject), with the sexual difference of man and woman clearly in mapped out and the act of copulation firmly in place.¹⁸

I shall explicate de Lauretis' theory of perverse lesbian desire further in relation to sadomasochism in the next chapter when I discuss Camille Roy's 'From "The Rosy Medallions"'. Of interest here, in relation to *The Passion*, de Lauretis suggests that so-called "mannish" lesbians may signify their desire fetishistically (i.e. displace the signifier onto objects such as items of clothing or even anatomical entities that do not in any way, shape or form resemble a penis or a phallic symbol).

De Lauretis is analysing the (butch) lesbian predilection for transvestism (cross-dressing). For this lesbian subject it may be items of clothing themselves, or particular gestures or attitudes, or even anatomical referents such as hands which signify (sexual) desire. Within this framework, Winterson's cross-dressing, webbed-footed Villanelle could be read as a perverse lesbian fetishist. Neither de Lauretis nor Winterson deny the reproductive effect of phallic signification or attempt to work outside its system of meaning. Nonetheless, Winterson manages to introduce a female subject who comically subverts any straightforward (re)construction of the male/female, phallic/castrated (i.e. normative heterosexual) paradigm. In other words - extrapolating from the psychoanalytical symbolic of sexual difference to sexual desire - why should lesbian lovers care if a hand is a penis or not if normative heterosexual reproduction is not the aim?

Part of the problem is that Lacan, following Freud, concentrates largely on the boy's symbolic development. This, of course, works better in a socio-historical, cultural and psychic context in which only males are perceived to 'be' symbolic subjects. In accepting the Father's Law, exemplified by the threat of castration, the boy identifies with paternal authority and represses his desire for his mother. In identifying with the father, he establishes a super-ego. With the creation of the super-ego and the (primal) repression of the desire for the mother, the unconscious is formed. He becomes a subject, an "I" able to function within a (patriarchal) symbolic system.¹⁹ However, according to Lacan, in the constitution of the *I*:

This form would have to be called the *Ideal - I*, if we wanted to restore it to the familiar scheme, in the sense that it will also be the root-stock for secondary identifications, among which we place the functions of libidinal normalization. But the important point is that this form situates the instance of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will only rejoin the development of the subject asymptotically, whatever the success of the dialectical synthesis by which he must resolve as *I* his discordance with his own reality.²⁰

The girl's reality is that she also must abandon her mother and thus her primary, homosexual attachment. Within a Freudian/Lacanian framework she presumably transfers her object of desire from the mother to the phallus, and thus to the father (man) whom she presumes 'has' it.

Winterson's subject(s) are ambivalent. Villanelle, in particular, is perverse in how she accedes to desire. According to Kristeva, the avant-garde (male) writer like, the fetishist, has one foot in the symbolic, representational order and the other in the pre-oedipal, maternal realm. To this extent he can operate in accordance with the symbolic (i.e. presumably represent the maternal attachment in the symbolic). It would seem to me that Winterson's lesbian (fetishistic) subject/Villanelle might also accomplish this feat/feet.

Villanelle recalls an encounter with her female lover:

And so, from the first we separated our pleasure. She lay on the rug and I lay at right angles to her so that only our lips might meet. Kissing in this way is the strangest of distractions. The greedy body that clamours for satisfaction is forced to content itself with a single sensation and, just as the blind hear more acutely and the deaf can feel the grass grow, so the mouth becomes the focus of love and all things pass through it and are re-defined. It is a sweet and precise torture (p. 67).

The two women, from the beginning, are capable of separating their *jouissance*. The (greedy) child who demands satisfaction from the maternal attachment (the Imaginary phallic mother) signifies in the Symbolic this separation not genitally (phallically), but orally ("the mouth"). Between a mother and a female child the signification of difference/separation phallically (genitally) would make "no(n)-sense." Through this mouth which focuses the attachment, and also speaks, "all things are re-defined" (re-signified). One might say that the referent for the signifier of desire, lack and difference in the symbolic

constructed in this passage is the mouth. In this case the term "phallic" would be non-sense.

For my reading this is the deepest, thickest point of Winterson's text.

Lacan claims that "women don't know what they are saying". He also asserts in the same seminar that:

on the the subject of female sexuality our lady analyst colleagues tell us not everything. It's quite remarkable. They haven't made the slightest progress on the question of female sexuality. There must be an internal reason for this, connected with the structure of the pleasure mechanism. ²¹

Winterson's female subject "knows" and "tells" very well. This "sweet and precise torture" (separation from the maternal attachment for the female child) is represented by a speaking female "I" in the Symbolic Order. Perhaps the blind (dead) French Father/father can not "hear more acutely." Winterson, following Irigaray, (re)writes the mother-daughter relation as a woman/woman erotic relation.

This (re)worked relation, is textually signified in *The Passion* by a plethora of fetish objects apart from the webbed feet and the mouth, including the Queen of spades from Villanelle's deck of cards, an earring belonging to the masked female lover, and Villanelle's transvestite 'male drag'. Between Villanelle and her female lover desire is signified reciprocally by a (possibly) infinite number of objects. This desire is also constructed as mobile (i.e. transferable from object to

object). Lacan would not disagree that this metonymic movement from object to object *is* desire. It just does not appear to have occurred to him that this desire might be signified by the Queen of spades. *The Passion* is engaged with transforming signifying systems for the female subject, in the process of which many ambiguities arise around the dichotomies male/female and masculine/feminine, and hence the textual inscription of sexual difference shifts throughout the novel.

I shall trace how both Winterson's male and female subjects tread the paths of desire for 'boys' and 'girls' in both their normative and subversive aspects. Parveen Adams sums up, in rather parodic manner herself, the oedipal scene for boys:-

Let us first see how the boy treads the path to desire. For the boy, the Oedipus complex leads to the castration complex and, with the sword of Damocles hanging over his genitals, the boy has to make up his mind in a hurry. Usually he does so, giving up his love for his mother, indeed also giving up his love for his father and identifying with him instead; with the proviso that he recognizes himself as unlike the father in so far as the essentials are concerned. The identification holds a promise for the future in lieu of symbolic castration. ²²

Winterson's first chapter, 'The Emperor', could be read as Henri's textual path to desire. It does indeed follow Oedipus; "I was homesick from the start. I missed my mother" (p. 6). However, he more or less successfully represses his mother: "We signed up straight away and those of us who couldn't write made an optimistic smear on the page" (p. 6). He identifies with the Emperor: "He believed he was the centre

of the world and for a long time there was nothing to change him from this belief. Not even John Bull. He was in love with himself and France joined in" (p. 13).

The use of the word "love" in this context might alert the reader to the fact that 'semiotic' slippage has, or is about to, occur. In fact this word operates textually as a "slippage" or transitional word *between* two generic signifying systems (i.e. what might normally be read or understood as historical narrative and what might be regarded as a "romance" novel). The text continues easily: "It was a romance.

Perhaps all romance is like that; not a contract between equal parties but an explosion of dreams and desires that can find no outlet in everyday life" (p. 13). Perhaps (male) symbolic identification with the paternal phallus and the Name of the Father is not unproblematical.

Despite Bonaparte's lack of prowess at games "with balls", it does not occur to Henri or his fellow recruits to leave him: "No one said, Let's leave him, let's hate him.The recruits are being divided into regiments; friends are separated on principle. This is a new start. These boys are men" (p. 26). The symbolic trajectory from 'boy' to 'man' is textually explicit. However there are indications that, despite his identification with the Name of the Father (Napoleonic), Henri has difficulty with "becoming a man":

The recruiting officer gave me a walnut and asked if I could crack it between finger and thumb. I could not and he laughed and said a drummer must have strong hands. I stretched out my palm, the walnut resting there, and offered him the same challenge. He coloured up and had a Lieutenant take me to the kitchen tents. The cook sized up my skinny frame and reckoned I was not a cleaver man. Not for me the mess of unnamed meat that had to be chopped for the daily stew. He said I was lucky, that I would be working for Bonaparte himself, and for one brief, bright moment I imagined a training as a pastry cook building delicate towers of sugar and cream (p. 6).

Henri's fantasy of building delicate (phallic) towers does not eventuate in reality, and he is put to work stuffing Napoleon's chickens under the supervision of the cook. The chickens operate in 'The Emperor' as a metaphor for women whether they are Josephine: "He liked no one except Josephine and he liked her the way he liked chicken" (p. 3), or prostitutes:

'Out on the town tonight, lads, and a night to remember, I swear it. He rammed the stuffing inside the bird, twisting his hand to get an even coating.
'You've all had a woman before I suppose?' " (p. 9).

Henri fails at 'whoring': "He went out whoring most nights but I never went with him again" (p. 15), and yet this is the symbolic world of 'men' in which 'women' are exchanged as commodified object of desire: "Soldiers and women. That's how the world is" (p. 45). Despite his difficulties he is not easily persuaded to relinquish the fantasy of the (son's) inheritance of the paternal phallus: "I spent my time learning how to stuff a chicken and slow down the cooking process. I was waiting for Bonaparte" (p. 15).

The reader leaves Henri, at the age of twenty, at the conclusion of 'The Emperor', still unable to "unknot" his fantasy of a confectionary phallus (i.e. an organ of pleasure) from its elevation to (elusive) signifier of paternal authority. It is a while before he realises that Napoleon (bone-apart) does not possess the phallus either: "They called the Czar 'the Little Father', and they worshipped him as they worshipped God. In their simplicity I saw a mirror of my own longing and understood for the first time my own need for a little father that had led me this far" (p. 81). What Henri lacks perhaps is a means of signifying "love" for the Father (i.e. a man/man rather than a father/son relation predicated on phallic identification and possession). This may be a gap or silence in Lacanian theory.

Winterson takes up the 'story', continuing her irreverent parodying of phallic signification and possession. This becomes more complex with 'The Queen of Spades' which might be read as the girl's story of sexual differentiation and desire. Villanelle is 'perverse' from the start - a girl with webbed feet. This biological appendage is attributed, as legend would have it, only to Venetian boatmen. Webbed feet are inherited from father to son:

There never was a girl whose feet were webbed in the entire history of the boatmen. My mother in her swoon had visions of rosemary and blamed herself for her carelessness. Or perhaps it was her carefree pleasure with the baker she should blame herself for? She hadn't thought of my father since his boat had sunk. She hadn't thought of him much while it was

afloat. The midwife took out her knife with the thick blade and proposed to cut off the offending parts straight away (p. 51).

The triangle of skin between Villanelle's toes, however, proves to be resistant to knife blades, and she grows up wearing shoes to hide her anatomical aberration. Her desire is 'out of order' from the beginning. Winterson's thinly disguised joke about girls and their relation to the penis/phallus and symbolic castration constructs an(other) story.

Notwithstanding arguments about the conflation of biology with symbolic representations, Winterson's hero[ine] enters the Oedipal complex uncastrated. What would a Venetian [boat]girl who can walk on water need with penis envy?

Winterson, rather than avoid the psychoanalytical theory/question of women's castration, underscores the point by constructing a female subject whose possession of symbolic representations of the signifier of desire multiplies to excessive proportions, often with humorous consequences. Villanelle, though keeping her webbed feet well hidden, becomes a transvestite. She works at the casino cross-dressed as a boy, often resplendant with codpiece and [false] moustache, sometimes as a soldier. Metonymically, the false objects substitute for her 'real' or hidden (veiled) phallus. She masquerades as 'masculine' with some of the obvious and some unexpectedly mistaken (and not-so-mistaken) (sexual) identity (mis)recognitions on the part of both male and female others: "I dressed as a boy because that's what the visitors liked to see. It was part of the game, trying to decide which sex was hidden behind

tight breeches and extravagant face-paste...." (p. 54). Or again:

He wonders the same thing about me. I catch him staring at my crotch and now and again I wear a codpiece to taunt him. My breasts are small, so there's no cleavage to give me away, and I'm tall for a girl, especially a Venetian. I wonder what he'd say to my feet. (p. 56).

Thus disguised, she meets a masked woman who beats her at cards, but then disappears, leaving behind an earring. Villanelle searches for her:

If I find her, how will my future be?
I will find her.
Somewhere between fear and sex passion is (p. 62).

Her search for the (lost) object of desire (i.e. presumably the maternal body) is rewarded and immediately complicated by the fact that Villanelle does not in reality possess the penis/phallus that her potential lover lacks and thus desires, and which would allow Villanelle (if she were really a 'man') access to (the object of) desire (i.e. the female body). "In the Casino that night I tried to decide what to do. She thought I was a young man. I was not. Should I go to see her as myself and joke about the mistake and leave gracefully?" (p. 65).

Villanelle finally reveals the [falsity] of the codpiece/phallus:

'I'm a woman,' I said, lifting up my shirt and risking the catarrah.
She smiled. 'I know.'
I didn't go home. I stayed (p. 71).

How then is this possible? Villanelle knows full well she is not a man, she doesn't have the paternal phallus, but, as it turns out, her (female) lover, who also doesn't have the phallus, already knows it. How, according to Lacanian theory is a sexual relation possible if both parties "lack" the signifier of difference and desire? Suddenly this relation becomes much more significant than just a "tender lesbian affair" or a comedy of errors in the Shakespearian sense of mistaken sexual identities. There is of course the veiled phallus of which the reader, unlike the (textual) lover, has full knowledge:

'Feet,' she said.
'What?'
'Let me stroke your feet.'
Sweet Madonna, not my feet.
'I never take off my boots away from home. It's a nervous habit' (p. 70).

The reader also knows that this phallus is not a penis but something else - a fantasy "feminine" fetish-phallus which resembles moons:

I took off my boots slowly, pulling the laces loose and easing them free. Enfolded between each toe were my own moons. Pale and opaque. Unused. I had often played with them but I never thought they might be real (p. 69).

The lesbian relation in *The Passion* could be seen, in itself, as a textual move (reworking) by Winterson of the 'abject' Mother-daughter relation of her first novel, *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985), in which the heroine grew up to be a "house full of demons" (in her

mother's and the pastor's eyes) by becoming a lesbian.²³ The mother of Oranges is the patriarchal (rather than the phallic) mother, repressive and fanatical who upholds patriarchal law (i.e. the values of male authority figures, God and his earthly representatives). Suleiman likens this figure to the "monstrous" mother figures constructed by the Surrealist (predominately male) avant-garde. However this figure/relation is absent from *The Passion*, a move with a precedent in Irigaray's rewriting of the abject maternal/daughter relation,²⁴ as a woman/woman relation.²⁵ This theme of the woman/woman relation is also (re)written by Monique Wittig as a uniquely lesbian relation (*The Lesbian Body* ²⁶ and *Les Guérillères* ²⁷) signified by the vulva.

This French feminist writing strategy could be read as a tactic to construct a dual signifying system of desire rather than one predicated exclusively on a semiotically 'masculine' signifier. Feminist arguments arise as to whether the invention of a "feminine", specifically vulval, signifier of desire however does not simply render the effaced phallus a 'threatening' absent presence. (i.e. preserve the dual hierarchical system). However the notion that the signifier of desire does not necessarily have to be the penis/phallus (i.e. the mark of difference between 'men' and 'women,' which also surely presumes heterosexuality) is opened up.

Winterson's textual strategy, like those of Irigaray and Wittig, is deconstructive. It is, however, rather more comical, in that, without

avoiding the (phallic) means of signifying desire, she displaces signification away from representations derived exclusively from either male or female anatomy, and constructs a fantasy-fetish which operates undecidably as both. She constructs a 'perverse' or fetishistic signifier which is and is not a paternal penis-phallus. It is also not necessarily vulval. Webbed feet signify Villanelle's status as a boatman but they nonetheless resemble, symbolically, female genitals (i.e. are described variously as "fan" shaped or "triangular"). Villanelle's master signifier, which is often displaced onto other signifiers such as earrings or male transevestite costumes, is undecidably masculine and feminine simultaneously. Villanelle's feet become the mark of difference and desire between herself and her female lover, otherwise, as Teresa de Lauretis says: "... the lesbian lovers would be merely two women in the same bed." ²⁸

One could read Winterson intertextually with, and slightly off-side to Irigaray's project of (re)writing a female Symbolic. Winterson has constructed a phantasy signifier, which, like the phallus, mobilises desire itself, with its movement between subject and object, between self and an other and which makes a desiring relation between a (female) subject and a (female) other possible. This marks a somewhat radical difference between Winterson's writing and Lispector's in the relation between the female subject constituted textually and a (female) other/object. For Lispector's G.H. the construction of subjectivity remains intrasubjective, a highly dramatic 'war' between the (unstable)

phallic subject and the repressed, abject maternal body. This is what Irigaray might describe as the preoedipal crises over the need for individuation. Winterson shifts the construction of subjectivity to the intersubjective i.e. between Villanelle and her female lover, and between Henri and Villanelle, simultaneously transforming the preoedipal relation between mother and daughter into an actively desiring relation between female subjects.

The repressed maternal body, which Kristeva acknowledged as being the same for boys and girls, also constitutes, for the girl, unlike the boy, a repressed homosexual attachment. Articulation or representation of the lost object/abject (maternal body) as an object of desire within the symbolic by a female subject would require taking up a 'homosexual' position in some form. Perhaps a female subject-to-subject relation would be a more appropriate term. However this recovery would seem only possible if the subject has the means to symbolise the female body as an(other) female body. The phallus qua penis as a mark of difference between subject and object or self and other just will not do. For a female subject to constitute herself as an "I" within the symbolic she would need to signify the maternal/an(other)female body. In other words, the girl, in order to 'be' a subject within the symbolic would need to be able to signify the difference between her/self and the maternal/an(other) female body. If this difference can not be signified by the female subject in some manner, then she can not 'be' a female subject at all. If she can not express the inexpressible (repressed

'feminine' maternal body) or "speak" her difference from the maternal attachment she will remain, as Irigaray suggests, more on the side of being spoken rather than speaking.

If the penis-phallus is a convenient signifier marking the difference between men and mothers in the constitution of the male subject within the symbolic field, and if the phallus is, as Lacan says not necessarily an anatomical referent but, as some feminists say, still semiotically linked, then perhaps what the fully constituted and desiring female subject needs is a signifier of difference between women and mothers that operates like the phallus but is also a (female) sexual symbol rather than a symbol of maternity. In this manner the (unspeakable) "feminine" Imaginary, or the "residual femininity unrepresented by maternity" might be symbolised as female sexual specific (i.e. woman would signify woman rather than mother within the symbolic). Within this strategy new meanings might be generated and the "feminine" repressed of the text/subject might be spoken within women's writing by a fully symbolic female (sexed) subject. I would suggest that this textual tactic is a major component of Winterson's work. It also indicates a major shift from the female phallic subject/object mother opposition revealed, but not necessarily deconstructed, in Lispector's text. If the (m)other (object), as Kristeva asserts, remains missing, an impossible subject is implied. The (female) subject will remain 'object'. Winterson, like Irigaray, attempts a textual reorganisation of desire so that the lost object which founds desire (the

maternal body) need not be given up, lost or repressed. At the conclusion of the 'story' Villanelle is still a fetishist with one foot in the (Venetian) symbolic and one foot in the Kristevan semiotic. She continues rowing her boat (man's work), but "speaks" her attachment to/desire for the maternal body/an(other) female subject/lover:

When I met her I felt she was my destiny and that feeling has not altered, even though it remains invisible. Though I have taken myself to the wastes of the world and loved again, I cannot say that I ever truly left her (p. 144).

In *The Passion* desire is (re)signified between a female self and female other rather than between a phallic self and an Imaginary phallic M(other). Textually, Winterson opens up (multiplies) the field of signification of desire for female subjects. She accomplishes this without (re)constructing a rigidly dichotomous homosexual/heterosexual opposition. Villanelle's desire is mobile and operates between herself and male and female others: "I am pragmatic about love and take my pleasure with both men and women, but I have never needed a guard for my heart. My heart is a reliable organ" (p. 61).

The concluding sections of *The Passion* are worked between a male subject (Henri) and a female subject (Villanelle). Henri, who has long since abandoned the Father Napoleon, has his wish for cakes ("delicate confectionery towers") fulfilled in Venice by Villanelle's (step)father. This father is a baker, the same father who has given Villanelle a (im)proper name:

My father likes them [the French]. They've made his business thrive with their cravings for foolish cakes. He gave me a French name too (p. 53).

Given that "cakes" signify Henri's wish that the penis was an organ of pleasure in contradistinction to the Napoleonic Phallus: "'Not every Frenchman is Napoleon Bonaparte,' said her father" (p. 110), Henri 'has' as many cakes as he desires in Venice: "[Where he] was reeling with cakes and wine and almost collapsed with exhaustion....." (p. 111). Henri could be read as "becoming" a post-phallic male subject. He and Villanelle are also lovers, but she refuses to remain his object of desire (marry him) even though she is pregnant. She continues rowing her boat. For Villanelle "anatomy is (not) destiny". Co-incidently enough, Irigaray attributes this phrase to Napoleon and invokes it in answer to Freud's truth ("phallocratic law") about the penis and its elevated status as reproductive organ in Freudian discourse. She asks, and Winterson asks us to consider further in *The Passion*: "What happens when the sexual function can be separated from the reproductive function (a hypothesis obviously given little consideration by Freud?)"²⁹

Villanelle would appear to be bi - s(t)extual or perhaps poly-s(t)extual, given her ability to occupy both subject and object positions in relation to various male and female others in various combinatory positioning. One should not forget that she has been the object of the phallic (masculine) Cook at some point in the carnival "game/scene". Jacques

Derrida wishes for just such a construction of (sexed) subject(ivity):

I would like to believe in..... the multiplicity of sexually marked voices, this mobile of non-identified sexual marks whose cheorography can carry, divide, multiply the body of each 'individual' whether he be classified as 'man' or 'woman' according to the criteria of usage. ³⁰

This statement both echoes and combines with the Kristevan/Bahktin theory of a carnivalesque text as polyglossic and polyvocal as well as Kristeva's assertion that the subject is produced, not given, within the signifying systems of textual production. For her the "carnivalesque tradition was absorbed into Menippean discourse and put into practice by the polyphonic novel." ³¹ She continues:

On the omnified stage of carnival, language parodies and relativizes itself, repudiating its role in representation; in so doing, it provokes laughter but remains incapable on detaching itself from representation..... Faulty (by which I mean ambivalent), both representative and antirepresentative, the carnivalesque structure is anti-Christian and antirationalist. ³²

One might add that Winterson's s(t)extuality is also anti-patriarchal and anti-Phallic. Kristeva defines intertextuality, which she derives from Bahktin's notion of the carnivalesque as denoting the transposition of one sign system (or several) into another (e.g. the carnival scene into the written text or novel as the result of a redistribution of several sign-systems: carnival, poetry and scholastic discourse. ³³

Winterson is certainly 'guilty' of transposing and redistributing sign-system(s) in a polysemic and heterogeneous manner as well as provoking laughter: "The book is as moving and funny as it is skillful....." - *Sunday Times*.³⁴ Kristeva also characterises laughter as a semiotic (the pre-oedipal vocalic eruptions of the child) disruption of the (phallic) symbolic. Winterson (re) works (transposes) historical narratives, poetic fantasies, romance novels and one might suggest psychoanalytical discourses. Bisexuality might be said to be a sign of ambivalence. Polyvocal sexuality with mobile sexual marks (signs) might be a Derridean wish fulfillment.

Kristeva continues her theorising of carnivalesque texts, intertextuality, and signifying systems:

If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an intertextuality), one then understands that this 'place' of enunciation and its 'denoted' object are never single, complete and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. In this way polysemy can be seen as the result of a semiotic polyvalence - an adherence to different sign systems.³⁵

The passage of one signifying system into another, for Kristeva, demands a new articulation of thethetic - "of enunciative and denotative positionality"³⁶ Thethetic for Kristeva permits the constitution of the symbolic with its vertical stratifications (referent, signified, signifier) and originates in the 'mirror' stage and is completed through the phallic stage (castration) - "no signifying practice can be

without it."³⁷ The thetic is not exclusive: the semiotic which precedes it constantly tears it open, and this transgression brings about all the various transformations of the signifying practice which Kristeva calls "creation". The traversal/ transgression of this thetic 'boundary' between the semiotic *chora* (maternal attachment) and the (phallic) symbolic is precisely what Kristeva valorises in the signifying and transformative practices of male avant-garde poets and writers. According to Kristeva, in order to keep the process signifying, to avoid foundering in a limitless 'unsayable,' (psychosis), and thus posit a subject of a practice, the subject of poetic language "clings to the help that fetishism offers." ³⁸

And so, according to psychoanalysis, poets as individuals fall under the category of fetishism; the very practice of art necessitates reinvesting the maternal *chora* so that it transgresses the symbolic order; and, as a result, this practice easily lends itself to so-called perverse subjective structures. For all these reasons, the poetic function therefore converges with fetishism..." ³⁹

Winterson, who constructs a subject who is poly-fetishistic in her (re)investment of the maternal within the symbolic - like Lispector whose subject spits out the phallic Mother - (re)writes Kristevan theory.

Unlike Lispector's text, Winterson's could be described as a dialogically carnivalesque deconstructive attempt to subvert/displace a monologically phallic (phallic Self/phallic Mother) subject (i.e. a text governed by [masculine] Phallic Law). Villanelle just keeps rowing her boat - one (webbed) foot in the Symbolic and one invested in her

former M(other)/lover. Villanelle reveals/unveils the "meaning" of the Paternal Phallus parodically and paradoxically by (re) writing fetishistically.

In answer to Lacan's assertion that the phallus "can play its role only when veiled", Jane Gallop counters:

To clear all this up is to reveal/unveil the Father's 'Phallus' as a mere 'penis', as one signifier among others, prey to the contingencies of the letter, of the materiality of signification, alienated from the referent. ⁴⁰

Winterson constructs a female villain who, like de Lauretis' fetishist or Kristeva's carnival player, does not care much for univocal or monological Symbolic Meaning (Phallic Truth) and opens up the field of signification. Villanelle's (webbed) phallus, unlike the Father's, is one signifier among many in an infinite network of differences and desires.

I shall elaborate further on Kristeva's theory of poetic fetishism and the fetishistic female (and male) subject(s)-in-process (in signification) in Chapter 3. where I address the texts of Camille Roy and Hewson/Walker. Roy and Hewson/Walker, I would argue, are more insouciantly "poetic" than Winterson. What Kristevan theory/analysis effaces is the experimental (re)production and (re)signification of the poly-s(t)extual female subject in women's writing.

THREE.

Camille Roy: The Poetics of Lesbian Sadoomasochistic Eroticism.

If the Lacanian/feminist argument over the primacy of the phallus, with its masculine semiotic overtones, seemed irresolvable or indissoluble, some writers and theorists could be read as having opened up or moved signification elsewhere. i.e. into the field of a (possible) infinite play of differences. The Irigaray/Wittig textual strategy of constructing vulval metaphors as a signifying system of female desire, whether in opposition to Lacan, or as an attempt to construct dual systems of signification for the two sexes, leaves the semiotic linkage between the signifier and an anatomical referent intact. Winterson, who invents an anatomical entity which no one, male or female, 'really' has underscores both the Lacanian point that no one really 'has' the phallus (her story is fantasy); but if they did (Villanelle), it might not linguistically or representationally resemble a penis-phallus at all (fans and moons). Winterson's signifier becomes undecideable, neither masculine or feminine. It might not even operate exclusively *between* the two sexes.

Continuing in this trajectory of proliferating fetishist signifiers that do not always and only operate heterosexually in women's texts, I will examine two other texts. One is a short poetic prose work by Camille Roy titled 'From "The Rosy Medallions" '1 The female subject(s) of this text, like Winterson's Villanelle and her female lover, are lesbian. The final text I will consider, *Cherished Objects*, is a poetic prose, illustrated novel by Hewson/Walker. The subject(s) of this text are Eva and Henri. The (heterosexual) relation between them is similar to, but in some respects differs from, the relation between Winterson's Villanelle and Henri (also not the same Henri). These texts are both shorter in length and more radically "poetic" than Winterson's fantasy/realist narrative. Traditional symbolic meaning(s), whilst not disappearing, are broken down to an extent that might almost require of the reader an assumed familiarity with, and understanding of, poly-signifying, bi-s(t)extual systems of writing.

In "The Rosy Medallions" Roy shifts the signification of difference, lack, and desire even further away from a (necessarily) anatomical referent. The psychoanalytical and linguistic "knottedness" of biology (male and female), sexual difference (masculinity and femininity) and sexuality are further unravelled. Her lesbian narrator(s), like Villanelle in the 'Queen of Spades', are fetishists. They are also sadomasochists: "She had a collection of crops framed and under glass. Each one had a name under it: Lady Fastbuck, Mary Mountbatten" (p. 80).² This is a short fictional story. The text is a combination of discontinuous and

fragmented narrative, diary format and poetic prose. Generically, it might be described as lesbian s/m (poetic) writing. Roy constructs *perverse desire* quite explicitly:

Her mountainous perversity is like buckets of hair. Buckets of finally hair, at a time of night when I get my pronouns confused. It's the kind of image or scene you want to describe to your friends, but its so weird that no openings come up in regular conversation.

Overheard on the street:

Y: She's a sadomasochist. And that's a new one, I'm telling you. But what's appealing to me is that she's been doing it for so long that her style and attitude about it are completely immune to fashion.

X:

Y: Very hot. But I mean she has pure attitude. And a kind of macabre seriousness, that reminds me of that writer's party we went to (p. 79).

Roy's short fictional story is the most ostensibly lesbian of the pieces chosen for analysis. It is also the most sexually erotic. Psychoanalytic discourses, including feminist ones, are obviously concerned with questions of sexuality, but are rarely overtly concerned with actual sexual practices. Although Roy's desiring lesbian subjects are similar to Winterson's, it is the silence surrounding the question of female-to-female sexual practice(s) and what they might signify that I wish to address here. The other point pertinent to my overall argument is the balance of poetry and narrative in this text. *The Passion*, though fantastical, is far more symbolically "realist" in a narrative sense. Through the density of narrative detail, the analyst might trace the trajectory of Villanelle from girlhood to a symbolically

desiring female subjecthood. Roy's text constructs the adult female subject as desiring from the beginning. There is no 'story' of how this lesbian desiring subject came to "be". Female desire is signified abruptly in the opening paragraph: "The first day I saw her was a day the fog didn't clear" (p. 75). The reader is presumed to be already familiar with actively signified female desire. Roy's text does not bother with a painstaking (re)construction of a different Symbolic Order, it is already always textually there. The narrator "I" who speaks in Roy's Symbolic could be read as conceptually problematising the Lacanian (masculine) "I".

Returning to the effacement of the significance of sexual practices in psychoanalytic discourses, this question is taken up by Parveen Adams in her theorising of lesbiam sadomasochism in "Of Female Bondage":

Psychoanalytically speaking all behaviours conducive to sexual satisfaction have a psychical significance; we are dealing with the marks of disavowal which signal perversion. Certainly there is a hint of the process of disavowal in us all, but not everyone constructs a fetish. Mannoni's distinction between the domain of belief and the actual fetish means that we can distinguish between the disavowal of the neurotic who holds two contradictory beliefs and the disavowal of the pervert who actually constructs a fetish. Technically, when disavowal leads to fetishism and beyond that to sadomasochism, we have to speak of perversion. The sexual scenarios of lesbian sadomasochism have to be recognized as perverse scenarios.³

For Adams, lesbian s/m practices do signify (have meaning). For this sadomasochist, according to Adams, there is an erotic plasticity and movement and "she constructs fetishises and substitutes them, one for

another, she multiplies fantasies and tries them on like costumes."⁴

Roy writes:

My moment in the hallway: I wanted to sit on the French inlaid bureau under the crops and get fisted. Marks rise to the surface of my neck. She looks like her leather jacket is causing long prickly emotions down the back. (p. 80)

This scenario for Adams is one in which the lesbian sadomasochist has separated sexuality from gender (sexual difference) and is able to enact differences in the theatre where roles freely circulate. Somehow this "scene" is reminiscent of both Winterson's Venitian Symbolic and Kristeva's carnivalesque scene. The difference that is of interest to my analysis is the extent to which Roy poetically deconstructs sexual difference (masculinity and femininity) into undecidability. This textual strategy constitutes a major challenge to the Lacanian assertion that the subject takes up a position of sexed subjectivity only in relation to the phallus as a master signifier and that it governs the structure of relations between the sexes. It also challenges the idea that the *lidibo* is masculine. Whilst Roy's text could be read as in line with Irigaray's call for a female sexed Symbolic Order, it also outflanks Irigaray's textual (re) construction of a singular, metaphorically vulval signifier. One would have to concede a certain mobility to Irigaray's signifier as ambivalent between an oral ("two lips") and a genital signifier. For Adams, lesbian s/m sexuality is both genital and non-genitally fetishistic (mobile and transferable to numerous signifiers).

The textual fragments which make up "The Rosy Medallions" are marked chronologically by dates, for instance October 6, 1983; October 10, 1983 and November 1, 1983. The first segment constructs a meeting between two women in a park. In the second, barely a paragraph, an "I" addresses "you" in a meditation on the meaning of a (sexual) look. The third, 'October 8, 1983', constructs a pursuit and seduction scene between two female subjects. 'October 9' is a reported overheard conversation about a particular woman's sadomasochistic "style and attitude." The penultimate scenario is a "fist-fucking" scene and the final segment constructs a "domestic" scene: "Days pass in your kitchen, you make soup" (p. 82). There is no indication that the events constructed in each fragment are chronological or that the narrator "I" or the addressee "you" are the same in each episode. This may be a continuing series of sexual encounters between the same two female subjects or a series of sexual encounters between the narrator/narrators and several other female subjects. The meaning of the subject/object of desire relation is rendered decideably ambiguous. It suggests to me that the narrator(s) desire(s) might be extremely mobile in relation to other female objects, and I shall read the text with Parveen Adams and Teresa de Lauretis' theories of "perverse" and "mobile" lesbian desire, sadomasochism, fetishism, and against Kristeva's theory of lesbianism as culturally unintelligible (psychotic). In terms of textuality, I will re-examine Kristeva's assertion that the fetishist avant-garde writer is male.

De Lauretis describes the lesbian fetish as "any object, even an inappropriate object attached to a desiring fantasy, any sign whatsoever that marks the difference and the desire between the lovers."⁵ Roy is textually direct. The narrator of 'October 6, 1983' spells out her desire for her object in the opening paragraph:

Her clothes were fine and understated - the expensive trenchcoat, Italian shoes, closely cropped gray hair. An obvious pervert, remote as a vampire who is no longer young. Shock settled into my shoes; I had never seen anyone like her before. She obviously had money (p. 75).

The narrator almost immediately shifts narrative position, constructing a [fantasised] object that her object of desire, as subject, might desire:

The thought made my teeth hurt, but filled me with modesty. I wanted to drag along in a white pinafore, to show how dreamy I was; it was the only quality of mine I could think of that might be attractive to her (p. 75).

What de Lauretis proposes is that many lesbian texts inscribe a fantasy of castration but also effectively speak desire and are thus fully in the Symbolic, in signification. Lacan would not dispute the disengagement of the notion of castration from its [Freudian] reference to the real penis by making it a condition of signification, of entry into language and the means of access to desire. Yet the semiotic (linguistic) bond remains problematic for many feminist theorists, both male and female.⁶ Neither Adams nor de Lauretis dispute the notion of the phallus as a signifier of desire. What they are attempting to read is how the

signification of desire, particularly in the psychic processes of perversions, is freed from penile representations of the phallus (i.e. phallic symbols), as well as the Lacanian assumption that the phallus marks sexual difference between the sexes. This implies that the signifier of desire might not have a master and hence raises the possibility of mobilising the signifier into a proliferating field of representations. These signifiers, for the fetishist, might be metonymically linked to the body (clothing for instance), but the fetishist "knows very well" that they do not in any way resemble a real penis. In fact, unlike both Lispector and Winterson's texts, "The Rosy Medallions" has not one (phallic) "tower" metaphor.

Difference is marked in Roy's text between female subjects in a similar vein to Winterson's. It is not signified exclusively by anatomical representations. Returning to the quoted passage from "The Rosy Medallions" (surely a cunt metaphor), the (female) subject, like the classical Freudian (male) fetishist disavows the mother's castration by displacing desire metonymically onto clothing ("trenchcoat", "shoes", "white pinafore") or parts of the body ("hair"). These 'substitute' objects, according to de Lauretis' (re) reading of fetishism, work (for the fetishist) as signifiers of desire anyway because she "doesn't care" whether or not the objects re-place (represent) the missing penis. Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit argue that the fetishist did not simply disavow the mother's castration.⁷ They puzzled as to why the fetishist did not re-place the missing penis with a phallic symbol and concluded

that the fetishist not only disavows maternal castration but also refuses the meaning of the paternal phallus:

The fetishist has displaced the missing penis from the woman's genitals to, say, her underclothing, but we suggest that if he doesn't care about the underclothing resembling a penis it is because: (1) he knows that it is not a penis; (2) he doesn't want it to be only a penis; and (3) he knows that *nothing* can replace the lack to which he in fact has resigned himself.⁸

De Lauretis (re)reads Bersani and Dutoit:

Consider the following statements with the word lesbian in lieu of the word fetishist: 1) the lesbian can see the woman as she is, without a penis, because she loves her with a penis somewhere else; 2) the lesbian also knows that nothing can replace the lack to which she has resigned herself; 3) lesbian desire is sustained and signified by a fetish, a fantasy-phallus, an inappropriate object precariously attached to a desiring fantasy, unsupported by any perceptual memory. In other words, what the lesbian desires in a woman and in herself ('the penis somewhere else') is indeed not a penis but the whole or perhaps a part of the female body, or something metonymically related to it, such as physical, intellectual or emotional attributes, stance, attitude, appearance, self-representation, and hence the importance of performance, clothing, costume, etc. She knows full well she is not a man, she doesn't have the paternal phallus, but that does not necessarily mean she has no means to signify desire: the fantasy-phallus is at once what signifies her desire and what she desires in a woman.⁹

According to Freud, fetishism does not apply to women because, as they have nothing (penis) to lose disavowal would not defend their ego from an already accomplished 'castration'. However, reading Winterson and Roy with/through Bersani, Dutoit, de Lauretis and Adams, it would seem apparent that female writers are eminently capable of constructing female (desiring) subjects who do not care

overly much if their signifier of difference, semiotically or representationally, resembles a penis-phallus in the slightest. For Roy's desiring lesbian subjects the signifiers proliferate ("how dreamy I was", "remote as a vampire", "she has pure attitude," "perversity like buckets of hair"). De Lauretis theorises this psychic process as one which detaches desire from the *paternal* phallus which she sees as eminently applicable to lesbian sexuality.

In terms of sexual difference, one could argue that some of the objects signifying desire for Roy's protagonist represent 'male body drag' (i.e. represent 'masculinity' or a more traditional male dress style), but only if one assumes that trenchcoats, Italian shoes and close-cropped hair signify males or masculinity. In Roy's textual universe there is no construction of difference from, or opposition between, the manner in which males dress and the manner in which females dress, (unlike Winterson's transvestite figure). Female subjects 'naturally' dress in this manner, therefore one might just as easily say it signifies 'femininity.' In Roy's text signifying systems which might construct male/masculine/penis/paternal/phallus/ subject in opposition to female/feminine/castrated/maternal/lack/object, or as complementary to each other, become de-ranged.

It is not so much that desire is not marked by signs of difference, or that it is not a movement between self and other (subject/object) signifying lack, but that if both the subject and object are female then certain

hypotheses, whether Lacanian or feminist, become problematic. The female subject(s)/object(s) dress differently from each other ("I wanted to *drag* along in a white pinafore"), but could *not* be said to represent masculinity and femininity respectively. This would certainly challenge the [Freudian] theory that female homosexuals suffered from a "masculinity complex". Or, if one were to say that they represent 'masculinity' and 'femininity' this notion of sexual difference could not be conflated with male and female subjects as there are no males in the text.

The textual boundaries between who and what represents masculinity and who or what represents femininity begin to collapse. In fact, difference and hence desire, in the opening paragraph of 'October, 6' is just as easily signified by "money". Who "has" money in this situation might designate a masculine phallic position, but as there is no construction within the text to indicate that men 'have' money (power and privilege) and women do not, then 'having' money (one of the women obviously does), might very well designate a feminine position. It might also designate a difference in social class.

Given that 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are undecideable textually vis-a-vis male and female, then attaching any meaning of subject and object positions to any of the aforementioned is also difficult, if not impossible. The "I" position is alternated between the female subject(s)/object(s) constructed in each narrative fragment. This fragmentation,

and the fact that none of the characters are identified by name makes it impossible to read the speaking position as ever occupied by a necessarily masculine subject. The speaking "I" position is never occupied by a male subject. All of the (female) characters in this text are desiring, at some point occupy the "I" position in relation to an other/object and could be read as symbolic subjects: "Sharp cravings [desires] make narratives, also subjects" (p. 79). The other/object is also represented/ representable within the text by whomever occupies the "I" subject position at any particular point: "I knew you would never be wholehearted, instead evasive, putting on your sly face on an expectation of disappointment. With anyone else that would have meant no sex" (p. 77).

The opening paragraph of 'October 8, 1983' exemplifies Roy's textual construction of the "I" positioning as ambiguous and interchangeable between lesbian s/m subjects:

'I followed you. I think you're interesting'. At her doorway I suddenly acquired my mother's clear bony pronunciation, an embarrassment. She took my shoulder, gently steered me into the house, and shut the door.
'I noticed you' (p. 77).

It is undecideable as to whether the "I" who "followed" and the "I" who "noticed" are the same or different. Both signify an active desiring position. Even if the "I" who notices (looks) is the same as the "I" who pursues the (passive?) object of desire, then there is also the point at

which the active "follower" is taken as the object (herself) and "steered into the house." Because the text does not indicate whether the speaking "I" who notices (desires) "you" and the speaking "I" who pursues "you" are identical or different, the s(t)extual subject becomes indistinct. However, the subjects themselves are not confused. One could (re)read de Lauretis: "Two passive lesbian objects of desire in the same bed would be two women who never get laid." This is not the case.

The undecidability of positioning continues throughout the remainder of this fragment, and I might suggest throughout the entire text.

However the women do fuck. Between: "I followed you" (female active desiring position) and the last sentence of this section: "So when I am narratively central to it on my back again she fists me with her total possessiveness, I am wholly (not) there having left (come), fucked to heaven" (p. 81), it would seem reasonable to conclude that the subject of desire and object of desire positions in this particular text are both active and passive simultaneously. She is "fisted" (fucked) but she also "leaves" and "comes". Is "she" subject or object of this text? I would argue that "she" is both subject and object of this text.

Both or all of the female protagonists are constructed intersubjectively (i.e. within a female-to-female subject relation). Individually these subjects are also constituted textually in relation to the other as object (intrasubjectively). The subject-subject position is also a subject-object

position co-extensively and alternates with incessant textual fluctuations: "Only by turning on her with all my teeth bared could I regain ground already lost. Of course I did it." (p.79). It often becomes textually uncertain as to whether the subject/object is "I" or the object/subject is "I" or whether the "I" from one textual fragment to the next is the same "I". The "I" who speaks would appear to be both split and constituted within an(other) "I"/you who is split and constituted in an(other) "I"/you who speaks also. This 'confusion' of the speaking position "late at night when I get my pronouns confused", results in "You caught *us* by surprise" (p. 77). The narrator at this point - there are only two subjects present - might logically have said: "You caught me by surprise." This female/female I/you = us is reminiscent of both Irigaray's "When Our Lips Speak Together" and Wittig's *The Lesbian Body* in which they both (re)write the phallic (masculine) "I"/Phallic M(other) individuation crisis of separation as *also* (possibly) an I/You (us) female reciprocal exchange. This linguistic pronominal slippage could be read as something of a crucial point of feminist and lesbian/feminist divergance from the Lacanian model of the constitution of the "speaking I".

These subject/texts, as Kristeva might say, are both "intra- and trans-linguistic: "This subject of enunciation, which comes directly from Husserl and Benveniste, introduces, through categorical intuition, both semantic fields and logical - but also intersubjective - relations, which prove to be both intra- and translinguistic." ¹⁰ Kristeva, like Wittig

appropriates from Benveniste's meditations on the reciprocity (as well as the separation) of the I/You position. Despite Roy's elliptical circularity of "I/you" and "You/I" positioning and the poeticization of the texts signifying system - "Bent over the edge of the body, lattice handiwork, the roseate palm smacking my tin flesh" (p. 81) - the text remains symbolically meaningful. The reader knows full well what these women are doing.

Like Winterson's female lovers these subjects would need to mark their difference from each other in order for the sexual relation to take place. Their reciprocal "femaleness" just will not do. In spite of the I/You (mother/daughter; female body/female body) similarity the lesbian lovers mark difference otherwise and in numerous ways. Apart from the fetishist signifiers around which the initial desire/ lack/ attraction circulates, actual sexual activity is signified sado-masochistically. The female lovers take up positions of affection and aggression which differentiate them at any given point. These positions are also reciprocal and reversible, but they are of the order of differences not reliant on biology: "What orders the flow is the modulation of aggression, *hers*....." or "I suddenly like her; this new affection streaks through *me* like aggression. I undo her pants and push them down....." (p. 81).

Kristeva appears to find the fetishist avant-garde writer, whose art practice necessitates reinvesting the maternal chora so that it

transgresses the Symbolic Order, the most satisfying in terms of his ability to mobilise the semiotic, poetic function which nonetheless signifies. "No text, no matter how 'musicalized', is devoid of meaning or signification; on the contrary, musicalization pluralizes meaning."¹¹ Freud also found fetishism the most satisfying of the sexual 'perversions.'¹² For Kristeva however: "The text is completely different from a fetish because it signifies; in other words, it is not a substitute but a sign (signifier/signified) and its semantics is unfurled in sentences." ¹³

I would dispute this notion of the fetish, both text and object, as 'substitute'. As already noted, Kristeva considers women's experimental texts 'substitutes' for actual families. One would have to assume that what women 'really want' is families. She would also seem reliant on the orthodox psychoanalytical view that any fetish object is a substitute for the missing (maternal) penis-phallus. As de Lauretis has pointed out the fetishist "may not care" if the fetish is a phallic symbol (refuses the meaning of the paternal phallus as master signifier). As there is no textual evidence to suggest that Roy's casual fist-fucking lesbians are aiming at procreative reproduction, there is no reason to assume that "fist" in this case would substitute for penis. It would seem very foolhardy of them if it did. Roy's female subjects signify their desire, lack and difference from each other through objects such as "expensive Italian shoes" or "money" or "how dreamy I was; it was the only quality of mine I could think of which might be attractive

to her." These may operate in much the same manner as the Lacanian phallus, but nonetheless, in "From the Rosy Medallions" text, they do not signify the difference between males and females or the difference between 'masculine' and 'feminine' or between 'men' and 'women'. They are signs. As signifiers they signify desire, lack and difference between two female subjects.

In "Motherhood According to Bellini"¹⁴, Kristeva suggests that, because the maternal body signifies the loss of coherent and discrete identity, poetic language verges on psychosis. In the case of women's semiotic expressions in language, the return to the maternal signifies a pre-discursive homosexuality that Kristeva also associates with psychosis (incoherence). According to Judith Butler, Kristeva, while conceding that poetic language is sustained culturally through its participation in the Symbolic, fails to allow that homosexuality is capable of the same non-psychotic social expression.¹⁵

Kristeva writes:

The homosexual-maternal facet is a whirl of words, a complete absence of meaning and seeing; it is a feeling, displacement, rhythm, sound, flashes, and fantasised clinging to the maternal body as a screen against the plunge. Perversion slows down the schizophrenic that collapsing identities and the delights of the well-known and oft-solicited (by some women) pantheist fusion both brush up against.¹⁶

The possibility that a female writer might mobilise the semiotic into the Symbolic (when for example she poeticises realist fiction), and simultaneously articulate a meaningful female desiring subject-to-subject relation and a female subject-object relation within this signifying system, did not seem to have occurred to Kristeva. If, on the other hand, by "the delights of the well-known and oft-solicited pantheist fusion" she means "fucked to heaven" she could be right.

In conclusion, one might say that "The Rosy Medallions" constitutes something of a challenge to the Lacanian construction of the "I" position within the Symbolic as both phallic and masculine. It might also be read as a critique of Kristeva's assertion that only male fetishistic writers could accede sufficiently to this position within the Symbolic from which to transgress it. It would appear to me that Roy not only textually constructs the speaking "I"/narrator as undecidable in terms of masculine or feminine positioning, but that she poeticizes the Symbolic of realist fiction to such an extent as to create a new textual Symbolic Order which is nonetheless meaningful in terms of difference(s). The (sexed) subject of this text moreover, being signified fetishistically rather than phallically (or vulvally), opens up infinite possibilities for a subject, textually constructed, whose sexed subjectivity is not reliant on either male or female referents.



Hewson/Walker: *The Undecidable (Cherished) Objects of desire.*

This brings my analysis to its final reading - an illustrated novel by Hewson/Walker titled *Cherished Objects*.¹⁷ The textual subjects are Eva Beatrice, a retired cartographer and Henri Valentine, an aging private eye. What differs most radically in *Cherished Objects* from the other texts analysed is the inclusion of visual representations. The transposition of a visual signifying system into a linguistic one is also meaningful intertextually. The images and text of Chapter One, 'Imperial Vinyl' and Chapter Three, 'Travel' were also exhibited as experimental artworks in various galleries.¹⁸ The constructors of *Cherished Objects* call themselves Hewson/Walker. Although their full names, which indicate that one is a male and the other female, appear on the publication page, it would be difficult for the reader, without prior knowledge, to determine who is the writer and who is the photographer.

The text begins: "This was nowhere. Eva Beatrice loved old hotels" (p. 1). The images might confirm that this scene is indeed an old hotel. They are, however, not illustrative of the text in any one-to-one relation. The photographs are fragmentary, not titled, and do not visually represent narrative events directly. The protagonists also do not appear in any of the photographs. These images are within and slightly off-side to the 'story'. They might be read as functioning in much the same way as the poetic dimension of the writing operates in

relation to the realist mode of detective fiction. The text could be placed simultaneously within the genre and also outside. I shall return to this point in relation to Derridean theories and some feminist thinking on the question of sexual (in)differentiation, or rather the undecidability of sexual difference. *Cherished Objects* in many ways consolidates points raised in the readings of Winterson and Roy, but in this case we return to a female/male rather than a female/female relation. Desire is also signified fetishistically, but the fact that the representative objects - which are also sexually (in)differenced by the photographer - are narratively visible produces something of a "doubling of effect." Hewson/ Walker could be read as underscoring the point of (sexual) undecidability "in excess" rather than in dissolution. Eva and Henri add up to more than the sum of *one* implied by masculine/feminine polarities.

The images in the section 'The Imperial Vinyl' - which is also the "case" that Henri is endeavouring to solve - are clues to the text but are not identical to it. They are in some ways "indifferent" to the written words, but "connected". They are certainly photographs of fragments of the interior of some building and a number of objects: a portion of a hallway, two suitcases, a messy (bed)room, a portion of a room with the corner of a bed and a sink, a potted plant on what appears to be a verandah, a 50's radiator etc. However, the 'fact' that these images represent an old hotel is not necessarily obvious to the reader inside the text. One could assume they are illustrative of such a place because the

meeting and conversations between Eva and Henri in this section take place at "an old hotel". At the conclusion of this section the text reads:

It's like a religion, he told her again, looking for the dead, always three clues and shapes on the surface. She said, like translating, finding the old ways and diverting, hints of incoherence. Henri said, well are you in or out (p. 13).

In the chapter titled 'Cherished Objects' and the chapter titled 'Travel' the visual images are even more discordant in their relationship to the written text, or at least to the titles of the chapters. For instance, the 'Cherished Objects' section contains images of landscapes. Images that one/Eva might see from a train: "She was between cities. She loved trains too" (p. 1). They might also illustrate the 'bizarre' entities that Eva inserts into her maps (e.g bridges and the speed of trains): "When he said, you mean you make unsubstantiated maps, she said yes" (p.22). The photographs in 'Travel' are visual representations of the "cherished objects" exchanged between Eva and Henri following Eva's return to the city. To a certain degree these sets of images might seem to be transposed quite radically. The landscape images should logically be placed in the section titled 'Travel', the objects in the section titled 'Cherished Objects'. The signifying system comprised of visual representations stands in relation to the written text in a parallel manner to which the poetry, as one signifying system, operates in relation to the symbolic of realist detective fiction. There is a "doubling of effect" or, one might say, the images are the semiotic of the written word as the poetic language is the semiotic of a textual Symbolic.

Jacques Derrida coined the term "différance" with an "a" to demonstrated the "difference" between a speech act and the written text. The pronunciation in French "sounds" the same. The "a" can only be "seen" when the word is written. There is a dimension in Kristevan theorising that implies that a signifying system is "full" when the "semiotic" is operating within the symbolic. If this semiotic dimension is understood as vocal intonations, rhythms and other vocalic gestures, then it might only be "heard" in the speech act, not necessarily signifying in written text. It is "read" in a text as the poetic dimension of a signifying symbolic. It is this 'musicalisation' of literature that Kristeva contends both pulverizes the symbolic and pluralises meaning(s). The written text represses not only "sounds" and "rhythms" but also "images". Kristeva and Derrida re-insert them into theory as Eva inserts them into the "truth" (the Symbolic) of maps: "Eva put Henri's letter onto the map" (p. 30) or "Eva wanted rhythms on maps" (p. 27). Hewson/ Walker insert poetic rhythms, images and strange post-phallic male and female subjects into the Real of detective fiction.

The narrative style of *Cherished Objects* is poetic prose fiction, written in the third person. Neither Henri nor Eva narrate from an "I/you" position. They are narrated as "she/he" throughout. The 'story' is summarised at the beginning of chapter three, 'Travel' which is also the concluding chapter:

THE STORY SO FAR.....

Eva Beatrice and Henri Valentine meet in an old country hotel. He is an aging private eye, she is a retired cartographer. She now makes maps for herself. Eventually she takes a train back to the city and refines her views on topography. Henri slowly continues his search for The Imperial Vinyl, making scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and photographs. He sends reports to his tall female employer. Eva and Henri write to each other. Then Henri moves closer to Eva's city... (p. 37).

Unlike Winterson's male and female subjects, Villanelle and Henri, *Cherished Objects*' subjects appear as 'older', their trajectory from childhood to (sexed) subjecthood is unknown to the reader: "Eva had forgotten she had parents. And Henri looked as if he couldn't have been a child" (p.12). Within the temporal space of this text, one can not know how Henri became a 'man' or Eva a 'woman'. They are constructed as relatively self-contained, individuated subjects: "Eva did not ask Henri to her room, Henri did not ask her to his" (p. 23) or "Henri and Eva had adjoining rooms, although they never heard each other" (p. 12). They do, however, speak to each other: "Whatever happened to romance, she said. He stared at her over the toast, nicely brown, comes down to fragments again, he said, dragging bits together" (p. 9).

The movement of textual desire between subject and object, self and other is elliptical in the Hewson/Walker text. Eva and Henri, following Eva's return to the city, exchange words (letters) and 'things' (small objects): "Eva wrote and told Henri, and he sent her a plaster

peach" (p. 39). Their difference is inscribed in signs which seem, according to traditional psychoanalytical theories, highly "inappropriate". Among the objects that Henri sends to Eva are, apart from the peach, a pottery cup/bowl (undecidable) engraved "Land's End", a skull (from an animal of indefinite species /origin), a china fish, a bullet, a pair of leather gloves, a plastic toy camera, a model airplane, a book (contents undisclosed in the image) and a white and silver (tea) cup. If, as de Lauretis suggests, the fetishist has no perceptual memory of the (original) lost object (of desire), and is quite prepared to substitute other (non-bodily) objects, then *Cherished Objects* might suggest a different system of meaning(s) in the constitution of the textual subject.

De Lauretis writes:

The object and the signifier of desire are not anatomical entities, such as the female body or womb and the penis respectively; they are fantasy entities, objects or signs that have somehow become 'attached to a desiring fantasy' and for that very reason may be 'inappropriate' (to signify those anatomical entities) and precarious, not fixed nor the same for every subject, and even unstable in one subject. But if there is no privileged, founding object of desire, 'if the objects of our desires are always substitutes for the objects of our desires' (as Bersani and Dutoit put it), nevertheless desire itself, with its movement between subject and object, between the self and the other, is founded on difference and dependent on the 'sign which describes both the object and its absence' (Laplanche and Pontalis).¹⁹

There is no indication in the text that either Eva or Henri are drastically destabilised by any of these objects (read substitutes). Neither are the

objects directly (or indirectly) linked metonymically within this text to maternal bodies, breasts or disavowed paternal/maternal phalli. Their childhoods are long forgotten: "Eva had forgotten she had parents" (p.12). They do have 'pasts', remnants and fragments which are both connected and dis-connected to the 'story'. As the story does not effect narrative closure, a large proportion of the information/facts/descriptions concerning Eva and Henri are themselves inappropriate or almost irrelevant, or would be in realist detective fiction sub-plots: "He planned to write a book one day about the melodies of staircases" (p. 5) or "It's poetry that's missing, she said" (p. 5). It is the poetic dimension of this text which disrupts the symbolic of generic detective stories without effacing, disavowing or repressing it:

Henri carried a small black gun. It was the only one he'd bothered with. He'd used it twice; it may be broken. Missed and missed. He had one scar on his body and that wasn't from a bullet. He knew men who had rooms full of guns, and women who slept with them (p.6).

One could read the "guns" as male phallic symbols and certainly "the scar on his body that wasn't from a bullet" has certain possibilities as a metaphorical mark of castration. Henri is however: "....past his prime" (p. 11). He is still a detective : "He had been secured by a tall older woman to track down The Imperial Vinyl" (p. 4). He has difficulty remembering this: "Henri had nearly forgotten he was on the case of The Imperial Vinyl. He was just on a case" (p. 49). Perhaps Henri does not care for Proper Names. He also doesn't appear to care if the

information (facts) he sends to his employer are particularly relevant to the "case" (truth):

Henri decided that the silver plane was elemental to his case, he isolated it for days. He photographed it, wrote a report for the tall woman (in which he quoted Eva's opinion that some front yards are like cabinets, they are where things natural and man-made are arranged as if analogous, they are personal dictionaries organised into geometric patterns, wall-less rooms, channels) then, instead, sent the plane and report to Eva. He glued the photograph to the lid of the suitcase. He sent a description of a bottle to his employer (p. 50).

There is a certain textual insouciance about the way Henri substitutes "descriptions of bottles" for objects "elemental" to the case. In fact, one might suggest that the exchange of objects between Henri and Eva is the case, or at least the poetic 'plot'. These cherished objects then would signify in the text as objects of desire substituting for objects of desire, the origin of which is long forgotten and perhaps no longer relevant to the 'case'.

Eva, likewise, has this tendency to substitute other things (signs) for, or insert other signs into, the Symbolic Truth of maps:

Eva wanted rhythms on maps. She had started embellishing the surveyors' drafts with words like 'succumb' and 'inherit', easing them between the contour lines she loved. These lines had become definitions. So she drew them asymmetrical, often with loops on the end; or she'd leave one out, or put one in, or include a whole valley, just to see how it looked. Her job had been about conclusions and she had become inconclusive (p. 28).

Eva's maps, like Hewson/Walker's text remains meaningfully readable. For Eva there are no true maps and she uses topographical principles "of world-wide repute" (p. 22), adding front yards and parking stations and "took her bearings from real phenomena, and so, importantly her maps were readable" (p. 22). She wishes to put other things on maps. Not just objects or words, but "speeds and sounds and lengths" (p.19).

Both Henri and Eva are quietly, eccentrically self-obsessed with their respective projects - Eva and her maps, Henri and the case of The Imperial Vinyl. Yet neither is particularly concerned with preserving the 'truth' of maps or cases. Eva changes maps and Henri sends his employer highly irregular information. Hewson/Walker write/image highly irregular detective fiction.

Fragments of an 'older' more archaic Symbolic Order do exist in *Cherished Objects*, like echoes or remnants from a remote past. "She was working on a map, charting the rooms she had lived in with Alex" (p. 21) or "When he was young he practised a drooping mouth, it was his concession to style" (p. 6). These semiotic ruptures within the poetic prose symbolic of Hewson/Walker's textuality could be read as something of a signifying involution. Is this a poetic signifying system transgressed by a realist Symbolic or a realist (detective) fiction Symbolic traversed by poetic signification? *Cherished Objects* has three

references in the endnotes. One is Raymond Chandler's, *The Notebooks of Raymond Chandler*. This cameo appearance is echoed occasionally by Eva and Henri: "It's a fragment, he said, this small [quoting with his fingers], it's a space where opulence and carnality are style. Well, she said, [knowing she was on safe ground] it's either a description or a cameo" (p. 5). Whether Hewson/Walker have one foot in the Symbolic and one in the "feminine" semiotic, or one in the poetic semiotic and one on Raymond Chandler's face is debatable.

If the latter were to be the "case", and this is a fine distinction, it has some implications for Kristevan theories of textual signifying systems and what she perceives to be the function of experimental writing. If the text predominately signifies as poetic ruptured by a Chandlerian Symbolic, then Hewson/Walker could be read as turning Kristevan theory inside out. Raymond Chandler becomes the Symbolic (masculine) "I" clamouring at the borders of the maternal attachment wanting to be "heard". *Cherished Objects* could just as easily be read as an archaic masculine Symbolic transgressing (penetrating, interrupting, rupturing) a poetic "feminine" semiotic signifying system.

Raising this question demands an answer. However, I would argue that the "case" in this case is insolvable. The realist Symbolic folds back on the poetic. Undecidability could be said to be the 'plot' of *Cherished Objects*. This undecidability of the text/subject is the "hinge" on which

this text turns. Deconstruction, according to Jacques Derrida, involves three 'phases': a reversal, displacement, and the creation of a new term - which he calls a 'hinge word' - such as 'trace' (simultaneously present and absent), 'supplement' (simultaneously plenitude and excess); 'differance' (sameness and difference); 'pharmakon' (simultaneously poison and cure); 'hymen' (simultaneously rupture and totality), etc. These are terms which are both preconditions of oppositional structures and terms in excess of their logic.²⁰

Derrida's notion of "in excess of their logic" could be read as the visual dimension in excess of the (repressed) poetic as a precondition for the erection of a detective realist Symbolic. In other words, the poetic/Symbolic opposition is, as Lacan might say, "not all." The images are in excess of the text's logic (i.e. the precondition 'has' a precondition). The construction of a realist (written) signifying system is dependent not only on the repression of "poetic" language but also on the effacement of "sounds", "images" and "rhythms" etc. This is Kristeva's thesis. It has a corollary also in her ideas of the 'abject', in that, underlying the subject/object dichotomy is the even more archaic 'abject' object. In excess of Eva and Henri's masculine/feminine circulation of desire there is always something left over the "tall female employer" perhaps or:

"Eva said, it's about the the sound of words, the actual noise, you can't say things in neutral, they're either masculine or feminine. It depends whose listening, what they already know, said Henri, take this case.... (p. 12).

Something is always signified in excess or outside (?) of the construction of sexual difference in terms of dichotomous logic.

Derrida's essay "The Double Session"²¹ outlines his hypothesis of the use of the metaphor of femininity in relation to *écriture* (writing). The term 'hymen' (sic) functions as one of his hinge words, undecidable in terms of binary logic, confusing the either/or choice demanded by logocentrism. It is neither identity or difference, neither confusion nor distinction, neither the inside nor outside, neither the veil nor the unveiling, but the condition of both. It is the metaphor that Derrida uses for a certain folded (involute) space of writing:

The fold folds (itself): its meaning spaces itself out with a double mark, in the hollow of which a blank is folded. The fold is simultaneously virginity, what violates virginity and the fold which, being neither one nor the other and both at once, undecidable, remains as a text, irreducible to either of its two senses..... The masculine is turned back upon the feminine: the whole adventure of sexual difference.²²

Whatever Roy's "fisting" lesbians, and some feminist theorists might think of terms such as 'hymen' and 'virginity' and metaphors of femininity, the question of whether the subject(s) of *Cherished Objects* are masculine or feminine is also put into question in this (heterosexual) text. The "femininity" of the Derridean hymenal metaphor, though used perhaps in contra- distinction to the masculinized overtones of Lacanian language usage, could be read as (re) confirming a phallic/vulval metaphoric oppositional binary logic.

What differs is that the "feminine" is spoken within the Symbolic rather than being the mute pre-condition of its logical construction. The images signify something beyond, in excess off, or off-centre to these dichotomies.

Both Eva and Henri are signified by signs of both sexes, or at least signifiers that might traditionally be associated with male detective subjects are transposed to Eva - she, not Henri, drinks whisky for breakfast. She doesn't own a dress and wonders ".....how old she'd be before she wore one" (p.29). Henri (when alone) wears an old sapphire blue smoking jacket (a feminine/masculine fetishistic classic), and learns "that other language" from Eva. Each evening they sit on the hotel verandah "drinking whisky and practicing the gender of language" (p. 13). When apart this exchange(ability) and difference is signified by the "cherished objects". Although it is difficult to position Eva or Henri as a sexed subject, as a *to have* or a *to be* in relation to phallic signification, and masculine and feminine attributes are interchanged between them, they are not *identical* subjects.

Desire in the Hewson/Walker text is constructed as an exchange between non-dichotomously differentiated subjects. This is a different 'story' to the more orthodox Chandlerian constructed meanings of masculinity and femininity and also to the Lacanian model of masculine and feminine positions in relation to phallic signification. Henri and Eva's desire is also mobile and transferable to fetishist

objects, likewise indeterminate as signifying masculinity *or* femininity. The textual inscription of sexual (in)difference is again doubled up (made excessive) by the visual imagery. For instance, the framing of the leather gloves (another fetishist classic) is in extreme close-up. As there are no other objects/referents within the photographic frame through which size might be relatively determined, the size of the hand that they might fit is undecidable. The image is reproduced in black-and-white. Colour is not a clue. Would a private detective wear pink leather gloves? Tonally, the gloves could be black (a masculine overtone?). They also appear to be 'soft' - if softness could be visually translated. They are not excessively decorative. In other words, they might fit a male or a female hand, or could be read as masculine or feminine or neither. "Eva wore the gloves that Henri sent" (p. 48) is the only textual reference to the object in question.

Even though these objects are exchanged between the two subjects, their meaning for each subject is different. For Henri they also signify his detachment from the distant "tall (female) employer." This figure operates in the text as a remnant of the notorious and by now very archaic Symbolic Phallic Mother. Henri is no longer on her "case". The "remote as a vampire" figure in Roy's text operates semiotically in a similar manner. The lesbian as vampire is also a staple of a male avant-garde textual symbolic (re)appropriated by contemporary lesbian writers. Returning to Henri, the objects are "clues" to his "case" which he sends to Eva instead. For Eva they not only signify the inter-

s(t)extual exchange with Henri, but also double up as the semiotic signifiers that she inserts into a cartographic symbolic. The objects signify desire between the two subjects and also operate to signify (long forgotten) archaic attachments ... and "maps" and "cases"..... The same objects signify desire between the two subjects, something different for each subject, and something beyond each subject.

In a similar manner to Roy's female subjects, Eva and Henri could be read as subjects whose difference and desire is signified by fetish objects that are neither phallic nor vulval, neither male nor female, neither masculine nor feminine, neither semiotic nor symbolic. If one wished to gloss Derrida one could add neither inside nor outside, neither identity nor difference, neither Henri nor Eva. Differences between subjects, as in Winterson and Roys' texts do count. They are just not an identical differences to those posited by the Lacanian pole of masculine and feminine positioning. Signification is mobile and fluid between subjects and between subjects and others. This is certainly a different difference, desire and lack to that proposed within a Lacanian Phallogocentric framework. This has interesting implications for the s(t)extual construction of both male and female subjects.

Between Roy, Hewson/Walker, Derrida, Irigaray, Kristeva and de Lauretis the "knottedness" of sex, sexual difference and s(t)extuality could be (re)tied differently to the phallic model. Elizabeth Grosz summarises the situation:

These 'hinge words' (in Irigaray, the two lips, fluidity, maternal desire, a genealogy of women, in Kristeva, semanalysis, the semiotic, polyphony, etc.) function as undecidable, vacillating between both oppositional terms, occupying the ground of their 'excluded middle'. If strategically harnessed, these terms rupture the systems from which they 'originate' and in which they function. Derrida's deconstructive 'double science' aims to undo the history of logocentrism in order to allow difference its space of free play.²³

Reading slightly against the grain of this proposition, I would argue that Roy and Hewson/Walkers' textual strategies could be harnessed to challenge Kristeva's assertion of male only avant-gard(e)hood. Their texts also open up and mobilise signification, and hence difference(s), into a space of play beyond that envisioned by Irigaray's "two lips". Derrida's deconstructive wish for involuted or invaginated (an inside out Phallus?) text hovers on the border lines of all the read texts, particularly *Cherished Objects*.

Grosz' 'excluded middle', I would argue in conclusion to this section, is the space in which de Lauretis' fetishist operates, simultaneously disavowing the mother's castration and refusing the meaning of the Paternal Phallus. Roy and Hewson/Walker write fluidly in the signifying space between the phallic Symbolic and the maternal (poetic) semiotic. To this extent they might be, to gloss Freud and Kristeva and (re)formulate Kristevan theory to include female writers, among the most satisfying of contemporary experimental writers.

CONCLUSION.

What is generally of interest in the contemporary experimental writing I have been analysing is that all writers share a concern to construct ambiguous narratives. This has a tendency to break the reader writer nexus of traditional humanist realist fiction. On a textual level all of the writers operate fluidly between what might be regarded as a Symbolic of realist fiction and one or several other signifying systems (e.g. poetry or metalinguistic systems such as philosophy). This experimentation with signifying systems creates new modes of Symbolic signification (i.e. the order of language and meaning). This is not outside the Kristevan framework which theorises that the degree to which semiotic and symbolic modalities interact determines the type of discursive production (e.g. psychotic speech, metalanguage, narrative etc.).

This intertextuality or poyglossic textuality, as practised by all the female writers analysed, produces a rupturing of unitary meaning(s) and signification structuration within the classical realist Symbolic mode. The contradictions, ambiguities and shifting positions (including the inscription of sexual difference) produced - features

germane to avant-garde or experimental writing - disrupt the explicit meaning systems of realist writing. They also problematise a reader's identificatory positioning (suturing) in and by a seemingly 'authentic' realism.

For instance, one could say that Lispector's text enacts something of an intertextual 'war' between two metalinguistic systems - fiction and philosophy - which might conventionally be considered incompatible. One might also say, with Irigaray, that the boundaries between these two signifying systems are dissolved by Lispector. It is at the point where Lispector's writing effects slippage from realist fiction to surrealist or Kafkaesque fiction (i.e. the introduction of the cockroach metaphor metonymically linked to the M[other])), in conjunction with the slippage into Transcendental metaphysical meditations, that the reader is distanced from any unproblematic subjective identification that might occur with more traditional systems of signification.

In a similar fashion the slippage in Winterson's poly-textuality from Napoleonic historical narrative (a masculine genre) into feminine "romance" mode tends to problematise both signifying modalities. Within this new textuality, Winterson (re)constructs female and male subjects who are no less "split" but tend to signify difference and desire in an open network of mobile and fluid signifiers. Winterson, no less than Lispector and the other writers examined is engaged at the level of textual (re)production in a debate with the Symbolic Order of language,

meaning and the construction of subjectivity. All of the writers appear dedicated to changing the ways in which texts generate meaning, to transforming the signifying process itself. They might also claim what for Kristeva is a masculine prerogative within the Symbolic Order.

What appears to be a consistent feature of Winterson, Hewson/Walker and Roy's' texts is the (re)signification of the sexed subject(s), regardless of whether they are male or female - and regardless of whether their sexuality is constructed as heterosexual or homosexual or otherwise - as undecidable or excessive in terms of polarities of sexual difference.

These subjects are no longer masculine (phallic) in the sense of an "I" in perpetual individuation crisis. This constitutes a radical movement beyond the modernist "narcissistic fixations of the unified subject."

These subjects-in-textual-process are also not representative of a patriarchally defined, repressed, unsayable, (psychotic) "feminine maternal". These subjects, particularly for my project, are constructed in language and signification, within the Symbolic, so to "speak."

Reading intertextually between Irigaray and Kristeva (i.e. conceptually with Irigaray and textually with Kristeva), one could posit that some female experimental writers (re) signify the semiotic maternal body as a (sexed, desiring) female subject within a (re)constituted symbolic. Not only might this be so, but Winterson, Hewson/Walker and Roy could be read as signifying female (and male) subjectivity fetishistically rather than phallically. I read this as a tendency to displace Paternal Law or

monological signification in favour of constructing a proliferating field of signifying s(t)extual possibilities. Reading them in this way suggests to me a way through the predominately heterosexual and phallo-centred theories of subjectivity.

None of the writers effect narrative closure, thus leaving open the possibilities for both the text and the subject -in -language -in-process. Winterson leaves Villanelle "rowing her boat" and Hewson/Walker leave Eva purchasing another train ticket: "She booked a seat on the train, cancelled it, then rebooked when the second white cup arrived." Whether she intends to move closer to Henri or to travel to some other destination is left open in the concluding (?) sentence. Lispector's sometimes ambiguous G.H. also suggests that she might become a different "she" to the "I" who entered the maid's room. In the final paragraph of "The Rosy Medallions" the narrator contemplates the possibilities of "moving into" what appears to be a maid's room in a house presumably owned by (one of) her female lovers - the vampire perhaps? "Still the maid's room sits in the back of my mind. With a few things arranged, it's a place *I* could vanish in" (Roy: p.82).

In conclusion I would have to say, appropriating from Derrida, Kristeva and de Lauretis that my 'hinge' word is "fetishist". It would seem to apply to the female experimental writer as ably transversing the boundaries of traditional signifying systems simultaneously transforming them and generating new meanings. (i.e. with one foot in

the Symbolic and one in the poetic maternal). All of the writers examined would appear to be at least bi-textual. Winterson, with her carnivalesque style is positively poly-textual. The word fetishist would also, following de Lauretis, apply to the construction of a textual subject who is able to signify her lack, difference and desire somewhere between the Imaginary and the Symbolic without positing them in opposition or being trapped in either. This textually (re)produced female subject-in-process would appear to be constructed as mobile in terms of a (sexed) subjectivity and playing in an open field of infinite differences.

NOTES.

INTRODUCTION. French Feminisms and Jacques Lacan.

1. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror-phase as Formative of the Function of the I", trans. Jean Roussel in *New Left Review* 51 (Oct/Sept 1968), pp. 72-3. a translation of a paper read to the International Congress of Psycho-analysis at Marienbad in 1949 and printed in *Ecrits*, 1966.
2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid.*, 385.
4. Jacques Lacan in Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds. *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne*. London: Macmillan, 1982, p.82.
5. Jacques Lacan, *Encore: Le Seminar XX*, 1972-4, p. 90. Paris: Seuil, 1975 quoted in Ann Rosalind Jones. "Inscribing femininity: French theories of the feminine" in Gayle Green and Coppelia Kahn, eds., *Making A Difference; Feminist Literary Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1985, p. 83.
6. Jacques Lacan. *Encore: Le Seminar XX* (Paris, 1975) trans. and quoted in Luce Irigaray. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 93.
7. *ibid.*, p. 87.
8. *ibid.*, p. 102.
9. Luce Irigaray. *Speculum Of the Other Woman*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 133.
10. Luce Irigaray, *Les Language des Dements* (Mouton: Paris), p.351 quoted by Toril Moi, "Patriarchal Reflections: Luce Irigaray's Looking Glass" in *Sexual/Textual Politics*. London and New York: Methuen, 1985, p.127.
11. Luce Irigaray from an interview given to L. Serrara and E. Hoffman in Holmes and Meier, eds., *Women Writers Talking*, pp. 238-9. Also quoted in Elaine Millard, "French Feminisms" in Mills, Pearce, Spaul and Millard, eds., *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989, p.160.
12. Luce Irigaray. "Questions" in *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, p.133.
13. Irigaray. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. *op. cit.*, pp. 205-218. In this poetic prose essay, Irigaray explores the possibility of (re)writing a female specific subject signified by fluidity and the metaphor of "two lips" which could be read ambivalently as vulval.
14. Irigaray, from "The 'Mechanics' of Fluids" also in *This Sex*, pp. 106-118. The quotation, p. 113.
15. Julia Kristeva. *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984. Kristeva's theories of the semiotic and the symbolic are detailed in Part I, pp. 21-106. A condensed essay also titled "Revolution in Poetic Language" is published in Toril Moi, ed., *The Kristeva Reader*. London: Basil Blackwell, 1986, pp. 89-135.
16. Kristeva, "Revolution in Poetic Language", *op. cit.*, p. 92-3.
17. *ibid.*, p. 94.
18. *ibid.*, p. 95.
19. *ibid.*, p. 96-7.
20. *ibid.*, p. 101.
21. Kristeva (1981) in "Interview - 1974", m/f, 5/6, p. 166. Also quoted in Elizabeth Grosz. *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989, p. 165.
22. For further readings on both Irigaray and Kristeva see Elizabeth Grosz. *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989.

ONE. Clarice Lispector: The (Pallid) Subject Breaks Down.

1. Clarice Lispector. *The Passion according to G.H.* trans. Ronald W. Sousa. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988. This novel was originally published as *A paixão segundo G.H.*
2. Ronald Sousa notes that his translation from the Portuguese results in some loss of potential language chaos and ambiguity. In my reading I have kept this in mind. Some contradictory and ambiguous features do still appear in the English translation.
3. Lispector, op. cit., p. 31. Hereafter page numbers are given in parentheses in the text.
4. Hélène Cixous. *Reading With Clarice Lispector*, ed., trans., and introduced by Verena Andermatt Conley. *Theory and History of Literature*, 73. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p. vii. Cixous does not specifically read *The Passion According to G.H.* but alludes to it in this text.
5. Jacques Lacan, *Encore: Seminaire XX* (Paris, 1975.), trans. and quoted by Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 102
6. Elizabeth Grosz. "Julia Kristeva: Abjection, motherhood and love" in *Sexual Subversions*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989. p. 75.
7. *ibid.*, p. 76.
8. Julia Kristeva's concept of "abjection" is theorised in *Powers of Horror. An Essay in Abjection.*, trans., Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
9. Georges Bataille quoted in Kristeva *Powers of Horror*, op. cit., p. 64. From Georges Bataille, "L'Abjection et les formes miserables," in *Essais de sociologie, Oeuvres completes*. Paris: Gallimard, 1970, p. 217.
10. Kristeva, op. cit., pp. 1-2.
11. *ibid.*, p. 91
12. *ibid.*, p. 5.
13. *ibid.*, p.41.
14. *ibid.*, p. 54.
15. *ibid.*, p. 3.
16. *ibid.*, p.13.

TWO. Jeanette Winterson: (Re)writing a Fetishist (female) Villian.

1. Jeanette Winterson. *The Passion*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988.
2. Susan Rubin Suleiman. *Subversive Intent. Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990. pp. 163-169.
3. *ibid.*, p. 163.
4. Julia Kristeva. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans., Leon S. Roudiez. London: Basil Blackwell, 1980, p. 78.
5. See Mikhail Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
6. Kristeva, op. cit., p. 81.
7. Winterson, op. cit., p. 94. Hereafter all page numbers from *The Passion* are given in parentheses in the text.
8. Bakhtin, op. cit., p. 60.
9. Kristeva, op. cit., p. 79.
10. Jacques Derrida. *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, trans. A. Ronell. New York: Schocken Books, 1985, p. 38.
11. Jacques Lacan. *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan. Tavistock, 1977, p. 288.
12. *ibid.*, p. 289. This passage is from an essay titled "The Signification of the Phallus", pp. 289-90.
13. See Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 61-2. The emphasis and interpolated statements added are Irigaray's.

14. See Elizabeth Grosz. *Jacques Lacan. A Feminist Introduction*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990, p.122.
15. *ibid.*, p. 116.
16. Parveen Adams. "Of Female Bondage" in Teresa Brennan ed., *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1989, p 248.
17. *ibid.*
18. See Teresa de Lauretis. "Perverse Desire: The Lure of the Mannish Lesbian" in *Australian Feminist Studies* 13 (Autumn 1991), p. 20. De Lauretis is (re)reading both Freudian theories of fetishism and Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. She speculates that a lesbian desire is not masculine or simply phallic. For de Lauretis a lesbian fetish signifies the absence of the object of desire (the female body) and the subject's wish for it.
19. Grosz, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
20. Jacques Lacan. "The Mirror-phase as Formative of the Function of the I", trans. Jean Roussel, *New Left Review* 51 (Sept/Oct. 1968), p. 73 quoted in Juliet Mitchell. *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. London: Penguin, 1986, p. 385.
21. Jacques Lacan. *Encore: Séminaire XX*. (Paris, 1975) trans. by Luce Irigaray in "Così Fan Tutti" in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 90.
22. Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 248.
23. Jeanette Winterson. *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987.
24. See Luce Irigaray's "And One Does Not Stir Without the Other", trans. Hélène Vivienne Wenzel in *Signs* 7:1 (Autumn 1981). This essay in many respects echoes the notion of abjection explored by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*. In Irigaray's essay it relates specifically to the mother-daughter relation.
25. See "When Our Lips Speak Together" in Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*. *op. cit.*, pp. 205 -18. Also trans. Carolyn Burke in *Signs* 6:1 (Fall 1980), pp. 69-79. Irigaray (re) writes the abject mother-daughter relation as a woman/woman or female subject/female subject relation. This textual strategy of Irigaray's has implications for the reading of lesbian subject constructions although this may not have been her explicit aim.
26. Monique Wittig. *The Lesbian Body*, trans. David LeVay. Boston: Beacon Press, 1986. Wittig explicitly (re)writes female relations as "lesbian". Wittig's textual strategy is experimental and anti-patriarchal. For her lesbians are not 'women' but actively desiring subjects for themselves and each other.
27. Monique Wittig. *Les Guérillères*, trans. David LeVay. Boston: Beacon Press, 1985. This text is something of an experimental (re)writing of Amazon mythologies in which the women wage war on patriarchal ideologies. These ferocious females are signified symbolically by the vulva or circle. The text also suggests a deconstruction of dual hierarchical systems of meaning signified by any singular signifier, male or female.
28. De Lauretis, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
29. See Irigaray. *This Sex....*, *op. cit.* p. 71.
30. Jacques Derrida and Christie V. MacDonald "Cheorographies" in *Diacritics* 12:2 (Summer 1982), p. 76. Also see Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, p. 34.
31. Kristeva, *Desire In Language*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
32. *ibid.*
33. See Julia Kristeva. Toril Moi ed., *The Kristeva Reader*. London: Basil Blackwell, 1986, p. 111.
34. Winterson, *The Passion*, *op. cit.* back cover.
35. Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, *op. cit.* p. 111
36. *ibid.*
37. *ibid.*, p. 113.
38. *ibid.*, p. 115
39. *ibid.*
40. Jane Gallop in Stephen Heath and Colin MacCabe, eds., *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction*. London: MacMillan, 1982, p. 99.

THREE. Camille Roy: The Poetics of Lesbian Sadoomasochistic Eroticism.

1. Camille Roy. "From 'The Rosy Medallions' " in Joan Nestle and Naomi Holoch, eds., *Women on Women: An Anthology of American Lesbian Short Fiction*. New York: Plume, 1989, pp. 75 -82. The editors of *Women on Women* note that this short fictional work was published in *Deep Down : The New Sensual Writing by Women*. Faber and Faber, 1989 and that originally it appeared under the title *Oct. 8*. The edition of *Deep Down* in which I originally read this work published it as "Oct. 8."- a slightly longer version of "From 'The Rosy Medallions' ". In other words this short text has been either published or referred to as *Oct. 8.*, "Oct. 8", "From 'The Rosy Medallions' " or "The Rosy Medallions". "From" suggested to me that this might be extracted from a longer work or a novel. My efforts to trace such a publication have so far been unsuccessful. However, for the reader not familiar with the genre of lesbian sadoomasochistic writing, Samois' (a San Francisco based lesbian s/m collective) *Coming to Power*. Boston: Alyson, 1982 and Pat Califia's *Macho Sluts*. Boston: Alyson, 1988. might be useful additional reading in lesbian s/m erotic fiction. What is interesting about Roy's writing within this genre is its "poeticization". Much of the writing in this field is realist narrative fiction.
2. Roy, op. cit., p. 80. Hereafter all page numbers will be indicated in parentheses in the text.
3. Parveen Adams. "Of Female Bondage" in Teresa Brennan, ed., *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1989. p. 262.
4. ibid.
5. Teresa de Lauretis. "Perverse Desire: The Lure of the Mannish Lesbian" op. cit., p.23.
6. See Stephen Heath. "Joan Riviere: Womanliness as a Masquerade," in Victor Burgin et al. eds., *Formations of Fantasy*. London: Methuen, 1986, pp. 35-44.
7. Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit. *The Forms of Violence: Narrative in Assyrian Art and Modern Culture*. New York: Schocken Books, 1985, pp. 68-9.
8. ibid.
9. De Lauretis, op. cit., p. 22.
10. Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, op. cit., p. 92.
11. ibid. p. 116.
12. Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, op. cit., p. 58
13. Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, op. cit., p. 116.
14. Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, op. cit., pp. 235-270
15. See Judith Butler. "The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva" in *Hypatia* 3:3 (Winter 1989), pp. 105-117. Butler is severely critical of what she sees as Kristeva's naturalization of a specific cultural configuration of maternity and her implication that lesbianism is culturally unintelligible. There is a dimension to Kristevan theory in which she posits that access to the pre-oedipal semiotic is recuperable in the Symbolic by male poets and by women through motherhood. For many feminist and lesbian feminist theorists this simply re-positions women in the "only men and mothers exist in the Symbolic" representational mode.
16. Julia Kristeva. *Desire in Language*. op. cit., pp. 239-40.

Hewson/Walker: The Undecidable (cherished) Object(s) of Desire.

17. Hewson/Walker. *Cherished Objects: an illustrated novel*. Adelaide: The Experimental Art Foundation, 1989. Hereafter page numbers will be given in parentheses in the text.
18. 'Imperial Vinyl' was exhibited at the One-Off Gallery, Adelaide in *Terminology of Distance*, 1987. It was published in Ken Bolton, ed., *Otis Rush 1* (SA Publishing Ventures and Futures, 1989). 'Travel' was exhibited in *Cactus*, at the Contemporary Art Centre of SA, Adelaide, 1988 and Artspace, Sydney, 1989.

19. de Lauretis, op. cit., p. 22.
20. Jacques Derrida. *Positions*. London: Althone Press, 1981, pp. 41-2.
21. Jacques Derrida. "The Double Session" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 173-286
22. ibid. p. 258
23. Elizabeth Grosz. "Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity" in Sneja Gunew ed., *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct*. London: Routledge, 1990, p. 97.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Primary Texts.

- Adams, Parveen. "Representation and Sexuality". In Parveen Adams and Elizabeth Cowie, eds., *The Woman In Question: m/f*. London: Verso, 1990, pp. 231-252. [also in *m/f*, 1 (1978)].
- Adams, Parveen and Jeff Minson. "The 'Subject' of Feminism." In Adams and Cowie, eds., *The Woman In Question* pp. 81-101. [also in *m/f*, 2 (1978)].
- Adams, Parveen. "Per Os(cillation)". In J. Donald, ed. *Thresholds: Psychoanalysis and Cultural Theory*. London: Macmillan, 1989.
- Adams, Parveen. "A note on Sexual Division and Sexual Differences." *m/f*, 3 (1979), pp. 51-58.
- Adams, Parveen. "Of Female Bondage." In Teresa Brennan, ed. *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 247-265.
- Bakhtin, W.M. *The Dialogical Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- Benjamin, Jessica. "A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space." In Teresa de Lauretis, ed. *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986. pp. 78-101.
- Benveniste, E. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971.
- Bersani, Leo and Ulysse Dutoit. *The Forms of Violence: Narrative in Assyrian Art and Modern Culture*. New York: Schocken Books, 1985.
- Brennan, Teresa (ed.). *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Burke, Carolyn. "Irigaray Through the Looking Glass." *Feminist Studies*, 6 (1981), pp. 288-306.
- Butler, Judith. "The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva". In *Hypatia* 3:3 (Winter 1989).
- Couani, Anna and Sneja Gunew (eds.). *Telling Ways: Australian Women's Experimental Writing*. Adelaide: Australian Feminist Studies, 1988.
- Cixous, Hélène. *Reading with Clarice Lispector*, ed. and trans. Verena Andermatt Conley. In *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 73. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.
- Conley, Verena Andermatt. *Hélène Cixous, Writing the Feminine*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- De Lauretis, Teresa, ed. *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- De Lauretis. *Technologies of Gender*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

- De Lauretis, Teresa. "Perverse Desire: The Lure of the Mannish Lesbian." In *Australian Feminist Studies*, 13 (Autumn 1991). pp. 15-26.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri C. Spivak. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Differánce." In *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass. Brighton: Harvester, 1982, pp. 1-27.
- Derrida Jacques, "Living On: Border Lines." In Harold Bloom et al., *Deconstruction and Criticism*. New York: Continuum, 1979.
- Derrida Jacques, and Christie V. McDonald. "Choreographies." *Diacritics*, 12:2, 66-76.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Fetishism" (1927). In *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. Philip Reiff. New York: Collier Books, 1963.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Humour" (1927). In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey et al., Vol. 21. London: Hogarth Press, 1971.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905). In *Standard Edition*, Vol. 7. London: Hogarth Press, 1963.
- Gallop, Jane. *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990.
- Heath, Stephen. "Joan Riviere: Womanliness as a Masquerade." In Victor Burgin et al. eds., *Formations of Fantasy*. London: Methuen, 1986, pp.35-44
- Hewson/Walker. *Cherished Objects: an illustrated novel*. Adelaide: The Experimental Art Foundation, 1989.
- Irigaray, Luce. "And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other," trans. Helene Vivienne Wenzel. In *Signs* 7: 1 (Autumn 1981).
- Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985
- Jones, Ann Rosalind. "Inscribing Femininity: French Theories of the Feminine". In Gail Green and Copelia Kahn, eds. *Making the Difference: Feminist Literary Theory*. New York: Macmillan, 1985.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror : An Essay in Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

- Kristeva, Julia. "The Speaking Subject." In M. Blonsky, ed. *On Signs*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985.
- Kristeva, Julia. *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror-phase as Formative of the Function of the I", trans. Jean Roussel. In *New Left Review*, 15 (Sept/Oct. 1968).
- Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Tavistock, 1977.
- Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan. London: The Hogarth Press, 1977.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Oedipus Complex". In *Semiotext(e)*, 10, (1981).
- Laplanche, Jean and J.-B. Pontalis. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. London: Hogarth Press, 1973.
- Laplanche, Jean and J.-B. Pontalis. "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality". In Victor Burgin et al, eds., *Formations of Fantasy*. London: Methuen, 1986, pp. 5-34.
- Lispector, Clarice. *The Passion According to G.H.*, trans. Ronald W. Sousa. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
- Mills, Sara, Lynne Pearce, Sue Spaul and Elaine Millard (eds.). *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.
- Mitchell, Juliet. *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. London: Allen Lane, 1974.
- Mitchell, Juliet and Jacqueline Rose, (eds.). *Feminine Sexuality; Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne*, trans. Jacqueline Rose. London: Macmillan, 1982.
- Rose, Jacqueline. *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*. London: Verso, 1986.
- Roy, Camille. "From The Rosy Medallions". In Joan Nestle and Naomi Holoch, eds., *Women on Women: An Anthology of American Lesbian Short Fiction*, New York: Plume, 1990.
- Roy, Camille. "Oct. 8." In Laura Chester, ed., *Deep Down: The New Sensual Writing by Women*. New York: Faber and Faber, 1989.
- Royer, Michelle. "Afterthoughts on Readings of Sexual Differences." In *Australian Feminist Studies* 13 (Autumn 1991), pp. 81-84.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin. New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1966.
- Suleiman, Susan Rubin. *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Winterson, Jeanette. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987. (Original Edition, 1985).
- Winterson, Jeanette. *The Passion*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988.
- Wittig, Monique. *The Lesbian Body*, trans. David LeVay. Boston: Beacon Press, 1986.
- Wittig, Monique. *Les Guerilleres*, trans. David LeVay. Boston: Beacon: Beacon Press, 1985.

Secondary Texts.

- Abel, Elizabeth. "(E)merging Identities: The Dynamics of Female Friendships in Contemporary Fiction by Women." In *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 6 (1981).
- Andermatt, Verena. "Julia Kristeva and the Traversal of Modern Poetic Space." In *Enclitic* 1:2 (Fall 1977), pp. 65-77.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Rotsel. New York: Ardis, 1973.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968.
- Bartkowski, Frances. "Feminism and Deconstruction: A Union Forever Deferred." In *Enclitic* 4:2 (Fall 1980), pp. 70-77.
- Benvenuto, B. and R. Kennedy. *The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction*. London: Free Association Books, 1986.
- Brady, Elizabeth. "Voices From the Periphery: First-generation Lesbian Fiction in Canada." In *Resources for Feminist Research* 12 (March 1983), pp. 22-6.
- Burke, Carolyn. "Report From Paris: Women's Writing and the Women's Movement." In *Signs* 3:4 (Summer 1978).
- Burke, Carolyn. "Gertrude Stein, the Cone Sisters, and the Puzzle of Female Friendship." In *Critical Inquiry* 8:3 (1982), pp. 543-64.
- Campioni, M. and Elizabeth Gross. "Little Hans: The Production of Oedipus." In Paul Foss and Meaghan Morris, eds., *Language, Sexuality and Subversion*. Sydney: Feral, 1978.
- Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." In *Signs* 1:4 (Summer 1976), pp. 875-93.
- Cixous, Hélène. "Castration or Decapitation?" In *Signs*, 7:1, (1981), pp. 41-55.
- Clément, Catherine. *The Lives and Legends of Jacques Lacan*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Conley, Verena. "Missexual Misstery." In *Diacritics* 7:2 (June 1977), pp. 70-82.
- Courtivron, Isabelle de and Elaine Marks, eds. *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980.
- Davis, R.C. (ed.). *Lacan and Narration: The Psychoanalytic Difference in Narrative Theory*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1983.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Spurs*, trans. Barbara Harlow, introd. Stefano Agosti. Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1979.
- Derrida, Jacques. "The Purveyors of Truth". In *Yale French Studies*, 52. (1976), pp. 31-115.

- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. "Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality." In *New Literary Theory* XVI:3, pp. 514-543.
- Eisenstein, Hester and Alice Jardine, (eds.). *The Future of Difference*. Boston: G.K. Hall and Co. and Barnard Women's College, 1980.
- Felman, Shoshana. "On Reading Poetry: Reflections on the Limits and Possibilities of Psychoanalytic Approaches". In Joseph S. Smith, ed., *The Literary Freud: Mechanisms of Defense and Poetic Will*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980.
- Felman, Shoshana. "Women and Madness: The Critical Fallacy." In *Diacritics* 5:4 (Winter 1975), pp. 2-10.
- Felman, Shoshana. "To Open the Question", *Literature and Psychoanalysis. The Question of Reading: Otherwise*. Yale French Studies, 55:6 (1977), pp. 5-10.
- Felman, Shoshana. "The Originality of Jacques Lacan." *Poetics Today*, 2 (1980).
- Felman, Shoshana. *Jacques Lacan and The Adventure of Insight*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Forsyth, Louise H. "The Radical Transformation of the Mother-Daughter Relationship in Some Canadian Writers." In *Frontiers* 6:1-2 (Spring-Summer 1981).
- Foss, Paul. "On the Text Which Is Not One". In P. Foss and Meaghan Morris, eds., *Language, Sexuality and Subversion*. Sydney: Feral, 1978.
- Gallop, Jane. "Psychoanalysis in France." In *Women in Literature* 7:1 (Winter 1979), pp. 57-63.
- Gallop, Jane. "Phallus/Penis: Same Difference." In J. Todd, Homes and Meier, eds., *Men By Women*. New York, 1981.
- Gallop, Jane. "The Father's Seduction." In *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982, pp. 56-79.
- Gallop, Jane. "Writing and Sexual Difference. The Difference Within." In E. Abel, ed., *Writing and Sexual Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Gallop, Jane. *Reading Lacan*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Garner, Shirley Nelson, Claire Kahane and Madelon Sprengnether, eds. *The (M)other Tongue. Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Giblett, Rodney. "Bracketing Bakhtin." In *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies* 4:1 (June 1986).
- Godard, Barbara. "L'Amor or the Exploding Chapter. Nicole Brossard at the Site Of Feminist Deconstruction." In *Atlantis* 9:2 (Spring 1984), pp. 23-34.
- Gould, Karen. "Setting Words Free: Feminist Writing in Quebec." In *Signs* 6 (Summer 1981), pp. 617-42.
- Gross, Elizabeth. "Lacan, the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real." In *Working Papers in Sex, Science and Culture* 2 (1976).
- Gross, Elizabeth. "Love Letters in the Sand. Jacques Lacan and Feminine Sexuality." In *Critical Philosophy* 2, 1984.

- Gross, Elizabeth. "Derrida, Irigaray and Deconstruction." In *Intervention* 20 ('Leftwright'), 1986.
- Gross, Elizabeth. "Irigaray and Sexual Difference. A Review Essay." In *Australian Feminist Studies* 2 (1986).
- Gross, Elizabeth. "The Hetero and the Homo: The Sexual Ethics of Luce Irigaray." in *Gay Information* 17-18, (1988).
- Gunew, Sneja, ed. *Feminist Knowledge. Critique and Construct*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Irigaray, Luce. "Women's Exile." In *Ideology and Consciousness* 1, (1977), pp. 57-76.
- Irigaray, Luce. "Veiled Lips." In *Mississippi Review* 11:3, (1983).
- Irigaray, Luce. "For Centuries We've Been Living in the Mother-Son Relation...." In *Hecate* 9: 1-2 (1983).
- Irigaray, Luce. "The Fecundity of the Caress." In R.A. Cohen, ed., *Face-to-Face With Levinas*. New York: State University Press, 1986.
- Jacobus, Mary. *Reading Woman. Essays in Feminist Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1986.
- Jardine, Alice. "Theories of the Feminine: Kristeva." In *Enclitic* 4:2 (Fall 1980), pp. 5-15.
- Jardine, Alice. "Pre-Texts for the Transatlantic Feminist." In *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981), pp. 220-36.
- Jardine, Alice. "Introduction to Julia Kristeva's 'Women's Time'." In *Signs* 7:1 (Autumn 1981), pp. 5-12.
- Jardine, Alice. "Gynesis." In *Diacritics* 12 (Summer 1982), pp. 54-65.
- Jardine, Alice. *Gynesis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Johnson, Barbara. "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida." In *Yale French Studies* 55:6 (1977).
- Johnson, Barbara. *The Critical Difference*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1980.
- Jones, Ann Rosalind. "Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of L'écriture feminine." In *Feminist Studies* 7:2 (Summer 1981), pp. 247-63.
- Jones, Ann Rosalind. "Julia Kristeva on Femininity. The Limits of a Semiotic Politics." In *Feminist Review* 18 (Winter 1984), pp. 56-71.
- Kristeva, Julia. "The Father, Love and Banishment." In E. Kurzweil and W. Phillips, eds., *Literature and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Lingis, A. *Excesses: Eros and Culture*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1982.
- Maclean, Marie. "Speaking in the Other's Tongue: Woman and Metalanguage." in *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies* 4:1 (June 1986).
- Makward, Christiane. "Quebec Women Writers." In *Women and Literature: French Issue* 7:1 (Winter 1979).
- Marks, Elaine. "Women and Literature in France." In *Signs* 3:4 (Summer 1978), pp. 832-842.

- Marks, Elaine and George Stambolian, eds. *Homosexualities and French Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979.
- Marks, Elaine. "Lesbian Intertextuality." In Marks and Stambolian, eds., *Homosexualities and French Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979, pp. 353-77.
- Miller, Nancy K. "The Text's Heroine: A Feminist Critic and Her Fictions." In *Diacritics* 12:2 (Summer 1982), pp. 48-53.
- Miller, Nancy. *The Poetics of Gender*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Miller, Nancy. "Changing the Subject." In Teresa de Lauretis, ed., *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Mitchell, Juliet. *Women: The Longest Revolution: On Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
- Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. London and New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Morris Meaghan. "Aspects of Current French Feminist Literary Criticism." In *Hecate* 5:2 (1979), pp. 63-72.
- Munster, Anna. "Playing With a Different Sex: Between the Covers of Irigaray and Gallop." In E. Grosz, T. Threadgold et al. eds., *Futur * Fall*, 1987.
- O'Reilly, Andrea. "Conceived in a Lesbian Embrace, Born from the Body: Reading Nicole Brossard's *These Our Mothers* as a Mother's Becoming in the Wor(1)d." In *Rampike Special Issue*. Toronto; Rampike (1988), pp. 79-82.
- Ragland- Sullivan, Ellie. *Jacques Lacan and The Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.
- Ragland-Sullivan, Ellie. "Jacques Lacan. Feminism and the Problem of Gender Identity." In *Sub-stance* 36 (1982).
- Rose, Jacqueline. "Femininity and Its Discontents." In *Feminist Review* ed. *Sexuality: A Reader*. London: Virago, 1987.
- Rosenfeld, Marthe. "Language and the Vision of a Lesbian-Feminist Utopia in Wittig's *Les Guerilleres*." In *Frontiers* 6:1-2 (Spring-Summer 1981).
- Safouan, Moustafa. "Is the Oedipus Complex Universal?" In P. Adams and E. Cowie, eds., *m/f: The Woman In Question*. London and New York: Verso, 1990, pp. 274-293. [also in *m/f* 5-6 (1981)].
- Samois, eds. *Coming to Power*. Boston, Mass.: Alyson, 1982.
- Sayers, J. *Sexual Contradictions: Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. London: Tavistock, 1986.
- Seldon, Raman. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Sussex: Harvester, 1986.
- Schor, Naomi. *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory and French Realist Fiction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Shaktini, Namascar. "Displacing the Phallic Subject: Wittig's Lesbian Writing." In *Signs* 8:1 (1982), pp. 29-44.
- Smith, J.H. and W. Kerrigan, eds. *Taking Chances: Derrida, Psychoanalysis and Literature*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984.

- Suleiman, Susan Rubin. *The Female Body In Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- Warland, Betsy. *open is broken*. Edmonton, Alberta: Longspoon Press, 1984.
- Weedon, Chris. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwells, 1987.
- Wenzel, Hélène Vivienne. "The Text as Body/Politics: An Appreciation of Monique Wittig's Writing in Context." In *Feminist Studies* 7:2 (Summer 1981), pp. 264-87.
- Wenzel, Hélène Vivienne. "Introduction to Luce Irigaray's 'And One Doesn't Stir Without the Other'." In *Signs* 7:1 (Autumn 1981), pp. 56-9.
- Wittig, Monique. "The Straight Mind." In *Feminist Issues* 1 (Summer 1980), pp. 103-11.
- Wittig, Monique and Sande Zeig. *Lesbian Peoples: Material for a Dictionary*. New York: Avon, 1979.
- Wittig, Monique. "One is Not Born a Woman." In *Feminist Issues* 2 (1980).
- Wittig, Monique. "The Category of Sex." In *Feminist Issues* 2:2 (Fall 1982), pp. 63-8.
- Wittig, Monique. "The Point of View: Universal or Particular." In *Feminist Issues* 3:2 (Fall 1983), pp. 63-69.
- Wittig, Monique. "The Mark Of Gender." In *Feminist Issues* 5:2 (Fall 1985), pp. 3-12.
- Winterson, Jeanette. *Sexing the Cherry*. London: Vintage, 1989.
- Winterson, Jeanette. *Boating For Beginners*. London: Methuen, 1985.
- Wright, Elizabeth. *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Methuen, 1984.
- Zimmerman, Bonnie. "Daughters of Darkness: Lesbian Vampires." In *Jump Cut* 24:5, pp. 23-4.