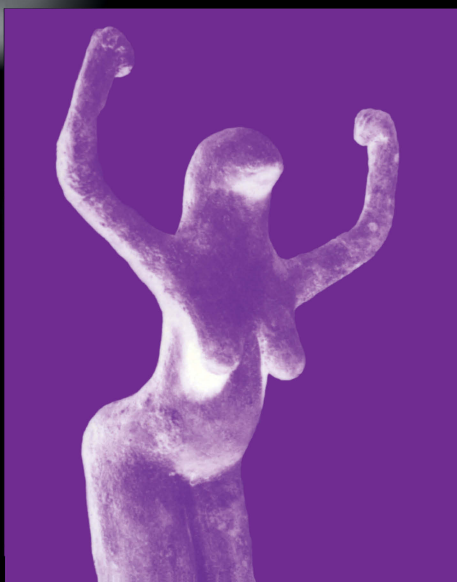


The Castration of Oedipus

Feminism,
Psychoanalysis,
and the Will to Power



J.C. Smith and Carla J. Ferstman
with an introduction by Ann Scales

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of Oedipus*

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*J. C. Smith and
Carla Ferstman*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
Ann Scales

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I sing the body electric

The armies of those I love engulf me and I engirth them,
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,
And disarrange them, and charge them full with the charge of
the soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies
conceal themselves?

And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who
defile the dead?

And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?

And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?

—Walt Whitman,
Leaves of Grass

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Abbreviations

Freud

- SE *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1966).

Derrida

- Ap *Aporias* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).
Df "Difference," in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
DS "The Double Session," in *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
EM "The Ends of Man," in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
EO *The Ear of the Other* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).
Glas *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).
PC *The Post Card* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
Pit "The Pit and the Pyramid," in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
Pos *Positions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
PP "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

Abbreviations

x Sp *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

Goux

OP *Oedipus, Philosopher* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

P "The Phallus: Masculine Identity and the 'Exchange of Women,'" in *Difference* 4 (spring 1992), "The Phallus Issue."

Lacan

E *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).

F *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981).

FS *Feminine Sexuality*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982).

OS "Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatsoever," in *The Languages of and the Criticisms of the Sciences of Man*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugene Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970).

S I "Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954," in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

S II "The Ego in Freud's Theory 1954-1955," in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988).

S III "The Psychoses, 1955-1956," in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993).

S VII "The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960," in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992).

Tel *Television* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990).

Laplanche

- L&D *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

Laplanche and Pontalis

- FO "Fantasy and the Origin of Sexuality," in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986).
 LP *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973).

Nietzsche

In most cases, Nietzsche's works are cited in the text by section numbers. Where Nietzsche did not use section numbers, the reference will be to a page.

- BGE *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1973).
 BT *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 1968).
 D *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
 EH *Ecce Homo*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1979).
 GM *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 1968).
 GS *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).
 HH *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
 Pt N *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (London: Penguin Books, 1982).
 T *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (London: Penguin Books, 1982).

Abbreviations

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TL	<i>On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense</i> , a fragment published posthumously, in <i>The Portable Nietzsche</i> , trans. Walter Kaufmann (London: Penguin Books, 1982).
UD	<i>On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life</i> , in <i>Untimely Meditations</i> , trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
UM	<i>Untimely Meditations</i> , trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
WP	<i>The Will to Power</i> , trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968).
Z	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1969).

Introduction

These authors have a lot of nerve. They have swum into the treacherous waters among the already rocky shores of psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and feminism, but not only that. They have written a book that claims to be *doing* each of those enterprises simultaneously rather than redescribing or reinterpreting them. Even more outrageously, they claim to be pushing psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and feminism to those perspectives' logical conclusions.

At no point do the authors attempt to define the three disciplines. They start, rather, with certain notions that are fundamental to each. They believe, fundamental to feminism, that women are oppressed, in every conceivable, cruel way. Something must be done about it if women are to be minimally protected or maximally "liberated," or, indeed, if the history of this species is to be other than stories of misery upon misery. They believe, fundamental to postmodernism, that in this postquantum-mechanical, post-Nietzschean, literally postmodern world, there is no "objective" reality. We cannot separate what we believe we "know" from how we know it. Everything that we "know," all that we are, is a function of language. They believe, fundamental to psychoanalysis, that there is a developmental process of "genderization," which process is not rational but driven by primal needs. Further, the genders constructed are not symmetrically related: for our "linguaging biped species," the process requires that the genders be differently understood, and even hierarchically ordered.

One could challenge the authors' simplification of these presuppositions (which of course I have simplified much further for the purposes of this introduction) or ask why these suppositions are not necessary to their respective disciplines or how subschools of each discipline actively deny

2 the respective suppositions. The power of this book, however, requires the reader to suspend those objections temporarily, in order to ask: *What if* the disciplines as characterized were combined? *What if* each discipline were taken to its logical limits? *What if* the disciplines had to meet each other—what would be the result?

In order to get that far, these authors claim that each of those disciplines (or sets of disciplines) can afford to sacrifice some of its most cherished tenets. They work in that “sacrifice” concept right off the top, and it ain’t that easy to swallow.

Feminism must give up its belief in the ideal of equality and in other prediscursive concepts such as nature and justice. Postmodernism has to give up its preoccupation with endless indeterminacy and allow itself to be used in the service of political ends and psychical transformation. Postmodernism must allow that there are morally compelling cases (such as the historical torture of women) and that, at least in those cases, postmodernism can be method rather than entirety. Psychoanalysis, having in its Lacanian form begun the purge of biological necessity, must now realize the contingency of its patriarchal conclusions. Allowing the inversion particularly of its Oedipal hypothesis (regarding the psychically violent separation of the [male] infant from the mother), it must recognize the primacy of the female, at least on the level of psychic reality.

Why would anyone want, even for the sake of argument, to make such sacrifices? In public discourses, battles seem to be won by fortifying rather than blurring the lines among points of view. In the academy, awards come from being aligned with a point of view and by picking away at competitors. It pays to be a loyal soldier in a particular army (some more than others), or at least to be a consistent, predictable resister of other ways of thinking. There is also reward in ownership. I could argue that many of the insights both of postmodernism and contemporary psychoanalysis are at best redundant of, and at worst ripped off from, radical feminism. I am sure that students of postmodernism and psychoanalysis could make parallel, oppositional arguments. The incentives to compartmentalize, to claim, to be uncontaminated, to assert truths are not trivial. One’s economic, political, and existential security can depend on it. These authors ask a lot of us.

As I am a radical feminist activist/lawyer/law teacher, my appreciation of this book must flow from what it can do for feminism. There’s an obstacle right there, insofar as the authors place, and require readers to

accept, at least some value in psychoanalytic theory. The other perspectives serve to whip psychoanalysis into shape, to render it useful today. (That is, postmodern method can clarify Freud's essentialist mistakes, and feminism can negate the prescriptive aspects of the Oedipal passage.) Thus, the primary concern of these authors is with the "why" of male dominance. As they note, there has always been an ambivalent relationship between feminism and psychoanalysis. Feminism is expert in the "what" of male dominance. Sometimes we cannot help but confront the why, usually out of compassion for our brothers. Though psychoanalysis can offer such explanations, those explanations seem always to import the sexually bimorphic terms of the Oedipal passage: phallic possession or lack, seduction, and castration. Of these terms, feminism is deeply and rightly suspicious, not only because of the Freudians' demonstrated misogyny but also because of the depressing stasis and morbidity implicit in the theories and the threat that any alliance with psychoanalysis will put us forever in the pit of "cultural feminism."

And that is a dark, deep pit. These authors state that contemporary feminisms tend toward the liberal ideal of equality, or otherwise toward essentialism, "advocating some form of the female supremacy over the male rooted in the biological differences between the sexes, or . . . some kind of mysticism about the female body."¹ I guarantee that this is a gross oversimplification of feminist *theory*. But it is an accurate description of how feminism has been *treated*. Feminist work, for all its insight and nuance, has been bludgeoned into the categories, roughly, of liberal and cultural feminism. Anything that is not liberal feminism (which the important work is not) gets called "cultural feminism," or less politely "Femi-Nazism," or even that most feared of all evils, "male-bashing." Why redomesticate that dog?

Five years ago, in a telephone conversation with J. C. Smith, I was describing how my early published work had been criticized for resorting to psychoanalytic theory and questioning whether feminism ought not to just abandon that approach. In the midst of my complaints and hardlining, J. C. interrupted to say (and those who know him can hear this exactly in their minds), "*But Ann, how else can you understand this crazy world and the crazy men who run it?*" How indeed? Why should feminists accept the risks of entertaining psychoanalysis yet again? The short answer to that came again from J. C. Smith, during a faculty lunch seminar in January of 1993, while I was visiting at the University of British Columbia. In a fifty-

4 minute span, Professor Smith shared the skeletal structure of this book, focusing on the relevance of Nietzsche to a postmodern, psychoanalytic feminism. One of our colleagues earnestly asked, But doesn't this whole theory undermine the goal of equality? J. C.'s short response: *"Equality is a male game."*

Those five words refocused my thinking and, I believe, encapsulate the greatest contribution of this book to feminist thought. Radical lawyers of all stripes have known for a long time that the discourse of equality was not "real," and surely not neutral. Our greatest theorists, particularly Catharine MacKinnon, have demonstrated how "equality" is manipulated to patriarchal ends. As shifting sands these are, MacKinnon long since predicted the path of almost every grain.

The authors of this book focus on the idea that women have settled, and that some feminist theories allow women to settle, for mere "patriarchal civility." This idea had its best feminist articulation in Andrea Dworkin's classic (absolutely fundamental reading) *Right-Wing Women*. J. C. Smith and Carla Ferstman complement Dworkin's approach by pursuing that settlement to its psychical origins and by showing how the settlement is mandated by a blind (yea, Oedipal) commitment to the ideal of equality.

The authors do not advocate an abandonment of equality discourse but a more strategic relationship to it. Those of us in the field have known that for some time and have proceeded accordingly. But these authors, in their central metaphor, give us a different way to understand why we must deploy the concept of equality with caution.

When Oedipus "answered" the riddle of the Sphinx, he made man the measure of all things. In the view of these authors, Oedipus symbolizes not only a wrong-headed and incomplete problem of childhood development but stands also for the ridiculous (though understandable) human desire for there to be answers to life's riddles. That is the basic impulse of modernity and its greatest political achievement—liberalism.

Contemporary liberalism has swept Nietzsche's lessons under a procedural rug. Thus, within liberalism, though there may not be a "right" answer among competing points of view, those points of view are presumed rational, and the world is right so long as the rational conversation among points of view continues. "Mistakes" (such as torture and genocide) will be disclosed in the fullness of time. We can fix those "errors." It is all right. Everything is really going quite smoothly.

As radical feminism has long since demonstrated, this is the central

metaphysic of patriarchy, as well as its insurance policy. Modernity and liberalism guarantee that real problems cannot even be fully realized, much less fixed. Equality is the centerpiece of this regime. Equality—conceived in rational, even mathematical, terms—provides the moral imprimatur for fixing nothing. In the United States, the weight of this imprimatur is evident in the public hysteria over the “injustice” of affirmative action (and that doctrine’s dramatic demise in constitutional law). There was once a complex question: What to do about centuries of oppression? Now there is an easy answer: whatever we do, it can’t be by means of acknowledging centuries of oppression.

Thus, “equality” as an abstract end is an Oedipal “solved riddle.” That of course misses the point of riddles and produces a “blindspot” (that metaphor again) about how patriarchal metaphysics is generated, sustained, and deployed with such seamless success. True believers in the ideal of equality cannot see how they are doomed to be sharecroppers on Apollo’s farm. As the authors put it: “My faith in the system as one which will protect my interests, ensure my voice and give me justice — O Almighty Justice!, is a system which at its very roots seeks to keep me down. Give me laws, give me rights entrenched in constitutions — let them proclaim that I as woman am a person, for this I did not know.”²

This book is *really* scary (to unreformed liberals and their beneficiaries) because it not only exposes the fallacies of equality at a psychological level, it also proposes the supremacy of the female as an alternative. Is this anything other than the “cultural feminism” trap? These authors go to lengths to explain how their postmodern, psychoanalytic feminism is not simply the replacement of Oppressor A with Oppressor B. First, they advocate the recognition of “female supremacy” as distinguishable from “female superiority.” The latter implies male inferiority, which is not their claim. The difference is crucial to their call for male sacrifice: the male’s gift does not flow from his vilification. Rather, it is the joyful counterpart to his liberation from the neurotic, debilitating illusion of control. His sacrifice to HER is matched by the gift to him of his own animality.

All of this takes place in the realm of “psychic reality.” For a feminism driven by something other than the equality game or by biological/psychological essentialism, we must locate our efforts, to use the Lacanian terms central to this book, “in the registries of the Imaginary and the Symbolic.” It is only then that feminism will be realized for what it is: a path toward social and psychical transformation rather than a “phallic ‘seizure of

6 power.' "³ Properly understood, these authors' alternative narrative of matriarchal consciousness "is not an opposition within patriarchy but its grand antithesis."⁴

Really? We really need to know and that depends on the strength of the book's central thesis. "There can be no self without a discourse, no discourse without a master signifier, no master signifier without a grand metaphor, no grand metaphor without a primal fantasy, no primal fantasy except through the body of the female."⁵ The thesis rests on the middle chapters, the neo-Lacanian arguments about the connections between childhood anxieties, language, and repression. These chapters will strike some feminists as a load of French vomit. (In fairness to the authors, however, though they use lots of the lingo of postmodernism, their arguments helped to demystify at least the Lacanian branch of that study for me. I'm sure some will object that the demystification could occur only because the authors' arguments are not really postmodernist—I'm not equipped to judge.) But these middle chapters are necessary to thwart biological determinism, to get to the matrix of language, and therefore to the contingency of maleness as the "privileged signifier."

I would have neither the knowledge nor the inclination to make such an argument in such terms. That is why I need this book. With a carefully constructed argument, it further informs what we already knew about both the contingency of patriarchy and the uselessness of its metaphysics. I want to say that this book advances a discussion that had become depressing in its compartmentalization and predictable traps. The authors, however, would be the first to retort that the notion of "advancing" is one of our species' strangest symptoms.

In any case, this book is a great chew, and also fun. I'm sure the authors recognize the compliment. They have willingly exposed their own vulnerabilities and accepted the risks and, in their confession to the high crime of "grand theory,"⁶ implicitly allowed that their mission may be undermined by its own terms. They understand the pitfalls and the rather endearing misguidedness in the "will to theory." At the end of the day, their own creation may be subject to Nietzsche's bottom line: "I hope that at this artificial inflation of a small species into the absolute measure of things one is still permitted to laugh?"⁷

Having said that, there are parts of the arguments in this book that are not fun and are indeed deeply troubling. (Every reader can no doubt make her own different list.) For example, fundamental to this work is a claim

to the urgency and frustration of male mammalian sexuality. Catharine MacKinnon has called this the “hard-wiring” defense of male aggression;⁸ it has been a mightily convenient explanation for many atrocities. This book of course posits the hard wiring very differently and raises the question of whether that business that won’t go away could ever be a link in a liberatory chain. Again, these authors have a lot of nerve.

Much of the controversial material in this book arises from the (by now) self-evident theoretical proposition that what we call “knowledge” is produced by contrast between and among presumed opposites, in an endless spiraling “economy.” The authors go much further (or much backward, from a postmodernist point of view). They argue that sexuality/genderization is the *basic* contrast and that all knowledge is dependent on sexuality, which is in turn based on their central notion that humans must have some fantasy/understanding of “the generative power of nature.”

That leads them to two other, more extravagant claims. First, that a domination/submission dialectic has been?/will always be? necessary to the human psyche. Second, that there is a *jouissance* in masochism (at least for the male). They could not have hit more controversial chords.

I will not attempt to summarize the connections among these ideas, which are the substance of this book. The authors go on to make detailed distinctions between pathological (bad) masochism and perverse (good) masochism. Their conclusions about sacrifice and castration depend on those distinctions. As of publication time, I have not determined whether my uneasiness is substantive or a reaction to the language of domination/submission, master/slave dialectic, *jouissance* of masochism, and all the other terms that have received recent popularity through a Frenchified abstraction of real traumas.

I have provisionally chosen, perhaps incorrectly, to understand these connections and distinctions in a larger psychical context. I think of them in terms of the pain of individuation—the struggle involved in having a self when the self is an entirely vulnerable, and inevitably temporary, construct. Though I am not otherwise given to grand theory, I recognize this struggle in much human endeavor, whether as a psychoanalytic explanation (per the Oedipal passage or the alternative to it proposed in this book), as a theological necessity (as in most “Eastern” religions), or as a metaphysical mistake (or the mistake that is metaphysics), which has had massively stupid and horrid consequences (the exposure of which was Nietzsche’s great contribution).

These reservations notwithstanding, this book makes many specific, not necessarily grand-theory-dependent contributions, four of which have settled forever in my brain. First is the psychoanalytic deconstruction of equality, described above, which I believe adds a new dimension to what we already understand and practice.

Second is the reinvigoration of Nietzsche in terms useful to the feminist millennium. Only Luce Irigaray, among widely read authors, has been able to give Nietzsche back to feminist social theory with any success. The effort of these authors, in my view, is even better. That may not matter to many readers. I suspect, however, that there are feminists besides me who have had a heretofore embarrassed attraction to (and inspiration from) Nietzsche's work, in spite of its misogynist moments, which these authors try to explain and in any case go beyond.

Third is the extraordinary exploration in this book of the connections among religion, law, and pornography. Several activists/scholars have long suspected that religion and pornography were mirror images; they knew, if only intuitively, that de Sade and Saint Paul are each other's evil twin, as these authors state unequivocally. The authors' construct has its genesis in the work of Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, and Jane Caputi—among others. But here we have something new. Even for those of us who are suspicious of linear constructs, the logos-law-penis axis described in this book is critical grist for our mill; it may even be a genuine breakthrough.

Fourth, the insights that J. C. Smith and Carla Ferstman provide about poor old Oedipus himself have both social and personal therapeutic value. Many of us know an Oedipal figure: a person who has surrendered the possibilities of life to the patriarchal institutions that make claim to certainty, the institutions that promise everything but at the literal end of the day deliver nothing. Those are really the terms of the bargain for lots of women. But many of us (particularly, perhaps, those of my generation who have attended the elderly) also know such a man: a former prince in Apollo's court who finds himself, at his animal end, literally and/or figuratively blind and crawling about in institutional excrement.

This business of finding or denying joy, of embracing or resisting resistance to certainty, is of consequence for everybody. Those topics are the real focus for J. C. Smith and Carla Ferstman. In that context, there are some specific conclusions of this book that ring true for me. The costs of the once presumably necessary "Oedipal separation" have been

astronomical for all organisms and for the earth herself. Our species must come to terms with its animality if we are to realize Nietzsche's "YES" to life. That minimally requires alternative forms of male heterosexuality, which means that men must relinquish the power that is in fact their misery. Some sacrifice (in the authors' term, "castration") is inevitable: the question is how and by whom and with what results. No one who has glimpsed this alternative psychic reality (in the authors' parlance, no one who has seen HER) would want to turn back to the miserable stories of history and personal demise.

I am in the privileged position of knowing both J. C. Smith and Carla Ferstman. They live in that alternative psychic reality and transform the people around them who—by whatever twists of fate—are lucky enough to be open to them. (It is not irrelevant that one of these authors—the guy, as it turns out—has shared an inspiring relationship with an astonishing woman for the last forty years.) I therefore cannot separate this book from my experience of the authors. I can only urge the readers to allow these possibilities into their own lives.

This book pushed every button on my personal and political pads. There is a raging argument in my head with the authors and with myself. These people are obviously learned and obviously mad. They are clearly strange and strangely clear. They must be on to something.

Ann Scales

Albuquerque, New Mexico

January 1995

Thinking the Unthinkable

Psychoanalysis, Postmodernism, and Feminism

Contemporary critical social theory points to three perspectives: the psychoanalytic, the postmodern, and the feminist. Though each has its own independent core, incorporating aspects from one or more of the other perspectives can be beneficial and has the result of strengthening or clarifying the respective theoretical structure. There is substantial literature combining any two of these three perspectives. Each alliance turns out to be a case of one perspective co-opting some aspect of the others while at the same time rejecting one or more of the basic presuppositions upon which the perspective rests. Thus, we have postmodern feminism, postmodern psychoanalysis, and psychoanalytic feminism. There is not, as yet, however, a full integration of these three points of view. Jane Flax wrote a book entitled *Thinking Fragments*, in which she exposed the fundamental contradictions of the three perspectives and came to the conclusion that a unified theory was not possible. She concluded that “no neat integration, new synthesis, or *Aufhebung*” of these three perspectives is either possible or desirable.¹ While a total convergence of these three perspectives may not be possible, or for that matter even desirable, they may be so integrated that it will be neither possible nor desirable to separate their discourses or methodologies.

We disagree with Flax in that we think a synthesis is possible. Whether or not it would be desirable is an open question. For there to be any unification, each perspective must sacrifice some of its basic tenets or presuppositions. Psychoanalysis and feminism must give up or reverse valued or cherished, and fairly fundamental, components. Postmodernism, when pitted against these two discourses, must allow itself to reach its

natural conclusions and avoid the desire to sidetrack or to get caught in the detail along the way. The desirability of a psychoanalytic-postmodern-feminism will depend upon the nature of these sacrifices. One of the primary objectives of this book is to explore how there would be a unified theory within which each position could maintain its integrity, while simultaneously exploring the desirability of making the necessary modifications. This text was not designed as a defense of any one or all of these three different perspectives. We assume these discourses as givens. Our intent is to create a treatise that makes the necessary modifications to each perspective in order to bring them together into an integrated whole.

Our objective is to demonstrate the natural results that flow from such an integration, rather than to persuade the reader of the viability of the unification. Theorists committed to psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and feminism must, in scrutinizing the premises of this endeavor, either find flaws in the method of unification and develop it differently or they must continue to think in terms of fragments. Since people generally prefer to rid their worldviews of contradictions, this may place the reader in somewhat of a dilemma. What is important, however, is that in struggling with these issues we enrich our understanding and are willing at least to think about and tolerate views that, in terms of the predominant psychic reality, may at first glance appear to be distasteful or unacceptable. We would not go so far as to say that this is the only form the unification can take. We think, however, that it is the best way to combine them while maintaining their essential elements.

Psychoanalytic theory, postmodernism, and feminism are all radical and critical approaches to theory. When they are combined, the degree of radicalness is compounded. There are unstated limits and boundaries that restrict what we can say and discuss about human sexuality. We generally function within these conceptual boundaries, but by taking a more radical hypothesis we can locate and critically examine these confines and possibly roll them back a little. Despite decades of "intermittent but intense dialogue," we do not fully know whether or not male and female sexual natures are essentially different or how far women's sexuality has been muted by repression, nor do we fully understand the complex relationship between sexuality and aggression.² Carol Vance, in posing such questions, points out that discussion of human sexuality is permeated with emotional ambiguity, intrapsychic anxiety, and fears of dissolution, self-annihilation, and dependency. "Having been told that pleasure threatens civilization, we

12 wonder: what if there is no end to desire?"³ One cannot help but ask why, after two thousand years of the ideology of equality, do we still have gender discrimination, and why after several decades of universal suffrage, do we still have only token female representation in the structures and hierarchies of power? Why, after substantial legislative reform and a new age of fundamental rights, is violence against women still pervasive?

We will argue that the transformation in discourse has failed to alter the reality of live practice because the practice itself is neurotic rather than merely mistaken. One cannot alter misogyny by appealing to reason any more than one can cure neurotics of their neuroses by pointing out and explaining how unreasonable their behavior is. The employment of the concept of neurosis as a metaphor for male misogyny is, we will argue, valid. Misogyny can be viewed as a neurosis of the male collective psyche and therefore as a collective neurosis.⁴ Neurotic behavior of individuals is altered, defused, or transcended by the psychoanalytic process of uncovering the source of the neurosis and bringing it into conscious awareness. A collective neurosis such as misogyny can only be defused or transcended by an analogous process. An examination of the interrelationships between psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and radical feminism will reveal how the deconstructive process parallels that which takes place between the analyst and the analysand.⁵

We do not purport to provide answers for any of the questions set out above as we write this book from a hypothetical perspective based upon presuppositions that for the purpose of our writing, we take for granted. The book does suggest answers to some of these questions, answers that are conditional upon the validity of the presuppositions that we assert underlie psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and feminism. These are presuppositions that the reader may or may not accept. In looking at some of the above questions from the perspective of a unified psychoanalytic postmodern feminism, the reader ought to be able to gain new insights about the nature and complexity of these issues, and hopefully it will be helpful for readers in formulating their own responses to some of these critical issues. By maintaining this study at the hypothetical level we hope to isolate our examination of the nature and structure of human sexuality and its relationship to social order from some of the emotional baggage that we as authors, and you as readers, will inevitably bring to these themes.

This book is written in the style of grand theory. There is no reason why postmodern scholarship cannot be comprehensive or sweeping, so

long as one keeps in mind that it is just a story not *the* story. As such, this kind of scholarship should be compared to theater. It is a play, a story, a myth, a discourse, a stage, as are also all other comprehensive or sweeping theories. When one writes, stages, or acts a play, one ought not to have to keep reminding the audience that it is a play. When the play is in progress, the author, director, and actors try to make it as convincing as possible for the sake of the play or the theatrical event. We hope that the reader will approach this book in the spirit of theater.

The Dialectics of Authors and Their Texts

Jacques Lacan, the most profound of all of the disciples of Freud, said of Freud, "the father of psychoanalysis, what did he do but hand it over to the women, and also perhaps to the master-fools? As far as the women are concerned, we should reserve judgment; they are beings who remain rich in promise, at least to the extent that they haven't yet lived up to them. As for the master-fools, that's another story altogether" (S VII, 182). If women have not fully lived up to the challenge of Freud's legacy, which, according to Lacan, Freud bequeathed them in the form of psychoanalytic theory, it may well be because they have not, as yet, fully integrated feminism and psychoanalysis. If there are master fools, certainly the postmodernist fits this description as the trickster and the subversive. The master fool of all time is Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche wrote the most outrageous, profound, unreasonable, irrational things, and if that is not the role of the master fool, then what is? The postmodernists—those who embrace the legacy of Nietzsche—are master fools. So it well may be that the feminists and postmodernists are, in the final analysis, the true heirs and beneficiaries of the Freudian Pandora's box we call psychoanalysis. In any case, we, the authors of this text, have written as woman and master fool.

The psychoanalytic tradition founded in the work of Lacan is postmodern in that it is poststructuralist and consistent with deconstruction, while the school of psychoanalysis grounded in the work of Melanie Klein, for example, presupposes a modernist theory of cognition. The postmodernist is the person who explores the limits of knowledge at the boundaries of language. Lacan would certainly fit this definition. Just as there are postmodern and modernist psychoanalytic perspectives, there are postmodern and modernist feminisms. Modernist feminisms tend to be essentialist,

14 advocating some form of supremacy of the female over the male rooted in the biological differences between the sexes, or they revert to some kind of mysticism about the female body. Or, further, they tend to submit to an ethereal truth of equality, of sameness. There are psychoanalytic feminisms and feminists who consider Freud and Lacan rather as enemies than allies. There is, however, a special convergence in critical social theory between psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and feminism.

Much of contemporary critical social theory in the English-speaking world consists of commentaries on French texts, such as those of Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva, who in turn are reacting to German texts such as those of Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger. The problem with reading many of these texts is that it is often difficult to understand them unless you already have a good grasp of what they say, and it is difficult to get that without first having read the texts. One technique is to read some of the excellent commentaries, interpretations, commentaries on the commentaries, and interpretations of the interpretations. This book uses the texts themselves to construct a narrative or exposition of the authors. This is precisely what Lacan does with the texts of Freud and invites us to do so with his own text. In this way we are not just talking in the abstract about psychoanalysis, or postmodernism, or feminism, but are doing it.

Throughout this book we make extensive use of the texts of Nietzsche, Freud, and Lacan. Lacan, in particular, suggested to those who attended his famous seminars that any attempt on their part to restate his position would lead to a misunderstanding. "I'm not surprised that something of a misunderstanding remains to be dispelled, even in people who think they're following me," he writes. "[I]f I were to try to make myself very easily understood, so that you were completely certain that you followed, then according to my premises concerning interhuman discourse the misunderstanding would be irremediable" (S III, 164).

This book, therefore, can not only be contrasted with the books that attempt to explain for the reader what Nietzsche, Freud, and Lacan wrote and taught, but also with some of the excellent commentaries on psychoanalytic or postmodern feminist social theory. This book attempts to forge a synthesis by making the necessary changes in each perspective that is required in order to create a convergence with the other two, rather than discussing what changes would have to be made and whether or not they are desirable. Whether or not the changes made in each perspective in

order to achieve a convergence are to be welcomed is left as an open question for the reader to contemplate and consider. 15

This book should not be taken as constituting an argument for the creation of a synthesis of psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and feminism. Our purpose in writing the book is to create a text that manifests such a synthesis. Our argument is that if you take as presuppositions the basic tenets and methodologies of psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and feminism and bring them together by deleting those elements that are inconsistent with what is fundamental to each of the others, then the theory should look very much like what we set out in this volume. This is our goal, and this is the standard by which we invite the reader to judge the book.

This book limits itself to an analysis of heterosexual relationships. As such, it ignores the fundamental reality of lesbians and homosexuals. This was not an effort to negate, but merely an effort not to distort and to leave for another day. We wish the text to stand as completely independent as possible from our own private views, many of which, of course, will be reflected in the text. We have attempted not to allow our own views to distort or modify the synthesis. That is to say that we have attempted to let the synthesis take its own form and speak for itself, even though our views may not accord with it. We have also tried not to use the synthesis to press our own views. In fact, being two authors, female and male, we ourselves do not hold the same views consistently. This fact has not been a problem in coauthoring the book because we have tried to let the text itself govern its own development. That is, we have sought to bring about the closest possible union of the views and the fundamental and essential texts of Freud, Lacan, and Nietzsche, the three sets of texts that are most closely interrelated and most fundamental to psychoanalytic social theory and postmodernism. We believe that this approach will allow readers to confront issues and raise questions that they might not otherwise have considered in reading commentaries on or the texts of Nietzsche, Freud, or Lacan in isolation from each other and from the feminist perspective. In particular, we wish the reader to explore more deeply the implications of psychoanalysis and postmodernism for feminism, particularly when they are used in consort.

The unifying theme of this book is the political. We are interested not only in what a synthesis of psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and feminism would be like, but also in what kind of politics such a synthesis would lead

16 to. Again, our interest in writing this book is not to promote this kind of politics but to develop and outline it. Consequently, the arguments in the book are not arguments in favor of the adoption of the analysis but arguments for the analysis taking this particular form as against other possible forms. This difference may appear subtle, and we may have crossed over the line at times for which we apologize and ask the reader's indulgence. It is for this reason that we have not developed counterarguments against this kind of politics.

We have diligently attempted to exemplify postmodern methodology in the writing of the book. We invite the reader to contemplate the relationship between sexuality and politics, gender and power. We will seduce the reader to suspend the belief in an objective external reality and absolute truth and to take as well a feminist perspective. In this way we hope to lead the reader to explore the place where the public and the private converge; where subjectivity and objectivity meet; where sexuality and politics intersect; where gender, sexuality, and power come together; and where the inner world of psychic reality and the external world of material reality fuse.

The methodology of postmodernism and psychoanalysis is much the same, and in a way each presupposes the other.⁶ One can only fully appreciate Freud when one has read Nietzsche, and one can only grasp the significance of Nietzsche after reading Freud.⁷ It is no accident that the deconstructionist movement is deeply rooted in the writings of both Freud and Nietzsche.⁸ Deconstruction entails close analysis, and close analysis requires deconstruction.⁹ Deconstruction and psychoanalysis are parallel processes such that when we envisage postmodern psychoanalytic theory or psychoanalytic postmodernism, they amount to much the same thing. The concepts of each can be explained in terms of the nomenclature of the other.

The relationship of radical feminism to each is different than the relationship of poststructuralism and deconstruction to psychoanalytic theory. Radical feminism is presupposed by neither; nevertheless, the actual practice of either ought to have led to the same set of presuppositions that underlie radical feminism. The discourse of radical feminism came into being independently of the discourse and perspective of psychoanalytic theory, poststructuralism, and deconstruction. Nietzsche, Freud, Lacan, and Derrida are males who failed to take their methodology to the limits of its potential, to the deconstruction and delegitimization of male domina-

tion. Consequently, their work remains incomplete. Radical feminism, therefore, is the methodology, discourse, and perspective that permits the analysis of the texts of psychoanalysis and the deconstruction of the texts of poststructuralism. When the methodologies are intertwined in this manner, the boundaries between them begin to disintegrate.

The Sacrifice

Psychoanalysis must sacrifice the privileged position of the phallus, while at the same time maintaining the underlying theoretical structure that led to the placing of the phallus in a privileged position. To do this, we must show that Freud was right about the methodology of psychoanalysis but made a wrong turn at some point in its application. While Freud was clearly not a feminist, and many feminists have been and are highly critical of Freud, others have forged an alliance between feminism and psychoanalytic theory. The fundamental contribution of psychoanalytic theory to feminist social theory lies in its capacity and potential for explaining the origins of sexuality, sexual difference, gender difference, male domination, rape, perversion, pathology, the structure of the family, and group or collective behavior. The paradox of feminism and psychoanalysis is, however, that the explanations are in terms of phallic possession or lack, seduction, and castration, all of which seem to privilege the Oedipal structure. This gives the male the dominant position as the possessor of the phallus and legitimizes male domination. The relationship between traditional psychoanalytic theory and feminism, while important for each, remains ambivalent at best.

From this unified perspective we have concluded and argue that a feminism rooted in the ideology of equality (as contrasted with the practical politics of equality) is inconsistent with psychoanalysis. Therefore, in order to mesh feminist theory with psychoanalysis, feminism must sacrifice liberal notions of equality. Psychoanalysis requires a feminism based on sexuality, and the psychoanalytic perspective of sexuality presupposes difference, castration, and lack—not equality. Equality is not sexy. There is no libidinal force behind equality. A feminism that chooses to concentrate on distribution of power rather than upon the nature and structure of human sexuality must reject Freud, and a feminism that is willing to consider the sexual dimension must confront Freud. At the same time, a psychoanalysis that is consistent with feminism must treat the privileged

18 position of the male as a neurotic and pathological symptom arising from repression. Psychoanalysis and feminism can only be fully integrated within a theory that embraces a dialectic of difference that may well be inconsistent with gender equality. Feminism may well have to choose between liberalism and psychoanalysis. It can align itself with one or the other, but not with both.

For both Freud and Lacan sexual difference is necessarily asymmetrical, and, furthermore, no symmetrical relation between men and women is possible. Sexual identity is culturally constructed through fantasy structures that are made to cohere with biology.¹⁰ The problem that feminism has with Lacan is that there appears to be no way out of this impasse. Postmodernism must take the giant leap into the domain of sexuality and gender and test the bounds of the liberal conceptions of sexual and gender symmetry. The result is a precarious positioning on the edge of discourse, a frightening discourse of binary oppositions and gender hierarchies.

What is at issue is how the explanations are to unfold. Whether the relationship between feminism and psychoanalysis is to be that of a close integration such that it will be difficult to measure where one ends and the other begins or whether it is to remain inharmonious will depend upon whether or not a different form of sexuality, gender structure, and psychic reality can be said to coexist as an oppositional alternative to the Oedipal analysis, while at the same time maintaining the essential theoretical structure of psychoanalytic theory. If psychoanalytic theory could be extended in this manner, then the process of individuation would be seen as a dialectical process between two forms of psychic sexuality and reality, each of which could furnish a set of gender structures having a reverse asymmetry. Each would provide a female and male sexual and gender structure.

Feminism requires that the category of "woman" be taken as a presupposition. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, assumes that the category of "woman" can only be defined in terms of the lack of the phallus. Traditional psychoanalytic theory has serious defects that center around its assumptions and presuppositions about women. Freud was haunted by women, obsessed with women, and in the end failed to understand them.¹¹ In traditional psychoanalytic theory man claims the position of subject, observer, and woman is designated the other—that which is to be observed. There have been and continue to be a substantial number of female psychoanalytic theorists who have focused their gaze in the same direction

as the male,¹² that is, on the female, in attempting to correct the many misrepresentations, projections, errors, and mistakes that the male as observer of the female has made.

There is, however, a fallacy in this configuration of males observing females and describing the nature of femininity, and females saying, "No, women are not really like that—the male is mistaken." The fallacy is that there is a subject making the observations of something that is other than itself, when in reality what is happening is that the males are projecting a fantasy structure of their own sexual psychic reality onto the female. The conclusions that Freud reached about women and their sexuality are about women as they exist within the fantasy structures of male psychic reality. If we wish to gain an understanding of women as a construct of the fantasy structure of male collective psychic reality, we must start by looking inside the psyche of the male since that is where the concept of femininity originates—as a male defense mechanism to protect the male ego against the seduction of the female as (M)other. Women psychoanalysts and feminist theorists have been reluctant to take on the task of describing what is inside the male psyche as this would create the same dangers of projection in reverse. What psychoanalytic theory lacks and desperately needs is an equivalent group of male theorists who would concentrate on analyzing the structure of male sexuality and psychic reality, such as the many important female psychoanalysts and feminist theorists have done in regard to female sexuality and the female psyche. There is an extensive body of literature about female sexuality and femininity. There is no corresponding body of psychoanalytic literature about male sexuality and masculinity. Freud asked, "What does woman want?" rather than asking "What is wrong with the man?" or "Why is the man a problem for women?" The need is to understand the man who is the projector of the fantasy structure "woman," which women adopt as the mask of femininity in order to participate within the framework of male desire. What is required to bring about a synthesis between psychoanalytic theory and feminism is a dialectical, postmodern psychoanalysis.

The writings of Jacques Lacan are and will continue to be a core theme in the dialogue between feminism and psychoanalysis because they furnish feminism with a version of psychoanalytic theory that begins the purge of biological essentialism—toward a postmodern psychoanalysis. The inter-course of the two will be contentious and difficult in that Lacan's writings themselves are formidable, opaque, complicated, and problematic, generat-

20 ing many interpretations of his thought, as well as interpretations of the interpretations. Just as Freud was not a feminist, neither was Lacan. As stated by Jane Gallop, "There never was an alliance between the person Lacan [the body of Lacan's writing] and feminism. What there has been is an alliance some feminists have made with Lacanian thought."¹³ A post-modern Lacanian psychoanalysis would push the boundaries of sexual difference and recognize the binary positions of hierarchy and power. It would acknowledge the final purge of biological essentialism—and would understand the male and female points of reference to be mere positions in the signifying chain, positions susceptible to bifurcation.

The Dialectic

Freud's dialectical method is manifest in his celebrated dualisms between ego and id, sex and ego, Eros and Thanatos, along with the pleasure principle and the primacy of masochism. Whether or not Freud's substantive theories are valid,¹⁴ psychoanalytic theory must take as its presuppositions the oppositional poles of the sexual and ego drive, material and psychic reality; the ego and the self; conscious and unconscious; repression and neurosis; the primacy of sexuality; and the structure of unconscious fantasy, which plays out in terms of the phallus, seduction, and castration, if it is to remain true to the legacy of Freud. When it comes to gender, however, the distinctions between masculinity and femininity, male and female, male sexuality and female sexuality, father and mother, are based on the possession of the phallus, and the corresponding lack. This is not a dialectical distinction and is, therefore, inconsistent with the dialectical methodology that Freud uses wherever possible. To surrender the privileged position of the phallus in psychoanalytic theory in exchange for a dialectic would be a major modification of traditional psychoanalytic theory. Yet feminism demands the castration of Oedipus. The question that must be asked is whether the sacrifice of the privileged position of the phallus is desirable from the perspective of psychoanalytic social theory? Can the theoretical body survive the operation?

From the position of a Freudian psychoanalysis that accepts the duality of Eros and Thanatos, we find ourselves as languaging biped primates, caught in a dialectics in which we can embrace our animality or reject it; embrace our sexuality or reject it; embrace our bodies or reject them; embrace the short ephemeral dance of life or reject it; submit ourselves to