

Women's Philosophy Review

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EDITORIAL

by Christine Battersby

The Editor is proud to present *Women's Philosophy Review* no 24 which, unusually, includes not one interview but three—exceptionally rich—conversations with women working in the discipline of philosophy in contemporary France. It is to Penelope Deutscher that we are indebted for this treat, as well as to the three French women interviewed below—Monique David-Ménard, Barbara Cassin and Claude Imbert—who so generously shared their time and their thoughts with their Australian interlocutor. Thanks are also due to Chimène Bateman who bravely took on the task of transcription and to Margaret Whitford who, no less courageously and no less generously, tackled the translation of all three conversations.

This trio of interviews has involved an immense amount of work for all concerned, including the Editor. Not only have there been the tasks of transcription, condensation and translation, but also the need for supplementary questions and research to contextualize the interviews. And here we are indebted to Penelope Deutscher's explanatory essay, *Philosophy's Fortune*, that precedes the three dialogues, as well as to the Cumulative Bibliography and the Contextualizations that she has also provided.

The intricacies of the task go some way towards explaining the late appearance of this issue—the first to appear in the year 2000. I am, however, convinced that it was worth the reader's wait and also worthy of the various contributors' efforts. What we are given is a fascinating and informative series of glimpses at some traditions of philosophy that are surprisingly alien to us—even to those working (as I do myself) in the traditions of so-called 'continental' philosophy. What comes out clearly is the 'foreignness' of philosophy as it has developed in France, in the shadow of Kant, Hegel, phenomenology, structuralism and a

quite different set of assumptions about philosophy's—and logic's—past.

Of the three French interviews it is the first, with Monique David-Ménard, that will probably seem the least unfamiliar, since her methodology includes the psychoanalysis of texts—and in ways that overlap with the types of 'French' theory that have had such an impact on feminist discourse in the anglophone world. This is, however, by no means to reduce the novelty and philosophical subtlety of David-Ménard's approach, or to fail to register the importance of her analyses of the linkage between 'madness', 'fantasy' and 'reason' in Kant and his heirs. Because David-Ménard is well-grounded in Kant's system (including his pre-critical writings), her acute observations strike home.

Far less familiar to an anglophone audience will be the methodology of the second interviewee, Barbara Cassin, who looks to the sophists—and hence to rhetoric—for another tradition of writing and argument that has been treated as 'other' to logic and dialectic by both Plato and the philosophical mainstream. By turning to this marginalized—and derided—tradition, Cassin finds a way to think philosophical history and methodology in terms of 'a plurality, instead of a single path'. Since the contributions of women have been written out of the histories of philosophy (along with the sophists), it is clear that Cassin's project has transformative potential in terms of allowing us to find a plurality of other histories of thought. Cassin's radicalization of the traditions of philosophy thus opens up potential for thinking about the modes of gendering tradition—and about strategies and possibilities for philosophical change.

The approach of the third interviewee, Claude Imbert, will be, I think, even less familiar to an anglophone audience, even though Imbert writes extensively on logic, on Frege, on Wittgenstein and also teaches regularly in the US. But what is surprising to those trained in the dominant Anglo-American traditions of logic is precisely the historical and structural nature of Imbert's understanding of logic's task(s) and the fact

that she (like Cassin) is looking to traditions of argumentation that have been marginalized and excluded. Imbert's task involves a kind of eclecticism that might at first sight seem puzzling, but that has radical potential in terms of rethinking the relationship between the self and the structures of thought that bind it.

The more familiar 'French feminisms' are not entirely neglected in this issue. Because of the length of the three interviews, there is no extended 'review essay' included this time. Instead Hanneke Canters has provided a informative overview of work on Luce Irigaray that has been undertaken in Holland. Alongside this should be read Gill Rye's double review: of a book by, and a book about, Hélène Cixous. Madeleine Dobie's review of *Enigmas*, an anthology of critical essays devoted to the late Sarah Kofman, provides the last of the French treats.

One of the themes of this issue is the notion of multiple traditions in the history of thought and the possibility of encountering 'other'—historically sidelined—figures, themes and methodologies that have the potential to reconfigure philosophy's present and its future. The way that women have been written out of the history of early modern philosophy is the subject of an important essay by Eileen O'Neill, 'Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and Their Fate in History' in Janet A. Kourany's *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice*, reviewed by Pamela Sue Anderson below. O'Neill shows how books by women, even though well-known in their time, seem to disappear from the history of philosophy—even from those 'pure' histories that seem non-evaluative and that seem simply to record 'the facts'. In the end it seems simply 'a fact' that women have been an absence in philosophy's past.

However, as O'Neill's essay also shows, there is no non-evaluative 'pure history': women were not absences in early modern philosophy, but marginalized presences who often addressed questions of gender alongside what now seem more traditional 'philosophical' concerns. O'Neill's essay can be usefully read alongside the interviews with Cassin and Imbert published here, since together they allow us to

see that in the margins of the history of philosophy we will be able to find the voices of women who were developing aesthetic, ethical and political insights from positions tangential to the (ontological) debates that have been privileged in the telling and retelling of philosophy's past.

Partly with this in mind I have decided to include in this issue a dream-poem by Rachel Speght (1621). Although not unknown to scholars of the Renaissance, it seems to have escaped the attention of those investigating the role of women in the history of early modern philosophy. And yet in it we see an example of an early woman thinker seeking to position herself in a matrilineal tradition of argument that reaches back to Hypatia and Aspasia as the 'mothers' of female knowledge. See also my 'Contextualization' that serves as a preface to the poem.

The other reason for including the Speght poem in this issue is that I will be standing down as General Editor of *Women's Philosophy Review* at the end of the year 2000, and this is the last issue that I will edit alone. There are two more issues to appear before then, of course, but one of these is the Special Issue on Aesthetics which is being jointly edited by Penny Florence and Nicola Foster, and the other General Issue is being co-edited by myself and Helen Chapman. Since one of the reasons that I took on the editing of *WPR* was to introduce readers to unfamiliar figures both from philosophy's present and its past, this seemed a suitable occasion to introduce this poem by Speght which, like the Greek texts discussed by Cassin and the 'disappearing ink' of O'Neill's authors, does not belong to the traditions of philosophy, but nevertheless helps define those traditions through its exclusion ...

Margaret Whitford will also be stepping down as Book Reviews Editor at the end of the year, and Stella Sandford (email address on front cover) is already commissioning the new book reviews for 2001. Alessandra Tanesini will remain as Administrative Editor of *WPR*, but the job of General Editor is still vacant. Let us know if you would like to be more involved in any way!

Christine Battersby
University of Warwick

Philosophy's Fortune

by Penelope Deutscher

In a recent issue of *Women's Philosophy Review* (no 19 1998)¹ Susan James interviews Australian feminist philosophers Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd about their engagement with Spinoza. James asks why Spinoza exercises such fascination over Gatens and Lloyd. Lloyd responds that Spinoza represents an alternative voice—alternative, for example, to the residue of Cartesianism in contemporary philosophy (James 1998, 7). Lloyd is not interested in making negative criticisms of philosophers, she explains. Instead, she hopes to find new sources and resources in the philosophical tradition.

There are noticeable similarities in the motivation and approach seen in the three contemporary French women philosophers, Monique David-Ménard, Barbara Cassin and Claude Imbert, interviews with whom are included in this issue. Barbara Cassin is interested in peopling the history of philosophy with new figures, who have often been placed in the background in narratives of major thinkers in the history of philosophy. Where Lloyd and Gatens bring to the fore Spinoza in place of Descartes, Cassin brings to the fore the concerns of Anaximander, Heraclitus, Democritus and Gorgias among the pre-Socratics, rather than Parmenides, for example.

Imbert brings to the fore the writings associated with Port-Royal, the work of Jean d'Alembert (1717–83), Jean Cavallès (1903–44), and the posthumous work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–61), suggesting that attention to these philosophers is a means of restoring 'forgotten possibilities of thought'.² One means of finding new sources and resources in the philosophical tradition involves breaking with convention with regard to the canon of historical philosophers deemed worthy of critical attention.

Another means is to strive to interrupt stereotyped and institutionalized interpretations of those schools and those philosophers we read most often. James suggests that in addition to finding critical alternatives to Cartesianism, we can also turn our attention to the diverse thinkers of which Cartesianism is constituted. We can supplement Descartes with a closer attention to contemporaries such as Malebranche, and also relax the tendency to read Descartes's texts as univocally sustaining mind/body dualism. We may choose also to read his texts with a closer attention to those elements which undermine or complicate that dualism:

The view, for example, that Descartes made an absolute distinction between states of the body and states of the soul and allowed nothing to cross it, has long been a mainstay of philosophy of mind, but it is a mainstay that will not stand up once the Cartesian account of the passions is taken into account. (James 1997, 17)

James expresses concern with the over-simplification of the history of philosophy, but over-simplification of a particular kind. This is the conventionalization and consolidation of a particular, often-repeated narrative at the expense of a reading-approach which attends more to the aspects of a text, or body of texts, which resist or render complex that narrative. It is, we can add, an appreciation of that complexity, resistance, or multivocality which may be most useful to feminist readings of historical texts.

Thus, James' interpretation of Descartes hardly denies that Cartesian texts constitute the dualist tradition, and are correctly interpreted in these terms. But, in the light of her comments about some feminist interpretations of Descartes, we may see James as asking whether we are best served by stereotypical narratives of philosophy which reiterate an account of modern philosophy as beginning with Descartes, a philosopher who depreciated the passions, and allowed nothing to cross between body and mind (James 1997, 16–17). As a result of the

repeated consolidation of such narratives, interpretation of the history of philosophy tends to 'skip over topics, such as the passions, that are perceived as marginal or irrelevant to a particular interpretation of what philosophy is' (15).

Perhaps we are better served—and, suggests James, perhaps feminism may also be enriched—by new narratives of the seventeenth century, peopled by more diverse figures, and more conflictual texts, by an attention to what philosophers have said about the passions, the emotions, and embodiment, and by an attention to the philosophers and themes that are not always included in the histories of philosophy which answer to the preconceptions philosophers have about it. Or, in the words of Michèle Le Dœuff:

Feminism does not contribute to a limiting of the quality of debate (as some of our conservative colleagues are prone to say) except when it blindly follows previous misinterpretations. In any case, I believe that younger women ... deserve to be given the best scholarship we can offer to them, the best food for thought. (Le Dœuff 2000)

The traditions for and from which the three French women philosophers interviewed here would hope to dislodge alternatives and new readings are not those of Cartesianism, but those of Kant and phenomenology. Claude Imbert speaks of how she sought to 'leave behind the dismal history of the fortunes and misfortunes of transcendental egology'. And, according to Barbara Cassin, 'It is very difficult to rid oneself of the idea that philosophers today do anything else besides rework Heidegger's gesture. ... In order to move out from this circumscribed territory, no less is required, doubtless, than ... a redefinition of philosophy throughout its history' (Cassin 2000).

Monique David-Ménard's major work on the history of philosophy has been based on an interpretation of Immanuel Kant's engagement with the problem of madness, and in conjunction with this, on her

argument that 'The Critique of Pure Reason is worked and traversed by unconscious themes and the work of repression' (David-Ménard 1992, 41). The interpretation is a means for David-Ménard to question philosophy's pretensions to universality, and also to question the pretence that 'rational thought is neutral with regards its subjective conditions of production'. All three women philosophers share their rejection of a directly critical approach to Kant, Heidegger and phenomenology, in favour of a tangential strategy which tries to amplify philosophical traditions which might implicitly contest and provide alternatives to institutionalized and dominant traditions in Kantian and Heideggerian philosophy.

While Cassin and Imbert share an interest in new figures which may be brought to the foreground, and in obscured philosophers of different centuries, Imbert and David-Ménard share an interest in the obscured aspects of well-known philosophers. Thus, for David-Ménard, the interest of Kant is not primarily that he is the author of the three *Critiques*, but that he is the author of a series of strange anthropological texts, and above all, of a series of writings on madness. Her interpretation of these writings occurs as part of David-Ménard's project to interpret the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a constant engagement with the possibility of madness.

For Imbert the interest of Merleau-Ponty is not primarily that he is the author of the *Phenomenology of Perception* [1945] (generally considered his major work), but that he is the author of a series of unfinished and posthumous writings which call into the question the phenomenological project, and, in particular, unravel and perform a kind of auto-critique of his own earliest and apparently most fundamental text:

From 'indirect language' to the 'chiasma,' phenomenological positivism and immediacy were repudiated, and [Merleau-Ponty] provoked questions sufficient to preoccupy the generation of philosophers which separates

him from us, and to preoccupy us, still. (Imbert 1998, 138)

The three philosophers differ in the extent to which they write about issues of gender and sexual difference. Apart from an interest in and writings on some French women philosophers of the first half of the twentieth century, such as Simone Weil and Simone de Beauvoir³—both of whom she considers to have lucidly 'dismissed from the outset the Kantian framework of the philosophy of the period'—Claude Imbert does not directly address questions of women, or gender, in philosophy. Even when discussing the work of Weil and Beauvoir, Imbert does not discuss them as women philosophers *per se*, but as marginalized figures who contributed to the negotiation of philosophical alternatives to the concept of the transcendental subject:

In place of the transcendental subject, they substituted some kind of concreteness, which was for Weil 'work' and 'suffering' and for Beauvoir the concreteness of a woman's existence.

By contrast, for David-Ménard, co-editor of an anthology of writings on sexual difference (Fraisie et al, 1990), the question of a sexed subject position is a central concern, one connected to her interest in the conditions of possibility of philosophical thought in the work of the passions, the drives, sexual orientation and desire. As well as being an object of knowledge, writes David-Ménard in an essay written with Michel Tort and Geneviève Fraisse, sexual difference 'can be a mode of knowledge, a sexual element of the workings of knowledge':

Forms of knowledge do not emerge unscathed, in their pretension to fasten themselves onto an object, once one fully grasps how the sex of those who engage in them intervenes in their practice. Sexual difference appears under a new light, once one grasps the fabric's bias in terms of which they take form as a knowledge-

form addressed to an other. (David-Ménard, Fraisse and Tort 1990, 8).

The proposal is taken up further in David-Ménard's *Les Constructions de l'universel* (1997) in which she analyzes the interconnection of concepts and phantasms in philosophical discourse. Sexual difference, she argues, provokes the crisis of any notion of universality. It allows universality to be seen as a dream, a phantasm of denial of sexual difference. It allows us to better see 'the construction of concepts as tributary to the construction of those phantasms in terms of which a subject defines itself as sexed' (1997, 2). David-Ménard's interests centre most around the demonstration that male philosophers who might have pretended to a rational, universal and objective philosophical discourse which had nothing to do with their desire, produced texts which can be interpreted otherwise: in terms of their phantasmatic content. The dream of universality itself is taken as a manifestation of phantasm and unconscious desire.

David-Ménard's question echoes that of the French-Belgian feminist and political philosopher Françoise Collin, introducing an anthology of women philosophers working in France published as a special issue of the journal *Les Cahiers du GRIF* (1992). Collin suggests that the theme of the collection—*Femmes/ Philosophie: Les Provenances de la pensée* (*Women-Philosophy: The Provenances of Thought*)—might be the question, 'From whence do we speak when we speak?' (Collin 1992, 5).⁴ Such a theme unites contemporary French women philosophers who speak directly on problems of gender in philosophy, and write overtly as feminist philosophers, with others of whom this is less the case.

These provenances, Collin suggests, might be exhibited, or at least overt, or they might be silenced, sometimes repressed. It might be a directly feminist issue to make the material conditions of intellectual production more apparent, or, even when it occurs within a project which is not overtly feminist, it might be one in which feminism might have a particular interest. Whether overtly feminist or not, she groups

the work of a series of contemporary French women philosophers in terms of their interest in staging a confrontation of philosophy with its provenances, which might be understood in a multitude of ways.

The work of historical philosophers can be understood in these terms, as when David-Ménard argues for an interpretation of Kant's texts in terms of his unconscious phantasms. The sexuation of contemporary philosophical production is addressed in an important contribution by Barbara Cassin (1992) which suggests that women's philosophical production can be marked by the fact that it is produced by women—as can that of male philosophers. This would enable a kind of typology of sexuation in philosophy.

While it is one of the few occasions on which Cassin has written directly on the question, Cassin's 'Le Désordre philosophique' (1992) suggests affiliations between herself, Collin and David-Ménard in terms of questions such as: From where do we speak? How might the fact of being a woman in philosophy importantly inflect one's philosophical production, when one does not write directly on issues of gender and sexual difference? But rather than locating sexual difference as an *explanation* of the 'provenances de la pensée', Cassin's approach appears to be more typological. She analyzes the issue of sexuation in philosophy less in terms of origin and explanation, and more stylistically, in terms of a question of genre. The feminine in philosophy is, she claims, a kind of discordant mixture of genres which is often greeted with some degree of discomfort, whether avowed or disavowed:

Whatever there is of women (or women) amongst the philosophers (of women who are recognized as philosophers, of the presence of feminine in the philosophers) is, in my view, the unstoppable mélange of registers ... of discordance, of an intimate multiplicity of voices, a perpetual moulting of one's skin (*mue*) (1992, 14)

All three women share an interest in interdisciplinary modes of philosophy, although for different reasons. For Claude Imbert, disciplinary boundaries are simply those which should never have been accepted in the first place, they are a sign of intellectual passivity and failure on our part: 'I have never really accepted that division which has been imposed upon us between literary thought and scientific thought. That division seems to me an unforgivable philosophical defeat.' Just as much a theorist of the conditions of possibility of philosophy, Imbert theorizes the way in which each discursive regime has its own 'constraints and possibilities'. Often, discursive regimes play against the limits of their own possibilities, and we can choose to read the history of philosophy attentively for these particularly generative, often obscured moments. It allows us to render richer and more diverse our sense of the 'inventory of possible rationalities'.

For David-Ménard, staging a confrontation between psychoanalysis and philosophy is a means of provoking in philosophy a stronger engagement with desire and phantasm as the condition of the possibility of rational thought. Cassin analyzes the way in which an interdisciplinarity represents that which is associated with the feminine in philosophy: the ragout, the improper, tacitly considered to be in slightly bad taste:

I think all of us (*toutes*) philosophize through mixing and remixing and mixing up the sensibilities, the apperceptions, the contact with phenomena, the ends of existence and the bracketings We intermix, enliven, and raze genres and styles. We don't know how to, and we don't want to, respect the appropriate regime of styles. (1992, 14)

Acknowledging the confusion of genres which constantly occurs in philosophy is also to acknowledge the plurality—the sexual plurality, but presumably others kinds of plurality as well—of those who practise philosophy. In this exemplary piece which incorporates a component of

autobiographical content, Cassin describes the benevolent advice she has often received, to exchange creative writing for her philosophical career—as she does also in a forthcoming essay in *Hypatia* (Cassin 2000). Much of her philosophical production may be thought of as a series of strategic and resistant responses to this advice, a practice of interconnecting literary modes of addressing what she considers to be similar problems.

Addressing this question directly, 'Le Désordre philosophique' (1992) juxtaposes two pieces of Cassin's writing, one a short story published in a literary journal, *Nouvelle revue française* and the other a philosophical essay published in *Revue de philosophie ancienne*. The former depicts the teaching of philosophy by the narrator in a hospital clinic for psychotic adolescents, where the latter offers an analysis of Plato's *Cratylus*. These are the kinds of writing that Cassin's colleagues, and the philosophical institution more broadly, believe are appropriately quarantined from each other. But Cassin responds that the two pieces are different genres for the addressing of closely related problems: 'I know they are saying the same thing,' she declares,

It concerns silence, and the manner in which the words of the world, ineffable by failure and by excess are restricted to the inventivity of a refusal to use words like spare change inflated with the sense of the world. Because there is nothing of the real, and too much of the real, because one does not know what one may attempt, and what one may do without. It's the shock of the limit, in the day-to-day, and in philosophy. (1992, 19)

For both Cassin and David-Ménard, although for entirely different reasons, interdisciplinarity in their philosophical practices enables their facilitation of an engagement of philosophy with the desire and femininity at its heart.

Finally, it is interesting to note the reflections of each philosopher on the conditions of possibility of their own philosophical production. Evidently, this is not to say that one is always the best authority on the conditions which allow one to attempt innovation in philosophical writing. But it is significant the extent to which each has reflected on the question. None takes for granted the need to carefully negotiate a position within the institutions of philosophy which will encourage creative and innovative expression.

Monique David-Ménard considers that her choice not to pursue a university teaching career, but to take up a position within the 'hypokâgne' programme⁵ was crucial. In her view, because she was both a practising psychoanalyst as well as an academic, and was not seeking a university post, she was 'absolutely free'. According to Cassin, the possibility of her philosophical production arose from good fortune or '*chance*': a full-time research post opened up at France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. This was good fortune because she had not followed a conventional academic training in France. As she recounts, after two years as a mother with a new child she ceased to attempt the '*agrégation*', the competitive examination which grants university posts and some final year high school posts to academics. Cassin's research position allows her, as she writes, not to have to be constantly accountable for her career.

Describing her experiences in a variety of diverse appointments prior to her appointment to the CNRS, Cassin depicts an important mood and affect not so far from that evoked by Monique David-Ménard, 'All this meant that I could work according to my own rhythm, and in my own way'. Claude Imbert may have occupied a more conventional academic career (now chair of Philosophy at France's elite Ecole Normale Supérieure), but the position is again the result, as she depicts this, of a decision to take up a position within an academic institution which would leave her with a high degree of scholarly freedom, 'I only wanted to obtain a post and remain in it. I felt that if I was not too concerned

about my career, I would be freer to be more audacious in my philosophical interests and more open to other philosophical traditions and practices.'

In very different ways, all three women are particularly interested in the conditions of philosophical production. According to Monique David-Ménard, the potential for such an analysis is philosophy's fortune or *chance*. She finds that 'the edifice of pure reason' is much better understood when one grasps, in its abstract formulations, the role of desire. This is, she says, the *chance* of philosophy: it is its luck and its fortune—in French *chance* has this double meaning (see the translator's note to the David-Ménard Interview)—'it is not at all the end of philosophy'. Instead, it is a way of understanding its necessity 'in a new way'.

This series of interviews allows us to think about how the range of philosophy's chances and fortunes might be expanded by readings which locate conceptual possibilities lost or obscured in the history of philosophy. In different ways, each philosopher interviewed offers a particular conception of philosophy's necessity. Either philosophy necessarily carries as its constant underbelly the forgetting of alternative possibilities of thought which we can choose to resuscitate; or it is perpetually worked by the philosopher's desires; or philosophy is diffused with its own undeclared provenances. It is that which repeatedly exceeds the limits of its own declared conceptual apparatuses; or perhaps that which constantly calls for new conceptual personae and its own renewal.

Penelope Deutscher

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Notes

Many thanks to Barbara Cassin, Monique David-Ménard and Claude Imbert for participating in these interviews and subsequent assistance with their preparation, to Chimène Bateman who undertook the transcription and to Margaret Whitford for translation of the interviews, and to Christine Battersby for editorial and translation

assistance. Although the interviews first took place in 1998, there have been subsequent additions and modifications.

- 1 For the Bibliography to this essay see the Cumulative Bibliography at the end of the three Interviews.
- 2 Citations are from interviews included in this issue of *Women's Philosophy Review* unless otherwise stated.
- 3 Imbert presented a keynote address on Beauvoir at the 'Legacies of Simone de Beauvoir' Conference, Pennsylvania State University (November, 1999). For her short piece on Weil see Imbert (1993).
- 4 This Special Issue included the work of Eliane Escoubas, Barbara Cassin, Jeanne-Marie Gagnebin, Catherine Chalier, Monique David-Ménard, Monique Schneider, Sarah Kofman, Geneviève Fraisse, Rada Ivekovic, Myriam Revault d'Allonnes, Françoise Durox, Françoise Collin, Françoise Proust and Elisabeth de Fontenay.
- 5 The 'hypokâgne' year is a highly competitive and selective one year program which constitutes an intermediary stage between the final year of high school and tertiary training. The hypokâgne year prepares a small group of students for competitive entrance examinations to France's élite 'grandes écoles'.

Three French Philosophers

interviewed by Penelope Deutscher

Translated by Margaret Whitford & Transcribed by Chimène Bateman

with Editorial Assistance from Christine Battersby

Interview 1: Monique David-Ménard

Critique of Pure Madness

Contextualization

Monique David-Ménard is a Director of Research at the Université of Paris VII (Denis-Diderot), in addition to her post as a teacher of philosophy at 'khâgne' level and her work as a psychoanalyst. Her books include *Hysteria from Freud to Lacan* (1989); *La Folie dans la raison pure* (1990) and *Les Constructions de l'universel* (1997) and *Tout le plaisir et pour moi* (2000). See the Cumulative Bibliography for more details.

Beginnings

PD You started by publishing a book on hysteria 'between Freud and Lacan' (1983) translated into English as *Hysteria from Freud to Lacan: Body and Language in Psychoanalysis* (1989), followed by a major project in which you confronted Kant and psychoanalysis, and then a project reading Kant, Sade and Lacan together, analyzing the relations between fantasies and conceptual constructs.

MD-M In practice, historically, I started looking at the relation between philosophy and psychoanalysis first, before I was able to transform what I do into a systematic and explicit method. I would say that, during the period I was studying philosophy, I read the major texts of the history of philosophy, but at the

same time, there was a closure in philosophical thought that I could not describe except by saying 'fortunately there is psychoanalysis', because, thanks to psychoanalysis, everything which is external to the *pure concept* seems interesting all the same.

And as it was the time when Lacan was fashionable in France, Lacan's continual reference to philosophical texts allowed me to say 'I am a philosopher but I have the right to suffer.' Suffering, or desire, is something with which one has the right to concern oneself, even when one is a philosopher. The proof is that Lacan defines transference in psychoanalysis through a reading of Plato's *Symposium*; defines the question of alterity in psychoanalysis through a reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, defines the splitting of the subject through a reading of Descartes etc. He also defines identification in the field of psychoanalysis through a reading of Frege, because that brings in the issue of what the unity of the subject is, and Lacan thinks the question of the unity of the subject, therefore, in relation to Frege's mathematical theory of number and unity.

So all that allowed me to give a status to what is not pure thought, at the time when I was becoming a philosopher. That's historically how it happened. One had the right to spend one's life reading Hegel's *Logic* and to say at the same time that there's something wrong in my life.

PD How did that position you in the institutional context of the academy?

MD-M For a very long time I was in analysis on the one hand, and a philosophy teacher on the other. And I had no difficulty in being accepted by the French academy as a philosophy teacher (because I had passed the *agrégation* [competitive exams]), but the rest was my own affair. I knew that I wanted to work on

the relation between the two, but it took me a long time to find a way of doing it. It's true that I was also very ambitious; I knew that it would take time.

First I worked on questions to do with the epistemology of psychoanalysis, since I had also studied the history of science. What interested me in psychoanalysis was to try out the methods of the history of science in a domain where it looked as though they might not work. I mean that the field of the unconscious is resistant to the methodology of the history of science, but that is what interested me. So in my first book, *Hysteria from Freud to Lacan*, I was an epistemologist in an unlikely area for epistemology. That first period of research was basically more concerned with psychoanalysis than philosophy. And in any case it was in psychoanalysis that I made my first intervention.

I was clear that what I wanted to do was not the philosophy of the philosophers. But I was teaching philosophy year after year. I was rereading Plato, I was rereading Kant, I was rereading Hegel, I was rereading Descartes. But I didn't use in my teaching the new angle of vision that I derived from listening to the unconscious. I was waiting until I could work out the best way to approach it.

And basically the best way was writing *La Folie dans la raison pure* [*The Madness in Pure Reason*] which came out in 1990; that was when I felt things came together for me; so I applied for a post at the CNRS [National Centre for Scientific Research] in order to write that book which came to be called *The Madness in Pure Reason*, and in which I really addressed myself to philosophers, in which I said to them, look, when I read philosophical texts, I see things that philosophers don't usually see, but which are there, and I see them because I have another angle

to think from, but if I can show it to you, it's there. You just need not to shut your eyes to it.

And I must say that I've always encountered both resistance from the French academy and also a lot of encouragement and recognition. A mixture of the two. Since I was good at preparing students for entry to the *grandes écoles* [the elite Universities], I've never had problems with the institution.

PD What about the reception of *The Madness in Pure Reason*?

MD-M It was the same with the reception of the book.

PD I suppose that some people working in the history of philosophy thought it was too psychoanalytic.

MD-M Yes of course. Simultaneously, the psychoanalysts told me the book was too philosophical, and the philosophers told me that it was too psychoanalytic. That is not a problem. What's important is that the book should make its way.

PD Wasn't it difficult to position yourself vis-à-vis the academy in France?

MD-M Yes, it was difficult, but I said to myself that I was not applying for a university post. So I was absolutely free. I was a good teacher in *khâgne*. [These are classes which prepare students for the entrance exams for the elite universities or *grandes écoles*.]

PD And you were also a psychoanalyst.

MD-M I was, in addition, a psychoanalyst, and basically I'm quite optimistic about the future in general—and I said to myself, if in what I write, I am demonstrating something new, that double position will eventually be accepted, even if it shocks. Quite a few people, though, have told me that I was basically the only psychoanalyst of any interest to the field of philosophy. There are many people who hate what I write.

PD But in fact, not being obliged to look for a university post was quite important?

MD-M Oh yes, it was very important for me.

PD I can't help thinking of Sarah Kofman who also wanted to take a psychoanalytic approach to philosophy.

MD-M And who had to fight for her university post.

PD Yes exactly. And that affects the work, it affects how one works if one feels strongly that there is a struggle—in contrast, I get the impression that in your work, there isn't such a feeling of struggle.

MD-M No, no. I need to be at rest when I write—I need to feel relaxed.

Philosophy's Madness

PD Why is it that philosophy, and above all, readings of the history of philosophy, are enriched by psychoanalytic readings? I'm thinking particularly about what you say in *Les Constructions de l'universel* [*Constructions of the Universal*]: that to require philosophy to be more attentive to the register of desire, of fantasy, is not the ruin of philosophy, but rather its 'chance'.¹ Why its chance? Could you say something about philosophy's chance?

MD-M Yes, I could give Kant as an example. I find that the edifice of pure reason, as a work of thought, is much more intelligible when one grasps the respect in which desire is at work in elaborations which are nevertheless abstract. One can't understand why Kant would have written all that if one doesn't see at the same time what his anxieties are about. So it's a chance for philosophy because one can understand much better why philosophers spend so much time elaborating a system, when one understands the respect in which for them elaborating a system is absolutely essential.

There is something external to pure conceptuality which constantly underpins the conceptual work, and from one point of view, it's a chance to be able to show it, a chance for philosophy itself, because it shows what philosophy is made from. So

it is not at all the end of philosophy. It is a means of understanding the necessity of philosophy, in a new way.

PD To emphasize the *chance* of philosophy is quite different from making a critique?

MD-M Oh yes. Basically what I want to show is that there is, certainly, an exclusion at work in philosophical thought, the negation of a certain conflict, a creative negation which is transformed into conceptual work. It's paradoxical that it should be the necessity of excluding certain experiences, while going on thinking them, that underpins a work of thought, but that is how it is. And, as you say, it's not quite what one calls the work of critique to show that. It's a bit like what Nietzsche called active thinking. That is, it is a caricature of affirmation, which is still a mode of affirmation. I think philosophy is related to that, so when I try to show it at work, very precisely, in the development of a philosophical thought, and in its systematicity, it's not destructive, what I do. I read otherwise what philosophy produces.

PD In the introduction to your translation of Kant's 'An Essay on the Maladies of the Mind' [1764] (and see David-Ménard 2000b), you ask whether Kant's reflection on the ambiguity of human character, forever on the verge of degenerating into madness, is merely a side issue for him—of pragmatic and anthropological interest, but not central—or whether it is one of the decisive sources of Kant's theoretical philosophy as it is formulated in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In fact the latter has become one of the major theses argued by your work up till now.

MD-M Yes. Kant himself said that the *Critique of Pure Reason* originated in the critique of the idea of the world. Concerning the question whether the world has a beginning in space and time, the question whether there are simple elements in the analysis of matter etc., he rapidly realized that something was wrong with

what reason was attempting and yet it involved a requirement of reason that one couldn't easily give up.

So there is a proximity between what he calls in the Transcendental Dialectic 'the illusion of reason' and 'madness'. The term '*Wahn*' refers to both at once. And the theme of madness is something which ran alongside the writing of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and which is still present in the very architecture of the book, in particular, in the distinction between the Transcendental Analytic and the Transcendental Dialectic.

The idea that there is a madness of pure reason, but that it is not quite the same as madness proper—i.e. the sort that gets people locked up—is really, I think, the centre of his thought. But then I realized that historically, during the whole pre-critical period, he'd been working at the same time explicitly on madness, not the madness of pure reason, but just madness: in the 'Essay on the Maladies of the Mind', and also in *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by the Dreams of Metaphysics* [1766].

So on the one hand, Kant had been working on madness, and on the other, he'd been doing the works on logic: it was during those same years that he wrote a new theory of negation after 1762 in the essay 'Attempt to introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy' [1763], or again in the text entitled 'The False Subtlety of the Four Syllogistic Figures Demonstrated by M. Immanuel Kant' [1762], where he critiques the Aristotelian notion of formal logic. So the problem became: why, at the same period, is he working on the logic of negation and on the question of madness? Does that conjunction have any connection with the problematic of the proximity between madness and the illusions internal to reason?

And the more I read, both the pre-critical texts and the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which I was reading again, the more I

realized that basically, the Transcendental Analytic is the theory of the way in which the understanding avoids the illusions which he describes at length in the Transcendental Dialectic. So for Kant, there is a profound ambiguity in the nature of thought; without the proximity of madness, it could never constitute itself as reason. Analytic reason manages to avoid the illusions that dialectical reason falls into. And scientific thought itself is thought which manages to restrict itself to the its object. It defines itself through its difference from the thought of the world which falls short of the real.

So for Kant, really, what is central is the problematic of the relations between reason and madness: how reason, when it becomes philosophical, manages to avoid madness. And it is central not only from an anthropological point of view, i.e. when he reflected on the hypochondria of Rousseau, of the reformer and moralist, but it's also central vis-à-vis questions of theory. So in his thought those anthropological remarks are not just a detail. I think that Kant himself knew very well—much better than his readers—that the most theoretical questions of his philosophy have to be achieved through differentiating themselves from the risk of mad thought.

PD Although this reading is not a critique of Kant, it does point to a certain imaginary in his philosophy. In your writings, you criticize the commentators who have systematically refused to see any relation between essays such as *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* and the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

MD-M Yet you only have to read *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* to realize how fascinated Kant was by Swedenborg. It's not just a political matter external to philosophy.

It's absolutely true that most of Kant's commentators accord no importance to the problematic of negation as a real conflict, as though logic were able to grant itself absolute

autonomy. With reference to the earlier texts, I have of course come across commentators who minimize the significance in Kant's thought of the proximity of reason and madness; who see the texts on madness as minor, anthropological texts and not philosophical texts.

It's quite true that there is a tendency in philosophy not to mention some of the conditions of the elaboration of the thought one is presenting. So commentators do that quite routinely. But philosophical thought does not completely eliminate what it is made from. You can see the process of elimination at work in the major texts. Freud would call it repression; you can see it at work in the major philosophical texts and it is practised by commentators. So the resistance that I meet is what I'm looking for, in a way; the difference in my reading relative to other readings of Kant is my focus, it's *my* issue, the point where I think have something to say. It's quite true that it's the limit and the success of philosophy to be able to produce objects of thought in which what those objects of thought are in fact linked to, for the thinker, is not mentioned.

PD Are you saying that without the fantasy there would be no philosophy, or are you saying that without suppressing the relation to the fantasy there would be no philosophy?

MD-M Without the struggle against fantasy there would be no conceptual thought. I think it's important to show the fantasies at work in the text, and one understands much better what philosophical thought is, when one shows that, than when one conceals it.

Philosophy and Sexuate Thought

PD According to *Constructions of the Universal*, you don't accept the idea that thought is sexuate. In the formulation of a thought, there

are fantasies and a relation to one's sexual position, but the thought itself is not sexual. Have I got that right?

MD-M I don't know if I would insist on the expression 'thought itself', since I don't treat what is purely conceptual, the logical kernel of metaphysics, as autonomous. I don't treat it as completely autonomous from that other type of thought which I call after Freud, after Lacan, fantasy. I look in philosophical texts for the points of articulation between these two heterogeneous orders of thought. It is in the order of the fantasy that the sexual identity of the male or female thinker—male or female philosopher—plays a part.

Perhaps I'll give you an example. When Kant writes in the *Critique of Practical Reason* as though it was an evidence of reason: 'No one can know *a priori* which representation will be accompanied by pleasure and which representation will be accompanied by pain', the statement can be read in several ways. Either one analyzes that faculty of separating pleasure from pain, and one shows that in fact pleasure and pain are linked to the reality of a state experienced by the subject, and that cannot be anticipated. So that any attempt to anticipate it, in particular, the idea of happiness, is necessarily an illusion of practical reason, since it won't ever be possible to anticipate the content of a feeling produced by a situation. Or else, on the contrary, one reads the statement quite differently: one reads it as a melancholic fantasy, that is, as a way of affirming that in the order of the sensible, nothing is constant. Everything is transitory. So nothing can truly be anticipated by reason. And at that point, it's perhaps quite coherent with what Kant says elsewhere, but nonetheless it's a fantasy transformed into coherence. Because there's no guarantee. It is stated, but not justified.

And if one takes the statement in that way, and then reads for example Kant's pre-critical 1764 text, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, one realizes that what is given as a rational principle in 1788 in the *Critique of Practical Reason* is just a repetition of the analysis of the melancholic, who lives only by principles. The melancholic is the man who feels very strongly that life is transitory, and Kant states that the only thing which isn't transient is the order of principles.

So in 1764, this idea of the *a priori* of moral principles is clearly put forward as an antidote, a remedy for an empirical state of affairs, not something given by reason, and it's presented by Kant as an observation, namely that for the melancholic, nothing is constant in the life of the feelings. Everything is transitory.

And in 1764, the meaning of that is defined with reference to the image of the woman for whom everything shifts all the time. Women do not understand principles, and what gives life its value, for them, is its beauty. When women are virtuous it is because they find virtue beautiful. It is never because they respect virtue or because they respect the moral law. Men say that women are fickle for this reason—above all melancholic men who love the constancy of principles, because otherwise they suffer the insecurity of what does not last. So one realizes that the idea that in the life of feeling there is no fixed point *a priori*, while the principles of practical reason, in contrast, introduce the only possible constancy in the order of feeling and of action, one realizes that this idea remains tied, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, to anthropological observations.

I myself call the observations fantasies, in the sense that their kernel is the way in which the man's identity is defined with reference to the supposed identity of the woman.

PD So the relation to the masculine and to the feminine can be found in the idea of the universal without the latter being in itself a masculine thought?

MD-M Yes, yes. Fantasies are unstable thoughts which are always in relation to more stable thoughts which are conceptual. But I want to show that there are always points of articulation between that search for self which is a fantasy, which leaves traces in the organization of conceptual thought, and the logical organization of conceptual thought.

So, in any case, the conceptual, in philosophy, moves in the direction of autonomy from the phantasmatic, and at the same time, to understand what differentiates one philosophical system from another, as pure concept, it is interesting to look at which fantasy a conceptual thought is built on. So I recognize at one and the same time the relative capacity to become autonomous, and at the same time I say that what allows us to understand that one philosophical system is different from another, is the fact that its relation to its constitutive fantasies is not the same.

PD In *Constructions of the Universal*, you raise the question of feminism. You say that you will be asked if you are a feminist, and that of course you believe in sexual difference, in a psychoanalytic sense. For example, women and men have a different relation to guilt, or the substitution of objects of desire is not carried out in the same way. Perhaps the construction of a concept of the universal reinforces an anthropology of desire which is masculine rather than feminine. And then it's more than a coincidence if it is a woman who wants to shed light on the blind spots of a philosophical text, because the blind spots appear more clearly to those who are not included in that text.

MD-M Yes, it is obvious that male philosophers prefer not to ask themselves what ties their philosophical thoughts to their

sexuate condition. Because tradition, at least recent tradition—perhaps in Greece it was different, perhaps in Plato's *Symposium* it was different—but contemporary philosophy since the eighteenth century doesn't ask this question. It's a philosophy which has been ninety-nine per cent the work of men. So when one asks the question about the sexuation of philosophy, there must be reasons for raising it.

But such a question supposes that one feels oneself a bit external to the way in which a certain relation between fantasy and concept is called into practice—which does not have to be made explicit in order to be called into practice. It is in that sense that I say it's not surprising that it should be women who raise the question. And not only women. I always say: 'women or men who are perverse but creative'. And it's true that since I've been attempting to show sexuation at work in the process that turns a thought into philosophy, there has always been a recognition that I've experienced from male scientific philosophers whom I call in inverted commas 'perverse but creative'. Because they are not comfortable either, for different reasons, with the customary articulation between fantasy and concept, that articulation which doesn't have to be explicit to be enacted, or which is enacted all the more successfully for not being explicit.

So in a sense, yes, my feminism would consist in saying that it's vital that the question I'm raising should be heard despite the kinds of thought that want to smother it. And they are, in general, derived from a certain articulation between fantasy and concept, very linked to masculine power in philosophy. But linked to masculine power in philosophy because it is linked to a phantasmatic scenario in philosophy.

PD How do you situate your work with respect to other directions in contemporary French philosophy? Including those taken by

women?

MD-M Yes, there are many thinkers who have taken routes that are different but comparable in their implications.

I'm thinking of Barbara Cassin, who rereads the relation between the thought of the Sophists and the constitution of reason in such a way that she, too, comes at constituted reason from another angle.

I'm thinking also of Claude Imbert who works inside a logical system in order to consider the dependence of this logical system relative to anthropological conditions. And, at the same time, she goes from highly elaborated systems of logic to an anthropology of art, to systems of aesthetics which show that an aesthetics is a logic of the sensible which is comparable with an axiomatic logic. So I am particularly interested in these two examples, but there are also many other fields of thought that interest me.

PD What about your relation to other philosophers who use psychoanalysis?

MD-M It's quite clear that what I do has links with Derrida, since basically he problematizes the relationship between the nature of sexuate identity and the work of thought. My theoretical scenario is a bit different, in that I say that on the one hand I am a philosopher, I respect the coherence proper to philosophical thought, and on the other hand I have a foot in another camp, in the attention I pay to fantasies, but I locate the articulation of these two fields in philosophical texts. And this is very different from deconstruction, for example.

Derrida may know his Freud very well, but his critique of reason is not carried out in the name of psychoanalytic practice. To the extent that I also work on all the things that go wrong in the relation between reason and the real, there are points where our paths cross, concerning the relation between

self and other, or concerning the relation between thought and the real.

I can't help but meet up with the work of Lyotard on the differend, for example. My thought crosses with his, but that's not the point where I started.

PD What are you working on at the moment?

MD-M I think I'm going to work on Schelling, Hegel and Kant, and their readings of the principle of identity, because I'm struck by the extent of the difference between these three philosophers in their reflections on the principle of identity and what it is. And I think that one can grasp quite well, when one thinks about it, what I call the articulation between the fantasy and the concept.

I'm also working on a book entitled *Clinique de la dénegation, philosophie de la négation* [Denial in the Clinic, Negation in Philosophy]. Lastly, I have just completed a non-technical book on psychoanalysis, called *Tout le plaisir est pour moi* [The pleasure is all mine].

Monique David-Ménard, Université de Paris VII (Denis-Diderot)
Penelope Deutscher, Australian National University, Canberra
Paris July 1998

Translator's Note

- Chance*, in French, can mean: fortune, chance, opportunity, luck (good or bad depending on the context), possibility of successful outcome. Several different meanings are at play in the exchange between *PD* and *MD-M* here.

Interview 2: Barbara Cassin

Philosophical Displacements

Contextualization

Barbara Cassin, philologist, philosopher, and specialist in Greek Antiquity, is a Director of Research at *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, Paris. In addition to her translations and many edited anthologies, her books include *L'Effet sophistique* (1995) and *Aristote et le logos* (1997). See the Cumulative Bibliography for more details. At the time of the interview she was working on a dictionary of 'untranslatable' terms in philosophy.

Towards a New Topology of Philosophy

PD In your work, and most particularly in *L'Effet sophistique* [*The Sophistic Effect*] (1995), you have put forward a sophistic history of philosophy. Would you describe this?

BC The sophistic history of philosophy is a history of neglected traditions, a history of alternative paths and a history of repressed traditions. What is essential is to have a plurality, instead of a single path. That single path of ontology, and the dominant path of ontology, for me, goes from Parmenides to Plato, via a certain reading of Aristotle up to Heidegger. I'm interested in showing how it goes even up to Habermas, who might seem to be different, but for me is just the same. The history of philosophy, the royal road, as history of ontology and phenomenology, or as history of communication, takes a path that one can't manage to trace, that one can't identify as a path, unless one looks at what it was not, what was, even materially, left to one side.

The sophistic texts are part of those texts that were concretely left to one side, concretely worked over. Imagine that you were trying to reconstruct a dinosaur from a few small bones—not only that, but that the bones had been chewed up by the dinosaur's foes. It's really a palaeontology of perversion.

To be able to modify the perception that we have of the great conceptual history of philosophy and of the royal road of ontology and phenomenology, we have to look elsewhere.

And to go and look elsewhere, we even have to go and look outside philosophy, because philosophy has organized things so that everything which appears to be a critique of the royal road is rejected as not being philosophy. For the Greeks that is quite characteristic. Alongside sophistic, you have to look at atomism, for example. You have to keep working on things—like Anaximander—which are poorly identified and interpreted in radically opposing ways.

What all these others have in common is that they have another way of speaking, even another conception of the *logos*. I found a very simple model and counter-model, perhaps also very caricaturish, in Parmenides' *Poem*: the model of Parmenidean and Platonic-Aristotelian ontology in this case, and the sophistic counter-model. Parmenidean ontology is the connection or the collusion, or the co-belonging between being and speaking [*dire*] of being. It is committed to that. To be, to think, and to say [*dire*] are the same thing.

That, very precisely, is wonderfully analyzed by Heidegger and leads directly to *Unterwegs zur Sprache* [*On the Way to Language*] and to the way in which man is entrusted with the 'being there' [*Dasein*] which will speak [*dire*] being. In the face of this entrustment, there is what has been cast back into rhetoric and literature, with the accusation of 'pseudos', meaning both 'false', 'lie' and 'fiction'. And as a model of that second type of *logos*, that I no longer call ontologic but logologic—to take up the term Novalis used to refer to discourse insofar as it is primarily concerned with itself—I found sophistic. But one would certainly have to think about the place of atomism.

So, sophistic, for me, is a discourse which is primarily and above all performative. It is not to do with speaking being, but making what one speaks be. When one makes to be what one speaks, one is in a completely different model from that of the physico-ontological model, say, where the concern is with speaking *physis*, or being, whatever name it calls itself by. No, what counts in the first model is the way in which discourse is a 'great tyrant'—to use Gorgias' phrase—and creates as it speaks. Now, the first performance is the *polis*. So one finds the opposition between physics and politics reworked.

With sophistic, one passes from physics to politics, from philosophy to literature. All that against the background of a basic discordance, which is the discordance between ontology and logology. I say all this to explain to you that in my view, one can't work the straight seam without at the same time working on the counter-models, and without working on philosophy's 'others'.

So obviously, I need numerous traditions, a new geography. I need equally the long-term perspective, to see what resurgences of antiquity appear in modernity, for example, to see how the regime of discourse forbidden by Aristotle in Book Gamma of the *Metaphysics* reappears via Freud and Lacan ... via sophistic, that is, via the possibility of homonymy and the signifier.

- PD* What were the moves in terms of career and intellectual development which led you to the work you have done on the Sophists?
- BC* I think the decisive encounter was my encounter with Heidegger, whose work I was introduced to by René Char, and my encounter with French Heideggerianism. That made me want to learn Greek, and I realized that Greek philosophy was very entangled and twisted. And not only Greek philosophy, but Greece, the Greek language, everything that was Hellenic,

was twisted in a certain way: a grandiose way, but which was appropriate for only a part of Greece. That really made me want to study the texts again, to understand how the traditions were articulated.

I learnt philology and I realized that viable alternatives existed. They were not always solid enough for my taste, from a philosophical point of view—in other words, I find that Heidegger is, in a certain way, irrefutable. In France, anyway, he has been irrefutable, much more than in Germany, obviously, for a large number of philosophers of the generation preceding mine, but also for my generation and for the one after, even now.

It was Pierre Aubenque who gave me the *Treatise on Non-Being* by Gorgias for my research subject. And from then on, many things crystallized, including the relation between philology and philosophy, between Gorgias and Parmenides. Gorgias put himself forward as a challenger to Parmenides, using other means, and a genuine violence, and above all, a terrifying intelligence which saw right through ontology. That's how I perceived him, understood him, and that is what set in train a reflection on the articulation between ontology and its critique. Can one be pre-Socratic differently? How is there a Greece other than ultra-Heideggerian?

And with those questions, entire sections of Greek culture, not only of philosophy, but also of rhetoric and literature, were opened up to being potentially reworked and perceived otherwise. The relation between philosophy and literature itself needs to be worked on—for example, when one begins to juxtapose and understand together the First and Second Sophistic Movements.

My intellectual career was really determined by that encounter with Heidegger, but subject to René Char. I mean

that it was determined in that way solely because of what the presence of René Char opened up simultaneously—he was sufficiently great and even grandiose, sufficiently celestial and terrestrial at the same time, to allow me to question and to put into perspective, let us say, the extraordinary Heideggerian intelligibility.

PD Do you think that philosophers need to rethink the relation to Heidegger ... ?

BC Nowadays?

PD Yes. Is it still a problem for contemporary French philosophy?

BC I think it is, yes, to a great extent. The only antidote—well there have been several antidotes. First, there has been more work done on Heidegger, by Derrida, for example, extensive work. But in my view, the real antidote is Deleuze, along with Jean-François Lyotard, who occupied a very complicated position. And Foucault, who certainly died a bit too soon, at least as far as his relation to Greek philosophy is concerned. (His last books, which look directly at Greece, are absolutely conventional; I don't think they come off.)

PD Many of your projects provide an occasion for encounters between different domains of philosophy, and the introduction to *Nos Grecs et leurs modernes* [*Our Greeks and Their Moderns*] (1991) explains your interest in getting Anglo-American philosophy and European hermeneutic philosophy to engage in dialogue.

BC For me, the analytic-hermeneutic difference is very important in Greek philosophy, because we are looking at two perceptions of the same texts, which are often difficult to reconcile. But it is not fundamental in philosophy. It gets things out of proportion, and leads to conflicts that are sometimes more irritating than really beneficial. I mean that I could get on as well or as badly with someone from the hermeneutic tradition, as with someone from the analytic tradition, when it

comes to Gorgias' *Treatise on Non-Being*. As it happens, I've been involved in scraps as much with one side as the other.

PD You have managed to establish quite an innovative, or independent, philosophical approach. How do you get on with institutional Classics scholarship?

BC Just at the level of anecdote, if you like, when I wrote *Ji Parménide* [*If Parmenides*], a review came out, one of the most vicious I've ever read, extremely violent, explaining that horses from Bollack's stable (Bollack was on my thesis committee) were well-trained, but unfortunately they had never crossed the starting line. That was a discovery for me, to realize that what I was writing could be so violently perceived as wrong, as disconcerting, yes, but also genuinely as wrong, methodologically wrong. And then when I met the author of that review, Jonathan Barnes, and when I realised what a wonderful man he was, and how intelligent and warm our discussion could be ... that made me think.

PD Your work displaces the history of philosophy, in a way, despite depending so much on philology. One would have thought that the capacity of philologist would have been enough to give you legitimacy.

BC No, because it is precisely when one appears the closest that one is likely to be the most irreducibly different. Philology is not an exact science. Two philologists may not share the same perception of language. Nor the same perception of the rights of an interpreter. That is the very point where it becomes interesting to delve, and which led me to work next on what remains of the spirit of languages.

The Spirit of Languages

PD Could you say something about the question of the spirit of languages [*le génie des langues*]? It is connected to your work on untranslatables.

BC The big project that I have on the go is a dictionary of untranslatable terms in philosophy. Obviously it's a put-up job to call it that, because it's not a dictionary: it won't cover all the terms; secondly, because obviously the untranslatables are translated, and it is their translation that the debates are all about. This is a way of resolving finally, but certainly not once and for all, my differences with Heidegger. It's a way of giving another version of the great conceptual tradition which takes us from Greek to German, as though there were only one philosophical language worthy of the name, that of the Greeks and of those who are more Greek than the Greeks, namely the Germans, via, occasionally, a momentary and semi-accidental incursion into a language that one may consider, in a certain period, as interesting; for example, Italian during the Renaissance, or Spanish at the moment of mysticism.

What I'm trying to do in contrast is to understand how each language constitutes an autonomous geography, a net for understanding the world in its own way, a net to catch a world, create its world (something like ontology again). The only real help in thinking a conception of language which is not magnetized by the *logos* is probably Karl Wilhem von Humboldt (1767–1835): a model other than the universality of the *logos* has to be found.

The dictionary of untranslatables tries, for example, to reflect on the difference between the English word 'mind', *Geist* and *esprit*. And at the same time, between *logos*, *ratio*, *oratio*. How, when one says 'mind', one enters a different universe from the one entered when one says '*Geist*', and how one universe can't necessarily be subordinated to the other, is not necessarily inferior, but what allows it to coexist? Then one has to go into enormous detail. One has to see at what point the terms were translated, at what point the bifurcations took

place, at what point the superimpositions began to exist. And each time, what sort of genealogical arborescence, but also what sort of rhizomatic spreading out, is at stake.

At the same time as one is interested in discordances between the networks, one is also interested in discontinuities. For example, the term *leggiadria*, at a certain point during the Italian Renaissance, was invented for the Mona Lisa's smile, a woman's doe-like beauty, that beauty of a wild thing tamed. The term is not well translated by 'grace', because 'grace' also has a religious meaning that is not truly part of the meaning of *leggiadria*. So each dimension of language has to be perceived in its singularity. So that examples can only be symptoms ... for example, what's going on when *Istina* and *Pravda* both lay claim to be translated by 'truth', since you absolutely have to refer *Pravda* at least to the domain of justice as well?

PD Philosophy tends to deny the spirit of languages?

BC I think that philosophy tends to turn the spirit of languages into something horrible. I think that the spirit of languages is an absolutely terrifying concept, which leads in a straight line to the worst kind of Heideggerianism, that is Hellenico-Nazism, quite easily identified; although I don't want to caricature too quickly, the caricatures are there.

We have to rethink, set about reconsidering, the possibility that the spirit of languages need not be horrifying. To reflect, for example, what, at a certain point in Russian history, diglossia can impose as the difference between the world above and the world below, and wonder how it opens on to spiritualism. That sort of phenomenon is on the frontier between linguistics and philosophy.

One gets too quickly into horror when one thinks a language [*langue*] qua language [*langue*], just as when one thinks a nation qua nation. Is there a way of doing it without arousing

anxiety [*angoisse*]? The problem has to be rethought, but we have very few instruments at our disposal, because, as it happens, the most powerful instruments were or are Graeco-German. So, to find a way of thinking the problem differently, and to find counter-models, real counter-models, that gets very difficult. And those are the difficulties I try to confront.

PD Why did you use the word 'anxiety'?

BC It creates anxiety to think about the superiority of one language, *qua* language, in its relation to philosophy. It creates anxiety to think that Greek, then German, are the languages of being.

To resolve that anxiety requires, on the one hand, rethinking the relation between philosophy as ontology, and what is not philosophy as ontology, that's the reason for the sophistic lever, if you like.

That means having to rethink the relation—but all in one go—the relation between literature and philosophy, and poetry a little differently, in order to desacralize all that.

This leads us to ask: what remains of the spirit of languages? That means having to rethink plurality through other means. For example, one often says that philosophical English is linked to ordinary language (following the arguments of Wittgenstein and Stanley Cavell). This is an example of the singularity of language. And when I begin to interpret the analytic/hermeneutic antagonism against that background, it becomes an interesting question for me.

Philosophy and Its Others

PD There are also, in your work, reflections on the relation between women and philosophy. In one issue of the *Cahiers du GRIF*, 'Women-Philosophy', Françoise Collin asks: 'From where does one think when one thinks? What are the sources of thought?' (Collin 1992). I think I know that you are wary of

the idea that a thought can be masculine or feminine. Having said that, in your article in the 'Women-Philosophy' issue of the *Cahiers*, you say that a woman 'makes do with the leftovers, she knows how to make a ragout'. Apparently for you there is a relation between the fact of being a man or a woman in contemporary philosophy, and the question of how one works as a philosopher, what methodology one chooses, what one's philosophical gestures are. How do you think this relation, if one does not accept the idea of a masculine or feminine thought?

BC Perhaps I can begin with the relation between, let us say, the great ontological or phenomenological tradition and its 'others'. The great ontological or phenomenological tradition is at one and the same time a tradition of submission and a tradition of mastery. It is certainly a submission to being, to the world, to the real. But it is also an absolute mastery, in several senses. Firstly because it defines a straight line, an orthodoxy. And everything which is not within this orthodoxy—either for it or even against it, but in a relation which is acceptable because it confirms the rules of the game—is expelled, and in a certain way reduced to silence.

All the same, up till now, philosophy has essentially been carried out by men. It is quite natural to assimilate, or to be tempted to assimilate, this philosophical power to power of a masculine kind. So I would say (perhaps one can speak like that without being too simplistic), that the first women I came across in philosophy were the Sophists. They constitute for the Platonic-Aristotelian orthodoxy an unassimilable heterodoxy.

That does not prevent them in other respects, returning in force, just as women come back to overthrow the power of men. The Sophists returned in force, to the point where Hegel called them 'the masters of Greece'. They returned in force with rhetoric and the Second Sophistic Movement, and they

were already there in force in the linguistic constitution of the *polis*. But philosophy as such marginalized them completely.

The philosopher who was mostly responsible for marginalizing them, in this instance, was not so much Plato as Aristotle. Plato fought the Sophists every inch of the way—using, whether he liked it or not, his resemblance to them, or the resemblance of Socrates to a Sophist. It was Aristotle who truly classified them as 'other', put them in the index as 'other' (in the sense, too, of putting them *on* the Index), when he demonstrated that their discursive regime, their way of speaking, was not human. They fell outside the principle of non-contradiction, and that made them immediately '*homoioi phutotai*', 'like plants'.

Women did not speak much either, did they? Nor children, nor animals, nor slaves. All of them, they were all a bit on the plant side. In short, I think that philosophy has never been able to prevent itself from being Aristotelian on that level. So—I'm going very quickly—but there is a persistent position of the 'other' which could be thought of as being somewhat feminine. And to hold that position is, shall we say, all of a sudden 'to philosophize'—Novalis used to say, even, 'philosophistize'—that feminine. To go on holding the position, and, not claiming it, I don't mean that, but showing its effects, showing how it is produced, its genealogy and its effects—that is what is somewhat new, relative to the great orthodoxy.

There is a grand tradition and there is a great orthodoxy, and then there are all the 'others'. There is philosophical language, and then there are the rest—that is, precisely, rhetoric, literature, a certain type of poetry which is not the great ontological poetry or which is not considered as such, etc. All these different registers, for me, are analogous, assimilable, adoptable and adaptable.

That's what I mean by making a ragout.

These registers are not accepted as such, and in any case, the passage from one to another is impossible to accept today—at least, impossible to accept in the grand tradition of editorial mastery which succeeds philosophical mastery.

When I wanted to publish at the same time *The Sophistic Effect* and a collection of short stories, *On the Clinamen*, it proved impossible. I was told that if I wanted to keep my scholarly reputation, I should not publish the collection of short stories. As far as I was concerned, I thought my reputation would benefit from it. In the event, I published the stories in literary journals. I consider that the stories came out of the same type of work on language, and the same type of work on the dominant, orthodox, or again ontological, phenomenological tradition. It is exactly the same type of philosophical work—and I would have been really excited if they could have been accepted at the same time. But as it turned out, they couldn't.

It makes me feel absolutely speechless, and I don't feel I can swim against the current, it is too much for me. It is too difficult to swallow. And besides—one final point to explain my relation to, let us say, 'masculine' philosophy—of course I have always encountered a lot of good will towards my stories or my poems from male philosophers who thought that what I wrote in philosophy was worthless. They have always said to me: 'Well, of course, yes, it's brilliant, your writing, when you write stories or poems, it's fantastic.' But you see, for me, there is a kind of social resistance there. It is much easier for a woman to be a novelist than a philosopher. And as soon as she is recognized as a philosopher, she must not be a novelist.

PD

How would you describe your relation to the academy, to institutionalized philosophy? You've already touched on that

issue quite a few times when you mentioned the reception of both your philological and your philosophical work, and the reception of your literary work.

BC I have been extremely lucky, in that the university philosophers gave me the chance to work at the CNRS [National Centre for Scientific Research]. So I am not answerable to anyone, so long as I produce reports explaining, in an acceptable way, how I am working, and so long as I actually *am* working. I am just incredibly happy and fortunate to have this position. It was simply rather unlikely that I would get it. But at the end of the day, it is probably a generous institution, and as it happened, at a certain point, the people who were involved in the decision were generous too. I hope we continue to be generous now I belong to the people who decide.

But in the normal course of events, I think that anyone in my position would have given up philosophy. Because after my first doctorate, for *Si Parménide* [*If Parmenides*] (already something very weighty), I simply couldn't find a job at all, ever. It was quite understandable, because I didn't have the *agrégation* [the highest level competitive examination]. Now the *agrégation* is something which I couldn't prepare, I wasn't capable of it, I didn't want to, all of those things, but certainly too, I wasn't capable of it. It was an obstacle, an *agrégation* which I couldn't get through, especially after 1968. For me, it was the opposite of what could be expected of me, and of what I was equipped to do, or of what I was capable of wanting to do, especially after I'd encountered Heidegger and Char. So I had to stick it out for a very long time, financially as well.

I took photographs, I was able to sell some canvases, and I did some painting. When I didn't have any money, I was also able to write for the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, and that way I had enough to live on. I led quite a strange life; some of the time I

taught psychotic adolescents in day hospitals, sometimes I taught at the Post Office, sometimes even at the ENA [the elite university that trains future public administrators]. I was able to get by without having to become a philosophy teacher in a provincial *lycée*¹, at a time when I already had a child with someone who worked in Paris. A truly impossible life when one doesn't have friends, or relations, or a husband to keep you, or when one doesn't have real enthusiasm for what one is doing.

All this meant that I worked in my own way, according to my own rhythm. I think that teaching psychotic adolescents was the experience from which I learnt the most. I did philosophy with them, but obviously not the sort of philosophy that I would teach today to university students. I did early philosophy with them, I worked on language in its early stages. I read *Cratylus* with them, to show them that they had a more maternal language than other people, with an alphabet more familiar than Greek, and that they could play with their language as Plato did with his. They would invent etymologies, we did astonishing, brilliant things. That taught me a lot.

So I was fortunate that I didn't have to deal with institutions until I could do so effectively. That is, until I'd done enough work to ask for it to be legitimated. And at that point, there were people who were so good as to do that. But it was really luck, enormous luck. Then things sorted themselves out without trouble, I mean that I really worked hard, at the same time trying not to become too narrow as a result, which is not easy, and now I feel—and that surprises me a lot—that I have a sort of power.

PD Yes, institutional power, you might say, which is quite rare for a woman philosopher.

BC Indeed. I think that I've always had a lot of luck, and I've also

worked hard—both. The luck is that I was as interested in drama, painting, writing, short stories or poems, as I was in being a philosopher. So in the end, that's a ragout as well—having children, having lovers, living, travelling. It is in doing all that that I felt I could do philosophy a little bit differently.

PD If, over the course of history, there have been few women philosophers, and some whose style of writing philosophy was, one might say, sometimes a bit awkward, now in the 1990s, there suddenly seem to be women philosophers whose writing, or prose, has a new quality ...

BC Their prose, yes.

PD ... where there isn't that feeling of struggle, it is as though there are now women's voices which are more at ease, at ease with philosophy. I think that's new.

BC Yes, one is at ease with philosophy, with language. For me, in any case, what is very important is to have the right to play on all the registers of language. I don't want to be obliged to write like the contributors to *The Classical Review*. I don't want to have to write like that, and, in any case, I can't do that kind of—let us say—dreary specialist work. Light-heartedness comes from complicity with all the strings of the language, and that constitutes at the same time a real ironising of all mastery of the object.

That's why I had such fun with the Second Sophistic Movement, I really loved it. It is a sort of layered palimpsest of the whole of Greek culture, with all the arts thrown in. It is a kind of writing that is only possible if the culture is there in the background, but at the same time the take on tradition is ironic. So I'm talking about stirring up the tradition, making holes in it, through the sheer weight of the details.

PD How do you situate your work relative to other directions in contemporary French philosophy? Is there other work being

done which seems connected to yours? Is the work that inspires you part of your support network of philosophers, and/or also of women-philosophers in particular? Are there women philosophers who are producing work that seems to some extent linked with yours?

BC Look, I have friends that I enjoy reading, both men and women. All the same, I think that there are a few of us who are aware that there are women philosophers, something we wouldn't have dared to say to ourselves before. It's more that.

Claude Imbert, Monique David-Ménard, Jacqueline Lichtenstein for example—there is a new generation arriving on the scene who see themselves as women and philosophers at one and the same time, and who feel themselves, let us say, to be both happy and iconoclastic. Fine. But I'm not sure that we are truly iconoclastic. I think we are going very fast, it is even quite astonishing, if you like. Your questions make me realize suddenly that I am old and I am a classic, you see. [Laughter] I say to myself, dammit, if I'm being asked questions like that, how old and traditional I must be.

PD Apparently, you often work in a group or a team, it is something you have done throughout your career. I'm thinking for example of several collections and conferences, such as *Le Plaisir de parler* [*The Pleasure of Speaking*] (1986a), *Nos Grecs et leurs modernes* [*Our Greeks and Their Moderns*] and *Positions de la sophistique* [*Sophistic Positions*] (1986b) among others. What are you currently working on?

BC Firstly on the Dictionary of Untranslatables, and that is a lot of threads to keep hold of. That too is my female side, as you were saying, working in a group and all that. I organize; I arrange; I go to the market; I prepare something to eat; and when I work it is the same. The collaborative works are things that I arrange, that I concoct; that too is a ragout.

It's interesting because each time I begin from scratch. In effect, I begin by going to the market and choosing the raw material before doing the cooking, that is before doing a book. It is a really enjoyable way to work, simply because I don't know where it will end up. I don't know what sort of book will come out of it. But I'm now sure that a book *will* come out of it, and further I'm sure that I'm going to love the book.

PD You are at the market with the untranslatables?

BC Yes. In addition, I've just finished retranslating Parmenides' *Poem*; it's not at all intended as a definitive translation, but as the exploration of a real question: Greek, *qua* Greek, is it or is it not the language of being? That's the subtitle, by the way: 'The Language of Being?' with a question mark.

I perceived in, or perhaps projected into Parmenides' *Poem* two main lines of interpretation. The first, suggested to me by Gorgias, is that it is about creating being with language. Parmenides, Parmenides' *Poem*, is first and foremost the story of Greek which, following the path of the 'is', makes language itself into the plot. It deploys syntax and semantics, the whole grammar: starting from the first '*esti*', from the verb conjugated as 'is', it produces the subject, '*to on*', being [*étanz*], substantive, substantified participle as noun. How, through what linguistic changes, one gets from verb to subject, from being to substance: that's what I call the ontology of grammar.

The second thread that I've identified is the way in which the story—this putting into narrative of the language—is presented as the story of all the grand narratives. This ontology which is so new, is already a palimpsest which in fact weaves and rearticulates all the earlier discourses, from myth to physics via epic. Thus, the moment at which being, *to on*, is indicated as such, takes up term by term the phrases which in Homer's *Odysseus* refer to Ulysses when he sails past the Sirens: 'solidly

rooted there'. In that way one attains an understanding of the fact that all Greek texts possess an extraordinary palimpsestic depth. And from there, the understanding that philosophy and literature are terribly linked.

The Prostitute's History

PD What sort of relation is there between the history of philosophy and the sophistic history of philosophy?

BC The sophistic history of philosophy is obviously a provocation which opposed itself to the philosophical history of philosophy. The philosophical history of philosophy, for me, is the history of philosophy from Parmenides to Heidegger, via Plato and Aristotle—and all the greats up to, and including, Hegel. That is, a history of ontology and phenomenology. And a history for which philosophy becomes confused with its history.

Nowadays, what would a sophistic history of philosophy be? It is a history of what was forbidden by the dominant tradition in its effort to define, and define itself as philosophy. Walter Benjamin used to say: history should be written from the point of view of the prostitute instead of from the point of view of the client. In a certain way, the sophistic history of philosophy writes the history of philosophy from the point of view of the prostitute, that is, from the point of view of the bad 'other'—the one whom one has not only the right, but also the duty to shun. It writes the history of philosophy from the point of view of philosophy's 'others', of the outside of philosophy, and its effect (the sophistic effect) is to show how—why—that exterior is philosophically determined. It's a way of reproblematising the notion of inside and outside, interior and exterior.

I showed this, with reference to a precise but decisive point, in 'The Decision of Meaning', when I analyzed the impossible demonstration given by Aristotle, in Book Gamma of

the *Metaphysics*, of the principle of all principles, the law of non-contradiction. Aristotle finds this first principle, which we all believe and obey, without thinking, on the refutation of sophistic. That is, on the requirement or the decision, that to speak means to say something, that is, to signify something, that is, to signify one and the same thing for oneself and for others. When I say 'Good Day', I am not saying 'Go to the devil', or if I say at the same time 'Go to the devil', then, according to Aristotle, I do not say anything at all, I am not even speaking. Outside of the regime of meaning as univocity, there is only 'what there is in the sounds of the voice and in the words'.

In the course of his demonstration, Aristotle admits that the whole of Greece (Heracitus and Protagoras, of course, but also Homer and Parmenides himself) is in danger of being left out, outside the regime of univocity. But Aristotle works at recuperating them, and ends up showing that they all speak like him; they all belong to the faithful, they all accept the principle. The only one left outside is the one who insists on making the materiality of the *logos* speak, that is in this case, the Sophist, the one who speaks for 'the pleasure of speaking', the irreparable 'speaking plant'.

So to do a sophistic history of philosophy, is to do a history of those whom philosophy considered not to exist, and to do the history of philosophy from their point of view; and in so doing, indicate the boundaries of philosophy, which philosophy has imposed on itself. So I am trying to identify a series of philosophical gestures. To each gesture corresponds its 'other', what is excluded or sick—and what interests me most is to see how the gestures get reproduced.

I'm very interested to see how Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas reproduce the Aristotelian gesture. How in their

work, it is the consistent sceptic who becomes the Sophist. Using the same type of argument. What strikes me are the points at which philosophy is impelled into violence. It's what I call 'using the stick'. When Aristotle says of those 'people who are puzzled to know whether one ought to honour the gods and love one's parents or not' that they 'need punishment, while those who are puzzled to know whether snow is white or not need perception' (*Topics*, Bk 1, 11: 105a.), I'm very interested to know at what point philosophy feels it has the right to say that people need punishment ...

PD And feels the need to say that people need punishment.

BC ... yes, when does it feel the need to. That comes back to a certain type of problematic that Lyotard had in mind with 'the differend'. At a certain moment, Habermas excludes certain men, excludes certain types of speech that are actually employed, puts them outside the 'communicational community'. That is something that interests me a lot.

PD In *The Sophistic Effect*, you say specifically that it is not an interest 'in the margins'; you are not 'making a plea for *penseurs maudits* [accursed thinkers]² against vetoes and exclusion'. You say also that you are not concerned with 'rehabilitating' sophistic thought.

BC What I'm trying to say is: 'Don't get things mixed up.' I'm not interested in those who are rehabilitating sophistic, because rehabilitating sophistic consists in making Sophists into philosophers after all. They are welcomed back to the flock; they occupy a place, at a certain point, within the philosophical fold.

For example, as we are thinking about the Anglo-Saxon tradition, G. B. Kerford thinks that the Sophists are hyper-rationalists, and congratulates them on it: they want even the formless, even sensation, to be subject to reason. But, strange as it may seem, that is exactly what Plato says about them,

apart from the fact that Plato thinks they would do better to concentrate on ideas than on words and sensations. That type of rehabilitation, which merely reverses the scale of values, while keeping the characteristics and the judgments, doesn't interest me at all.

PD Their rehabilitation *qua* philosophers?

BC *Qua* philosophers. We are told that they are serious thinkers, because they fit perfectly into the traditional schema of Greek philosophy. So no, that does not interest me. One could say the same thing about the Sceptics. There is a big rehabilitation of the Sceptics, according to which they are rigorous philosophers, and there is also a rehabilitation of the Sceptics, according to which they are disturbing philosophers, who disrupt philosophy. Obviously, it's the second kind that I'm interested in. But they can't be separated so easily, and the second kind is continually recuperated by the first. The inside always absorbs the outside—that's how it is.

Don't think that I am going to rehabilitate the Sophists by claiming that they are good philosophers. On the contrary, at a pinch I would say that it is the philosophers, insofar as they have excluded the Sophists, who interest me. At the same time, what interests me is the light which sophistic can shed on philosophy. Anyway, it's not because the Sophists are outside that I'm interested in them.

PD It's because they are excluded?

BC You've got it. It's the gestures and the strategies. And it might also be said, after all, that I am largely rehabilitating the Sophists as philosophers to the extent to which I make of them, roughly speaking, models for the critique of ontology. As Jean Beaufret used to say—and it's a comment with frightening implications—'A destroyer of torpedo boats [*contre-torpilleur*] is first and foremost a torpedo boat [*torpilleur*].' How can you

manage not to get recaptured by the inside? What interests me are the gestures of recapture and the gestures forbidding that recapture.

That's why there is fluctuation, and why it [*ça*] has to be looked at over the long term. There are repetitions, but they are not quite the same. There are returns, but they are not quite identical. I am one of the only ones, in France at any rate, who has really tried to think together the First and the Second Sophistic Movements. There is one Anglo-Saxon tradition, more on the side of analytic philosophers, concerned with the First Sophistic Movement, another Anglo-Saxon tradition, more on the side of the literary classicists, which is concerned with the Second Sophistic Movement. But both together—not really. What interests me is what emerges from all that history. What does Philostratus connect with? [*met en continuité*] What is the new relation between sophistic, rhetoric, literature, philosophy, politics, etc.?

PD Are ways of doing philosophy or poetry that don't give rise to the philosopher's wish to exclude of less interest to you?

BC On the one hand, poetry insofar as it is sacred, or holy, and which has a place inside the quasi-sacred word of philosophy does not interest me as such. On the other hand, perhaps Celan's poetry, insofar as it struggles against a certain sacralization of the word, that might interest me. Having said that, Mallarmé doesn't write a single line that could not be interpreted both ways. Rimbaud doesn't write a single line that could not be interpreted both ways ... so I can't speak like that. If I did, I would be speaking all the time against myself.

PD From what you say, one might say that the position of the 'other' is feminine, or ... ?

BC You mean that I could be summary enough to assimilate the two.

- PD** Yes, that's it. That's what you said at a certain point.
- BC** Yes, that is true. That is, I think that there is a real collusion between orthodoxy and mastery. And there is a real collusion between mastery in philosophy and mastery by men. At any rate, in philosophy the collusion is historical. It's a fact. But that does not mean that those who occupy the position of the 'other' might not also be men. That is why I say, if pushed, that if I've encountered women in philosophy, then the Sophists are the first women I encountered in philosophy.
- PD** Women would be in a better position relative to philosophy if they read your work?
- BC** You mean, would a woman prefer *The Sophistic Effect*? I think it's not out of the question, while emphasizing that it is not a question of sex. Perhaps the feminine side of the mind as eternal irony of the community feels more at home in what I've written. It is certainly true that what I've written is ironic, all the same, relative to the massive lava of orthodoxy. I'd say it was more that.

Barbara Cassin, *Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris*
 Penelope Deutscher, *Australian National University, Canberra*
 Paris July 1998

Translator's Notes

- 1 Secondary school preparing 15–18-year olds for the baccalaureate (since 1975). Philosophy is taught at sixth form level.
- 2 A phrase often applied to certain 19th-century French poets such as Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Verlaine, because of their interest in socially marginal elements.

Interview 3: Claude Imbert

Philosophical Encounters

Contextualization

Claude Imbert is chair of Philosophy at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris, in addition to an annual seminar given in the United States (at Johns Hopkins University and the University of California at Davis). Her areas of specialization include classics and mathematics. Her publications include *Phénoménologies et langues formulaires* (1992) and *Pour une histoire de la logique* (1999) as well as the translations of Frege listed in the Bibliography and numerous articles. At the time of the interview she was working on a new book on the 1930s, *Années 30, le point de non retour*.

Logic and its History

- PD** Claude Imbert, you have most recently published *Pour une histoire de la logique* [*Towards A History of Logic*] (1999). I know you want to expand our notion of what logic is.
- CI** I would like to get free of the word 'logic'. *Pour une histoire de la logique* began with a long introduction on Plato. Of course, the word originates with the Greeks. But since then we have been confronted with different syntaxes, and no one logic can claim to be the logic *par excellence*.
- PD** What is a logical system, in your view? What is a logician?
- CI** That is an excellent and difficult question. I am not going to give a direct reply, because I've encountered more than one logician, and it is precisely the necessity of working out what was happening in each instance that has given my work its direction?
- CI** Originally, 'logical' was an adjective, qualifying whatever had to do with the correct use of the *logos*; the *logos* itself was understood in two senses, and unifying them was precisely the point at issue. The point was to inscribe on to the *logos*, in its sense as our articulated language, the objective order of that reason

which inhabits the world, guarantees its regularity and is identified with nature. A logic is a way of unifying the two senses, either by imposing an orthology on language, in other words, an exclusive practice governing the formation of statements, or by deciding on an analytics which maps each of these propositions on to the correct objective determinants.

In fact, the two techniques have always been carried out at the same time, in a to-and-fro movement of which Stoicism was a master. The Greeks organized their 'logical grammar' with reference to certain physical invariants: the stability of substances beneath the movements which reveal them, the organization of time by the verb and a few adverbs, the use of demonstratives etc. The modern invention of generative syntaxes broke with this tradition.

As Wittgenstein points out in *Notebooks 1914-16* (11e), logic 'takes care of itself', that is to say, a logic relies purely and simply on its rules of formation and transformation. Their adequacy to the organization of a specific intellectual domain—mathematics, functional calculus, calculability etc.—is inscribed in the initial syntactic choices and the metalogical properties of the system. As for analysis, in the Russellian sense, it could only be an approximate effort to project an extremely impoverished part of that syntax on to the statements of natural language.

The way in which natural language acquires its relation to the real, once the realm of predication had been relocated in its Greek past, was explored by Wittgenstein through the notion of language games, but also—although it has been less often noted—by Paul Valéry in his *Cahiers* [Notebooks]¹ and by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *The Structure of Behaviour* [1942]. All this suggests that it might be sensible to abandon the term 'logic' which is no more for us now, fortunately, than a homo-

nym of numerous languages, and a fleshless hypostasis of pure reason.

PD Perhaps you could say something about the importance, in your view, of narrating logic's history.

CI I have tried to sketch that other history, the Platonic past, and the break introduced by Frege, despite the confusion that this created for him.² The modern question would be rather: How is a logic constituted? It would be better to speak of families of syntaxes. A syntax is a set of choices which must be coherent and generative, that is to say, they must produce new well-formed formulae.

It took a long time before it was accepted that these syntactic dimensions (variables, functions, functions of functions) are neither measures nor dimensions of objects. Nowadays those kinds of consideration precede any question about the production and objectivity of our concepts. No one will be surprised to learn that Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty come to the identical, and as far as one can tell, independently arrived-at conclusion that language is, in the first instance, self-referential.

PD You are particularly interested in reading the history of logic for its most inventive moments.

CI Apart from Plato, Aristotle and the modern period—the ones always referred to—I am interested in logicians who have tried to exploit the constraints and possibilities associated with certain discursive regimes. I spoke of it with regard to Chrysippus. Stoic logic made possible Euclidean geometry, Archimedean physics, Polybius's history, and the natural history of Pliny the Elder. So it had an absolutely incredible generative power.

PD Could you give another example of this kind of generative power?

CI Well I could also mention Port-Royal, the Jansenists. The Jansenists tried to modify slightly the logical paradigm inherited

from the Greeks, which privileged predication, by inserting what I have called subjective modalities, that is to say, hope, consent or command. They translated the Old Testament and they enriched the French language with 'Biblical' modalities, opening up stylistic resources which were subsequently developed by Racine, Baudelaire and Proust. They made possible that incredible development of French prose between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries.

A Fractured Itinerary

PD Could you say something about the importance, for you, as a philosopher, of bringing together these disparate domains of philosophy and thought. Reference points in your work include Greek philosophy, Stoic philosophy, writers like Baudelaire, Sarraute, Beckett, Proust, Mallarmé, anthropology (Lévi-Strauss) and also Merleau-Ponty, mathematics, Foucault.

CI First of all, perhaps because of my intellectual training, perhaps through personal interest, and naturally within the limits of my abilities, I have never really accepted that division which has been imposed on us between literary thought and scientific thought. That division seems to me an unforgivable philosophical defeat. So I do not know if I have responded to the challenge, but in any case, it has always been present in everything I have undertaken and in everything I am continuing to do.

The roll call of authors—Plato, Alexandrian Stoicism, Port-Royal, Kant, Frege, Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty—picks up those splits: the deployment of philosophical classicism from Plato to the Stoics and to Kant, then the decisive Fregean break. After that, nothing would be the same again. We have to relearn to think within the diversity of discursive attacks. It is a diversity that, certainly, no philosophy can do without, and neither a Kantian *a priori* nor a logical empiricism can hold un-

disputed sway. We are turning rather towards Spinoza and the reform of understanding. We may not know 'what a body can do', but we do not know either what a mind can do.

We have not completed the inventory of possible rationalities. And that notion of inventory has no meaning. The very notion of a possible rationality is clearly non-predicative: any list which attempted to be exhaustive would have to include the possibility of an unsuspected term which would change the meaning of it. But it is not impossible to learn from the past, from the way in which the real imposes ways of thinking, to give up the desire to separate the warp and the weft of our reasons, to distinguish between the sensible and the intelligible, and that includes words and sense data. We can expect more from what Merleau-Ponty calls the 'chiasm' and Wittgenstein the indefinite succession of 'language games' and 'forms of life'. Theorizing the transcendental self—the transcendental egology of Husserl and Kant—is no longer anything more than an adolescent game.

PD In your chapter on Frege in *Pour une histoire de la logique* (1999) you show that Frege's epistemology contests its own methods. It seemed to me that you are often interested in the way in which a philosopher's work contests its own methods. Could your interest in Merleau-Ponty be similarly described?

CI It is exactly that. Let us stay with the case of Frege for a moment. What I said was that in the last pages of the *Foundations of Arithmetic*, Frege was officially, and consciously, Kantian. He was planning to write on the origins of knowledge for a neo-Kantian journal. At the same time, he produced a logical language whose syntactic dimensions contradicted the main points of the Kantian table of logical functions. So the syntactic project preceded his ability to understand it. One could say the same of Merleau-Ponty. The time for reflection

that he gave himself between the *Phenomenology of Perception* and his final manuscripts has been taken for a time of silence. But he needed the time to understand that phenomenological methods are no longer pertinent to modern philosophy, while painting and literature had already crossed the threshold of modernity. This contradiction exercised him for a long time.

PD You consider that the history of philosophy contains resources overlooked in contemporary understandings of the progression of key philosophers, of our identification of their main projects, and of the development of key philosophical themes in the history of philosophy?

CI If I were to try to situate myself, I would say that my work involves resuscitating philosophical possibilities overlooked by the nineteenth century. I find my resources in the tiny Jansenist variant relative to Descartes, the variant offered by d'Alembert relative to Kantian critique, or that offered by Baudelaire relative to the poetics inscribed in post-Kantianism, and the variant contributed by Mallarmé, Valéry and some contemporary writers. No one dominates the intellectual field completely. Let us look for the most fertile and promising paths.

PD It is in *Phénoménologies et langues formulaires* [*Phenomenologies and Formula-Languages*] (1992) that you describe a fractured itinerary going through Plato, Alexandrian Stoicism, Port-Royal, Kant and Frege, which meets up with two essential figures of the mid-twentieth century, Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty.

CI It is an itinerary which is a counter to standard received history. The standard history said firstly that logic had no history, and secondly provided confirmation for itself through a kind of extension of the same model, which went through Aristotle and Descartes, and the transcendental egology of Kant and Husserl. And we attempted, to borrow an image from Wittgenstein, to put everything on the same shelf of the library.

Conversely, I was interested in the points which are both foundational and innovative. I should say they were foundational because they were innovative. That is why Plato's invention was so important, and its remarkable influence, giving the Alexandrian heritage its direction via the Stoics. It is also how classicism came to crystallize around the Jansenist school, which poured into the French language all the resources of Greek and all the resources of Biblical language, and the language of probability. The result was a systematic diversification—which many find difficult to accept—of our elementary ways of thinking, such as describing, defining or proving.

PD You teach regularly at Johns Hopkins University and at the University of California at Davis. How has your teaching in the United States influenced your work?

CI The fact that I have been over the last twenty years quite regularly invited to the States has been a great opportunity for me. I had different students and I could think publicly in different ways. I discovered that so-called analytic philosophy was much more complex than was thought in France. At Harvard I met Quine and Cavell. In California, I met Searle and Paul Rabinow, and this was for me a great experience. I saw the very great differences between a Russellian brand of analytic philosophy, the role of Wittgenstein in the States, and the huge impact of the analysis of ordinary language. I understood that mathematical logic may be one thing, but that the way in which we treat our daily experience is unaffected by such a logic. And this was for me a confirmation of Cavallès's conclusions. Cavallès emphasized the difference between modern epistemology and Kantian experience.³

PD So how would philosophy benefit if it could get free of the word 'logic'?

CI First, we would understand better that Kant was the last of the classical philosophers. Although his was an exceptional enterprise, it has lost its contemporaneity. After Kant and the Kantian legacy, we entered modernity. Of course, I'm drawing on a kind of intellectual history which has little to do with political or social history. But one of the consequences is that our way out of Alexandrian imperialism is rather recent, and that we have to renounce the kind of universal history Hegel tried to undertake.

PD Why do you think that coming to the States allowed you to think in other ways?

CI I discovered that the Ecole Normale Supérieure was very famous, but that there were other forms of philosophical teaching and philosophy where I did not need to feel obliged to conform to the requirements of the *agrégation* in my teaching. I wanted to argue that Port-Royal was much more important than Descartes, and that I could follow a path from Port-Royal to Racine and Proust which was also a philosophical path.

I was invited to give a paper at the American Philosophical Association which was very important for me. I gave a paper which was not on classical Stoicism but on Stoic minds in modern times. I argued that Stoicism was much more important for philosophy than Aristotle! Stoicism successfully passed the test of modernity. I began with a philosophical genre of Stoicism, the confession, and I followed the transformation of Stoicism through Rousseau, Thomas De Quincey, Baudelaire and modern philosophers such as Deleuze and Foucault.

PD What did the project of retracing these transformations make clear?

CI I understood better the importance of Alexandria, which was the background for our own history of philosophy until Hegel.

And my question was: how do we think of ethics and the position of the self? How do we do so after the death of Hegelianism? How can we reappraise our unspoken Stoicism? How can we understand our classical Stoicism from an anthropological point of view? That is a question which has been clearly treated by Marcel Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, for example in the famous lecture on the category of the mind which Mauss gave in England in 1938 (Carrithers et al 1985, 1–25). The real work of Lévi-Strauss is linked to that Mauss lecture.

PD How has your work positioned you with regards to the institution?

CI I never cared about my career. I only wanted to obtain a post and remain in it. I never left the Ecole Normale Supérieure. And so I moved through different positions there—assistant professor, professor, and now I am the Chair of the Philosophy Department. I felt that if I was not too concerned about my career, I would be freer to be more audacious in my philosophical interests and more open to other philosophical traditions and practices.

PD I think that your work has seemed very eclectic in some quarters.

CI Yes, some do not understand why I speak about ancient Stoicism, Racine, Baudelaire and Lévi-Strauss. I confess that everything would have been easier for me if I had been concerned with just one point in philosophy, such as classical Stoicism, on which I wrote my dissertation, and had left out of my project modern philosophy, modern logic, and literature.

PD So why do you think you favoured a philosophical project which made things professionally difficult?

CI Once I was able to earn my living, I was not worried about my career and I could take risks. I was also encouraged to do this in response to the work of Cavailès and Lévi-Strauss. Their

work made a great impact on me. They opened my mind; reading their work encouraged me to take risks.

PD What kind of risks?

CI To fail! Both in my professional life and in the gambles I took in my philosophical work.

Legacies and Allegiances

PD Why do you prefer not to speak of being the first woman to be Chair of Philosophy at the Ecole Normale Supérieure?

CI I take it just as a matter of fact.

PD Are you concerned with the place of women in philosophy today in France?

CI Of course I am concerned. I am very glad there are a lot of women in philosophy in France today.

PD Do you think they face any particular obstacles?

CI Of course, the greatest obstacle is the economic situation, because there is such a scarcity of teaching positions in philosophy at the moment.

PD The present interview will appear in the *Women's Philosophy Review* together with interviews with Barbara Cassin and Monique David-Ménard. Do you feel any affinities with their work?

CI Yes, many affinities, these are very good examples. They have both attached themselves to major divisions and ruptures in the history of philosophy. They have looked at the texts in sufficient depth to be able to challenge the canonical figures of Aristotle and Kant. And they have been able to do it because one is an excellent Greek scholar, and the other an excellent Germanist. For me, as I was convinced that the tradition established from Aristotle to Kant was played out, I was seeking an alternative to that history.

PD You recently gave a keynote address at the 'Legacies of Simone de Beauvoir' conference at Penn State University (November, 1999). Would you speak about your interest in Beauvoir and Weil?

CI When I read them for the first time, I was struck by the social meaning of their intellectual positions. But I must confess I was quite blind to their philosophical positions. I am currently engaged in research about the philosophical legacy of the late 1930s, so now I can place their diverse writings in the context of the huge philosophical undertakings of that period. Their classmates, such as Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Lévi-Strauss, transformed philosophy in France, forcing open its limits from the inside. With great lucidity, those two women dismissed from the outset the Kantian framework of the philosophy of the period. In place of the transcendental subject, they substituted some kind of concreteness, which was for Weil 'work' and 'suffering' and for Beauvoir the concreteness of a woman's existence. If we are now ready to understand that generation of philosophers I mentioned, now is the right time to understand the profound philosophical intervention of these two gifted women. You know, they were known in their generation as brilliant thinkers.

PD Yet you argue that their work was not seen—and still is not seen—as a moment in the history of philosophy.

CI They were pushed outside philosophy, considered as very interesting, committed intellectuals⁴ but not as practising philosophy. I must confess that I am only now beginning to understand that they were clearly inside philosophy.

PD Discussing the period in which Beauvoir studied, you mention other women of this period who undertook an academic training, such as Clémence Ramnoux, Simone de Pétremond and Jacqueline de Romilly, and who pursued careers in Greek

studies with great success. You comment that this was a career that Beauvoir and Weil might well have followed.

- CI** Yes, they were very gifted. If they had stayed in the classical domain, as did Ramnoux, Pétreumont and Romally, they would have been appreciated as great teachers. But their feeling for the hard times they were living in made it more urgent for them to engage with historical experience, especially in Europe before and during the war.
- PD** And why do you think that this interest made it so hard for them to be perceived as philosophers?
- CI** Because it was necessary for them to invent new concepts in philosophy and new ways of framing experience. It was a revolution in philosophy.
- PD** Do you consider their writing philosophically successful?
- CI** In France, the complete works of Simone Weil are only now being published. At first her work was received as that of a mystic rather than that of a philosopher. Now we are reconsidering that position. As to Simone de Beauvoir, to my mind her literary work and her leading role in *Les Temps modernes* have overshadowed her philosophical insights. You know, she was the only one who managed to accomplish a coherent philosophical analysis of the work of Merleau-Ponty and of Lévi-Strauss when they were first published just after the war. To my mind, this was an exercise of high intellectual skill.
- PD** I know that philosophy in France at the end of the 1930s more generally is of great interest to you.
- CI** That's what I'm currently working on. Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty will be included, and what I make apparent is a philosophical development which is more and more clearly liberated from the phenomenological and transcendental orbit. A far cry from that 'constituting subject' which Merleau-Ponty referred to as philosophy's professional imposture. That

formula puts back to back the constitutions and the deconstructions. We are no longer there any more, that page has been turned. The human sciences were to make a way for themselves, and all that is another story—our own, which began at the end of the 1930s with Mauss, and opened out after the war.

There is no unified continental philosophy, any more than a unified analytic philosophy, except for those who insist on thinking in the strategic terms of the Cold War. But who would benefit from that nowadays? I have referred back to the past, and the weight of history, solely with the intention of meeting up with the contemporary. Nobody is starting philosophy again, no one can be certain of its possibility. At least we have lost faith in canons, in analytics and in origins, and are better informed about the penetrating intellectual methods which have reached us from the '30s.

- PD** You have argued that there is a singularity to French philosophy in the '30s which we tend to overlook. This singularity tends to be overshadowed by the idea that the late '30s and '40s is the period in which a preoccupation with phenomenology dominates.
- CI** In France there is a singularity which was tentatively emerging at the very end of the 1930s, which was snuffed out by the war, and which was utilized in the 1960s against phenomenology and Heideggerian ontotheology. What was unclear during a period of polemics is perfectly obvious today: namely, the singularity of the epistemology represented, notably, by Cavailles's work, the posthumous manuscripts of Merleau-Ponty which make the *Phenomenology of Perception* obsolete, Sartre's existential psychoanalysis (Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Flaubert) which is both a reflection on the nineteenth century, and a wonderful amplification of *What is Literature?* (Sartre's

1947 manifesto). It is precisely when I understood the importance of that period in the thirties that I was able to recognize the place of Weil and Beauvoir. There are others I could mention as well.

Today we see that the real question, from the '30s on, was the position one took relative to Hegel and Nietzsche. How could one disengage from the one without falling into the arms of the other? Facing that question implied taking a position relative to Hellenism, to the extent that the Greek tradition had been canonized by the phenomenological tradition. I am not talking about an obligatory return to the pre-Socratics, but a necessary effort of invention induced by the contemporary. This is where Michel Foucault's philosophical option can be situated, and in many respects that of Gilles Deleuze too—both took the measure of Stoicism. I will attempt to come back to this issue in my next work, *Années 30, le point de non-retour* [*The Thirties: Point of No Return*].

Already at the beginning of the 1940s, it was obvious that a lot had been going on in the relatively independent histories of mathematics and painting which, via different routes, sanctioned the abandonment of phenomenological space. So the history of modern painting, understood as an eminently non-Hegelian philosophical concept, has been a philosophical playing field where Malraux, Merleau-Ponty, Bataille, Sartre and Michel Foucault all met. And all that was prepared by Valéry and Walter Benjamin.

PD What sort of intellectual training did you have? What were your motivations?

CI My studies were the most classical you could imagine and I am most thankful for that. In France, one begins to specialise after the *agrégation*, depending on what one chooses or what compels one. For myself, I felt extremely uneasy about entering a

philosophical culture or landscape which was blurred. I felt as if I'd been handed a cine-camera which was out of focus, or running at the wrong speed, or else it was the wrong screen or the angle was not right. I was intending only to have a go at clarification: a serious attempt to tackle the history of philosophy, a few scientific studies, an initiation into the contemporary human sciences, these would all contribute. Mathematical logic was included. I undertook it for completely personal reasons, just in order to understand; it was something that seemed indispensable for me as a philosophy teacher. There was nothing to warn me that I would get drawn into the labyrinths I have been talking to you about.

There was another motivation, more direct and certainly more decisive: the encounter with those texts that 'make your heart beat faster' as Malebranche said of his reading of Descartes and as Lévi-Strauss recalled of Marcel Mauss's *The Gift*. In my case it was *Sur la logique et la théorie de la science* [*Logic and Theory of Science*] (1943 and 1947), the final statement of Cavailles's work. I felt the same breathless excitement when I read Lévi-Strauss's successive works.

Lévi-Strauss, a philosopher who was noticed from the start and who chose to become an anthropologist, was the one who carried further and faster the dissidence and the lucidity of his generation. Apart from their intrinsic power and beauty, his books seemed to me perfect examples of what I was seeking. They gave me the motivation to leave behind the dismal history of the fortunes and misfortunes of transcendental egology, and offered an anthropological opening up of our closed philosophies. I found in them the certainty that philosophy was still a going concern. The desire to understand the heritage of the ancient Greeks came later.

PD Where do you situate yourself on the contemporary French

philosophical scene?

CI I do not have the faintest idea, obviously. Why does one have to belong to a school? I know what I owe to my teachers, to those I have heard and to those I have read, as far as one can be aware on this score. The fact remains that isolation is the price, and perhaps the condition, of the work—and whatever comes out of it that is unexpected. There is a lot to be done, we have still to understand what is taking shape in contemporary work, to restore forgotten possibilities of thought, inside or outside philosophy, because we are impoverished in that area. So we need to look again at Port-Royal, d'Alembert, Cavallès, the posthumous work of Merleau-Ponty, to open up our options—to confine myself to a few examples.

We know with certainty since the '30s that no philosophical perspective has an overview of the sciences or the arts, there is no decisive mode of analysis which could impassively survey every domain, which could claim for itself the privilege of a universal language or attain the real directly. We know too that philosophy cannot feed on itself. Besides, it devoured its own liver a long time ago without need of a vulture to impose the punishment of the gods. We have learnt that our real possibilities are finite and diverse, they cannot be unified and can never be totalized, that certain accomplishments of the mind are to all appearances played out, particularly those which were the most brilliant and the most fertile—like Raphaelite painting or predicative logic. All that is unpredictable, risky and at the same time deeply absorbing.

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 Penelope Deutscher, *Australian National University, Canberra*
 Paris July 1998

Translator's Notes

1. *Cahiers* vol. I, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris: Gallimard 1973, 414: 'la syntaxe est, entre autres choses, l'art de la perspective dans la pensée.' [Syntax is, among other things, the art of perspective in thought.]
2. 'Ce platonisme que l'on parle et dont on ne parle pas' [That Platonism which is spoken but not spoken of] in *Pour une histoire de la logique* (1999).
3. *Oeuvres complètes de philosophie des sciences*, Paris: Hermann, 187–8.
4. 'Committed' refers to Sartre's concept of *engagement*. i.e. the commitment of the writer or intellectual.

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Recent Dutch Research on Luce Irigaray:

An Overview

Recent years have seen a small explosion in Dutch monographs on Luce Irigaray. Most of these are doctorates. In The Netherlands it is customary to publish doctorates before the *viva voce*. The oral doctoral exam is usually held in a University's auditorium. It is not unusual for a hundred people to be present some of whom will be family and invited guests, others interested graduates keen to witness academic debate.

The doctoral candidate is rigorously grilled for an hour by professors from her/his own university and other universities. After an hour the professors retreat and return to deliver the verdict. No one can fail at this point. The only thing to be decided is whether the candidate is awarded a distinction. Nevertheless, this ceremony is nerve wrecking for the doctor-to-be. It entails a great deal more pomp and circumstance than PhD examinations within the British universities. One condition for the public exam is that the PhD is published. Usually, this is done by a University Press and paid for by the students themselves. Sometimes however, a publisher might be interested and think that the research in question is commercially viable. The recent Dutch monographs on Irigaray that I will introduce here, are examples of such publications. I will not discuss the numerous Dutch articles on Irigaray.

There has been a longstanding interest in Irigaray in The Netherlands. Irigaray originally delivered the lectures published in *The Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1984) at the University of Rotterdam in 1982, some of which were also published in Dutch. The first Dutch studies of Irigaray however, did not appear until 1989. In that year Denise de Costa wrote a very accessible introduction *Sprekende Stiltes* [*Speaking Silences*] into French feminism and postmodernism. She argues that the two French strands of thought, feminism and postmodernism, do not seem to be aware of each other. However, according to de Costa, the *écriture féminine*

developed by Irigaray and Kristeva could serve as a bridge between the two perspectives. In de Costa's description, the *écriture féminine* undermines phallogocentric thinking and allows the articulation of repressed female voices. To this end, it experiments with language. The writings of *écriture féminine* cannot be restricted to one area or discipline, but simultaneously belong to literature, poetry and philosophy.

In her conclusion, de Costa argues that both Kristeva and Irigaray retain modernist aspects in their thinking. Both incorporate ethics within their philosophy (Irigaray in terms of sexual difference and Kristeva in terms of contemporary suffering) and both employ a notion of subjectivity. According to de Costa, this is truly postmodern in the sense that neither philosopher feels constrained by boundaries. Both develop their thinking as journeys with endless possible outcomes.

Rina van der Haegen's study *In het Spoor van seksuele differentie* [*Following the Trail/Trace of Sexual Difference*] was also published in 1989. This research was originally intended to become a doctorate. Unfortunately, van der Haegen died when the study was almost finished and it was published posthumously. Van der Haegen explores the relation between Derrida and Irigaray, particularly between Derridean deconstruction and Irigarayan mimesis, and argues for a combination of both approaches. From Derrida she adopts the deconstructive reading of texts which lie at the foundation of Western culture and civilization and from Irigaray she takes the need to focus on women and reach out to the 'beyond' of women's speech or language.

After a 'quiet' period of ten years, research on Irigaray flourishes again. This research builds on well-known studies on Irigaray in English, such as Grosz (1989), Whitford (1991), Burke *et al* (1994) and Chanter (1995). In 1998 Annemie Halsema's *Dialectiek van de seksuele differentie* [*The Dialectics of Sexual Difference*] was published. Halsema is currently a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. This was followed in 1999 by Tonja van den Ende's doctorate *In Levende Lijven* [*Living Bodies*]. Van den Ende has a position within the Philosophy Department

of the University for Humanism in Utrecht. This summer (2000) Anne-Claire Mulder will obtain her doctorate *Divine Flesh, Embodied Word*. Mulder is also one of the authors of *Renaissance* (1990), a Dutch collection of translations and interpretations of some of Irigaray's texts.

It is interesting to note that all three authors formed part of a reading group on Irigaray. I think that partly as a result their overall attitude to Irigaray is similar. Another aspect that unites at least two of these studies is that Rosi Braidotti, Professor in Women's Studies at the University of Utrecht, has been part of the supervisory team. Braidotti herself has, of course, published extensively on Irigaray. In The Netherlands, only professors can supervise doctoral students. A supervisory team usually consists of at least two professors who complement each other.

Halsema's 1998 thesis is a solid study of Irigaray and can be said to function as the Dutch equivalent to Whitford (1991). Halsema starts with contextualizing Irigaray in terms of French feminist thought and then introduces the reader to Irigaray's project of sexual difference. She explains that Irigaray aims to develop a different symbolic so that women too can become subjects. This will be familiar territory to *WPR* readers.

The originality of Halsema's thesis lies in her interpretation of Irigaray's mimetic strategy. Halsema argues that Irigaray uses two 'theoretical instruments' of mimesis, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and Hegelian dialectics, in order for women to become female subjects. Halsema's main focus is on the latter. She looks at Irigaray's *Sexes and Genealogies* (1987) and *I Love to You* (1992) in particular, to explore the relation between Irigaray and Hegelian dialectics and Irigaray's rejection of the master-slave dialectic.

In *I Love to You* Irigaray criticizes Hegel for his lack of recognition of sexual difference in ethical terms. As a result, sexual difference remains in the realm of the natural for Hegel. Irigaray attempts to bring it into civil society and the state. Thus, Halsema argues that for Irigaray

a critique of the Hegelian dialectic in terms of gender is necessary in order to move towards the development of sexual difference. What remains is the recognition of two distinctly different identities. Halsema concludes with a brief exploration into contemporary feminist debates about female identity. She concludes that although Irigaray's work opens up ways of becoming female subjects in the symbolic, her lack of attention to factors such as race, sexuality and class means that there is still a lot of work to be done.

Van den Ende (1999) does not agree with Halsema on that last point and interprets Irigaray's work as an exploration into the connections between identities, differences and embodiment. These differences need not be restricted to sexual difference. Van den Ende signals a need in contemporary Western societies to think about differences within the context of living together. She starts from the question 'how can we determine how to live well together, taking our differences into account?'. Her thesis concentrates on the psychoanalytic dimension of Irigaray and takes the psychoanalytic dialogue as a model for exchanges and interactions on the levels of the symbolic, the imaginary and the body.

One way that differences manifest themselves, van den Ende argues, is through our bodies. Through bodies we differentiate between people, and our sense of identity derives from our experience of being embodied together with other people's reactions to our embodied selves. The experience of differences between bodies forms the starting point of Irigaray's concept of alterity according to van den Ende. This alterity is articulated in the meeting of two people. Living together well and acknowledging differences is possible, van den Ende concludes, if each dialogue-partner dares take the risk to open up to the other and venture into the unknown of becoming.

I find this interpretation of Irigaray interesting, but less convincing than Halsema's. It leaves obvious issues out such as an analysis of differences in power. In my view, power is a crucial difference between

people in our patriarchal societies and should be at the centre of feminist thinking about differences. Ironically, another weakness is van den Ende's emphasis on embodiment as primary site of identity. One wonders how her interpretation would address issues such as cloning and identical twins. Even though the emphasis on specific bodily experience would still hold, van den Ende's claim based on embodiment, that the relation with the other is unique, would need more working out.

The last piece of research that I shall briefly discuss here is Anne-Claire Mulder's forthcoming doctorate *Divine Flesh, Embodied Word*. This study looks at Irigaray from a feminist theologian's perspective—an area of research that has a longstanding history in the Netherlands, but which I do not have the space to discuss further here. Mulder elaborates on van den Ende's emphasis on embodiment and criticizes the traditional Christian dogma that Christ was the incarnation of God. This, Mulder argues, implicitly assumes that women cannot truly live in the image of God. To do that, they would have to become men. This line of argument is similar to Irigaray's critique of the subject in philosophy and psychoanalysis.

Mulder develops an interpretation of the Christian concept of incarnation that starts from two premises: first, that there is an irreducible difference between feminine and masculine corporeal subjectivity and, second, that a female corporeal subject represents God's image. This interpretation is intended to be liberating for women, because it advocates a becoming of two sexually different subjects. This means that there is not a male norm for female subjectivity.

Mulder's thesis is split into three parts. In the first part Mulder presents an exposition of Irigaray's critique of the male self-same. Mulder applies this to the Christian faith and argues that here too, the creative force of the maternal-feminine has been usurped by the Father-God. It is the hysteric, interpreted as resistant flesh, that points to a way out. This resistance redirects us, Mulder argues, to embodied

subjectivity. This subjectivity should not develop through a surrender of the flesh to the Word, but in a dialectical relation between Word and flesh—traces of Halsema's work on Hegelian dialectics can be distinguished here. In order for the flesh of women to become Word (lit. trans.), for women to become divine, women need their own language, their own linguistic home. The impetus for the development of the dialectical relation between Word and flesh can be found in the meeting with the other. In this encounter, the subject is touched in the flesh. In the reaction of the subject, new images of self are generated, which causes changes in identity and subjectivity.

The different examples of Dutch research on Irigaray that I have introduced vary in their emphases and research questions. However, all studies demonstrate an attitude to research that incorporates connections to actual situations. In all the texts discussed, explicit connections between thinking and living (as a woman) in a contemporary Western-European society are made. In my view, this is not only refreshing but also indicative of feminist scholarship.

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BOOK REVIEWS

An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies

Alessandra Tanesini, Blackwell, 1999

h/b £55 0 631 20012 6, p/b £15.99 0 631 20013 4

In opposition to those who believe that knowledge is not an appropriate object for philosophy, Alessandra Tanesini considers that epistemology 'is of fundamental importance to understand our position in the world' (3). She locates feminist epistemologies in the received epistemological tradition and asserts that while feminist theorists are critical of mainstream theories, they are nevertheless able to produce positive theories within it. She argues that feminists can make a valuable contribution to epistemology by distancing themselves from some of the presuppositions central to traditional epistemology, namely: 'the belief that epistemology is first philosophy; the belief that knowledge depends on foundations; the belief that knowledge is best understood in terms of how subjects represent their environments' (6).

As well as explaining how it is possible to support alternative theories that reject these tenets, the author also explains clearly and succinctly the main problems present in mainstream epistemology, helping the reader to understand the position of feminist thinkers in relation to it. When it is needed, the contextualization of the epistemological topics is done by offering a historical perspective on the development of particular problems or aspects of theories. Attention is paid to analytic and continental traditions, and even if feminist epistemologies are considered to be closer to the latter, they are nevertheless taken to be a bridge builder between the two of them (21).

The plurality of perspectives within the area is faithfully represented in this introduction, but the division commonly accepted for classifying the different types of feminist epistemologies (empiricist,

standpoint, and postmodern) is maintained. Tanesini offers an explanation of the main theories that can be encountered in each of these positions, and a critical approach to the most important theories in each tendency. In her analysis, she offers detailed arguments against those aspects that she finds weak or untenable, but also points out the positive outcomes of each, leaving the reader with the impression that it is worth paying attention to the work of most feminist epistemologists.

Tanesini also engages with some of the issues that are inextricably linked to feminist epistemology, such as what counts as objective knowledge, the relation between power and knowledge, or the different approaches to rationality. Apart from offering a good summary of the main theories in the area and sound criticisms of some of their aspects, Tanesini indicates what her own position is in relation to each of the issues discussed, and, therefore, by the end of the book, we are left with an idea of the alternative theory that she favours. She manages to interweave her own theory within the exposition and critical analysis of the main theories in the area—which is, after all, the main aim of an introductory text. However, this means that her own project is not developed in depth, even if it definitely deserves a more detailed treatment, perhaps in the form of a monograph.

Tanesini argues for a concept of knowledge as a practice which she explicitly owes to Heidegger. She argues against the idea that knowledge is mainly representational and claims that even 'theorising is a kind of practical competence' (16). All knowledge is thus practical knowledge, which she characterizes as 'a matter of getting inducted in socially instituted practices' (13). She insists on the social nature of knowledge given that societies are what institute practices. Individuals are inducted into practices and learn to recognize particular aspects of the world as significant in relation to those practices. Accordingly, she links justification with the social nature of knowledge, and considers that 'it is only against the background of social practices that a performance can count

as justification for a claim. Outside this context nothing could have the special kind of authority that pertains to justification' (16).

This conception of justification as grounded on the methods and norms embedded in practices is more congenial to feminist theorists than to those in the mainstream, because feminists are 'more concerned with finding out, and improving, the practices that help us to achieve knowledge' (20). Claiming that objects of knowledge are such due to our involvement with them via practices does not amount to saying that we cannot take them to have a reality independent of us. Nevertheless, it helps us to realize that representing things as independent from us is only one of the many possible ways in which we respond to the world.

Tanesini claims that value is constitutive of knowledge precisely because by engaging with things we invest them with human values. Stressing the relation between values and knowledge is one of the main subjects within feminist epistemology, along with the importance of analyzing our practices for the production of knowledge and the insistence on the social aspect of it. So Tanesini's alternative theory is firmly grounded in the feminist tradition that she has analyzed in this introduction.

The scope of the book is wide, and I would recommend it as a text book for students in the final year of their degree, postgraduate students and also to academics in general. It is very clearly written and the issues are explained in detail and contextualized adequately. There is no simplification of the topics, and the analyses offered by Tanesini are thorough. I would classify this as an accessible but sophisticated introduction to feminist epistemology.

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Enigmas: Essays on Sarah Kofman

Penelope Deutscher & Kelly Oliver (eds), Cornell University Press
1999

h/b, £37.50 0 8014 2912 9, p/b £14.50 0 8014 8141 4

Enigmas is the second collection of essays to take a retrospective look at the work and life of the French philosopher Sarah Kofman who died by her own hand in 1994. The first such volume, a special issue of the feminist journal *Cahiers du GRIF* (new series: 3, 1997), grew out of a day of homage held in Paris in 1996, gathering perspectives from the French intellectual scene. *Enigmas*, by contrast, provides a forum for Kofman's principal anglophone readers. It also presents a more thorough and rigorous overview of Kofman's lifelong investigation of the positioning of woman in literature, philosophy and psychoanalysis.

The editors of *Enigmas* carefully negotiate the difficult boundary between establishing Kofman's legacy in order to preserve her work from the assimilation (notably to Derrida's) of which she often complained, and 'fixing' this legacy in a way that would be unfaithful to her constant emphasis on the instability of meanings and the heterogeneity of texts. They also deftly handle the issue of the relation between life and work that arises for any commemorative project, espousing Kofman's own conviction that to oppose biography and textuality is to reproduce, in inverse form, the error of conflating them.

Enigmas is divided into four sections, each of which examines a principal area of Kofman's thought. The first section is devoted to her writing on literature and aesthetics, the second to philosophy and metaphor, the third to women, feminism and psychoanalysis, and the final section to Jews and German nationalism. Throughout the volume, Kofman is celebrated as a reader attentive to the economy in which thought is crystallized, a reader whose instruments are psychoanalytic analysis of drives and motivations, the cultural genealogy pioneered by Nietzsche, and the painstaking examination of the economy of the sign practised by Derrida.

Kofman is also consistently represented as a close, even 'mimetic' reader (Penelope Deutscher) who reads with rather than against the thinkers she analyzes. Several contributors approach this practice of close reading as a form of 'fidelity', the expression of a propensity to identify with the male authors she examines. This pattern is, however, shown in the pieces by Deutscher and Duncan Large to be complicated by a countervailing strategy of juxtaposition, a 'flickering across a range of thinkers' (Deutscher) by which Kofman maintains a relation among psychoanalysis, philosophy and deconstruction, and in so doing undercuts the potential systematicity of each methodology.

A second theme explored in several chapters is Kofman's concern to preserve the mobility of thought, her reluctance to 'conclude', and in concluding to impose definitive interpretations. Pierre Lamarche, for example, sketches an interesting contrast between Kofman's and Derrida's approach to Marx in *Camera Obscura* and *Specters of Marx*, arguing that whereas Derrida appears haunted by the spectre of the ontological in Marx, and tries to exorcise it, Kofman embraces the heterogeneity of Marxist ontology, thereby retaining the possibility of working with Marxist social theory.

The final unifying theme of the volume is the titular trope of the enigma, a reference to Kofman's seminal study *The Enigma of Woman: Woman in Freud's Texts* (1980), and in a wider sense to the author's relentless examination of the philosophical construction of femininity as a riddle that must be solved. Kofman herself is repeatedly cast as something of an enigma, not only because she resists easy classification as a feminist or a Freudian, but also because the complex overlap between her work and life-history is approached in essays by Deutscher, Oliver and Tina Chanter as a riddle that unravels in her late autobiographical narrative *Rue Ordener, rue Labat* (1994).

Although *Enigmas* offers compelling coverage of the principal issues raised in and by Kofman's *oeuvre*, two issues seem to me to be insufficiently considered. The first of these is Kofman's place in the

field of contemporary feminism. No single essay undertakes to situate Kofman's thought in relation to, for example, the work of Irigaray or Le Dœuff. This is unfortunate because whereas numerous books have been devoted to Irigaray's contribution to feminism, none has attempted to evaluate Kofman's.

To situate Kofman in this way would be to read her against the grain of her own expressed views since, as the editors note in their introduction, Kofman refused to align herself with *écriture féminine* or any form of the politics of difference, and maintained that the exposure of the phallogocentric assumptions of male thinkers—a praxis she ascribes, often acerbically, to Irigaray—must be complemented by recognition of the constitutive instability of these constructions of femininity. Several essays propose a somewhat critical reading of this methodology, arguing that Kofman's close identification with the 'fathers' of western thought constitutes the kind of apotropaic defence against the maternal that Kofman herself repeatedly discerns at the heart of their systems, and thereby disclosing the profound ambivalence with which Kofman's method turns away from a maternal genealogy even as it uncovers it.

Françoise Duroux gestures toward an assessment of Kofman's place in the panoply of feminist thought when she offers a brief survey of women's contribution to philosophy, and comments that (with the exception of Irigaray's *Ethics of Sexual Difference*) women have not been innovators in the sense of constructors of a system. She at first equates originality with system-building, but subsequently argues that some women, notably Kofman, have innovated without constructing systems.

These reflections have an interesting resonance with a 1988 interview, cited by Chanter, in which Kofman herself affirms that for reasons of education women have not established themselves as innovators in philosophy. Chanter shows that Kofman hesitates over the question of her own originality, both courting and rejecting the recognition of the male establishment, and offers a persuasive reading of this

ambivalence as a characteristic reflection of the dilemma of women in the patriarchal order.

Chanter might, however, have extended this argument by addressing the glaring fact that not one of Kofman's twenty five books—not only on philosophy but also on art and literature—addresses the creativity of a woman: Kofman does not analyze works by women, just as she never sought to be compared to or measured against feminist theorists. It seems to me that it would have been productive not just to turn Kofman's genealogical method on Kofman's writing—as several of the essays do—but to read Kofman *contra* Kofman by situating her within a feminist economy, reading her with and against other women philosophers. This is in fact a direction that Deutscher explores in *Yielding Gender*, and it would have added depth to the assessment of Kofman as a specifically feminist thinker offered in *Enigmas*.

The second omission is the absence, in the short final section entitled 'Jews and German Nationalism', of a discussion of Kofman's writing on the Shoah (this section is in fact essentially devoted to the narrower question of Nietzsche's anti-Semitism). Although several pieces in earlier sections evoke *Rue Ordener, rue Labat* (1994)—Kofman's late narrative about her childhood in Nazi-occupied Paris—they focus not on the holocaust but on family dynamics.

Curiously, neither of the essays on Germany and the Jews discusses *Paroles suffoquées* (1987) [*Smothered Words*, trans. Madeleine Dobie, Northwestern University Press 1998], Kofman's only sustained piece of writing on the Shoah. In this text Kofman argues for a new 'humanism' and a new 'ethics', challenging the accepted opposition between humanism and poststructuralism. This challenge seems to me to provide a possible avenue for considering the fraught question, at issue throughout *Enigmas*, of Kofman's originality.

As mentioned above, several contributors observe that Kofman undercuts the systematicity of psychoanalytic theory by exploring the semiotic economy of Freud's writing; as a parallel they suggest that

Kofman similarly complicates deconstructive readings by maintaining a relation between Derrida and Freud. They do not, however, undertake to explain how or why psychoanalysis is deployed to undercut deconstructive reading. Kofman's call, in *Paroles suffoquées*, for a new humanism and a new ethics, helps to clarify the reasons for her continued fidelity to Freudian psychobiographical analysis. Unsurprisingly, this core of 'humanistic' resistance emerges with most force in a text that examines the dehumanizing program of the holocaust.

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Hélène Cixous: Authorship, Autobiography & Love

Susan Sellers, Cambridge: Polity Press 1996

h/b £45 0 7456 1254 7, p/b £13.99 0 7456 1255 5

Stigmata: Escaping Texts

Hélène Cixous, Routledge 1998

h/b £40 0 415 17978 5, p/b £12.99 0 415 17979 3

Together, these two books present the anglophone reader with the full extent of Hélène Cixous's rich *oeuvre* spanning thirty years. Despite the mixed reception her work receives, Cixous's influence has been felt on a wide range of disciplines, from feminist literary studies and art history to economics, ethics and philosophy.

Susan Sellers' monograph comments on almost twenty-five years of essays and fiction authored by Cixous, while *Stigmata* is a collection of translations of recent essays and short pieces by Cixous herself. Sellers' book operates best as a general introduction, differing from existing introductory studies, by not only following a particular trajectory in Cixous's work, but also including sustained analyses of her fiction and her writing for the theatre. *Écriture féminine* (or 'feminine writing' as Sellers translates it here), for which Cixous is best known in English-speaking countries, is also strongly featured: the introductory chapter is

an exposition of the concept, and subsequent chapters evaluate Cixous's own writing against its qualities, aesthetics, themes and effects.

The format Sellers chooses for this evaluation brings welcome clarity to the complexity of Cixous's prolific *oeuvre*. She divides it into five chronological and thematic stages, selecting from each period an exemplary fiction or theatrical text for analysis while drawing parallels with other contemporaneous Cixous works. Quotations from the texts are given in English. This is where the main value of Sellers' study lies—in the detailed textual analyses offered to the English-speaking reader. Sellers has a thorough knowledge of Cixous's work and her readings do full justice to its richly connotative poetical language, to its themes which impact on personal, political and ethical issues, and to the open-ended nature of the texts wherein, to my mind, lies Cixous's real generosity as a writer.

The progression that Sellers identifies in Cixous's writing and which structures this study is one offered by Cixous herself: the trajectory taken by her writing over the years, from explorations of self-identity through to the question of the other. Although Cixous's account undoubtedly provides an enlightening approach to her own *oeuvre*, this is also where my major criticism of Sellers' discussion lies. What bothers me is not simply the practice of following Cixous's own framework, but rather that the effects of this are compounded on different levels in this book. Sellers employs Cixous's own 'feminine' mode of reading, which is to be attentive to the multiple meanings of the text, but it is almost exclusively to Cixous's own pronouncements in essays, interviews and book introductions that she turns for illumination.

Sellers calls on the open-endedness of Cixous's texts to defend her methodology and she does send the reader in the direction of her own useful *Language and Sexual Difference: Feminist Writing in France* (Macmillan 1991) in which Cixous's work is placed in a broader intellectual context; but, in its self-referentiality, this current offering tends to reinforce the effect of the so-called 'Cixous Club'—which, on

the whole, produces celebrations of her writing rather than critical engagements with it.

Predictably then, while Sellers' discussion of *écriture féminine* does raise one or two problem areas, generally she confines herself to explicating Cixous's own account. Notwithstanding the lack of a critical or historically-informed perspective, this treatment does have its strengths, offering useful guidance to a new generation of readers of Cixous's 1970s essays. There are rather sweeping claims made here for 'feminine writing' ('to prevent the forces of holocaust from happening again' [20]), although Sellers' book ultimately finishes realistically, with the suggestion that the real power of Cixous's writing to change things rests with its readers.

Sellers includes a (fairly complete) bibliography of books and articles by and about Cixous. For readers new to Cixous's work, Sellers' book acts as useful background reading to Cixous's own *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*. In the tradition of the earlier *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (Harvard University Press 1991), *Stigmata* consists of a collection of essays from the 1990s on literature, art and other recurrent Cixousian themes.

As always, the language play that characterizes Cixous's writing—and to which the sub-title of the volume partly refers—presents particular problems to her translators, especially where the significance of the gendered nature of the original French is impossible to convey in English. However, the regular translators of her work featured here helpfully call attention to such instances.

Cixous's essays and fictions are interdependent, and the essays in this volume echo the concerns of some of her recent fiction (*Déluge* [1992], *Beethoven à jamais ou l'existence de Dieu* [1993], *La Fiancée juive de la tentation* [1995] and *Messie* [1996]), not only in the Biblical connotations of their titles but also in their thinking about pain and loss. For Cixous, the Bible is 'the land of the most ancient passions' (5); significantly, the title of this current collection connotes a lasting wound, and similar

analyses of the universal themes of loving and losing appear in fiction and essays alike, specifically here, 'What is it O'Clock? or The Door (We Never Enter)' and 'Love of the Wolf'.

The process of writing is the subject of many of the essays in *Stigmata* as indeed it is throughout Cixous's *oeuvre*, as Sellers study readily confirms. In 'Hiss of the Axe' writing is figured as a way of fulfilling a deep human need to play at—and with—death, while in 'Writing Blind' its 'business is to translate our emotions into writings' such that the 'act of writing engenders the author' (143).

For Cixous, writing is concerned with the exploration and expression of internal realities. Nonetheless, if feelings and emotions form a large part of Cixous's subject matter, events of history—such as the fall of the Berlin wall—are not neglected. Some of the pieces also mark a return to Cixous's Algerian origins, taking the form of memories, now refracted through political as well as personal prisms of history, of what it was to be a 'French' and Jewish family in colonial Algeria. The Cixous of the 1990s has not completely deserted the gender issues for which she is so well-known outside France, and 'Unmasked!' points to the transfigurative qualities of the theatre in this respect.

The wealth of literary references in Cixous's writing is always striking. Indeed, all writers are readers first, and it is Cixous's readings of paintings and of literature that stand out in this collection. In 'Bathsheba or the Interior Bible' Cixous analyzes Rembrandt's painting *Bathsheba Bathing*, taking the reader along with her on an interpretive journey. The figure of Cixous is ever-present and as such can be a controlling feature in her work, but she is nonetheless generous to her readers.

Cixous's analysis of Rembrandt—in a similar way to the readings of Joyce, Shakespeare, Lispector and Tsvetaeva elsewhere in this collection—does not remain with the single work. Not only does it extend out to other paintings in Rembrandt's *oeuvre* and beyond, but it also looks within—so that, as so often with Cixous's writing, her readers are led back from, and by, the text to think about themselves and their

relations with others. For me, this is one of the most important effects of Cixous's work which, at its best, not only engages her readers on a personal journey but also connects with major political and philosophical issues. Cixous's writing is never easy, but it can repay the effort of reading it.

If Sellers' book provides a good general introduction to Cixous's oeuvre, *Stigmata's* sample of offerings brings the reader up to date with her current concerns. Some of the beauty, nuances and multiple meanings of Cixous's poetical writing are necessarily lost in translation; nonetheless, these two books both make a worthwhile contribution to Cixous studies and are undoubtedly of value to those students, teachers and researchers who are interested in her rich body of writing.

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Philosophy in A Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions

Janet A. Kourany, Princeton University Press 1998
h/b £37.50 0 691 03313 7, p/b £11.95 0 691 01936 3

Philosophy in A Feminist Voice has a grand objective: to guide social change by making audible feminist critiques and reconstructions of philosophy's fundamental concepts. Despite its persistent biases, Janet Kourany contends that philosophy is a force for change. Ignorance of the critical and reconstructive work of feminist philosophers appears incompatible with the self-definition of philosophy as a discipline engaged in exposing false beliefs and unwarranted assumptions. To resolve the incompatibility this collection of essays intends to enable philosophers to recognize the flawed assumptions concerning the gender-neutrality of central beliefs, conceptions and arguments.

In feminist essays on philosophy's history, its conceptions of persons, ethics, politics, aesthetics, religion, knowledge, science, language

and its other, readers can glimpse the fault running through the heart of every branch of Western philosophy. Each essay is written by a distinguished, North American feminist philosopher who has made, or is making, a particular impact. Each contributor addresses the need for change in her particular branch of philosophical expertise where women's distinctive voices have not been heard.

Eileen O'Neill demonstrates that the fate of women in early modern history who wrote philosophy was to have their work discredited or neglected by the fact of their gender. Louise M. Antony offers new evidence of a universal capacity for language acquisition, and with it, the capacity for abstract thought and rationally directed action, linguistic communication, social relations and cultural creation. In short, Antony suggests the existence of a human cognitive nature which is equally applicable to women and men and supports feminist protests against the 'systematic' dehumanization of women 'in ways that prevent or impede the full development of their *human capacities*' (85).

Virginia Held writes on transformation in ethics, explaining how and to what degree change has already taken place. She critically scrutinizes formative ethical concepts: such as 'reason' and 'emotion'; 'public' and 'private'; the 'autonomous' and the 'relational' self. She also acknowledges the feminist debt to Carol Gilligan's 'different voice' which will be put under more radical critique in later essays.

Susan Moller Okin writes a hard-hitting account on her home territory of political philosophy. She elaborates the intricacy of feminist critiques of malestream political conceptions, but turns her criticisms back on feminists themselves for failing to articulate non-'tentative' practical proposals and to avoid debilitating internal disagreements. Lorraine Code contributes her epistemological and feminist expertise on the problem of inaudible voices. She challenges the premise that a feminist speaks in a different voice. More basic than 'developing a different voice' is 'finding the voices of the epistemology makers, uncovering the processes of theory and knowledge production' in order to expose how

epistemic authority has been established and withheld, taking it back from 'the "no-one's-land" that it has seemed to occupy' (204). The collection includes the often unacknowledged feminist critiques and reconstructions of aesthetics which, as demonstrated by Carolyn Korsmeyer, do far more than address conceptions and critical strategies common to other branches of feminist philosophy or to literature and the arts.

Andrea Nye establishes a new feminist intervention into philosophy of language. This is feminist not because it is a study of feminine language or because it criticizes masculine language, but because 'it locates [its intervention] in language resources that facilitate a circulation of meaning and desire that fixes the points of equilibrium between material reality and diverse human aspiration which are the necessary form of shared objectivity' (289). Nye finds these common points in the interest of 'men and women, Continental and analytic philosophers, Westerners and non-Westerners, white people and people of color'. Kourany's essay stresses the social nature of feminist proposals for reconstructing the philosophy of science.

Nancy Frankenberry's *Philosophy of Religion in Different Voices* should be applauded separately for its inclusion as an overdue account of the necessity of a particular feminist intervention. Owing to the apparent silence of feminist philosophers on religion, Frankenberry turns largely to feminist theologians, yet introduces philosophical ideas such as Maria Lugones' 'world-travelling' to break down the narrow perimeters of philosophy of religion. Distinguishing the decisive weaknesses of gender bias and ethnocentrism in this branch of philosophy, this essay immediately predates the publication of the first two books in feminist philosophy of religion in 1998.

Bordo's 'Afterword' takes a critical look at an obstacle to change implicit in the collection's title: '... In A Feminist Voice' could reflect the impact of Gilligan's *In A Different Voice* as a critique of gender difference. Bordo sees a serious mistake in treating feminist critique as *only*

involving gender (i.e. as being about woman only). Instead 'what gender difference here affords (as ethnic and other cultural differences can afford, as well) is a "way into" cultural critique'—that is, 'to expose the universalist pretensions of dominant norms [in philosophy] and to envision alternatives' (305). In part the lack of progress in integrating feminist insights into philosophy is due to the failure to read them against the terms of a culture shaped by gender dualities. Further, to make feminist philosophy a vehicle for social change involves 'swim[ming] upstream against powerful currents whenever it threatens to assume the mantle of *general* cultural critique rather than simply advocate for the greater inclusion or representation of women and their "differences"' (307).

Pamela Sue Anderson
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Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon: Feminist, Artist & Rebel
Pam Hirsch, Chatto & Windus 1998; London, Pimlico (p/b) 1999
h/b £20 0701 1 6797 1, p/b £14 0712 66581 1

Despite her importance in nineteenth-century British feminism, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon has not been well served by earlier biographies and this meticulously researched work is a welcome addition to the literature on Bodichon. It offers a wealth of information about the background and family life, the friendships and emotional relationships, the artistic and feminist activities of this remarkable woman. Pam Hirsch provides extensive detail about Bodichon herself, but also excellent material on the social, familial, feminist and artistic contexts in which she lived and worked.

The illegitimate daughter of an affluent and progressive Unitarian businessman, Barbara Leigh Smith and her siblings were somewhat marginal figures in the upper-middle class society to which they should have belonged: well-connected cousins like Florence Nightingale, for

example, never acknowledged the young Leigh Smiths. Barbara shared her father's reforming impulse, setting up an experimental school in the 1850s and becoming a pioneer in the mid nineteenth-century movement for women's rights. She also shared her father's romantic inclinations and his desire to live outside the established sexual and familial frameworks of her class. As a woman, however, she was both more vulnerable and less free than he had been.

Benjamin Leigh Smith lived for many years with a woman who was absolutely devoted to her father—but whom he refused to marry. By contrast, Barbara found herself sought by the unscrupulous philanderer, John Chapman, who wished apparently to add her to his stable of women and to have access to her ample means. Chapman used his medical knowledge to attempt to persuade Barbara of the benefits to her health which a sexual liaison with him would offer! This plan was foiled by Benjamin Smith who removed her from Chapman's clutches and took her and her sisters to Algiers. Even there, Barbara showed her rash romantic inclinations. She married an eccentric French doctor, Eugene Bodichon, thereby establishing a relationship which, while giving her much of the freedom she sought, provided little companionship and was a constant source of tensions amongst her family and friends.

Pam Hirsch is at her best in dealing with this part of the story. Her clear and detailed discussion of the childhood and family life of the Leigh Smiths, of Barbara's early interests and ambitions and particularly her relationships with Bessie Parkes and John Chapman are excellent. The early, and relatively happy years of her marriage to Eugene Bodichon, their trip to America and their attempt to work out a new pattern of married life make fascinating reading.

The later part of the book is less successful, however. Hirsch claims that Bodichon is much less known than one would expect from her achievements. Yet one might equally argue that this is really because Bodichon presents a puzzle which has never been resolved: she never achieved what one might have expected from her early promise, and she

did not have the impact on feminism or on nineteenth-century life and thought that her early energy, ability and independence suggested.

In regard to feminism, this is particularly important, Bodichon's life hinted at the possibility, raised earlier by Mary Wollstonecraft, of a feminism which combined the demand for legal and political rights for women with an equally insistent demand for sexual freedom. But Bodichon herself relinquished this demand and her personal views on this question were never clearly articulated. The women's movement which developed in the mid nineteenth-century concentrated on political and legal reforms and allowed little scope for personal rebellion within feminism.

This book certainly shows some of the reasons why Bodichon's impact on feminism was limited. Her contribution to nineteenth-century feminism declined markedly after her marriage. Although still interested in art and in feminist causes, she was involved in constant travel and in an equally constant juggling act between the demands of marriage, family and public life, never able to devote herself to anything adequately. She became an increasingly shadowy figure within the women's movement. She was closely involved in establishing Girton College—but always in a background role while direction of the college fell to Emily Davies.

Hirsch details the ill health and family tensions and quarrels which absorbed a vast amount of Bodichon's energy from the late 1860s, when she was in her early forties, until her death in 1891. But one feels here that her concern to offer factual information and to work through Bodichon's life year by year gives a less satisfactory picture than one would wish. There is a need here for imaginative interpretation and for some discussion of why Bodichon constructed—and destroyed—her life in quite the way she did.

Bodichon insisted on marrying someone completely alien to her own family, but then spent years being distressed by familial disapproval and by the difficulties she faced in attempting to retain the ties of her

early youth. There were constant quarrels with brothers and sisters over nieces and nephews and Barbara felt increasingly lonely and isolated. Her last years were plagued with ill health. She suffered a stroke in 1877, when she was in her early fifties and lived increasingly as an invalid until her death in 1890.

This book offers a very detailed and informative account of Bodichon's life, but it does not venture into the psychological territory which alone might help one to understand the puzzle of Barbara Bodichon.

Barbara Caine
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Property, Women and Politics: Subjects or Objects?

Donna Dickenson, Cambridge, Polity Press 1997

h/b £45 0 7456 1321 7, p/b, £13.99 0 7456 1322 5

'Property' and 'contract', and the moral values, social relationships and economic opportunities bound up in these terms, have come to enjoy considerable salience in present political debates. Yet the situation of women and their relationship to property and contract—which is the starting point of this excellent and stimulating book—hardly figures in these contexts.

Mainstream political and legal theories commonly fail to account for the specific ways in which gender has structured the very enterprise of theorizing property. Feminist scholars, on the other hand, tend to view that nexus from a perspective that casts women as mere objects of property. To the extent that the contract, especially in the form of the marriage agreement, has been directly implicated in women's sexual subordination, this concept too would seem lost to any use but the legitimization of an invariably unequal and unjust relationship. Donna Dickenson aims to do for contract and property what feminist analysis has done for other key concepts of political theory, namely to decon-

struct and reconstitute these terms in ways that will enable women to claim their status as subjects.

The originality and persuasiveness of Dickenson's argument owes much to the interdisciplinary perspectives from which she approaches this task. The main body of the book (chs 2–5) is given to the critical investigation of the canonical heritage of political theory (represented by Aristotle, Locke, Hegel, Marx and Engels). But this seemingly conventional enterprise yields novel insights because it is aligned with reconceptualizations of property derived from jurisprudence; with a wide range of historical and anthropological material that documents the diversity of marriage arrangements in different cultures and the diverse forms and meanings of women's propertylessness; and with the new questions about contract and ownership posed in the field of medical ethics. Engagement with feminist writings (in particular those of Catharine MacKinnon, Carole Pateman, Christine Delphy and Luce Irigaray) serves to chart the pathways towards a new understanding of female subjectivity.

The skilful integration of these multi-disciplinary resources allows the author to set out the conditions under which the relationship of women to property and contract can be reformulated so as to ensure women's independent agency; this positive, enabling relationship can hold only if we define property not as the possession and control of objects, but as a complex set of relationships which affirm the mutual recognition of individual agents. This further requires that we opt, *pace* Hegel, for a developmental, rather than instrumental, conception, defining property as a means to promote self-sufficiency and autonomy. Most importantly—and this is the decisive thrust of the argument—we should understand the meanings of Lockean self-ownership to entail not primarily property in our body, but property in our person, i.e. in our capacities, aspirations, life-projects and feelings.

The reinterpretation of Locke's text, set in the context of the specific formulations of the marriage contract in the early capitalist period,

enables Dickenson to delimit Pateman's influential thesis of the 'sexual contract'. It is not the contract as such, she argues, which seals women's sexual subordination to men, but the fact that under particular historical conditions marriage was established by means of a *sexual* contract. This distinction provides us with the space to consider the potential of the contract as a cooperative arrangement between the marriage partners in which women's personhood and property entitlements are fully recognized.

Similarly, Marx's concept of alienation can be made to explain the specific causes of women's propertylessness and impaired subjectivity, if we reorient the definition of labour so as to include women's domestic work, and in particular the labour of childbearing and childrearing. As the case studies on gamete donation, sale of foetal tissue and surrogate motherhood demonstrate (ch. 7), these critical reformulations can equip feminist analysis with effective tools to intervene in those domains of public policy where women's agency has been routinely denied.

One might perhaps ask whether at the end of the twentieth century it is still adequate to identify women's property as extensively with the labour of reproduction and domestic work as this book seems to suggest. Donna Dickenson has chosen to focus upon the propertylessness and impaired agency that continue to mark the situation of a large number of women in Western societies and the lives of the overwhelming majority in the developing world. She advocates their case in a lucid and compelling argument and engages her readers' interest in such an effective way that her book must count as a major contribution to the study of women and gender across the boundaries of academic disciplines.

Ursula Vogel
University of Manchester

A Dream: Imaginary in Manner, Real in Matter

by Rachel Speght

prefixed to *Mortalities Memorandum* (London 1621)

Contextualization

Rachel Speght (c. 1598—after 1630) was the daughter of a London clergyman. In *A Mouzell for Melastomus* ['A Muzzle for Black Mouth'] (1617), she answered Joseph's Swetman's 'foul-mouthed' attack on the female sex. This was then followed by *Mortalities Memorandum* in 1621, which is prefixed by *A Dream*—the text of which is reprinted here (slightly shortened and with some modernized spellings)—in which she positions herself in a tradition of women philosophers that reaches back to Hypatia and Aspasia.

Making reference to Aristotle and the doctrine of the Golden Mean, as well as to Christian teaching, Speght's allegorical dream-poem shows her quest for Knowledge, and her lament over the way that women are kept in ignorance and with their talents undeveloped. In the dream the poet is helped by Truth and Desire to conquer Dissuasion and to help her find the courage necessary to combat the misogynistic 'beast' [Swetman] who roars and foams 'filthy froth' on 'Eve's sex'.

The verse is dedicated—in a section not reprinted here—to the poet's godmother, Marie Moundford, and ends with the poet encountering Death in the shape of a monster who has taken her mother. A passage mourning her dead mother closes the *Dream*. The poet's positioning of herself in a matrilineal tradition of learned women is thus framed by another, more personal, acknowledgment of female debts and bonds. Those interested in reading *A Dream* in its unmodernized form (which includes Biblical references), as well as the subsequent extended meditations on the origins and consequences of mortality, are referred to the online text at [//darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/ren.htm](http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/ren.htm).

Speght is usually described as a 'polemicist and poet', but she needs to be situated in terms of philosophical traditions. Although lacking the weight and substance of Christine de Pizan's defence of woman in *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405), *A Dream* is an important early example of a woman writer using the established genre of dream allegory to establish a tradition of thinking and arguing that can reach back to encompass both Hypatia and Aspasia (both omitted by de Pizan in her 'defence' of woman).

Hypatia is, of course, now often situated as the first woman philosopher, but is perhaps more appropriately thought of as the 'mother' of mathematics—and thus of the more mathematical parts of philosophy. Aspasia (c.470–410 BC) is more properly the 'mother' of philosophy conceived of as techniques of argument. Aspasia came to Athens from Miletus as a well-educated woman and opened an academy for women, which later became a popular meeting place for Plato, Socrates, Sophocles, Pericles and other philosophers and rhetoricians. Both Aspasia and Plato taught that belief and truth were not alike and that rhetoric has the potential to deviate from the truth and deceive the audience. But Aspasia was herself an influential Sophist. Her teachings on induction influenced Cicero, particular in respect to his account of argumentation. Speght misspells 'Aspasia', writing 'Aspatia' (corrected below) who was a character in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* (1619), but her reference is clearly to Aspasia the Sophist and consort of Pericles.

Christine Battersby
University of Warwick

A Dream

When splendent *Sol*, which rises in the east,/ Returning thence took
harbour in the west,/ When *Phoebus* laid her head in *Titan's* lap,/ And
creatures sensitive made haste to rest,/ When sky which erst looked like
to azure blue,/ Left colour bright, and put on sable hue;

Then did *Morpheus* close my drowsy eyes,/ And stood as porter at
my senses door,/ Diurnal cares excluding from my mind;/ Including
rest, (the salve for labours sore)/ Night's greatest part in quiet sleep I
spent,/ But nothing in this world is permanent.

For ere *Aurora* spread her glittering beams,/ Or did with robes of
light her self invest,/ My mental quiet sleep did interdict,/ By
entertaining a nocturnal guest./ *A Dream* which did my mind and sense
possess,/ With more than I by pen can well express.

At the appointment of supernal power,/ By instrumental means
methought I came/ Into a place most pleasant to the eye,/ Which for
the beauty some did *Cosmos* name,/ Where stranger-like on everything I
gazed,/ But wanting wisdom was as one amazed.

Upon a sudden, as I gazing stood,/ *Thought* came to me, and
asked me of my state,/ Inquiring what I was, and what I would,/ And
why I seemed as one disconsolate:/ To whose demand, I thus again
replied,/ I, as a stranger in this place abide.

The Haven of my voyage is remote/ I have not yet attained my
journey's end;/ Yet know I not, nor can I give a guess,/ How short a
time I in this place shall spend./ For that high power, which sent me to
this place,/ Does only know the period of my race.

The reason of my sadness at this time,/ Is, 'cause I feel my self
nor very well,/ Unto you I shall much obliged be,/ If for my grief a
remedy you'll tell./ Quoth she, if you your malady will show,/ My best
advice I'll willingly bestow.

My grief, quoth I, is called *Ignorance*,/ Which makes me differ little
from a brute:/ For animals are led by nature's lore,/ Their seeming

science is but custom's fruit;/ When they are hurt they have a sense of pain;/ But want the sense to cure themselves again.

And ever since this grief did me oppress,/ Instinct of nature is my chiefest guide;/ I feel disease, yet know not what I ail,/ I find a sore, but can no salve provide;/ I hungry am, yet cannot seek for food;/ Because I know not what is bad or good.

And sometimes when I seek the golden mean,/ My weakness makes me fail of mine intent,/ That suddenly I fall into extremes,/ Nor can I see a mischief to prevent;/ But feel the pain when I the peril find,/ Because my malady does make me blind.

What is without the compass of my brain;/ My sickness makes me say it cannot be;/ What I conceive not, cannot come to pass;/ Because for it I can no reason see./ I measure all men's fear by mine own shoe,/ And count all well, which I appoint or do.

The pestilent effects of my disease/ Exceed report, their number is so great;/ The evils, which through it I do incur,/ Are more then I am able to repeat./ Wherefore, good *Thought*, I sue to thee again,/ To tell me how my cure I may obtain.

Quoth she, I wish I could prescribe your help;/ You state I pity much, and do bewail;/ But for my part, though I am much employed,/ Yet in my judgement I do often fail./ And therefore I'll commend unto your trial/ *Experience*, of whom take no denial.

For she can best direct you, what is meet/ To work your cure, and satisfy your mind;/ I thanked her for her love, and took my leave,/ Demanding where I might *Experience* find./ She told me if I did abroad enquire,/ It was likely *Age* could answer my desire.

I sought, I found, She asked me what I would;/ Quoth I, your best direction I implote;/ For I am troubled with an irksome grief,/ Which when I named, quoth she declare no more:/ For I can tell as much, as you can say,/ And for your cure I'll help you what I may.

The only medicine for your malady,/ By which, and nothing else your help is wrought,/ Is *Knowledge*, of the which there is two sorts,/ The

one is good, the other bad and nought;/ The former sort by labour is attained,/ The latter may without much toil be gained.

But 'tis the good, which must effect your cure,/ I prayed her then, that she would further show,/ Where I might have it, that I will, quoth she,/ In *Erudition's* garden it does grow:/ And in compassion of your woeful case,/ *Industry* shall conduct you to the place.

Dissuasion hearing her assign my help,/ (And seeing that consent I did detect)/ Did many remoras to me propose,/ As dullness, and my memories defect;/ The difficulty of attaining lore,/ My time, and sex, with many others more.

Which when I heard, my mind was much perplexed,/ And as a horse new come into the field,/ Who with a harquebus at first does start,/ So did this shot make me recoil and yield./ But of my fear when some did notice take,/ On my behalf, they this reply did make.

First quoth *Desire*, *Dissuasion*, hold thy peace,/ These oppositions come not from above:/ Quoth *Truth*, they cannot spring from reason's root,/ And therefore now thou shalt no victor prove./ No, quoth *Industry*, be assured this,/ Her friends shall make thee of thy purpose miss.

For with my sickle I will cut away/ All obstacles, that in her way can grow,/ And by the issue of her own attempt,/ I'll make thee *labor omnia vincet* know./ Quoth *Truth*, and since her sex thou do'st object,/ Thy folly I by reason will detect.

Both man and woman of three parts consist,/ Which *Paul* does body, soul, and spirit call:/ And from the soul three faculties arise,/ The mind, the will, the power, then wherefore shall/ A woman have her intellect in vain,/ Or not endeavour *Knowledge* to attain.

The talent, God does give, must be employed,/ His own with vantage he must have again:/ All parts and faculties were made for use:/ The God of *Knowledge* nothing gave in vain./ 'Twas *Mary's* choice our Saviour did approve,/ Because that she the better part did love.

Clauvulina, and *Demophila*,/ With *Telesilla*, as historians tell,/ (Whose fame does live, though they have long been dead)/ Did all of them in poetry excel./ A Roman matron that *Cornelia* hight,/ An eloquent and learned style did write.

Hypatia in astronomy had skill,/ *Aspasia* was in rhetoric so expert,/ As that Duke *Pericles* of her did learn;/ *Arete* did devote herself to art:/ And by consent (which shows she was no fool)/ She did succeed her father in his school.

And many others here I could produce,/ Who were in science counted excellent;/ But these examples which I have rehearsed,/ To show their error are sufficient./ Thus having said, she turned her speech to me,/ That in my purpose I might constant be.

My friend, quoth she, regard not vulgar talk;/ For dung-hill cocks at precious stones will spurn,/ And swine-like natures prize not crystal streams,/ Condemned mire, and mud will serve their turn./ Good purpose seldom oppositions want:/ But constant minds *Dissuasion* cannot daunt.

Shall every blast disturb the sailor's peace?/ Or boughs and bushes travellers affright?/ True valour does not start at every noise;/ Small combats must instruct for greater fight./ Disdain to be with every dart dismayed;/ 'Tis childish to be suddenly afraid.

If thou didst know the pleasure of the place,/ Where *Knowledge* grows, and where thou mayst it gain;/ Or rather knew the virtue of the plant,/ Thou would it not grudge at any cost, or pain,/ Thou canst bestow, to purchase for thy cure/ This plant, by which of help thou shalt be sure.

Let not *Dissuasion* alter thy intent;/ It's fin to nip good motions in the head;/ Take courage, and be constant in thy course,/ Though irksome be the path, which thou must tread./ Sick folks drink bitter medicines to be well,/ And to enjoy the nut men crack the shell.

When *Truth* had ended what she meant to say,/ *Desire* did move me to obey her will,/ Whereto consenting I did soon proceed,/ Her

counsel, and my purpose to fulfil;/ And by the help of *industry* my friend,/ I quickly did attain my journey's end.

Where being come, *Instruction*'s pleasant air/ Refreshed my senses, which were almost dead,/ And fragrant flowers of sage and fruitful plants,/ Did send sweet savours up into my head;/ And taste of science appetite did move,/ To augment *Theory* of things above.

There did the harmony of those sweet birds,/ (Which higher soar with contemplation's wings,/ Then barely with a superficial view,/ Denote the value of created things.)/ Yield such delight as made me to implore,/ That I might reap this pleasure more and more.

And as I walked wandering with *Desire*,/ To gather that, for which I thither came;/ (Which by the help of *industry* I found)/ I met my old acquaintance, *Truth* by name;/ Whom I requested briefly to declare,/ The virtue of that plant I found so rare.

Quoth she, by it God's image man does bear,/ Without it he is but a humane shape,/ Worse then the Devil; for he knows much;/ Without it who can any ill escape?/ By virtue of it evils are withstood;/ *The mind without it is not counted good.*

Who wanteth *Knowledge* is a Scripture fool,/ Against the ignorant the prophets pray;/ And *Hosea* threatens judgement unto those,/ Whom want of *Knowledge* made to run astray./ Without it thou no practical good can show,/ More then by hap, as blind men hit a crow.

True *Knowledge* is the window of the soul,/ Through which her objects she does speculate;/ It is the mother of faith, hope, and love;/ Without it who can virtue estimate?/ By it, in grace thou shalt desire to grow;/ 'Tis life eternal God and Christ to know.

Great *Alexander* made so great account,/ Of *Knowledge*, that he oftentimes would say,/ That he to *Aristotle* was more bound/ For *Knowledge*, upon which *Death* could not pray,/ Than to his father *Phillip* for his life,/ Which was uncertain, irksome, full of strife.

This true report put edge unto *Desire*,/ Who did incite me to increase my store,/ And told me 'twas a lawful avarice,/ To covet

Knowledge daily more and more./ This counsel I did willingly obey,/ Till some occurrence called me away.

And made me rest content with that I had,/ Which was but little,
as effect does show;/ And quenched hope for gaining any more,/ For I
my time must other ways bestow./ I therefore to that place returned
again,/ From whence I came, and where I must remain.

But by the way I saw a full-fed beast,/ Which roared like some
monster, or a Devil, /And on *Eve's* sex he foamed filthy froth,/ As if
that he had had the falling evil;/ To whom I went to free them from
mishaps,/ And with a *Muzze* sought to bind his chaps.

But, as it seems, my mood outran my might...// ... But ere that I
had little further gone,/ I saw a fierce insatiable foe,/ Depopulating
countries, sparing none;/ Without respect of age, sex, or degree,/ It did
devour, and could not daunted be.

...// The name of this impartial foe was *Death*,/ Whose rigour
whilst I furiously did view,/ Upon a sudden, ere I was aware;/ With
piercing dart my mother dear it flew;/ Which when I saw it made me so
to weep,/ That tears and sobs did rouse me from my sleep.

But, when I waked, I found my dream was true;/ For *Death* had
taken my mother's breath away,/ Though of her life it could not her
bereave,/ Since she in glory lives with Christ for aye;/ Which makes me
glad, and thankful for her bliss,/ Though still bewail her absence, whom
I miss.

A sudden sorrow pierces to the quick,/ Speedy encounters
fortitude does try;/ Unarmed men receive the deepest wound,/
Expected perils time does lenify;/ Her sudden loss hath cut my feeble
heart,/ So deep, that daily I endure the smart.

The root is killed, how can the boughs but fade!/ But since that
Death this cruel deed has done,/ I'll blaze the nature of this mortal foe,/
And show how it to tyrannies begun./ The sequel then with judgement
view aright,/ The profit may and will the pains requite.

[Then follows *Mortalities Memorandum*, also in verse.]

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Guest Editors: Peg Brand & Mary Devereaux

This issue will explore a range of issues concerning the interconnections between work in aesthetics & feminist philosophy.

Papers (not longer than 30 pages double-spaced) by 1/3/2002. *Hypatia* style guidelines & more details at csupomona.edu/~ljsfrage/hypatia/index.htm.

11/10/00–14/10/00
9th Symposium of
International Association of
Women Philosophers
Zürich, Switzerland
contact iaph@freesurf.ch
<http://iaph.org>

30/6/01–2/7/01
Women in Philosophy
Conference
marguerite.lacaze@utas.edu.au
or l.shotton@utas.edu.au
followed by
1/7/01–6/7/01
Australasian Association of
Philosophy Conference
at University of Tasmania
Hobart, Tasmania
kelleit@utas.edu.au
or jeff.malpas@utas.edu.au

July 2002, Kampala
Women's Worlds: Gendered
Worlds
8th International Congress on
Women

Uganda will be the 1st African country to host the congress. Topics include:
Women in Academia; Sexuality; Masculinities & Femininities; Gender, Culture & Reproductive Health; Gendered Identities & Images; Gender & Religion, plus others.
Contact Grace Bantebya, PhD Head, Dept of Women & Gender Studies, Makerere University, PO Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda.
gendermu@swiftuganda.com
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