Fantasies of Gender and the Witch in Feminist Theory and Literature

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Chapter One

Functions and Risks of Radical Feminist "Witches"

Desire as a Place of Herstorical Inconsistencies

While rereading the radical feminist versions of the "witch" figure in 1970s scholarship, it is possible to conclude that no matter who she is, or whom she supposedly represents, the "witch" remains a benevolent "wise-woman," a victim of phallogocentric hegemonies. This particular identity construction derives from mythic stories of the "Burning Times" and beliefs in the "Craft of the Wise," both drawing on the historically documented medieval and postmedieval European witch-craze. Following Diane Purkiss, most of these "mythic" sources were invented (and invention is one of the key words here) at the point when the second wave feminist movement "began to turn away from rights-centred public-sphere issues towards crime-centred, private-sphere issues": "Sexuality was to be identified as the site of women's oppression in the sense that property was for Marx the site of class oppression. Rape, sexual violence, pornography, wife-battering and (eventually) child sexual abuse became the central signifiers of patriarchy, replacing signifiers such as legal asymmetries and pay differentials" (15). This formulation of sexuality, traced back to the so-called sexual revolution of the late 1960s and forming an important aspect of second-wave feminist identity politics in the 1970s, carried in itself the somehow troublesome "freedom of sexual expression." Reflecting the influence of Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, whose theories were grounded both in Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis, the early 1970s feminist voices postulated the "release of sexual energy" as a means of liberation from repressive social forces and, on a more radical note, the right to "sexual pleasure." Sexuality was defined as male centered and organized around phallic pleasure, with women's sexuality defined in terms of meeting male sexual fantasies and reproductive duties. Through this simplified binary lens of sexual relations, radical feminism (see Millett, Rowbotham, Oakley) encouraged women to reclaim their sexuality that has been suppressed and denied to them.
The feminist narratives from this period, such as Daly's *Gyn/ecology* (1978) or Dworkin's *Women-Hating* (1974) shift their critical interest to the witch figure as a signifier for physically abused and culturally neglected "woman," the one Cixous, in the French feminist context, refers to in "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975): the woman "in her inevitable struggle against conventional man," the "universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history" (347). To begin with, this universal subject performs "a sort of tetralogy, tackling the problem of the four elements: water, air, fire, earth, applied to philosophers nearer our time," and simultaneously, it interrogates the philosophical tradition (Irigaray, "Bodily Encounter" 35). Irigaray's focus on the "double syntax" in philosophical debates on desire, that is to say, on a possible articulation of the in-between processes of the conscious and subconscious, masculine and feminine significations of desire, is of crucial importance in this context. It somewhat futuristically delineates what is still out of sight in 1970s: the strategy of a self-conscious mimesis that will highlight the mechanisms that maintain sexual indifference (rather than difference) in place. The very concept of "desire," dense with intertextual connotations, is understood here as used by Lacan in correlation with the exteriority of linguistic experience, that is as the "split" that occurred when we entered language, and a "hole" in the "self" that the subject attempts to "close" through an endless metonymic chain of supplements. This definition of "desire" becomes a point of contention for French and Anglophone second-wave feminists because of the phallogocentric model of "woman," who is said "to be desirable to man" owing to a belief that she will be able to complete him, that she is his Other (all that he is not)" (Warhol and Herndl 485). Within the newly emerging feminist psychoanalysis, this concept of "desire" clearly limits women's possibilities in the world of lived experience, that is, an experience ruled by the symbolic discourse that relegates female types of desire to the dyadic "imaginary." The "symbolic," imposed by Lacanian psychoanalysis "as a universal, innocent of any empirical or historical contingency," is in fact, as Irigaray argues, a "'monosexual' (or 'hom(m)osexual') imaginary, transformed into an order, into the social" (*Speculum* 98). Or, in Butler's understanding, the symbolic constitutes "the sphere that regulates the assumption of sex, where sex is understood as a differential set of positions, masculine and feminine" (*Undoing Gender* 47).

In this fantasmatistic system of "topological order" of phallus as a signifier of fullness of being, "woman" (and as a result, women) has been made into a "fantasy" of the "speculum" providing a material support of male narcissism. Projected as "being the phallus," "woman" does neither exist nor belong; she is "in exile" (Irigaray, "Women's Exile" 76), in cultural diaspora. The exilic narratives, especially the Anglo-American radical feminist texts, revalorize the unbelonging roles of midwives, healers, herbalists, and crones, reflecting Cixous's "women" who return from the Dark Continent of desire "from always: from 'without,' from the heath where the witches are kept alive; from below, from beyond 'culture'" ("Laugh" 348). These texts need to be viewed as attempts to remove witches' history (problematically identified with women's history) from the entrapment of their physiological bod-
ies stigmatized by "symbolical castration": the "little girls and their 'ill-mannered' bodies immured, well-preserved, intact unto themselves, in the mirror. Frigidified" (348). They are mostly so-called herstorical (in contrast to historical) narratives, and their objective is to escape the stereotypical link between fascination and revulsion as inscribed onto the castrated and melancholic female body. More recently, this and similar radical objectives have come under challenge (see Butler; Purkiss; Pusch), while the subject of a feminist identity, assumed to be shared, obvious, and crucial to the understanding of the radical feminist texts, has since been recognized as far from monolithic. Indeed, the arguments developed by Diane Purkiss, Luise Pusch, and Butler that will frame my discussion emphasize the fragmentation of feminist identity and "the paradoxical opposition to feminism from 'women' whom feminism claims to represent" (Butler, Gender Trouble 4). This opposition, as a type of adversative reaction, suggests in itself "the necessary limits of identity politics" (4). In Purkiss's view of this inadequacy, the radical narratives of the witch-craze are particularly troublesome, because the myth of the "Burning Times" has become "such a key part of many feminists' identities that to point to its limitations is bound to be painful and divisive" (26). As a radical feminist identity, the "witch" strategically represents both the historical abject figure subjected to torture and death, and a radical fantasy of renewal in the form of a female figure who desires (and articulates) a cultural transformation "that has not happened yet," and also the one who already marks that transformation. Although the feminist witch succeeds in subverting her abject identity by converting it into a political fantasy of gender, the "category of women for merely 'strategic' purposes" (Butler, Gender Trouble 4) remains problematic. The herbalist-witch represents clearly such a fantasy of a superwoman, the feminist heroine of the 1980s and 1990s, a professional woman who has a beautiful country garden, bakes her own bread, makes her own quilts, and demonstrates unconventional sexuality (Purkiss 21). Through all this, the fantasy is strategically set to undermine the inferiority of the feminine sex and to erase paternity (the father and the son) from the symbolically accorded priority. This "feminine," designating a restorative theory/fantasy beyond the signifiers of paternity and fecundity, is clearly meant to refer beyond the biological entrapment of the "female" subject; however, the question remains of what transformative significance this radical term acquires in the end. In an attempt to answer this question, I trace several theoretical routes as taken by Continental and Anglo-American authors.

I begin by focusing on Irigaray's, Cixous's, and subsequently, Daly's and Wittig's philosophical conceptualizations of a/the "universal" woman, all constituting very different intellectual standpoints. In contextualizing their positions (especially Irigaray's and Cixous's), it seems necessary to refer to a mobile discursive locus of the/a "universal" woman: a dialogical impossibility, or incongruence between history and herstory, strategically ending up in women's imaginary which "is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible" (Cixous, "Laugh" 347). This "stream of phantasms" needs to be retrospectively seen as a therapeutic attempt both to break through the silence and invisibility of female
history, and to elevate the notion of "feminine alterity" over the complementarity and symmetricity of the phallogocentric system. Such clearly Levinasian reference to the "exteriority of the Other" (see his Time and the Other) has been carefully pursued by Irigaray in her philosophical debate of "alterity" as a "nonreciprocal relationship" that characterizes social life. Posited at the very heart of the relationship with the other, Irigaray's interruption of Levinasian "alterity" is most significant in the context of the "feminine." Elevated by Levinas as "absolute alterity," this formulation plays a crucial part in both unsettling and maintaining the philosophical heritage of the masculine sameness. Although for Irigaray, the Levinasian "feminine alterity" does not constitute the limits of masculinity, but, above all, the site of a masculine self-elaboration, it is the unsettling aspect of the Levinasian Other that becomes attractive for French feminist purpose.

Given that Levinas, against the Western philosophical tradition, claims a priority for alterity over the sameness, the idea that alterity is accomplished in the feminine amounts to a radical claim: the "feminine" is thus inconspicuously rendered a privileged term, since in it alterity is accomplished (Chanter 5). In a similar mode, the "witch" (or the "alterity" of the woman) becomes a privileged term for herstorical narratives. To follow Morgner, the witch "is not only possible, but actually she is needed, desired" (Amanda 635). The perspective offered is that of an other woman, defined by Irigaray as one that is exterior to phallocentric metaphorizations, "a woman who does not yet exist, but whose advent could shake the foundations of patriarchy" (Whitford 29). Indeed, in The Newly Born Woman (1975), Cixous's and Clément's witch figures replicate the traces of alterity (illeity, anarchy) in a range of subversive feminine symbols. Evoking both medical and sexual implications, the sorceress and the hysteric are posited as tropes for the feminine condition of the "universal" woman, that is, for cultural incompatibility and deviance which, if excessive, will be vomited "into protected spaces—hospitals, asylums, prisons" (Newly Born 6). There the witch-woman is veiled, hidden, and kept under restraint. This feminine condition, according to Cixous, has to be rewritten against the heterosexual ideology of two physiologically different but supposedly complementary halves; an ideology, which Butler would reformulate as "literalizing fantasy": the conflation of desire with the real—that is the belief that it is parts of the body, the "literal" penis, the "literal" vagina, which cause pleasure and desire. This fantasy and its perennial enactments, characteristic of the syndrome of melancholic heterosexuality (Butler, Gender Trouble 71), have silenced figurations of alternative subjectivities, and precisely the "alterity" accomplished in the "feminine."

The "dark" origin (alterity) of the feminine condition has been revisited by Cixous in her formulation of a/the woman as Dark Continent, associated symbolically with what Reason leaves behind: "the dark powers of the earth goddesses, immersion in unknown forces associated with mysterious female powers" (Lloyd 2; see also Anderson). This continent is "neither dark nor unexplorable" (Cixous, "Laugh" 354), but due to phallogocentric perpetuation of this fantastic belief, "what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to Lack" (354). Dating back
to the Aristotelian philosophy of reasoning in ancient Greece (see Anderson), the/a "universal" woman represents the embodiment of nonreason and antirational procedures, emerging as an icon (or a symptom) of cultural un/belonging. As a contemporary protagonist, Cixous's Medusa (and her subversive laughter) becomes a deconstructive designation for the difference that challenges her historical displacement, indicating a permanent breakdown of authority, an anarchic gap between the signifier and signified and the manifestation of an ontological inconsistency. As such she/it relates to the Derridean "past that has never been present," adapted carefully in Cixous's theoretical aspiration to reverse the course of Western history in which the concept of the transcendental "woman" develops in tandem with philosophical and religious denials of the female authority: "And we believed. They riveted us between two horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss. That would be enough to set half the world laughing, except that it's still going on" ("Laugh" 354). This reversal theoretically converges with Butler's "laughter in the face of serious categories" as an indispensable feminist tool, a way to trouble the "historical configurations of a nameless female indisposition" (Gender Trouble viii). Cixous's clearly Derridean recognition of the "unexamined" potentials of the dominant culture contributes thus to an important aspect of Butler's parody of gender, i.e., a parody of "natural" identity "vested with an agency that remains intact regardless of its cultural embeddedness" (Gender Trouble 142-43).

Cixous's representations of the "universal" woman enter into dialogue with some of the most peculiar phallocentric assumptions that "enabled male culture sometimes to vilify women as representing darkness and chaos, to view them as Lilith or the Whore of Babylon, and sometimes to elevate them as the representatives of a higher and purer nature, to venerate them as Virgins and Mothers of God" (Moi, "Feminist" 127). In discussing these extreme versions, or "limits" of a/the "woman," I view them, following Clément and Kristeva, as "porous" models, models that both interconnect and deconstruct women's cultural bodies. The very contours of these bodies, as Butler suggests in reference to Douglas, "are established through markings that seek to establish specific codes of cultural coherence" (Gender Trouble 131). The objective to follow is thus to reformulate the "witch" as a trace of cultural un/belonging, of bodily margins "invested with power and danger" (as referred to by Douglas); a trace that is constantly present and absent in such Western figures as the Judeo-Christian Lilith, Eve, and Jezebel, and the Virgin Mary, or Mary Magdalene, as well as in the classical Greek figures of the Sirens, Circe, or Cassandra, all of whom are evoked in the discussed literary texts. Above all, "the sorceress—the witch, the wisewoman, destroyer and preserver of culture—is she not the midwife, the intermediary between life and death, the go-between whose occult yet necessary labors deliver souls and bodies across frightening boundaries" (Cixous and Clément xiii)? Similarly, in a striking reliance on the "original craft" of words, Daly and Barbara Walker draw on the hag's metamorphosis from the wise-woman into the witch that transforms her medieval cauldron "from a sacred symbol of regeneration into a vessel of poisons" (Walker, The Crone 122). According to Daly, the hag
is a female eccentric, in reference to the Greek *ek* (out of) and *kentrum* (center of a circle; 186), who deviates from established patterns and delineates new cultural topography of the universal woman. This hag, to follow Walker, stands in a direct opposition to the malevolent stereotypical hag that "still haunts elder women today. If a man is old, ugly, and wise, he is a sage. If a woman is old, ugly, and wise, she is a saga—that is, a witch" (122). This revival of the crone, the image, and the motif of the "witch" allows for highly emotional "digging" through several layers of history, and lead radical feminism to the inevitable rediscovery of the witch pogroms of the late Middle Ages as an incontestable archaeological proof of female oppression (Bovenschen 230). And although the tension between past established patterns and present feminine condition is experienced in all subsequent second-wave feminist histories, only radical feminism resolves it by presenting its narrative "not as a reconstruction of the past, but an account of the way things always are" (Purkiss 10). This *herstorical* tendency to invoke the mythical past, and its insistence on erasing the traces of its own historicity (10), is undoubtedly intertwined with the desire to manifest one's own sovereign presence, even if that presence appears to be hysterical. Alice Walker's references to witches, in the context of her African heritage, also seem to fall into this category of emotional "digging." As explained by Lissie, one of the protagonists in *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), "the first witches to die at the stake were the daughters of the Moors....It was they (or, rather, we) who thought the Christian religion that flourished in Spain would let the Goddess of Africa 'pass' into the modern world as 'the Black Madonna.' After all, this was how the gods and goddesses moved from era to era before, though Islam, our official religion for quite a long time by now, would have nothing to do with this notion; instead, whole families in Africa who worshipped the goddess were routinely killed, sold into slavery, or converted to Islam at the point of the sword. Yes...I was one of those 'pagan' heretics they burned at the stake" (*Temple* 222). Such emotional "proofs" explain perhaps why "the radical feminist history of witches often appears to offer a static, finished vision of the witch" (Purkiss 10), one that reflects the feminist desire for an irrefutable reference that could be considered ultimate and eternal. This form of historicizing, dogmatic and often historically inadequate, can be understood as a resistance to the phallocentric attribution of "deficiency" to the/a "woman" (Felman 9).

In the view of the above, the radical feminist witches "can only represent all oppressed women if we know very little about them. The more witch-history the myth of the Burning Times attempts, the more damage it does to its own mythic status" (Purkiss 13). This *herstorical* blindness to difference in historical and present situatedness of women is characteristic of many radical feminist texts. Their witch figure remains entrapped within the dilemma of a cultural transgressor and negotiator that in history became a convenient scapegoat (the stereotypical frightening witch-woman to be eliminated), and in *herstory* becomes a utopian projection of female power. I therefore propose to consider radical feminist texts as theoretical and narrative forms of spontaneous hysteria, that is, as examples of a revolutionary discourse that carries in itself an inherent division between the methodical, logical, and
reasonable on one hand, and the hysterical, that is *eccentric* and out of control, on the other. There is a revolutionary potential in this type of hysterical discourse: "Even in her paralysis, the hysteric exhibits a potential for gestures and desires....A movement of revolt and refusal, a desire for/of the living mother who would be more than a reproductive body in the pay of the polis: a living woman" (Irigaray, "Women-Mothers" 47-48). I illustrate this division between methodology and hysteria while focusing specifically on Daly's, Dworkin's, and Wittig's positions on women's sexuality.

**Constructing the Body as a Locus of Fear**

To begin with Moi's observation, valid particularly in reference to Daly's writing, the radical Anglo-American phantasms represent the "undeconstructed" form of feminism that, still "unaware of the metaphysical nature of gender identities...runs the risk of becoming an inverted form of sexism" (*Sexual/Textual* 129). One of the risks to be negotiated by the radical feminist projects is that of merging, intentionally or not, with the patriarchal definitions of women that Simone de Beauvoir struggled to contest, confining women to the mysterious and not quite human other, as a muse incapable of taking responsible actions in the symbolic. Thus, although significant as radically positive and empowering rewritings of the historical "witch" into a therapeutic narrative figure, the narratives analyzed here demonstrate how difficult and sometimes risky it is to work against the phallocentric structure, especially once we start to diversify feminist *herstories* across race, class, and political systems. Precisely, because it operates on a basis of assumed identity politics, *herstory* emerges as a form of feminist mythology, and constitutes a challenging alternative to the established (Western) male-centered master-story. One could refer here to a range of narrative fantasies: Elana Nachman's *Riverfinger Women*, Bertha Harris's *Lover*, Wittig's *Les Guérillères*, or Gearhart's *Wanderground*, to name but a few, present communities of strong, witchlike women, drawing on myths of Amazons and prehistorical matriarchies. This phase of "intellectual rebellion, gynocentrism, and critical separatism" belongs to "a crucial period in the experience of women who had always played subordinate roles as dutiful academic daughters, research assistants, second readers, and faculty wives" (Showalter 224).

As an alternative discourse, *herstory*, or rather herstories, taking into account their conceptual plurality, initiates important processes in the cultural interrogation of existing historical and mythical representations of gender. In the 1970s, as Clément and Kristeva remind us, "we heard slogans about the return of witches, the moon, the tides, matriarchy, the primal. There was blood in the air and slaughter on the horizon" (71). In these rebellious circumstances, the alterity accomplished in the "feminine" amounts indeed to a radical claim, and must alter the traditional association of the feminine with negative otherness. The feminist witch (or the alterity of the woman) consequently becomes a central strategic signifier, a crucial metaphor or rather a metonymy for radically transmitted female values. Daly's and Dworkin's texts in particular can be categorized as hysterical and fanatical means to resist an equally hysterical and fanatical misogyny. Their strategies consistently draw on
the historical victimization of women accused of witchcraft, and particularly on the
exhibition and torture of the female body. Considering that postmedieval accusa-
tions of witchcraft were "aimed at particular categories of persons," the majority of
which were elderly, and often poor widowed women of low status (Sanders 118),
recreating their victimization as a symbol of sisterhood-based on twentieth-century
middle class women's solidarity is particularly troublesome. However, in the pro-
cess of constructing a "universal" feminist story, personal fears, hatred and solidar-
ity are evoked on purpose, and their complexities, such as the conflation of fiction
with academic research, are often difficult to examine, leaving little space for ana-
lytical perspective. Questioning Daly's self-absorption with historical "discoveries,"
Pusch addresses her plea directly: "Mary, please don't punish us any more" (106).
Cleary disapproving of her "new, true, deep structures," apparently referring to the
etymological "original word/craft," Pusch suggests rightfully that Daly's word puns
contribute to her theoretical weakness, tangible especially if read in a translation
today, at the dawn of transfeminist culture. No doubt, Daly's sharp-witted linguistic
deconstructions that have since drawn our attention to the pathologies of patriarchal
language end up in a feminist storage: in the "section: patriarchal curiosities" (Pusch
110). Interestingly, to follow up on some possible reasons, Daly's troublesome, de-
liberately ambiguous wording would still be digestible, if used within reasonable
limits. But clearly, such limits are not Daly's venture. In fact, her linguistic intric-
cies increase from one work to the next, undeniably revealing Daly's engagement in
a "truly pleasurable pursuit of new meanings," resulting in such flourishing creations
as stag-nation, the-rapist, bore-ocracy, Hexicon or Mister-ek-tomy (Pusch 107). At
this point, I propose to open the storage once more and dust off some of the reasons
for the herstorical rage and its dogmatic practices.

Daly's and Dworkin's radical theses posit the "witch" simultaneously as a fe-
male source of authority and as a patriarchal scapegoat, equating patriarchy with the
relentless persecution of women by physical torture. In Woman-Hating, Dworkin
informs us that "the magic of witches was an imposing catalogue of medical skills
concerning reproductive and psychological processes, a sophisticated knowledge of
telepathy, auto- and hetero-suggestion" (148). Accused, in history, of stealing male
fertility, or even dismembering the male body, the all-devouring, death-dealing hag
returns in Daly's Gyn/ecology to represent the protective maternal instincts of an
archaic character. The witch-crone, Daly's most prominent "archetype" of female
powers, becomes a guardian of birth-giving as well as of virginity and homosexu-
ality unstained by patriarchal semen. Daly's rewriting of hagiography as Hag-ography
morphs the hag into an embodiment of feminist fantasy of sisterhood, i.e., of "hid-
den history" deeply intertwined with our own processes of identification. Thus, we
learn that "our foresisters were the Great Hags whom the institutionally powerful but
privately impotent patriarchs found too threatening for coexistence." As "we write/
live in our own story," we are thus inevitably "uncovering their history" (Daly 14).
Their story is our story, while we become crones (the survivors of the witchcraze),
"as a result of having discovered depths of courage, strength and wisdom" (16) in
ourselves. Obviously, this mode of speaking in the name of all of us raises questions as to "who has the right to speak about what on behalf of whom," or else "who can possibly be fit to listen" (Purkiss 17). I would argue that it also explains how these reconstructions and/or postmemories of sorts contribute to a constitution of "feminist subjectivity." To follow Butler, the feminist "we" is a fantasmatic construction of a common gender (Gender Trouble 142), attempting the impossible: to bring women living under highly disparate circumstances into the same feminist family. This construction has its clear political and therefore strategic purpose, since "at this point, it becomes clear that [Daly's] narrative account of the Burning Times is less a presentation of external events than the story of an internal voyage, a metaphorical journey into the heart of patriarchal darkness" (Purkiss 13). This darkness clearly converges with Cixous's metaphor of the Dark Continent, both representing modes of resistance to women's "cultural castration" and serving as a new territory from which to identify oneself with the "witch."

If Daly's herstory of witchcraft is a religious (spiritual) experience, a form of self-actualizing narrative of suffering, Dworkin's is an experience of bodily victimization, a type of masochism, through which she replies to the "gynocide," "a term which at once covers over and gestures at what it replaces" (Purkiss 17). Dworkin "uses both the image of the demonized witch-stepmother of fairy tales and the figure of the persecuted witch-victim of the Burning Times as figures for the suffering woman-victim of pornography and rape" (Purkiss 15). Unlike Cixous's, her narratives are manifestos of female subjection and simultaneously, somehow disruptively, they celebrate the survivor-figure who lives to tell the tale. Particularly valid, in this double context, is Purkiss's observation that radical feminists (such as Daly and Dworkin) equate themselves with witches in order to ensure "that anyone who disagrees with [them] can be cast as an inquisitor" (16). Daly's "notorious intolerance of women not classed as Hags—often stigmatized by her as 'fembots' (female robots)—ironically reduplicates a rigid structure of 'acceptable' behaviour for women" (16). Daly's firm conviction that what happened to Hags once is happening to them again, perpetuates the vicious circle of gynophobia and is no longer effectual in the light of more recent feminist rereadings of history. Similarly, Dworkin's conscious preoccupation with the very linguistic structure, as she writes "with a broken tool, a language which is sexist and discriminatory to its core" (Dworkin 26), reflects on her own failure to invent vocabulary and articulate her pain. Instead, Dworkin appropriates a sometimes coarse and angry style, as if trying to break through the symbolic, through the theory, into something that constitutes the "actual" subversive discourse, into "life" (24), as she says. In this refusal of emotional detachment as a necessity of critical evaluation, radical feminism maintains a highly personal character. To follow Daly, defending a witch equates with declaring oneself a witch, a symbolic Holocaust survivor from the past and the cult figure of the present. As Purkiss suggests, pogroms, lynchings, and the Holocaust make it difficult "to deny the very existence of racism and ethnocentrism. The Burning Times myth offers to play the same role in women's history, to authorise the need for struggle and authenticate the forms
that struggle takes" (15). Daly's model of genocide, unreflectively drawing on the paradigm of Holocaust, clearly serves the purpose of a symbolic shock-value, and has been critically addressed by Purkiss as a strategic attempt "to inflate the number of women who died in witch-persecutions into the millions" (15). This form of re-traumatization of historical memory and its identificatory consequences for radical feminism are giving rise to a discourse of the "surrogate victimage" (LaCapra 221).

Despite a detailed analysis of the torture inflicted on witches, Daly and Dworkin are reluctant to mention (historical) names of witches or to describe particular cases of witch trials. To follow up on this reluctance, Purkiss notes that "male historians never tire of observing that radical feminist histories of witchcraft use almost no early modern texts as a source for views about witchcraft except the *Malleus Maleficarum*" (11). Both Daly's and Dworkin's major historical reference is indeed the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*, published in 1486, in the early period of the witch craze, and known in English as *The Witch's Hammer*. One of the most famous passages in the *Malleus Maleficarum* reads as follows:

As for the first question, why a greater number of witches is found in the fragile feminine sex than among men...the first reason is, that they are more credulous, and since the chief aim of the devil is to corrupt faith, therefore he rather attacks them...the second reason is, that women are naturally more impressionable, and...the third reason is that they have slippery tongues, and are unable to conceal from their fellow-women those things which by evil arts they know...But the natural reason is that [a woman] is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from the bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives....And this is indicated by the etymology of the word; for Femina comes from Fe and Minus, since she is ever weaker to hold and preserve the faith....All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable." (47)

This comprehensive handbook for witch hunters, compiled by Dominican inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, presents "by far the most important treatise on persecuting witches to come out of the witch hysteria of the Middle Ages and Renaissance" (Guiley 221-22). In the *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*, Rosemary E. Guiley informs us further that the *Malleus Maleficarum* "had a profound impact on witch trials on the Continent for about 200 years. Montag Summers, an English author who wrote extensively on witchcraft and demonology at the beginning of the twentieth century, called it "among the most important, wisest, and weightiest books in the world....It was second only to the Bible in sales until John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* published in 1678" (221-22; interestingly, whether Guiley's encyclopaedia represents an unbiased and reliable academic source is subject to debate; published in 1989, her work certainly follows the herstorical representations of the witches' history). The Latin genitive *Maleficarum* translates literally as "of female evil doers," and, as cited by Dworkin, the questions analyzed in it are such quandaries as "'whether Witches may work some Prestidigitatory Illusion so that the Male Organ appears to be entirely removed and separate from the Body (Answer: Yes),' [or] 'That
Witches who are Midwives in Various Ways Kill the Child Conceived in the Womb, and Procure Abortion; or if they do not do this, offer New-born Children to the Devils (Answer: Yes)” (128). Elaborating on the interrogational procedures described, both Daly and Dworkin portray the witch hunters as obsessed (religious) maniacs who see themselves as purifying the female mystical body of indigestible elements, to paraphrase Daly's text. It is precisely these elements, in the radical feminist interpretation, that constitute female independence, a spiritual, physical, and economic sovereignty that threatens the phallocentric monopoly of power. According to Daly, references to torture and the death sentence, performed ad infinitum on witches in a medieval form of spectacle, do not concern the women actually accused, but their bodies or body fragments that are rendered seductive, fascinating, and repulsive at once. Passages are quoted from the *Malleus* "not for their centrality to witch-beliefs, but for their striking qualities, hence the more or less constant reiteration of the passage about the stolen phalloi, a belief rarely recorded elsewhere but striking as an illustration of rabid misogyny" (Purkiss 11). From the fantasy thus emerges a new feminist ideology of female suffrage. And although radical feminist historians are not deluded into thinking that the *Malleus* is central (although they do write as if it is), their criteria are those of the storyteller, in search of the most striking illustration or anecdote.

Furthermore, radical feminists seem to agree with the Foucauldian understanding of torture as forming part of a ritual. The radical symbolism of the inadvertently sexualized female body is extended and designed to illustrate the spectacular martyrdom of the raped pagan goddess. The same symbolism turns the persecutor into a hysteric who applies repetitive procedures of detecting warts and moles on the stripped female body, or verifies its ability to float when it is tied up and thrown into the water. As Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), "from the point of view of the law that imposes it, public torture and execution must be spectacular, it must be seen by all almost as its triumph" (34). Particularly valid, in the radical feminist context, is the observation that "torture does not reconcile (even if its function is to 'purge' the crime)," it rather "traces around...the very body of the condemned" woman, leaving on the reader/spectator visible, and recognizable scars of fear, which "must not be effaced" (34). Ironical as it seems, Daly's and Dworkin's narratives express a similar desire for ongoing torture, even after death, in elaborate descriptions of the burnt corpses, or bodies dragged on hurdles and exhibited at the roadside. If medieval justice had pursued human body beyond all possible endurance, the radical feminist narratives seem to be absorbed with the same abject ceremonial element: with a sanctification of the victimized body that torture invokes. This element, called by Foucault "the liturgy of punishment," marks the victim "either by the scar it leaves on the body, or by the spectacle that accompanies it, to brand the victim with infamy" (*Discipline and Punish* 34). Because of their focus on torture and execution, Daly's and Dworkin's narratives are both problematic and rhetorically significant: "Since we all have a body, and since we all fear pain and death, torture and execution
create an illusion of common identity with a witch-suspect which might be shattered if Daly were to enlarge upon her life or quote her words" (Purkiss 14).

Certainly, in the light of such observations, the myth of the "Burning Times" has lost its political usefulness, but it is important to remember that it was logically unavoidable at one stage in the feminist past. This is particularly true in the context of the eventually rejected victimization of the female body as a site of torture evoked famously by Wittig in Les Guérillères (1969) or Gearhart in Wanderground (1978). Their radical ecofeminist and lesbian manifestos about witch-Amazons, the rebel-warriors riding bare-breasted under a brilliant helm of crescent horns, appear at the point in history when "there was one rape too many" and the self-conscious earth "finally said 'no': There was no storm, no earthquake, no tidal wave or vulcanic eruption, no specific moment to mark its happening" but the refusal was radical and 'apparent,' and 'it happened everywhere'" (Gearhart 171). Although the identifications with the Amazon as a figure of female autonomy and creativity was both too fundamental and too narrow for a critical movement (Showalter 225), in fact, it were these and similar types of acute and legitimate refusal to cooperate with phallocentrism that enabled a turning point in feminist theory. Today, not unlike the Malleus itself, the radical narratives appear as abandoned, archetypal monuments, significant because of the reenacted silence of the victimized female bodies.

In a similarly monumental mode of building on the classic sex/gender distinction, Monique Wittig turns into a radical critique of heterosexism and emphasizes the need to free female sexuality from its subjection to the phallogocentric signifier of a/the "woman." In both restating Hegelian dialectics and radicalizing de Beauvoir's constructed nature of femininity, she proposes that we dismiss the signifier "woman" as epistemologically and politically inadequate. Thus, in a "queer" parallel to Daly's proposal of a "hag" approach, Wittig replaces the signifier "woman" with the category of "lesbian." The "lesbian," who is not a woman, has subtracted herself from the Phallus identity, a position being both attractive and problematically universalizing woman into a new model of normativity (see Braidotti). This radicalism leaves no room for more fluid and dynamic definitions of lesbianism that would reflect on the transformative force of the alternative proposed, and through this, empower different groups of women, such as Rich's concept of the lesbian "continuum" (Blood, Bread and Poetry 52) or Irigaray's notion of a female homosexual "libidinal economy" ("Women's Exile" 62-67). Moreover, Wittig's position excludes a priori the possibility of optional hetero- or bisexuality. In a parallel to Daly's heterosexual "female robots," these options are seen as coextensive with domination, and consequently result in a "voluntary servitude"; a position reminiscent of the most extreme antisexuality wing of US-American feminism (Braidotti, Metamorphoses 35).

Certainly, in their quest to locate new empowering paradigms for women, radical theoreticians have taken stereotype and archetype as synonymous and therefore ignored the "projective" and "futuristic" capacities of the archetype (Pratt 135). The rhetorical danger of this approach lies however in the evocative, metaphorical
power of the archetype itself, resulting, in this case, in perpetuation of phallogocentric desire and victimization of "woman" who has to take rescue in new signifiers. Pratt herself offers vivid examples of herstorical tendencies to elaborate on "insanity and womanhating for which there can be no reparation," on the "female martyrdom in death" which "took the forms of burning at the stake, strangulation, crushing with stones, whipping, hanging, drowning, and unspeakable and vile tortures" (175). Without doubt, her archetypes have not become more fluid or dynamic, and remained equally excluding. This indomitable persistence in articulating fear of rape and women's victimization "helps to explain the very dangerous preoccupation with torture and execution in radical feminist narratives of witchcraft," which has turned the historical figure of the witch "into a spectacle of violation and dismemberment" (Purkiss 15). Often difficult to control, fears evoked by radical feminist texts have universalizing tendencies that, not unlike the fear of death itself, are irreversible and impossible to cure. In the fear of rape, as Angela Carter notes in The Sadeian Woman (1979), there is "more than merely physical terror of hurt and humiliation—a fear of psychic disintegration, of an essential dismemberment, a fear of a loss or disruption of the self which is not confined to the victim alone" (6). The herstorical fantasies, strategically called feminist, are therefore both escapist and political, taking a withdrawal into the fantasmatic as a "spontaneous" tool for cultural transformation. In positing the "witch" as a powerful "other" of the victimized woman, these radical fantasies impose otherness as a political strategy, based on the identity principle that is crucial to early radical feminist work. I now proceed to expand the quality of this fantasmatic while drawing on the poststructural French feminist stances, such as those of Cixous and Clément, Irigaray and Kristeva, whose distinct proposals take a new position on women's sexuality.

The Orgasmic Freedom of the Newly Born Woman

In French herstorical deconstructions of "masculine" sameness, "femininity" becomes a state of permanent conceptual reconfiguration (a permanent lack of authority), since, as Felman has put it, the "possibility of a thought which would neither spring from nor return to this masculine sameness is simply unthinkable" (8-9). At the same time, paradoxically, herstory attempts to challenge the unthinkable, and this is perhaps the most (politically) hysterical part of it, since the challenge comes very close to trying to normalize the unthinkable: "More present than ever," the feminist witch becomes (or transgresses into) the newly born woman, "the ancient/innocent/fluent/powerful/impossible woman," as Cixous and Clément have described her. And everything about her is "intense, indeed hyperbolic" (x). They write:

To dance: at the heart of The Newly Born Woman is the story of a southern Italian ritual, the tarantella. Early in the book, as she discusses the rebellious celebrations with which repressed (female) subjects have responded to their subjugation by patriarchal hierarchies, Clément tells a tale of women in the Mezzogiorno who can be cured of imaginary spider bites only by doing a ceremonial dance, which sometimes lasts for twenty-four hours. A village orchestra plays; a woman/patient dances—dances in a ferocious "festival of metamorphosis"...which subversively...expresses her passionate
rage...At the end of the episode, she transcends the divine bite and "leave[s] risk behind...to settle down again under a roof, in a house, in the family circle of kinship and marriage...the men's world"...But she has had her interlude of orgasmic freedom. (xii)

It is in her "orgasmic freedom" that Cixous's witch personifies the assimilated abjection of the witch's body, her ambiguity of form, and her reenactment of the absence of patriarchal culture that cannot be conceptualized in the historical language of the symbolic. As a linguistically abstracted, imaginary position assigned to the witch, Cixous's and Clément's cultural absence defies symbolic "cultural castration" by a strategic reenacting of inconsistency, transgression, and trance.

Embedded in these hyperbolic allusions, the conceptual categories of the virgin, mother, wife, whore, or postmenopausal crone constantly overlap, disturbing a range of "taboos regarding the appropriate limits, postures, and models of exchange that define what it is that constitutes bodies" (Butler, Gender Trouble 131). It is within these overlapping categories that un/belonging appears as a parody and pollution within the system. As Douglas observed, the main function of purifying, demarcating, or punishing transgressions is "to impose system on an inherently untidy experience...It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created" (4). According to Butler, Douglas's analysis, although clearly subscribing to a "structuralist distinction between inherently unruly nature and an order imposed by cultural means," provides "a possible point of departure for understanding the relationship by which social taboos institute and maintain the boundaries of the body as such" (Gender Trouble 131). Within their specific theoretical frameworks, Cixous, Irigaray, and certainly Butler (following Douglas), seem thus to suggest that what constitutes the limit of the body is not only biological material, but that the "surface," the "skin," is systematically signified by taboos and anticipated transgressions. The contingency of these transgressions translates the boundaries of the body into the limits of the socially sanctioned, the hegemonic, the phallocentric. The term "phallocentric" refers in this context to a (post)-Lacanian concept that claims to distinguish the "phallus" from the "penis" and therefore represents divergent sexual positions, yet remains unable to erase the immediacy of this association, and fails to represent an abstract (gender-neutral) cultural condition. Gallop, for example, questions the Lacanian project of abstracting the phallus (le/la phallus) from its association with the male organ: "By denying the 'phallus' as a fantasy, Lacan denies it as an object, and even as an organ (penis or clitoris, which it symbolized) and renders it dangerously abstract and detached from a cultural context: Is the phallic signifier intrinsically neutral, transgressing the linguistic rules of gender? The Lacanian subject is castrated, that is to say, deprived of the phallus, and therefore can never satisfy desire...Most of Lacan's explanations of the phallus's privilege are 'vague,' that is to say, veiled" (Daughter's Seduction 134-54). "Being" the Phallus and "having" the Phallus denote, on Butler's suggestion, "divergent sexual positions, or nonpositions (impossible positions, really), within language" (Gender Trouble 44). Caught in the mode of Hegelian dialectics, to "be" the Phallus is to be (and appear) as the "signi-
fier" of the privileged desire. To be desired, on the other hand, is to reflect that desire, to be the object, the Other of a "masculine" desire.

Following precisely this line of reasoning, Cixous and Clément's analysis of the hysteric figure leads us back to the Greek *hyster* (womb), to the witch-woman as a creature with a "wandering womb" that manifests a "distinctively female bonding" (*Newly Born* xiii). This radical alterity of the newly born woman is thus anchored in the "forgotten" history of a/the woman: her "inescapable female connection between creation and procreation," (xiii) the destiny, inexorably determined by anatomy. In this sense, Cixous and Clément pursue the radical feminist path but reverse the argument of the second (marked) sex in focusing precisely on the eluded representation of a/the woman, on her symbolically suppressed female transgressions: desires, fears, and rage. These transgressions integrate the new (radically reinvented) qualities of the witch as a metonymic extension of the female limits in the symbolic, an extension that should in fact eradicate these limits. Consequently, Cixous and Clément both associate with and disassociate themselves from the conflictual and self-perpetuating desire to celebrate an exclusively female (*herstorical*) type of suffering. The momentary disintegrity of the dancing, carnivalesque body, as posited by Cixous, revives the experience of inquisitorial interrogation, and links this experience with the possession of the/a woman who "by her opening up is open to being 'possessed,' which is to say, disposed of herself" ("Book" 42). But the witches' sabbath is also evoked as a recurring spectacle of trans-, a trance, and a trace associated with permanence through strategic repetition of dislocating experience. To follow Cixous, "those" who did not experience the "festival of metamorphosis" can neither articulate nor negotiate it. But "she" (the female pronoun, the one designated She, the orgasmic witch-woman), who has participated in this experience has to return in order to speak of it, and so she no longer speaks from, but only about the/a position of otherness. The "she," once placed in the symbolic structure, can no longer speak from the place of the Other since this place resists symbolic articulation. Cixous's otherness of the "witch," deriving precisely from the negotiating status between speaking and speechless (impossible to be articulated) positions, refuses to complement the Law of the Father. In this refusal Cixous's position distinguishes itself most prominently from the radical U.S. formulations of female sexuality. Her witch figure, embodying in fact this refusal of otherness, carries a transgressing value that has already been symbolically castrated, but cannot (yet) be culturally mapped. The concept of "place" (*lieu*), clearly elevated in this cartography over more mathematical *locus* (*lieu géométrique*), does not convey any precise cultural localization. In particular reference to Kristeva psychoanalysis (of which more in my second chapter), *lieu* remains "a hypothetical place, even though constrained by actual forces or presences" (Kristeva, *Desire* 17). In "speaking" thus "hypothetically," the "witch... laughs at the solemnities of sacrifice that constitute culture" (Cixous and Clément xiii), and refuses the historical construction of the abject hag as a zone of exclusion from the symbolic. The phallocentric construct of the hag represents therefore, as with Daly, a salient challenge to *herstory*, which sets another equally imaginary zone
functions and risks of radical feminist "witches"

against it, the zone of fantasy of the positive other.

The philosophy of the positive other has been most effectively explored in Irigaray's proposal of the "fantasmatic" woman who "will not yet have taken (a) place" ("Volume" 53). The "not yet" points to a "hysterical fantasmatic" that acknowledges its own historical condition: "experienced as all-powerful where 'she' is most radically powerless in her indifferentiation" (53). Distinct from Cixous's, especially in its pertinence to the question of anatomy, Irigaray's feminine sex, which is a "plenum," has a similarly radical point of departure. It is placed in a linguistic absence, which, as Butler would argue, "is not marked as such within the masculine signifying economy" but "eludes the very requirements of representation, for she is neither 'Other' nor the 'lack'" (Gender Trouble 10). Irigaray's alterity pertains above all to the question of identity as assumed in the symbolic language, but strategically coincides with, and in her later work, exceeds, the radical feminist claims that the only possible subject position is that of a phallocentric order. For the sake of my present analytical focus, I therefore employ the term of "herstorical fantasmatic" (deriving it from Irigaray's hysterical fantasmatic), emphasizing the theoretically shifting ground of "sexual difference." Whether written in opposition to Lacanian phallogocentrism (Irigaray) or as a critical reclamation of Lacan (Kristeva), this appropriation attempts necessarily to transgress the "feminine" while employing contradictory positions. First, it attempts to view the "feminine" "as the unrepresentable absence effected by (masculine) denial that grounds the signifying economy through exclusion" (Gender Trouble 28). Second, it subverts its own exclusion in its radical claim of the positive difference (see Braidotti) that will prove necessary to overcome the split between the incompatible sensibilities of the maternal and the paternal versions of desire. Although Irigaray's philosophical texts, like Cixous's, "are dazzling, allusive, deliberately polysemic, difficult to unravel, and for the most part still untranslated" (Whitford 9), they are significant for reminding us that it was Freud, and not Lacan, "who brought to light something that had been operative all along though it remained implicit, hidden, unknown: the sexual indifference that underlies the truth of any science, the logic of every discourse. This is readily apparent in the way Freud defines female sexuality. In fact, this sexuality is never defined with respect to any sex but the masculine....The feminine is always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy, as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value" (Irigaray, "Power" 119).

The herstorical fantasmatic draws our attention to the inconsistency of the herstorical locations that meet at the crossroads of the "transatlantic divide" (Braidotti, Metamorphoses 29). Standing at this crossroads, the witch as a "fantasmatic other" emerges thus as a project for the feminist future. In its futurist form, she/he will no longer embody any antithetical or previously missing addendum to subjects of feminist research. Instead, formulated as running counter to the subjects of Hegelian dialectics, the "witch" will represent "cross-thinking, counter-questioning, counter-seeing, contradiction, protest" (Thürmer-Rohr 164). And as long as s/he does not reduce herself to the universal essence of female specificity, she will uncov-
er the phallacy of standardized systems, understandings, and contradictions of the androcentric worldview (see Braidotti). Notwithstanding this metamorphic vision, I now return to the "herstorical" meeting at the crossroads of theory. This meeting, as a conflation of distinct feminist standpoints, builds a theoretical core of my analysis that attempts to bring or even piece together the inconsistence of the "herstorical" witch. Of all the metamorphoses of her "alterity," I choose one that clearly prevails and therefore interconnects the various theories of difference: the alterity as a range of metaphors of flying. I go through some of the images briefly now and return to this alterity in my readings of the narratives to follow. According to Dworkin, witches most certainly could and often flew on broomsticks: "Before going to the sabbat, they anointed their bodies with a mixture of belladonna and aconite, which caused delirium, hallucination, and gave the sensation of flying" (148). The transformed broomstick, "an almost archetypal symbol of womanhood, as the pitchfork was of manhood" (148), serves here as an excellent example of Cixous's "orgasmic freedom," the "herstorical" trance beyond the symbolic, in which the flying broomstick also denotes escape from housework, domestic ties, and oppressive confinement to the sphere of home. In flying on her broomstick, the radical witch of the seventies personifies an alarming "indifference to the boundaries between memory and invention, fact and fancy, truth and fiction" (Purkiss 53). These fantasies do not address the phenomenon of flying itself, but undoubtedly its metaphorical potential. As Cixous explains, "Flying is woman's gesture—flying in language and making it fly. We have all learned the art of flying and its numerous techniques; for centuries we've been able to possess anything only by flying; we've lived in flight, stealing away, finding when desired, narrow passageways, hidden crossovers. It's no accident that voler has a double meaning, that it plays on each of them and thus throws off the agents of sense. It's no accident: women take after birds and robbers just as robbers take after women and birds" ("Laugh" 356-57). In turn, for Irigaray, the emancipation of the female body is inseparable from a female self-knowledge (self-touching and opening up physical and metaphysical borders), and related to her plural and "perversion" images of anatomy: her self-touching is that of the/a woman, who is both unable and unwilling to close up, a form that is in(de)finately transformed ("Volume" 59). Embodying reinscriptions of the archaic mother, the self-touching witch "lives with her body in the past," referred to by Cixous as the past of "forgotten roles: the ambiguous, the subversive and the conservative" (Cixous and Clément 12). She is subversive, "because the symptoms—the attacks—revolt and shake up the public," (the phallic gaze of the inquisitor) and conservative, "because every sorceress ends up being destroyed, and nothing is registered of her but mythical traces." Finally, her ambiguity is "expressed in an escape that marks the histories of sorceress and hysteric with the suspense of ellipses" (5). The flying as an embodiment of her herstorical Sabbath is thus a rite of the past, an apotheosis of the emancipated body and it is also a repressed desire for the imaginary space prior to gender, the forbidden maternal zone, and a fantasy of fragmentation as well as of union. During her performance, the witch-woman "is open to being 'possessed,' which is to say, dispossessed
of herself" (42). Perhaps it is a question of a particular phase which, later, one could call "transitivity," some sort of phase of excessive identification with the other being: always on both sides, double. In the end the Sabbath, like a hysterical attack, "provides a return to regular rhythm" (19), reiterating as well as subverting the standard form, the cultural pattern. This Bakhtinian carnivalesque structure is composed of distances, analogies and nonexclusive oppositions that need to remain essentially dialogical (Kristeva, "Stabat Mater" 48). Out of a dialogue then, established between her possession and her dispossession, the "dyads of carnival" appear: "high and low, birth and agony, food and excrement, praise and curses, laughter and tears" (48).

In a similarly dialogical suspension between fantasy and memory, between autobiography, theory, and fiction, feminist narratives employ "fantastic qualities of imagination" that "go far beyond what theoretical discourse, hostile towards images as it is, can transmit" (Bovenschen 232). In a similar vein to Purkiss's argument, Bovenschen notes that elevating the historical witch post festum to an archetypal image of female freedom "would be cynical, considering the magnitude of her unimaginable suffering" (232). But there is more than a carnivalesque optimism to this dialogical structure of trespassing. It is rather the witch's hysterical placement on the border between suffering and freedom that evokes the desire to perform, to take part in the enactment of deliverance, the emancipation of body, form, and structure. This borderline position does not simply add to the answers of existing research but fills the historical gaps and omissions in the answers with herstory, which in itself might no longer be relevant, but needs to be acknowledged as a necessary and extremely empowering stage of development in feminist research. This borderline location remains central to the contemporary feminist politics of resistance. In the end, the fantasmatic witches, in particular as sustained in the metaphor of flying, represent a much cleaner break with standardized academic reasoning "than anything feminist historians have produced or have wished to produce" (Purkiss 53). The phenomenon of herstory demonstrates perhaps "what feminist history might be like if it really abandoned empiricism altogether instead of simply calling it into question—from time to time" (53). Beyond doubt, the herstorical assumption that patriarchy has operated in similar ways across national borders neglects historical and material differences in women's situations and political struggles. Beyond doubt, it allowed many of Western feminists to avoid confronting painful differences among women in their own cultures, while obscuring the dominance of middle-class women around the globe (on this, see Kaplan and Grewal). Undeniably, however, the herstorical stream of phantasms enabled to the next generation new formulations of protest and rebellion against the cultural imprisonment in gender. They have provided the necessary, albeit contentious, points of departure for criticism currently exercised by Braidotti, Butler, or Haraway, namely, the criticism of the prevailing representation of "the metaphysics of substance" (Butler, Gender Trouble 24) that shakes the constitution of the very notion of subject.
When the Symbolic Order Collapses

To open a discussion of the "symbolic" collapse, I start with Kristeva's observation that "a woman has nothing to laugh about when the symbolic order collapses. She can take pleasure in it, if by identifying with the mother, the vaginal body, she imagines she is the sublime, repressed forces which return through the fissures of the order. But she can just as easily die from this upheaval...if she has been deprived of a successful maternal identification and has found in the symbolic paternal order her one superficial, belated and easily severed link with life" ("Stabat" 150). The relevance of Kristeva's thought becomes clear in reference to the identification with the mother/nature as a persistently reoccurring theme in radical feminist fiction. As I argue, Gearhart's *The Wanderground* and Walker's *The Temple of My Familiar* contribute equally to the Kristevian "taking pleasure" in the collapse of the symbolic. Although deriving from different cultural backgrounds (Anglo-German and African American, respectively), both stories represent the herstorical fantasmatic that is similarly inspired by "rediscoveries" of the repressed, "forgotten" origin, with leading metaphors of the sovereign queen/witch and the healing mother/earth. In blending the myth with history, and fantasy with 1980s ecofeminist standpoints, they speak in the name of the "feminine alterity" as contained in and conflated with nature. Reflecting on Ynestra King's and Rosemary Ruether's ecofeminist postulates, nature represents a somewhat utopian flux of everything that is organic, symbiotic, and untouched by human technology. This herstorical archeology of writing has several characteristic features: it is synthesizing (working against analysis), speaking the body/nature rather than self-consciously writing literature, and finally articulating rather than evaluating desire. The witch, as she appears in these narratives, belongs to the newly valorized sphere of the feminine: she speaks about herself, about her presence, and about her origin. Her voice, persuasive, seductive, and above all charismatic, resonates with the voice of a fortune teller whose predictions turn into an intrinsic model of her narrative, a metaphoric/metonymic picture of her own therapeutic methodology.

Both the post/memories of origin and the prophesies of return involved in this herstorical archeology translate the "universal" female oppression into an equally universalizing fantasy of the symbolic collapse. This fantasy restores the appealing/appalling powers of the archaic womb, celebrating women's difference or their "natural" uniqueness that is at odds with culture. It draws in fact on the troublesome division of sexuality into heterosexual and lesbian issues that in the 1970s produced a fundamental rift between US-American feminists and shattered the potential unity of feminist claims to "forgotten origin." In particular, the mythic versions of a/the lesbian culture have been read today both as political identifications and as forms of therapeutic consolation. In Butler's commentary, they appear as "a strategic tactic within a narrative that, by telling a single, authoritative account about an irrecoverable past, makes the constitution of the law appear as a historical inevitability" (*Gender Trouble* 36). Indeed, imagining a postpatriarchal future, Gearhart offers an ecofeminist construction of Womanpower, which intentionally deploys the binary
of witchcraft (feminine nature) as opposed to reason (masculine technology). *The Wanderground*, a radical separatist lesbian manifesto, addresses specifically female incompatibility with masculinist society and technology. Gearhart's Hill Women live in a somewhat near future: one could imagine an apocalyptic year of the twilight zone, the end of the twentieth century; the end of history of capitalism. Clearly, what is at stake in the 1970s, when Gearhart's, and many similar narrative manifestos were written, was "not so much literature or criticism as such, but the historical, social, and ethical consequences of women's participation in, or exclusion from, either enterprise" (Kolodny 171). Invented as a counterstatement to this exclusion, Gearhart's characters represent harmoniously synchronized, telepathic witches, integrated within the organic world, and further contrasted with an apocalyptic, collapsing (male) civilization. This conditioning reminds us both of Wittig's and Irigaray's challenges to the symbolic order, in which women inevitably stand in an archaic and primal relationship with themselves and, therefore with homosexuality, since the first object of their love and desire is a woman (Irigaray, "Volume" 44). Gearhart's Women act in plural, act now, and finally act for themselves, developing magical relationships with nature, reproducing by ovular merging, learning to fly and to live by noncompetitive values and sensibilities unique to female homosexual economy. They are activists of the future (which follows "the collapse of the symbolic"), continuing in fact Gearhart's biography, and projecting her own ecopolitical agenda.

Indisputably, the "Wanderground" (the witches' geographical but also hypothetical location), builds on the "Gaia hypothesis" proposed by such scientists as Margulis, Lovelock, Sahtouris, and further developed in Ruether's work on "the intelligence that guides evolution" and that is not outside nature, but embodied in it as the "wisdom" of the earth (118). However, in Gearhart's story, gender division becomes a prerequisite for the Gaian condition of "evolving," as "masculine values" remain excluded from this "co-evolution": "Love man? The idea did not fit. It was uncomfortable and backward in her mind. She tried it from every angle but it would not adjust" (2). Rather, in a dialectical suspension, Gearhart's proposal resonates with de Beauvoir's and Irigaray's notion of "natural homosexuality." Her lesbian witches demonstrate a "natural" refusal of the male. Their "linking for feminine flesh" is "instinctive," resulting from fear of penetration and "certain repulsion for the male body" (de Beauvoir 428). The dystopian atmosphere of the male-dominated City, reminding us perhaps of the sociopolitical conditions endured by women under Islamic fanaticism, the compulsory marriages, polygamy, male escorts, sexual harassment, and institutionalized prostitution from which Gearhart's women have escaped, still haunts the memories of the Hill Women. These postmemories, stored telepathically, serve as historical awareness for the youngest generation, born parthenogenetically in the "Wanderground." Following Wittig's postulates of lesbian departure from the constitution of womanhood, Gearhart draws on a female biological predisposition, a natural difference, affirming the possibility of collective solidarity, and enabling lesbians to effectively rebel against the politics of heterosexuality. Echoing thus Wittig's radicalism in *Les Guérillères*, Gearhart's narrative offers no
alternative unless a mutual understanding and acceptance of lesbian autonomy is granted. However, if Wittig has strategically differentiated between women's and lesbians' political agendas, Gearhart offers the most radical split between biological sexes that resists Levinasian elevation of the feminine, the most radical elimination of the negative other, the alterity of the second sex as accomplished in the feminine. In order to preserve its sovereignty, the lesbian, as the "other of the Other," alludes to the semiotic pleasures, and is not bothered to know by whom or what it has been named. It neither reads books nor produces culture; it refuses to recognize a linear advancement (progress) as transforming the natural into the artificial.

Owing to this fanatical refusal to cooperate with the signifiers of culture, Gearhart's matriarchal fantasy remains suspended between two poles of desire: the lesbian alterity and its incompatibility with phallocentric culture. As Seja, one of the warriors in the story, explains, "it is not in his nature not to rape. It is not in my nature to be raped. We do not co-exist" (26). In this particular sovereign deadlock between contrary forces, Gearhart's account resonates with Walker's African American perspective on matriarchal fantasy of tribal women healers untouched by the symbolic order. Like Gearhart's, Walker's matriarchy celebrates the hypothesis of the mother goddess and radically expands the Western concept of women's participation in the so-called historical time. As analyzed by Carol P. Christ, historical time is usually discussed within the framework of the Babylonian creation epic: "the Enûma Elish, which depicts the slaying of the primordial Mother Tiamat, and the Epic of Gilgamesh, in which the hero curses the Goddess Ishtar and refuses her gifts, may be mentioned as providing evidence about the origins of religion in the Near East" (76). Frequently, these religious sources, attesting to historical denigration of female authority, are presented primarily as backdrop to the "distinctive and superior" contributions of Greek philosophy, Hebrew religion, and subsequently of Christianity. To follow Christ, the naming and chronology attributed to "time" "is not a trivial matter, as Christian rulers recognized when they took control of the calendar" (77). Both Walker's and Gearhart's reinventions of matriarchy draw tangibly on this recognition in their proposals of the positive and powerful alterity that expands the symbolic chronology of the paternal order. In Gearhart's particularly utopian projection of matriarchy, the future of women's time takes place in fact instead of in history. Perceived in this matriarchal dimension, the cult of the Earth has a symbolic, even religious quality that connects with the denigration of the mother in the Babylonian epic and subsequently with the patriarchal fear of the archaic mother. This link becomes most evident in the imbedded story of eleven warriors emerging from the forest to fight against demoralized militant males. In supplying her female warriors with all the unfeminine characteristics that phallocentric oppression attempted to avoid (woman as a maternal warrior, a self-sufficient family provider, an active political body), Gearhart attempts to transform the powerlessness of the mother in culture. The mother, conflated with earth/planet, opposes militant technology associated by Gearhart with numerous evils such as rape, pornography, imperialism, starvation, homelessness, and the poisoning of the environment (126).
Characteristically for U.S. radical feminist positions, the narrative identifies with the culturally victimized women/nature, clearly deriving from Carolyn Merchant's ecofeminist postulates of the technological exploitation of nature understood as a "feminine principle" (99). Certainly, both the "nurturing mother" and "dominating father" metaphors have existed in Western philosophy and religion, but, to follow Merchant, "as the economy became modernized and the Scientific Revolution proceeded," the metaphor of domination "spread beyond the religious sphere and assumed ascendency in the social and political spheres as well" (100). Further, the depiction of culturally unpredictable nature echoes King's influential essay on feminist ecology discussing "life on earth" as "an interconnected web" of dependencies in which the earth is "like a lover" who has suffered, "yet with great intelligence, has survived" (19). It is precisely in this metaphorical employment that Gearhart effectively links the feminine with mystical maternal powers acting as vital elements in women's favor. In this herstorical vein, Gearhart's witch turns from a carnivalesque figure into a figure of ritual. The Hill Women live and survive thanks to a complex ceremonial sharing: they sleep, eat, work, and love in constant communication with nature. Their awareness is no longer that of a self, it has a plural, ritualistic and, to large extent, sacred character, converging with ecofeminist aims to reveal the complexity of interconnectedness. In her allegorical reinscription of the culturally abject menstrual blood into a sacred ritual, Gearhart introduces a monstrous generative womb, "crowded with women, sitting on the upward spiralling path, naked and gleaming bodies moving rhythmically to and fro to the sound of their own humming...never ceasing steady vocal rumbling" (55). This image offers a powerful envisioning of the semiotic chora, and a return to its repressed forces. Consequently, it is this maternal feminine that in Gearhart's narrative makes it into the communal, holistic, and intuitive and that offers a viable choice for survival. In contrast, the masculine powers are projected as fundamentally evil, allowing no cooperation, perhaps with the exception of "gentle" homosexual men who have initiated contact to the witches in order to learn from them but have so far been rejected. This separatist position is particularly relevant to the context of radical feminist rethinking of the feminine in relation to the unquestioned character of cultural normativity and its deep suspicion of even most progressive theory that might emerge from there. In fact, 1970s attentiveness to power relations, with its acutely gendered character, demonstrates what feminist theorizing needs to take into account today in formulating the cultural, social, and economic conditions for divergent "embodied" subjects and their fair participation in the cultural landscape. In the end, however, Gearhart's herstory operates with mythically static, disabling rather than empowering versions of women. In its remedial blend of female biology and spirituality, it problematically persists at preserving women's alterity. As a conceptual deconstruction of the symbolic, the very "feminine" cannot be limited to an inherent "femaleness" that "gives women emotional satisfaction...at the price of obscuring the real conditions of life" (Carter, Sadeian Woman 5). Either way, Gearhart seems to reject Beauvoir's assertion that one "isn't born a woman, but becomes one" (see The Second Sex) and that
it "is in the patriarchal interest that these two terms (femininity and femaleness) stay thoroughly confused" (qtd. in Moi, *Kristeva Reader* 123). Her ecofeminist search for a natural female origin works against feminist theories of no return by defeating their premise that biology is not destiny after all. Whether "feminine sexuality is articulated here through a discourse of biology for purely strategic reasons," or whether it indicates a return "to biological essentialism," to formulate "female sexuality as radically distinct from a phallic organization of sexuality remains problematic" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 30). The witches, and Gearhart herself as a radical feminist, are to some extent aware that their identity politics is too simplistic, but their mistrust and wariness are stronger than reason, especially since reasoning, entangled in a paternal tradition, is based on technology, the logical development of thought, and its empirical dichotomies. In imposing culturally enhanced oppositions, Gearhart's witches ignore the actual, acute differences between women and the distinct ways through which their cultural positions are manifested, repeating precisely what Daly's and Dworkin's texts have accomplished: the radicalization of the "feminine alterity."

Drawing on the commonality of women's culture propagated by such feminist traits, Showalter and many other race- and class-sensitive critics in the1980s have reexamined the essentialism of the female subject. The *herstorical fantasmatic* has thus been "open to charges of racism, especially since black women's texts were rarely cited as examples" (225). In articulating this feminist dilemma, Showalter has contrasted a color-blind or an "uncolored" woman theoretician as already "in exile" (because "she speaks a paternal language") with a nonwhite female theoretician as "in double exile," "for she speaks a white paternal language" (214-15). In this sense, balancing the heterogeneity of women's exile, Gearhart's and Walker's fantasmatic returns to nature are perhaps good examples of the second-wave political conflation of difference and similarity among women. Developed in Walker's narrative into a specific "Afra"-American fantasy, this exile demonstrates its own linguistic consciousness, distinct from the "white" feminist field. "Afra"-American criticism, unfolding in 1974 with the publication of *Black World*, essays by June Jordan and Mary Helen Washington, and Alice Walker's critical work (see Smith; Humm), is preoccupied with the relationship between Black feminism and poststructuralism, as well as with the position of African myths in the Western cultural order. Both issues refer to essentialism and difference, demonstrating an attempt to open the Eurocentric discipline of literary criticism towards other races and cultures. Myths are thus interpreted in terms of textual opportunities for the actual voice of the differentiated. Walker proposes a mixture of conscious and subconscious uses of language, interweaving her autobiography with mythic history that moves decisively beyond Western tradition. Referring to herself as a "womanist" rather than a "feminist," Walker provokes the emergence of a much wider spectrum of Black womanhood. "Womanist," as she writes, "is to feminist as purple to lavender" (*In Search* xxii) and she calls for a return to a mythical African spirituality that survives in Black women's culture.

In reference to Walker's manifesto, *In the Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983), Showalter posits Walker as a storyteller and a philosopher, describing her
position as a mediator between contemporary culture and the suppressed creativity of black women under slavery, poverty, and the denigration of African art. Charting and analyzing culturally distinct mythical pasts in *The Temple of My Familiar*, Walker simply invents her own, as it were, maternal mythology. Also, rather than envisioning the future, she returns to the prepatriarchy, a process that in her writings often conflates with spirituality. Consequently, the responsibility for the revision of the past is attributed to women artists, weavers, and musicians, rather than to academic thinkers. Walker describes spirituality as a move "away from sociology, away from the writing of explanations and statistics and further into mystery, into poetry and into prophecy" (*Temple* 8). Her female characters, depicted as spiritually richer and more powerful than their male counterparts, are not the victim-figures repeatedly found in white feminist criticism of the same period. Pratt, for example, who criticized her radical sisters (Daly and others) for remaining in a dialectic deadlock of binary poles, seems "always to find that women in fiction are cut off from autonomy, from self-actualization and ethical capacity. In her view, women are victim figures either succumbing to madness or marriage or frequently to both" (Humm 69-70). On the contrary, Walker's polyphonic stories, proverbs, and gospel recreate entrances to the pre-ancient pasts, a gesture, as Walker frequently reminds us, that leads away from analysis, criticism, and accusation towards meditation upon cultural difference. Eleonora, one of the characters in *The Temple*, observes in her diary: "There is a little serpent here [she writes in 1922] that is exactly the color of coral. It lives only in certain trees and comes out of its hole, far up the tree, near dusk. It lives on the tree spiders and bugs, and is known to sing. The natives tell me that it sings. They claim they have heard it sing millions of times, and act as if this is entirely ordinary. Furthermore, they ask why I have not heard it and why it should be so strange. Everything sings, they say" (239). In a way, Walker's mythic constructions of a/the woman of color provide the post/colonial perspective to the reinterpreted past of the 1970s feminist agenda. A key role in her agenda is assigned to the "forgotten" crone figure, the third figure in the matriarchal triad. Her crone, Miss Lissie, moves consciously from one life into the next, maintaining the narrative pattern of her story retelling the cosmologies of various religions and people. Her story unfolds like the intrigue of gossip: she is the mythmaker, the fortune-teller and the archaic mother of mankind. By transferring her messages from one era and culture to another, Walker's heroine repeatedly emphasizes her need to go beyond (Western) culture, and, apparently, to recover the "pre-ancestral heritage" as a form of women's unconscious. Her voice travels in time in order to reach and "open a very important door against memory, against pain" (*Temple* 389) often unacknowledged in academic writing. Miss Lissie is a fully mature female character and a timeless creature, ultimately representing all three aspects of the triad (virgin, mother, and crone), and bringing any one of them into play at any time. She is universal (as Daly's hag), fantasmatic (as Cixous's sorceress), subversive, and extremely knowledgeable all at once: a presymbolic virgin-whore and a wise mother who lets her children go at the right moment, an act that if precipitous or delayed can lead the maternal element to become destruc-
tive. In other words, she is a superwoman, and even more so, as she is sensitive to
difference as well as sameness between human and nonhuman embodiments of the
underrepresented subject positions.

Lissie, like Gearhart's Atheca, one of the highly skilled witches in *The Wanderground*, presents thus a visionary projection of the past, when women were ap-
parently united with nature. This affirmative projection of the bond between women
and nature could be directly contrasted with de Beauvoir's twentieth-century woman
who abandons her "disquieting plantlike mystery" (de Beauvoir 444) willingly, as
well as with Irigaray's extension of that "woman" and her masks and decorations that
cover a void of her desire, the absence of her self-love, and the "I" in discourse. Both
de Beauvoir and Irigaray refer to the "significance of woman's attire," her "decora-
tion" as a means to be offered in and to culture (de Beauvoir 444). This adornment
has a diametrically different implication in Walker's envisioning of a prehistorical
woman who is "entirely used to herself, while man [is] still infatuated with his rela-
tive newness. Woman [is] already into adornment....She [is] more like playing with
herself" (*Temple* 61). In the mirror-image of de Beauvoir's woman, she uses "feath-
ers, shells, stones, flowers," but she does it narcissistically, entirely for her own plea-
sure: "For days she and her sisters hung over the edge of the reflecting pools in the
jungle, trying this or that" (62). This blend of female/feminine specific pleasures has
a religiously utopian character; it is *the unconscious*, semiotic pleasure of coexisting
with nature. Its strategically dogmatic aspect becomes most evident when confront-
ed with the newly emerging phallocentric order (*Temple* 61-62), most effectively
used in Walker's juxtaposition between the "natural" separation of mother and child
in childbirth and its "primitive" effects in the symbolic. In one of the scenes, Walker
inscribes Lissie's childbirth with the cultural abject precisely to unfold the complex-
ity of the nature/culture flux. After delivering her baby, which she does without pro-
fessional assistance, Lissie frantically looks for a knife to cut the umbilical cord, un-
necessarily extending the bodily connection that was brought to a close. By the time
her horror-struck partner is able to find one, "Lissie had bitten through the cord with
her teeth" (127). Subsequently, Walker lends voice to Lissie's partner to describe the
abominable scene from his culturalized point of view: "'God, it's like rubber,' she
said, making a face and spitting into the rag. And I looked at Lissie sitting up now
with the naked baby next to her naked body, and I thought to myself how primitive it
was. When the afterbirth came—a lump of bloody, liverish-looking stuff that made
me feel even woozier that I was—she wrapped it in newspaper and gave it to me to
bury at the corner of the house for luck, so that we could have a houseful of babies.
When she wasn't looking though, I threw it into the fire. It wouldn't burn. It put the
fire out" (127-28). But we can approach Lissie's character from yet a different, a
more Deleuzian angle. As an embodiment of metamorphoses, Walker's crone is a liv-
ing memory; her mind has the capacity to transgress, and "just as the memory exists
at a deeper level of consciousness than thinking, so the dream world of the memory
is at a deeper level still" (*Temple* 99): "I lied when I told you I have always been a
black woman, and that I can only remember as far as a few thousand years....In ad-
dition to being a man, and white, which I was many times....I was also, at least once, myself a lion. This is one of those dream memories so frayed around the edges that it is like an old, moth-eaten shawl" (391-402). As ever changing and ever becoming narrative figure, Lissie offers a fantasmat"ic prepast as totalizing vision of the relationship between the unacknowledged fragments and the whole. This, revealed by the simultaneous deployment of world history and individualized psychic processes (Braidotti, *Metamorphoses* 185), offers a remedy against the universal exclusion of marginalized forces. And clearly in concert with Gearhart's vision, Walker posits nature on the very top of the marginalized subjects.

If Gearhart has postulated a radical separation from incompatible culture, Walker's narrative proposes an ultimate symbiosis, a feminine striving toward an androgynous ideal, that is, towards "the ultimate lack of mastery over the one" as "related to the lack of mastery over the other" (Weil 36). Bringing together the writings of Schlegel and Barthes, Kari Weil analyzes androgyny as the paradoxical body, a personal and social ideal of "completed humanity" (Schlegel's *vollendete Menschheit*) that clearly links with Walker's concept of androgyny as a "completed, united wo/manhood" (36-39). This politically utopian enterprise is certainly marked by the naïve production of powerful celebrations of womanhood at the cost of ignoring its own illusionary suspension in the "collapse of the symbolic." Completed in crossing all the boundaries of cultural discourse, both Gearhart's and Walker's narratives could be in consequence categorized as compelling fantasies with an astonishing capacity to resist criticism that effectively bring together militant proponents of matriarchy with worshippers of a fecundity goddess. In this therapeutic function, with its inherent tendency to elevate the "unattainable" future or the lost past of the subject (matriarchy, nature), the "feminine" inevitably confronts its own suspended contemporaneous subject position. In this suspension a/the woman (and many women as a consequence) have perhaps "nothing to laugh about when the symbolic order collapses." Their identifications with the loss, indeed their imaginary sublimations, remain deprived of a link to the very order they seek to reestablish. Thus, reviving Goddess worship and spirituality as sustained in the metaphor of "mother nature" is not automatically a simple step forward for feminist practice. For how far can anyone be sure that the modern religious depictions of the Goddess, especially in their association with the absence of civilization and technology, are actually not disguised borrowings of the patriarchal imaginary, perpetuating ever present phallogocentric fantasies of gender? To associate female powers with values of the semiotic remains thus inherently divisive, having an intrinsically valid therapeutic function but at the same time writing women's agenda out of the picture. The radical mythologies succeed, however, as proposals for alternative forms of female mime-sis. Miming, which for Irigaray suggests breaking from within, (deconstructing ones own subject position), implies maintaining a very difficult position of internalized oppositions, of being in-between, sentenced to a permanent compromise. Irigaray's mimesis is difficult to achieve since it borders on mimicry (a concept often used by Moi) that fakes power, that manifests possession when there is dispossession, and
that denies gender difference in order to deny gender imbalance. Considering both
the problematic and therapeutic aspects of Gearhart's and Walker's narrative disas-
sociations from the symbolic, they must be taken into account as powerful feminist
thealogies. Dancing through the minefield (Kolodny 175) of the social, cultural, and
religious, their methodologies strategize "feminine" pleasure, and constitute, so to
say, Irigaray's therapeutic location of self-touching and self-exploring. They cleverly
demonstrated the 1970s need for a different mythology from which to address the
stubborn oppositions between nature and the female/feminine on the one side, and
everything that accounts for cultural representation on the other side of the dialectic
pendulum. Their innovative techniques, although associated with a certain North
American radical current of second-wave feminism, provoked a range of parallel
standpoints across Europe. They have taught us how "to negotiate the minefield"
across the transatlantic divide, and if not yet "with grace, then with at least a clearer
comprehension of its underlying patterns" (Kolodny 175).

Women are Flying When Men are not Looking

My section title here echoes the title of Maitland's collection of short stories Women
Fly When Men Aren't Watching (1988). In order to enlarge the cultural framework
of the herstorical tradition of witches, I have selected an East German narrative
Amanda. Ein Hexenroman (Amanda: A Witch Novel; 1983), written with a far more
ironical and detached type of feminist engagement by Irmtraud Morgner. My analy-
sis of this narrative is followed by a choice of German short stories published twenty
years later in reunited Germany. Both the choice and chronology of the stories, to
follow my reading of Amanda, reveal an astonishing complicity with the phallocen-
tric thinking (denounced by Morgner), and further complicate herstory as related to
the concept of a "universal" female writing-as-desire.

Exceptionally for the socialist political climate, Morgner was granted trips to
the political West, and celebrated cautiously as a feminist. In 1974, her major work,
Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz (The Life and Adventures of Trobadora
Beatrice) was published in East Berlin, although with difficulties, due to its unac-
ceptably elaborate title as well as its strict feminist position, inappropriate irony, and
ideologically suspicious fantasies. The latter in particular challenged both the social-
istically defined feminism and patriarchal order of socialist Germany. In 1976, after
being rejected by a Western publisher, Trobadora Beatriz became an East German
bestseller and Morgner was acclaimed a major feminist of the German Democratic
Republic. Although Morgner is little known outside German-speaking countries, the
author of an extensive study of her work, Alison Lewis, claims that her experiments
with forms of the fantastic offer one of the most comprehensive examples of a femi-
nist critique of the history of patriarchal institutions to emerge out of second-wave
feminist movements (1). In East German culture, as in other countries of the socialist
regime, the very term feminism has long been in mistrust. "In contrast to the United
States," feminism in (both East and West) Germany was a term "fraught with a fear
of aggression, anarchy, misandrism. Hitherto it was almost completely unknown,
and in our first women's movement it played only a marginal role" (Moltmann-Wendel 241). With specific reference to the East German dilemma, Lewis has noted that feminist philosophy "is somewhat problematic when applied to Morgner since she herself repeatedly rejected the label in interviews." As a communist, Morgner "did not need to be a feminist since the sweeping social changes brought about by the socialist revolution automatically envisaged the abolition of all forms of exploitation, including those based on gender" (1).

My understanding of Morgner's philosophical position takes yet into account a fundamental influence of Western feminism (e.g., de Beauvoir, Irigaray, Mies, Schwarzer) on Morgner's vision of a socially transformed society, in which women would have equal rights to education, employment, and public life. Clearly sharing Irigaray's political standpoint, Morgner is not opposed to women's struggles for equal rights, but she does not believe that equality can be achieved as long as women are caught within the paradigm of the exchange (see Rubin, Butler) within a masculine sexual imaginary. This standpoint is most clearly addressed by Morgner in *Amanda*, the work selected for analysis here. *Amanda* appeared in 1983 as a continuation of the intricate story of Laura Salman who, inspired by Beatrice, initiates a cultural revolution against the universal masculine subject. Intended as a "training work to recall the forgotten Sirens' voice" (*Amanda* 657), the novel rewrites the concept of "heresy" as a means of preserving "the possible of the day after tomorrow" (246), and as an allusion to the "impossibility" of the present (unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine). Referring to the 1970s and early 1980s in East Berlin, the present embodies a blend of communist reality and herstorical fantasy, employing a heterogeneous mixture of female characters, from mythical women and witches to Greek goddesses, Sirens, and legendary medieval characters. "Reality," understood thus as a historically determined system of dominant philosophical assumptions upheld as reality, offers in Morgner's text a homogeneous, one-dimensional, and undeniably oppressive entity. In contrast with Gearhart's story, the female fantasy coexists within the phallocentric dominance, but far from unified, its plurality denotes both fragmentation and an anarchical potential. In thus supplementing socialist veracity with surrealistic motifs, Morgner focuses on the illusionary character of the communist state that remains suspended in a rigid binary opposition between the phallocentric (both realistic and mythic) world and the dispersed subversive and fantasmatic women. When Laura, the main character, is visited as a child by the daughter of Frau Holle, the witch figure emerging from German folklore, her male playmate, Gerhard, appears not to notice anything unusual and remains unaware of the conspiratory exchange taking place between the two women (Lewis 36). Thus, from the very beginning, a female homosexual economy (Irigaray) is clearly established among various women in their attempts to forge alliances with one another. The borders separating the real/historical and the fantastic/grotesque are sometimes abandoned altogether, but the fusion does not necessarily indicate that choices are available or that plurality is favored. Rather, the borderless coexisting of incompatible systems masks the conflictual power relations, political paradoxes, and gender
imbalances permeating, according to Morgner, every aspect of women's lives in East Germany. To put these power relations into postsocialist perspective, I quote Frigga Haug's observation in "The End of Socialism in Europe" (1992): the "former socialist model did not eliminate women's oppression, in fact, the situation of women was not even relevant to the dominant theory, which saw feminism as a bourgeois deviation. Nevertheless, it is above all women in movements in the former socialist countries who appear to be ready to think about an improved model of socialism" (167). Morgner herself explicitly draws on the difference between the West and East European representations of gender roles in her 1975 interview with Karin Huffzky: "But you'll find, for instance, differences in the way things are advertised in your country and ours. Advertising that flatters people by saying what they want to hear always states things very directly. Here advertising for laundry detergent shows men doing the laundry, and in store ads, there are men doing the shopping. It's not something we even notice, except in contrast to advertising in your country, where women are expected to have a guilty conscience if their laundry isn't fluffy enough" ("Making Use" 276).

And yet, parallels to Western herstorical fantasmatic are indisputable in Morgner's text. At every turn, like Walker's narrative, Morgner reinvents and refeminizes mythology. In her version of the myth of Pandora, she rejects the classical depiction of Pandora as a dashing beautiful but calamitous woman sent to earth by vengeful Gods who planned to destroy mankind's happiness. According to Hesiod's account, as summarized by Morgner, when Epimetheus, against the will of his brother, offers shelter to Pandora, she opens her box and all the evil elements in it are distributed over the earth. Only hope remains inside the hastily covered container (Amanda 99). Morgner, however, introduces a correction to the story by depicting her Pandora as a source of knowledge about "woman," that is, as an "Allgiver" (87), and as a womb that, depending on the speaker, dispenses "all the good or all the evil things" (267). Again, a parallel association with Irigaray's work can be drawn. In Speculum, Irigaray refers to the dominant fantasy of the mother, a "receptacle for the (re)production of sameness," and analyzes the phallocentric need "to represent her as a closed volume, a container": "his desire is to immobilize her, keep her under his control, in his possession, even in his house. He needs to believe that the container belongs to him. The fear is of the 'open container,' the 'incontournable volume,' that is to say, the volume without contours" (Irigaray, Speculum 53). Morgner's model, provided by Goethe's Pandora's Return (Pandoras Wiederkunft; 1808), refers to a container of the "figures of the imagination and goods with wings: images of the future" (Amanda 82). To follow Lewis's detailed analysis of this reference, Goethe's unfinished portrayal of Pandora "is significantly at variance with the Greek sources and subsequent versions of the myth. Goethe recasts his Pandora with the classical grace and beauty of her box, which was once the source of 'all the Spites that might plague mankind' but now contains 'figures of the imagination' and 'happiness in love'" (237). Whereas the figure of Pandora is introduced in Hesiod's epics to explain the necessity for humans to work for their livelihoods and the existence of
such social evils as hunger and illness, Morgner uses the same mythological figure to explain the loss of human qualities that have traditionally been associated with the feminine (237). In Morgner's narrative, it is Epimetheus who opens the box, and he does so against Pandora's will. All the attributes cultivated by women over the ages, and summarized by Morgner (love of the earth, a sense of harmony and nurturing, the ability to compromise and to make peace) fly out, and only hope remains (Amanda 83). Pandora realizes that in order to preserve her only remaining gift to humanity she must abandon the phallocentric space in which she lives; she must flee/fly, and like Cixous's sorceress, perform a herstorical act of "repossession" of the "forgotten" roles. One of these roles will be that of Zoharic Lilith (Patai 223), an ambiguous "reflex of the earth goddess" (Milgrom 227) that, in many herstorical narratives of the early 1980s, closes the metaphoric gap between historical civilizations and the myth of the archaic mother. Enveloped in such imaginary returns, Morgner's concept of hope "is entirely stripped of the negative connotations it has in Hesiod's account and becomes—instead of a synonym for delusions—the key to the salvation of the human race and to maintaining faith in [the] future" (Lewis 237).

Although phallocentric space is conceptualized in Amanda in direct opposition to what we might denote as the "feminine principle" (of 1970s ecofeminism, notably of Ruether's Gaian ecosystem discussed in the context of Gearhart's narrative), Morgner's concept of the feminine is not as straightforward as it might seem: it is neither a phallocentric construct nor a utopian projection. As Lewis suggests, Morgner contrasts Pandora (as well as other witch figures) with the heroes of the "performance principle"—Prometheus, Faust, and Don Juan. Pandora draws here on Marcuse's rescriptions of Orpheus and Narcissus, and "stands for alternative modes of social interaction and peaceful, non-aggressive forms of knowledge" (Lewis 219). The feminine principle is simultaneously "unreal," "unrealistic," and "irresponsible," forcing women like Laura to continue to be content with private responsibility, the heterosexual matrix, and patriarchal safety blankets, while delegating public responsibility to specialists (the "chosen few"; Morgner 222). In questioning the political effectiveness of such delegation, Morgner proposes her own specialists (Arke, the serpent daughter of Gaja, and Beatriz, the Siren) who stand for the culturally "monstrous" rather than the "feminine" gender, and take over the responsibility for political activism on the behalf of the paralyzed women. Beatriz, for example, as the only siren already awakened, has the difficult task of coordinating the various ecofeminist activities to bring the planet back from the edge of destruction (Lewis 239). Sirens, having the ability to warn of pending danger, have yet to learn how to divert Prometheus from his self-destructive path, so that he recognizes "his work as fragmentary," and "recall Pandora and her one remaining gift to humankind" (Morgner, Amanda 40). At present, Beatriz, whose embodiment converges clearly with the various frustrations of feminist writing, represents an alienated creature that lives on the borderline "between suffering and freedom," to borrow from Cixous and Clément (6). Soon upon her awakening, the Siren finds out that although she has claws, she has been reborn as a mute creature. This truly depressing discovery is directly
contrasted with her excellent ability to fly, the herstorical capacity per se. Moreover, her voiceless status (as explained by Arke) is nothing new, since sirens had already been silent enough during Odysseus' lifetime. "For the first time," Arke continues, "I have seen the Sirens at the navel of the world....In the old days all wise women lived their second lives in the form of Sirens. There were many Sirens then" (Morgner 15). The navel serves here as a metaphor of centrality in the sea-abyss, the "strange lands beset by powerful females"—Cirke, Calypso, the Sirens, Scylla (Brilliant 167), and of a lost connection with the archaic maternal body often associated with the ocean. Arke's own situation is even less encouraging: Her wings are scratched, her corpus missing numerous scales: "A sad sight of a scabrous face, mysteriously smiling as usual" (Amanda 35). Arke's major task is to persuade Beatriz to exercise her voice, since it will be needed, and to write in the meantime; that is, like Arachne, to weave her/story on paper.

In an increasingly bizarre development of events, Arke remains consistent in fulfilling her goal to mobilize and unite women. She does not give up, even when Beatriz, imprisoned in a zoo cage and classified as a "strix sirensis" (479), has to put up with frequent visitors admiring her as "a rare type of a bird" (435). Eventually, the Siren, kidnapped by the witches, undergoes a tongue operation, retains her speech, and will be installed as Pandora "in woman-hating cultures" against a particular type of masculine desire ("the desire for the forbidden"; 52). The job itself is a long term investment since, as Morgner explains in an interview with Huffzkzy, paternalistic habits "that have evolved over thousands of years cannot be changed in decades" (272). Thus, in concert with herstorical politics, Morgner's fantasy offers a form of estrangement, enabling women to remove their femininity from entrapment in a masculinized economy of desire. Morgner's argument that women not only live in patriarchy, but patriarchy also lives through them (Amanda 94) connects precisely with the "imaginary zone" of culture, as envisioned by Cixous and Clément, and its importance for what it excludes and what "we must try to remember today" (6).

Laura, like many other "real" women, has been split into two women-halves by Kolbuk, the "major devil" who, as we find out later, simply follows the divine example. Laura, the smaller and thicker half, remains as the "real" single working mother in the city, at a time when "the much-propagated double burden was beginning to peak: Hold down a job on the side and at the same time be the perfect housewife, good mother, smooth lover" (Schwarzer 221). The other half, the tall and slim Amanda, has been kidnapped by Kolbuk and imprisoned in the mythical underworld of East Germany's magic mountain, which in recent times (in the novel) doubles as a brothel. Amanda, who to a degree functions in the story as a Lilith figure, provides a symbolic image of the female beyond the maternal, conveying her "dark," uncontrollable, and threatening attributes in culture. Following the Near Eastern and Judeo-Christian figurations of Lilith as a female demon and "polluting other" (see Frymer-Kensky; Koltuv Black; Milgrom), Lilith's body as a grotesque construction fluctuates between femaleness and animality. It accentuates the connection between evil and femaleness as a specific reinforcement of gender difference.
Lilith's violence, unrestrained sexuality, and lack of encumbrances can be seen as early manifestations of the Western witch figure, a mouth-dominated female creature in a double understanding of the female labia, the dangerous lips of the speaking female mouth and the uncontrolled lips of the vulva, usually in the form of the vagina dentata. Her body has an indefinable status, and hence it is depicted in different, often contradictory, forms that convey her status as a variable, ambiguous container of divergences, deviations, and deferrals. Indeed, drawing on the Zoharic legend of Lilith, Morgner rewrites her with radical feminist values. However, representing the potentially rebellious part of Laura, Amanda-Lilith is paralyzed, suspended, and isolated in the zone of the imaginary, the only proper place for heretics, lesbians, and witches.

Linked with sexual promiscuity, lasciviousness, and rebellion, Amanda falls outside the symbolic and the social order, and can be further associated with Michelet's witch, who "will be arrested when she has finally become beautiful—in insolently good health, too comfortable in her own body, not sickly enough" (Clément and Kristeva 130). Morgner's strategy of reclaiming the power of female homosexuality parallels in many respects the previously discussed feminist theories, but her belief in the transformative power of this sexuality is tempered with skepticism. To "be banished to the margins means that the heretics and dissidents in fact occupy an intermediary position, a space in the interstices between East and West, between antagonistic systems" (Lewis 214). Simultaneously, it is also a severely controlled military space that remains off-limits and out-of-bounds to the average women, such as Laura. In this somewhat pessimistic closure, Morgner's belief in the reunification of women's halves is "linked to the survival of wishful thinking" (Amanda 284), because of the growing gap between feminist theory (as represented by Amanda) and feminist practice (Laura). In fact, Laura's bodily deformity and spiritual weakness result in a fear that "could be defeated by Amanda only," but it will not happen "by means of violent speeches and argumentation alone. The words mean little against the devil's prohibition" (153). Although Amanda and Laura alike want to find out what is the "mother of all things" (141), the first is a visionary full of confidence and hope, the other a skeptical single mother under the pressures of the "double burden." As in her 1975 interview, Morgner asserts that, after all, equal rights are of little use to working mothers if they continuously experience physical and emotional exhaustion. These laws do not simply guarantee the right to work; they also stir up dissatisfaction on the part of women and, in fact, encourage their political disengagement ("Making Use" 276). But there is more to the laws and "words alone," as Morgner seems to suggest in her depiction of the socialist version of the witches' Sabbath, taking place in the Berlin City Hall at night.

When Laura, disgusted and tired, attempts to leave the witches' assembly (which she previously discovered by chance), she is held back and effectively forced to stay by one of the participants. Further on, Laura witnesses "sharp sexual and political jokes, cacophonic singing, partly sung with full mouths, since the women not only drank, but ate without restraint. They ate the richest food, high in calories: Hun-
garian salami, pickled pork knuckles, whipping cream, sweets. Were they not personally responsible for their figure, or socially responsible for keeping their workers' bodies in healthy condition? And what was really amazing: were they never tired at all? Laura was dog-tired. Did this type of women make it through the nights by sleeping all day? Laura suspected there were housewives around her. Naturally, not the real ones who had to serve the household, the husband and children—but women with housekeepers" (323-34). On the contrary, Laura finds out that these "homoerotic" housewives are fully involved in all sorts of private and public activities, and far from being privileged in patriarchy. When the sabbath night is over, they hurry home on their broomsticks "to prepare breakfast, send their kids to school, gently wake up their husbands, and leave for their places. 'What places?,' asked Laura. 'University, conveyor belt...music school, editors' office, marriage fraud office, hospital, poets' society'" (325). These housewives, Morgner's ironic versions of "superwomen," allude to communist achievements in women's mobilization and entry into the labor force. The socialist ideals supporting women's legal and economic independence, providing affordable childcare and increasing participation in education and politics, have clearly remained part of Morgner's own vision of a women-friendly world. In adopting thus a more critical stand toward the West, Morgner connects conceptually with Western feminist hesitation as to whether to refer to the superwoman as a syndrome or as a necessity. To quote Ursula le Guin, writing in a capitalist context, "it's a lot easier to write books while bringing up kids than to bring up kids while working nine to five plus housekeeping....Talk about superwomen, those are the superwomen. Those are the mothers up against the wall. Those are the marginal women, without either privacy or publicity; and it's because of them more than anyone else that the woman artist has a responsibility to try to change the life in which she is also immersed" (235). In addition to flying, most of Morgner's witches, and this connects them with Laura, enjoy their kitchen as a herstorical place of inconsistency and subversion. The kitchen in fact is a central metaphor for the fantasmatic place of female alchemists' experiments (Amanda 144). Both sovereign and "safe," it is the place of witches' cauldrons, potions, and brews. Laura's former husband, now married to her best friend, Vilma, never enters a kitchen, a place inscribed with secrecy, containing magic potions and forbidden, half-finished formulae against melancholy, the threat of stagnation, and imposed immobility. This fantasmatic kitchen, in fact, encourages "faith in the possibility of social change and therefore in the improvement of existing conditions for women" (Lewis 17).

In subverting the usual representations of the socialist patriarchal realities, Morgner's imaginary marks the return of values repressed by these realities (Lewis 2), but does not offer substitutes as temporary solutions. Rather, engaging in a Bakhtinian dialogical discourse, her fantasy simultaneously reinforces and undermines the matrix of normativity, echoing the medieval laughter that signals suspension of authority, of fear/death, and of the holy and forbidden. It is precisely in this association with the medieval carnivalesque safety valves that the socialist Blocksberg, the site of witches' rites, is demystified as a site of patriarchal control, a measure of the de-
gree of oppression of the feudal/patriarchal order (Amanda 510). Its authority tolerates and actually enhances rehearsals of a revolt, because these rehearsals, including the witches' orgasmic laughter (feminist demonstrations), are fake substitutes for conditions that have not been created. After the performance, the witches' leader, along with the devils' leader and his omnipresent raven, reverse the upside-down universe back into the norm. Ultimately, the fantasmatic carnival of bodies has a "critical rather than celebratory" character; meant to trivialize the tyranny of a regime in an exhibitionist display of pluralist thinking (Lewis 204). Reported to replicate patriarchal relations of exploitation, the Blocksberg remains therefore highly ambivalent in its status. It is a "place of double standards" (Amanda 548), oscillating between fascination and terror, depending on the participant's gender. Calling to mind Carter's phallocentric constructions of female sacrifice and "annihilation" ("Scarlet House" 421), of female entrapment rather than sovereignty, the Blocksberg is a place where women can experiment with the "mimetic mode of appropriating the world" (Amanda 461). Vilma, for instance, explains proudly that she has swallowed her "unruly half," which is now safely stored in a place (the womb) where her "body speeches" are. The invention of body-speak allows her and many other women to satisfy their need to communicate among themselves, especially since she has realized that most of the energy she requires for living had to be spent on conforming to the system. Gender relations are not necessarily divided between the feminine and the masculine codes of behavior, but the division echoes here ironically the communist assumptions of gender and class equality. The subversive gender, primarily represented by the women-witches, is modeled as a "third" (alternative) gender, and works against the traditional heterosexual matrix. Morgner's task, as a reminiscence to Daly's venture, is to normalize this third gender, in other words, to "rationalize the phenomenon of the witch on a broom" (36) as a future representative of the entire female sex/gender. Therefore, Laura's insistence on an alliance with men, who, according to Morgner, suffer another type of enslavement, is not an endorsement of heterosexuality but a necessary political strategy to ensure the emancipation of both sexes (Lewis 185). The witch, as a gender deviation from the existing fe/male binary, has a political character and transforms the monopoly of patriarchal power into a dialogue of genders. Consequently, the responsibility for Laura's split is assigned to women themselves, and in particular to those who are "blind," nourished with patriarchal dogmas, generations of grandmothers and mothers who urgently need to be reeducated. As Schwarzer postulated in 1975, it is not "biological difference, but its ideological consequences" that Morgner posits as a predicament to be eliminated from women's lives. In the end, Morgner's witch becomes a mediator between the women's "forgotten" knowledge and their future im/possibilities, where, to follow Bovenschen, "elements of the past and of myth oscillate, but along with them, elements of a real and present dilemma as well" (231). In rejecting Amanda (her other "half") as an eccentric witch, and the very word "witch" in connection with herself, Laura is convinced that she can do without theory and "lofty ideas," "a cry not unfamiliar to feminists in the West—to solve her immediate practical problems of
sleep deficiency" (Lewis 184). On the other hand, Amanda dismisses Laura's intention to combat tiredness with alchemy as a "piecemeal solution" (Amanda 284), one "that fails to address the underlying problem of the fragmentation of East German women" (Lewis 177). Out of these two particular positions, Morgner herself favors Laura's form of pragmatic, down-to-earth feminism, "satirizing the type of radical militant feminist opposition represented in the figure of Isebel" (184). Thus, Laura, still reluctant to cooperate with Amanda's strategy, recognizes it finally as a political necessity in the witches' overall project to unite, since their fragmentation serves patriarchal interests. The "break through the wall," as an attempt at reunification, has a clear reference to Germany as a divided country and the envisioned collapse of the Berlin Wall, alluding to German feminisms divided along the same political axis. Realizing "that even practical short-term goals cannot be achieved without Amanda's theoretical guidance" (Morgner 233), Laura overcomes her skepticism towards feminist ideals. This political overcoming attests to Morgner's conscious narrative focus on how to end the fruitless war between sexes, and to shape the political consciousness of gender relations instead. Amanda played a relevant role in building the gender awareness of East German women, and in fact, became a well-known feminist manifesto of the 1980s, influencing various German feminisms since then.

As represented by the next generation of German witch stories (written, one might say, by Morgner's and Irigaray's "daughters"), the political unconscious, although given shape, demonstrates that the reinscribed woman's identity is still entrapped in a masculine sameness and phallus envy, while the common experience evoked by the feminist "we" prevents women from seeing how certain differences are constructed as relations of subordination. I now turn to Sabine Korte's "Hexenhochzeit" ("Witch's Wedding") and Iris von Finckenstein's "w.i.t.c.h.," two German short stories published in 2000 (unless indicated otherwise, translations of these texts are mine). These literary proposals of "mystic dances, magic convocations, refined trophies, enchanting and poisonous at once, never harmless" (Walpurgistänze back cover), grippingly reflect on the reminiscence of the second-wave fantasmatic traces at the turn of the century. Published twenty years later, they reveal an astonishing complicity with the phallocentric thinking previously denounced by such writers as Morgner and Schwarzer. These rather pop-cultural representations of the feminist witch complicate indeed the relation between theoretical spaces of feminist herstory and the actual articulations of female desire that continues to represent a hysterical inconsistency, despite the feminist theories/therapies in process. The question forming itself upon the following readings is that of a suspicion of herstorical failure in sustaining a politically useful and common ground from which to act upon culture. Has the "newly born woman" returned to the worship of the phallus, to heterosexuality as a type of biological binary that "has crippled us and created a rift which is seemingly impossible to overcome" (Schwarzer 223)? Do we have to agree with Irigaray that so-called "sexual liberation" has done absolutely nothing for women? "Precisely. And they lay traps for us. Not that I think we should hold it against individual men. But all the same, they do lay traps for us. The superegoization of sexual excess: you
aren't a liberated woman if" ("Limits" 107). To continue this thought, both Korte and Finckenstein emancipate their "witches" financially and abandon the privacy of traditionally marginalized witches' locations. Like many contemporary women in Germany, the protagonists have their own income that enables them to travel and explore various opportunities. Yet this sovereignty remains enclosed within a persistent phallogocentric discourse that reduces them to miming and "taking pleasure" in the privileges of men and as their accomplices. In analyzing this phenomenon, I link these narratives to a much earlier and far more didactic configuration of an "active witch," found in Colette's 1958 short story, "The Rainy Moon," and pursuing a witch theme deliberately erased in the herstorical imaginary. Colette's story, serving hence as a prelude to my discussion of the German narratives, presents a hysterical and "altogether mad" Délia who makes use of witchcraft in order to kill her husband, Eugène. Eugène, although already separated from her, repeatedly comes to see her because she has "cast a spell on him" (121) or "convoked" him: "Convoking, do you know what that is?...Convoking is summoning a person by force" (122), asserts Rosita, Délia's sister, in a dialogue with the surprised narrator who does not believe in things like "doing evil" (123). Colette's text, underscored with irony, introduces magic as a popular and not exclusively female affair, a secret yet conventional means of getting rid of one's spouse and achieving the liberty of widow(er)hood.

Depicting Délia as one of those knowledgeable in the art of black magic, Colette draws on the power of superstitious belief as well as on a linkage of sexual bonds with possession: "Possession gives you the power to summon, to convoke, as they say" (130). Eugène is lost, according to Rosita, since his body once "belonged" to Délia, but he could be saved if he bonded with another. Unfortunately, Rosita continues, "Eugène has never even thought of wanting me....If he had wanted me, even just once, I'd be in a position to fight against her, you understand." But Colette's narrator does not understand, she has everything to learn. "'Do you really attribute so much importance to the fact of having...having belonged to a man (sic!)?' 'And you! Do you really attribute so little to it?' I decided to laugh" (130). Rosita, however, proceeds to elucidate the convoking procedure, while all that the narrator expects now from her detailed informant is the "one final picture" of Délia, "arriving at the crossroads where, amidst the vaporous clouds produced by each one's illusion, the female slaves of the cloven-footed one meet for the Sabbath. 'Yes, indeed. And where does the devil come in, Rosita'" (133)? And here comes Colette's radical feminist reply, in the form of an innocent but persistently political response: "'What devil, Madame?...An honest amazement was depicted on Rosita's face and her eyebrows flew up to the top of her high forehead. 'But Madame, whatever trail are you on now. The devil, that's just for imbeciles. The devil, just imagine....' She shrugged her shoulders, and, behind her glasses, threw a withering glance at discredited Satan" (133). Délia does not need any form of complicity with phallic figures; she is perfectly self-sufficient in her work with "pointed things, scissors, pins," as Colette assures her readers in the final image of Délia strolling along the aisles of a flea-market as a widow. If anything, she must compete with her sister. Two interesting thoughts are thus sug-
gested by Colette's text: first, that witchcraft is a private (secret) but popular affair, and, second, that it is a serious, competitive undertaking. Irony and detachment discarded, these ideas continue to be used in Korte's and Finckenstein's stories, both fascinated with convoking procedures. The central theme of "Witch's Wedding" is inscribed, however, with the female castration complex and her subsequent seduction by the phallus, ironically reflecting the Lacanian theory of the feminine that substitutes phallus for "lack." Korte's witch, madly in love with her (male) lover, focuses obsessively on his masculinity, a troublesome subject from a radical feminist point of view. Like Rosita, Korte's narrator attributes great importance to the fact of having belonged to a man, but assuming her "natural" inborn castration, she desires an adequate tool that will balance her desire. The knife is what she dreams about: "the witch's knife for the blood wedding" (Korte 266), that is, a fetish, a temporary substitute for the erotic catharsis and a narcissistic identification (in a Freudian sense) with the phallus. Traveling through Africa as somewhat of an eccentric but clearly a tourist, she succumbs to a nomadic condition that should surprise and challenge her lover: "You don't know your witch well enough. I have used all my magic to escape the city. Not with husband and child. Not as a married couple. But alone, enchantingly free, perfectly close to myself and as far away as possible" (257). Joining thus various expeditions to remote places, she articulates her desire while writing letters (convocations) to her lover, likewise on a journey to the Philippines with his wife. The colonizing spirit of these parallel adventures attests precisely to the kind of postmodern and nihilist tradition of Western writing that Korte's text seems to uncritically recreate. In this sense, the narrator's "cultural castration" attains a doubly violent significance, simultaneously intermingling with a culturally sanctioned desire to become the conqueror of a "unexplored" continent and with a culturally abject desire to become a castrator figure, to steal the phallus, to penetrate with the witch's knife. Because of her culturally reinforced submissiveness to the dominant culture and the powerful organ that she strives to possess, she is in a struggle against her own sex, and specifically against her lover's wife, a woman in competition with her. Her unruly libido will thus be tolerated as it continues to cultivate the phallic function, while the relationship between her and the lover progresses as a typical love affair between two unhappily married people.

On her journey, the narrator resembles Cixous's sorceress, suspended between her salient suffering in a particular culture (Germany, home, family obligations) and her "orgasmic freedom" (Africa, journey, erotic desire). The ambiguous in/visibility of her own desire, articulated in a hysterical attack, reflects the narrator's alienated, even lacking, sexual identification, and feeds her eccentric perception of the African landscape as an erect phallic construction. She, the conqueror, has given her lover an ultimate choice, but he has asked for time and place to reflect: "And yet, the fight is not decided, not yet, lover. Perhaps, you will burn me, your Satan's woman, at the stake of lost chances." Or, perhaps, "you will take me as your wife. In a black mass, at a white altar, the elbows bound, the arms thrown over the head, the legs so wide open that the thighs chant, united" (Korte 266). The narrator's vision of
the witch's wedding initiates her black-and-white, yes-or-no journey that metaphorically converges with her quest for the knife and her fight for her lover. Resonating thus with the phallocentric voyages of the male hero on his way to self-realization, Korte narrates a somewhat unaccomplished version of Irigaray's mimesis. To play with mimesis for a woman, as Irigaray suggests, is "to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it" ("Power" 124-25). The latter contributes precisely to the narrator's dilemma. If mimesis indicates the kind of "resubmission" by an effect of playful (Irigaray) or otherwise strategic (Butler) repetition of unacknowledged possibilities in culture, the narrator's mimesis barely manages to unveil the fact that women are "simply" good mimics, exercising in this function for centuries. Unquestionably, Irigaray's mimesis is difficult to achieve, since it borders precisely on this type of mimicry that fakes power and manifests possession when there is only dispossession. I mention these two types of miming because "Witch's Wedding" demonstrates how easily one falls into the other. The story shows, perhaps inadvertently, how mimesis turns into mimicry, and how it becomes entangled with a discourse in which a woman, the subject of the new century, cannot articulate her difference, her body, or her jouissance, and continues to mirror the universal gender. In this state of not knowing what she might otherwise want, she will be "ready for anything, even asking for more, so long as he will 'take' her as his 'object' when he seeks his own pleasure" (Irigaray, Speculum 47). Although in speaking, writing, and acting (all the necessary prerequisites in cultural participation), Korte's narrator inadvertently continues to enact a role of "the beautiful object of contemplation" (Irigaray, Speculum 47), of a hysterical woman who, more than anything, desires herself without being able to internalize her desire. At once revealing and ignoring her own ethnocentrism, the narrator becomes a cultural transvestite, playfully projecting herself as a white fe/male Other. In this playful "as if" suspension that easily rejects one subject position in exchange for another, she allows herself to wonder, somewhat narcissistically, who might be afraid of the white woman, who might be fascinated, and who will be seduced by her body of an apparently fake color (Korte 258). Her body, so distinct from the blackness of an African woman, (a blackness that is projected as plural, indistinct) naively denies its own subjectivization. Most certainly, "the Africa" she encounters, to follow Alice Walker, "had already been raped of much of its sustenance...made an uninhabited region, except for its population of wild and exotic animals" (The Temple 168-69), and other objects of European desire. But Korte's narrator never "deals" with the black woman, does not approach her, but curiously observes her "exotic" body: the breast full of mother's milk, the child carried proudly in a wrap on her hip like a heavy jewel that accentuates her femininity (Korte 258). The black female body, an actual Other of the other in the story, is a silent witness to "all the action"; the Other does not play, and is not aware of its "authenticity." Falling into the Levinasian category of incommensurability, the Other passively constitutes the narrator's private speculum, where she enjoys her own displayed body as an object of ridicule and fascination. Like Irigaray's woman, "she exposes, exhibits the possibility of nothing to see" (Speculum
and this *nothing* entertains her, excites her "lacking" sexuality. Moreover, she is proud of "being allowed" to transgress her gender as a white foreign wo/man, as an eccentric freelance witch.

Her pathetically colonizing and privileged perspective remains entangled in a universality of the "white explorer" who can afford occasionally the encounter with poverty, a postmodern model of boundary-crossing. The fact that she "is allowed" to do "certain things," to transgress taboos is never questioned, because in fact her exceptional position (white European, eccentric) liberates her from her particularly female indisposition. Tolerated and even respected as a stranger, she is not an intruder but a credit card holder, and a freak of sorts (Korte 268). For this very reason, she can forge alliances with (black) men, to negotiate with them and to meet the fetish man. She can thus afford the transgression; she can afford to pursue her desire to detach the phallic organ that does not belong to her yet. Unlike Colette's Délia, who is entirely, *eccentrically* on her own in pursuing the goal of disposing of her husband, Korte's witch assumes that she "has to look for the black magic" that will secure for her the man's love/death (260). Contrary to Délia, she "signs a pact with the devil," since she does not know how to be on her own, in a state defined by Irigaray as "within the intimacy" of her female body. The fetish man, taking on the role of devil discredited by Colette's tale, is thus appreciated, believed indispensable, and even longed for. That devil, the archaic father, will have to teach her how to seduce; his eyes are abysmal, his mouth open as if he wants to talk with her, and the tent is flooded with the presence of his goat-body: "The fetish man squatted on his heels closely to my body and gently opened my legs. I could smell him. He smelled of black skin and male sweat, spicy, intense and strange. My legs trembled under the weight of the stone. The mouldy scent of the menstruation blood flowed from my womb...and the fetish bathed in the chicken's blood. It soaked my skirt, wet my slip and mixed with my own blood" (262). And so, in mimicry, she gives herself away, balancing her desire for the man with an obsessive objectification of her own position. Her body, seen through the man's eyes, excites her, because the phallic gaze has eroticized it. Desiring thus herself, she parodies her self-desire, just as the *herstorical* witch, unable to speak, returns to the language of the archaic mother. This schizophrenic status of the woman, as encoded in the Western philosophy of masculine sameness and its social practices, imposes duality on Korte's figure: She is an object in the language, while her body offers the linguistic home-place inviting masculine desire. The narrator's desire is induced and focused on imagining her own eroticized body intermingling with her masochistic fantasies and obsessions with rape (Irigaray, "Poverty" 90-92): "When, after weeks, I looked at myself in the mirror of the hotel's room, I sank deep into my eyes. I am beautiful, lover—you will see. My eyes are as clear as those of a wo/man who has fasted for a long time. My lips are so dried out that you can no longer bite them to blood. My body is so surfeited with swellings, bites and blue marks that you can no longer lie down on me. There is yet a spirit of the desert shining in me like a sparkle" (Korte 271-72). Proud of her accomplishments in cooperation with black men, she opens her bag which is heavy with what it contains—the fetish
and the knife. She has deserved it, having been initiated into the men's world. The story ends with a warning directed to her lover, should he disbelieve her mimic potential. And until the end, the narrator remains anonymous; she does not sign her letters, but represents the nameless: one of the many Walpurgisnacht's witches invited by the Devil to dig up and consummate fresh corpses. Colette, in her story, wants monstrosity to belong to Délia (a problematic issue in itself), to be her private affair, and evokes the devil's centrality on Walpurgisnacht only to deny it. Korte's witch prefers to warn her lover: "It is dangerous to leave a woman devoted to magic to her own devices" (259). It is better to take her home, domesticate her desires, and let her worship the phallus. Let her "be" the Phallus, "reflect the power of the Phallus," and "supply the site to which it penetrates" (Butler, _Gender Trouble_ 44).

The second story to be analyzed here, Finckenstein's "w.i.t.c.h.,” attempts to relate to the True Craft of the Wise, the one launched by Rosita as a serious business. The secrecy and fear resulting from the witches' persecution, as propagated, for example, by Dworkin and Pratt, has been successfully eliminated in Finckenstein's story and exchanged with the notion of strict business relations. Disrupting the secrecy of witchcraft, Finckenstein installs the witch as a businesswoman immersed in the commercial, money-making aspects of life. The "true craft," advertised on an internet site, is accessible to everybody who joins the workshops organized by w.i.t.c.h. In suggesting that the "forgotten wisdom" can now be bought in a variety of personalized packages, Finckenstein's narrative draws on the growing popularity of esoteric studies offering introductions to magic crafts, psychological archetypes à la Jung, and Tarot readings. As a fully commercialized business, The True Craft of the Wise ironically reinscribes Dworkin's figures of the witch-herbalist and midwife, standing "both for agriculture and for untamed nature" with their "unchanging identity...in an unchanging world" (Purkiss 21). The witch in Finckenstein's text is an active, competitive, and public authority. She takes over the role of the wise old woman, the hag of Daly's (re)creation, as Lu, a grown-up Lolita, the witch-psycho-analyst, and simply the boss: "You will receive your own broom and a new name. She made a dutiful break. Emily admired the obviousness with which Lu spoke about such things" (Finckenstein 33). There is no metaphysics in the foundations of Lu's power, no fundamentally magic phenomena in her witchcraft. As she promises in the folder outlining the course content, relations are reciprocal, pointing out "the perpetual gaps between intentions in relation to one another" as if borrowing from Foucault ("Space" 164). This transition, indeed, the metamorphosis of a phallocentric victim into a businesswoman, meets precisely with the lifestyle of a feminist healer in the seventies, the first owing to business etiquette, the latter to notions of a simple life and increasing commercialization of traditional, antique, or natural products. Both figurations are problematic because they substitute an often unattainable fantasy (the business-witch, the herbalist-healer) for a solution to women's problems (Purkiss 21). The fantasy of Lu, the postmodern witch, is problematic precisely because of the surrealistic status she claims to have achieved. As Emily observes, "an outsider would have taken her for a totally crazy person" (Finckenstein 33). Before
she joins Lu's workshop, Emily in fact is an "outsider" leading an unexciting life as a secretary. For a long time now she has been looking for something "original," "thoughtful," and "different." She has tried out many other product remedies (reminiscent of the 1970s), such as Ayurvedian massage, ritual Eskimo chanting, or Indian sand painting, "but nothing was right." While surfing on the Internet, she eventually realizes that "the right thing might be nearer than she thought" and might even be "rooted in European culture" (28). Emily calls the institute only to find out that in the coming workshop there is one place left, and that it is "entirely up to her whether she feels worth it," that is, the 7000 Deutsch Marks that she would need to supply immediately: "It was a short but violent emotional struggle. Then Emily made another phone call and registered for the workshop. The night before the workshop she had really bad dreams. Wild dreams about witches with green pointed nails and yellow bloodshot eyes. They wanted her purse where she kept the check for 7000 DM. She managed to escape, but when she opened her purse, she found an ugly slippery toad instead of her money" (29). In fact, the Institute of Witchcraft, with its main location in California, has long since discarded the witches' history, along with their bad reputation and "European character" (32). Portraying thus, inadvertently, another case of mimesis/mimicry, Finckenstein's institute follows the current fashions for a professional enterprise: The entrance of w.i.t.c.h. resembles the lobby of a financial institution rather than a witch's kitchen. "Glass, stainless steel, immaculate white walls, a light leather sofa with matching armchairs, the name of the institute in sleek golden letters above the bright glass-topped reception desk. Behind the desk a woman, an elegant, dark haired middle-aged woman, a friendly smile on a carefully made-up face" (30). The workshop itself, both a type of masquerade and a form of "initiation into a different womanhood" (as suggested arrogantly by Lu in her welcome speech), sells a modern fairy tale to lonely secretaries and bored nobody-loves-me housewives (the reference is to Doris Dörrie's film Keiner liebt mich (Nobody Loves Me) [1995]): "And yes, [Lu] is as old as she feels she is...and totally free in terms of relationships. This doesn't mean, she added in a silky voice, that she does not treat herself to a man from time to time. It sounded as if she was talking about a tasty but calorie-laden morsel" (35).

As a postmodern parody of the True Craft then, Finckenstein's narrative, like Korte's, remains uncritical of heterosexual patriarchal normativity targeted and challenged by radical feminism. It can be read, most certainly, as an ironic warning against fraudulent institutes and as a proof of witchcraft addressed to skeptical unbelievers. But, above all, it raises questions as to what has remained of the impact of 1970s feminism on the younger generation of women writers. Although the slogans of w.i.t.c.h., such as "join us, the workshop will change your life," might ironically echo U.S. radical feminist "healing methodologies," the narrated images of female professionals represent a spectacular collage of everything that proves problematic from these feminist positions. The workshop does, in effect, change Emily's life; the w.i.t.c.h. stands proudly for "Where I Take CHances." Emily's major goal, like that of Korte's narrator, to find the right man and get rid of her "loneliness," has
been achieved. However, everything that happens seems to have also been possible without the workshop. In this sense, Finckenstein does score a feminist point, as she seems to be aware of irony as an important mimetic enterprise. In the rewriting of the witch's historical characteristics, her story shows that the contemporary witch is seen as both a humorous and an arbitrary figure. Her "postmodern nature" is fully adjusted to the phallocentric capitalism of the late twentieth century. Enveloped in the needs, desires, and fantasies of such system, her masquerade, as Irigaray has suggested, offers a protective skin in the absence of a language specific to her body and her own desire. But her triumph is that of the complicitous woman; she acts and speaks in a language that invariably articulates her "lack" of autonomy. Most probably, rather than "escaping from her loneliness," Emily abandons her (wasted) independence, and ends up denying her own hysterical status/body, while accepting the pleasurable aspects of phallocentric rather than eccentric desires. Although showing witches as an "active, public and financially self-sufficient" group of women, both narratives speak from the perspective of phallocentric fantasy and can be interpreted as subconscious returns under the patriarchal security blanket. This position, characterized often as that "of the castrata" (Baym 280) and forced into various forms of tokenism, continues the tradition of a masquerade. "In the masquerade, they submit to the dominant economy of desire in an attempt to remain 'on the market' in spite of everything. But they are there as objects for sexual enjoyment, not as those who enjoy" (Irigaray, "Poverty" 136). The transgressive potential recognized in some historical narratives as enabling the mimetic to break out from within might thus appear as a fantasmatic illusion. The/a "woman," no longer confined to the private home, is still entrapped in hysteria, in a phallocentric "vacuum" (Whitford 54) where autonomous herstory has not yet taken place. This entrapment, which confirms the cultural castration of women, draws on Irigaray's "mimetic appropriation" of the hegemonic discourse, which is "still the most terrible thing of all because it is practiced without any feminine ideality or model" (Whitford 110). Korte's and Finckenstein's stories, and to varying degrees all of the texts discussed in this chapter, are thus Irigaray's "reservoir of a yet-to-come" imaginary in which women would be nomads (but no longer in exile), mobile, dancing, taking their own "house with them."

Tracing Cultural Un/belonging

The narratives analyzed in this chapter illustrate the second-wave feminist sense of urgency, and the need to construct a political "we" and create a common identification with the historical oppression of women (Irigaray's bringing together of mothers and daughters). The figure of the "witch" represents here a dimension of radical (feminist) identity that inserts the history of her invisibility into contemporary ideological and political spaces. Conveying the tension between past and present, the witch becomes a central signifier of women's cultural sovereignty in a "curious epoch in which 'cold' hypertecniciety goes hand in hand with rustic magical passions, with a rather worrying irrationality" (Whitford 140). This witch figure becomes a crucial metaphor for herstory, that is, a form of feminist mythology constituted in relation to
and as an alternative to the established male-centered master narrative. In response to the poststructural dismissal of traditional identities and what in psychoanalytical theories has been diagnosed as "cultural castration," radical feminism employs strategies of appropriating and reenacting the cultural locations of the witch as "the newly born" woman. Cixous and Clément address specifically the "extensions" of the historical witch towards a woman traditionally exiled from the symbolic order: There is thus an intrinsic connection between the philosophical, the literary, and the phallocentric. Philosophy, constructed on the premise of subordination of the feminine, gives the appearance of universal condition that keeps the machinery intact. If this "suddenly came out," to follow Cixous, "all the history, all the stories would be there to retell differently; the future would be incalculable; the historic forces would and will change hands and change body" (Cixous and Clément 116).

I develop the concept of the herstorical fantasmatic as an attempt to assess this "incalculable change," positing the feminist "witch" as a radical denunciation of Lacan's object petit a, the embodiment of the woman's lack. Evoking images of the culturally abject and "an implacable enemy of the symbolic order" (Kristeva, Powers 70), the "witch" interferes with patriarchal discourse, as does Cixous's "newly born woman" in her imaginative journeys across the frontier of prohibition. After all, it is the physical absence of her mother (her unacknowledged identity) that contributes to the dream of presence ("a new earth of her own invention"), a dream that in fact should be taken literally, since its fulfillment lies within the "newly established" limits of culture. In defining history as "a fantastical and slippery concept, a making, a construction" (McDowell 234), the narratives employed in this chapter clearly address the feminist need to rehistoricize the "witch," and through that to revitalize the "woman" and show in herstorical perspective how knowledge about her was constructed, by whom, and with what consequences. This need, in retrospection, has to be seen as a form of herstorical desire to establish an unchanging point of historical reference from which to start autonomous processes of rewriting the past. An emotional and very personal feminist engagement with the witch as a victim of phallocentric metaphors enters here into a dialogue with institutional knowledge and the homogeneity of phallogocentric discourse. What herstory comes to realize is that it works, as a consequence of history, with its tongue cut out, but that it has the capacity to weave her/story in reminiscence of Ovid's Arachne. At stake here, to follow Nancy K. Miller, is the premise "of a female signature, the internal delineation of a writer's territory." Likewise, it is the feminist desire "for another logic of plot which by definition cannot be narrated," and "looks elsewhere for expression" (279). Radical feminist writers are thus often located "inside" the discourse they construct; as narrators and protagonists they are incapable of distance, textual disconnection, or self-criticism. In analyzing the narratives selected for this chapter, I read them as literary unveilings of the "witch" in her ability as well as inability to reenter history as a speaking, autonomous, and self-reflective subject. Most importantly, I view the radical feminist archetype of the witch as attempting, and to some extent failing, to be "fluid and dynamic, empowering women's personalities to grow and
Functions and Risks of Radical Feminist "Witches"

develop" (Pratt 135). Instead, herstorical narratives focus hazardously on constructing an identity and therefore a theory of "woman." And to have a theory of woman "is already to reduce the plurality of woman to the coherent and thus phallocentric representations of theory" (Gallop, Daughter's Seduction 134). The false universal of the "white middle class woman" subject and identity ideals, in particular, "had not promoted feminist solidarity—they led on the contrary, to anger and schism, to hurt and mistrust" (Fraser, Justice 179). Reconstructing the history of second-wave feminist debates on sexual difference, we can thus close its first chapter—from the late 1960s through about the mid-1980s—with its radical focus on the erasure of gender difference, and shift our attention to the second phase—from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s—embracing a cultural recognition of "differences among women" and the current position on "multiple intersecting differences." Of course, to plot the trajectory of debate in this way is necessarily to simplify and abstract. But it is also to make us remember an inner logic of the past positions, from which new insights emerge, especially those, as postulated by Fraser, integrating social with cultural demands and seeking to change culture and political economy in tandem (Justice 177).

Like a feminist theoretician, to conclude this thought with Braidotti, the witch figure "can only be 'in transit,' moving on, passing through, creating connections where things were previously dis-connected or seemed un-related, where there seemed to be 'nothing to see.' In transit, moving, dis-placing—this is the grain of hysteria without which there is no theorization at all" (Nomadic Subjects 93). In exploring the witch's cultural incompatibility in the following two chapters, I continue to use "un/belonging" as a term to convey the location of gender fantasy as a cultural topography of the stigmatized body. The ethical value of difference, as in Irigaray's rereadings of the Levinasian Other, is crucial to my use of stigma as a concept both deriving from and defining un/belonging. Un/belonging is a form of Levinasian "resistance" of the other to the same, of the stigmatized (signified) to the stigmatizing (signifying). This resistance as a point of exteriority to the philosophical logos is located in the face of the Other, but still articulated in the language of logos (see Levinas, Totality 290). Un/belonging refers thus to the fantasmatic, the semiotic, and the heretic space of gender associated with the Otherness of the witch. It responds to phallocentric constructions of the witch as the ambiguous ("invested with power and danger") limit or "pollution" of the patriarchal order. This ambiguity, explored in Irigaray's analysis of *Oresteia*, points to the foundations of Western culture as both of patricidal (Freud's hypothesis) and of matricidal order. In her rerereading of Clytemnestra story as "an account of the installation of patriarchy built over the sacrifice of the mother and her daughters (one daughter, Iphigenia, literally sacrificed by Agamemnon, the other one, Electra, abandoned to her madness, while Orestes, the matricidal son, is designated to found the new order)" (Whitford 25). Irigaray returns to the major cultural taboo: the relationship with the mother. "The stress on Oedipus, on castration, serves to conceal another severance, the cutting of the umbilical cord to the mother. This relationship with the mother needs to be brought out
of silence and into representation" (Whitford 25). The unacknowledged matricide, followed by "the burial of women in madness," institutes the new model of the virgin/goddess, one "born of the father and obedient to his law in forsaking the mother" (38). If we link Irigaray's reevaluation of the maternal with Douglas's anthropological readings of pollution as associated with the feminine, it becomes apparent how Irigaray's notion of the placenta as the "first house to surround us...like some child's security blanket" (40) constitutes itself as nothing but a waste to be disposed of. And how it is constructed, naturalized, and misrepresented in culture as the "openness" ("ouverture de la mere") that is threatening, that unleashes the danger of pollution, contamination, and "engulfment in illness, madness and death" (40). In Douglas's words, "pollution is a type of danger which is not likely to occur except where the lines of structure, cosmic or social, are clearly defined" (113).

The witch as a fantasy of gender, emerging from this structuralist thinking, has thus crossed over some line that should not have been crossed and unleashed danger through this structural displacement. Both as the "trace" of an archetype and as a specific literary character, the witch displays gender resistance to the phallocentric culture in which she is physically and philosophically placed. Her transgressive character relates to her un/belonging that allows for a type of subculture and relates to the ontology of the interval "between the two" which finds echoes in a range of contemporary theories on gender, most notably in Irigaray's more recent work Entre deux (1997). But it is also already present in questions posed by Douglas, and later elaborated by Kristeva and Butler, namely, why should bodily margins be thought to be specifically invested with power and danger" (Douglas 121)? Kristeva, in particular, assimilates Douglas's notion of body boundaries to her post-Lacanian reformulations of defilement as "what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based." This social aggregate "becomes differentiated from a temporary agglomeration of individuals and, in short, constitutes a classification system or structure" (Powers 65). The very structure, in a more recent feminist perspective, has traveled, so to say, a full circle of signification. Today, margin and body are categories more slippery than ever, tending, on one side, to slide towards essentialism, and on the other, to be caught in positivist reductions or new age naïve celebrations (see Purkiss; Braidotti). Far from attempting to reduce the discussed images into a blending picture of a/the "woman," I thus refer to the witch as a "differential network," a fabric of heristorical and historical traces alluding endlessly to something other than the image itself. The witch, posited in this differential network as a dynamic figure, connects and disconnects culturally distinct narratives, all enveloped in various ways in Western imagery of the very figure. The cultural validity (identity) of this witch appears in sequences of differential processes, and, as I argue in the chapters to follow, releases a multiplicity of meanings. Hence, the seemingly contradictory representation of the witch as a universal Western archetype on the one hand, and as a specific literary character on the other, needs to be acknowledged as a necessarily dialogical and paradoxical structure of "being-the-two." This, in a link to a Levinasian understanding of the concept, does not imply a fusion of one
and the other, but the interval between the I and the You, the in-between, employed by Irigaray and Braidotti as the site where the feminist work might take place. The strategy, as employed in this interval, is that of a self-conscious mimesis pointing to and questioning the mechanisms that maintain sexual indifference (rather than difference) in place. In Butler's understanding, specifically, this kind of mimesis does not result "in a slave morality, accepting and fortifying the terms of authority." On the contrary, Butler follows Irigaray in explaining that mimesis exposes the exclusions as sites of absence which can be mobilized: "The voice that emerges 'echoes' the master discourse, but this echo nevertheless establishes that there is a voice, that some articulatory power has not been obliterated, and that it is mirroring the words by which its own obliterating was to have taken place. Something is persisting and surviving, and the words of the master sound different when they are spoken by one who is, in the speaking, in the recitation, undermining the obliterating effects of his claim" (Undoing Gender 201).

In the overall argument so far, I evoke the fact that although herstorical methods are not completely successful, they initiate necessary revisions of such cultural constructs as femininity, spirituality, and the female body (as a twofold locus of abjection and fascination). I have analyzed these narratives as forms of feminist mythology posited as alternatives to the established Western canon and inherently divided between the methodical (logical, reasonable) and the hysterical that is out of the phallogocentric control. As such, they prove effective in removing some of the unnecessary distinctions between fiction and history, licensing, to follow Purkiss's argument, the use of both in terms of "what is needed" rather than "what is true." Daly's Gyn/ecology and Dworkin's Woman-Hating are examples of such herstorical ventures formulated, in my analysis, as a theoretical (and narrative) hysteria, as a textual incongruence between the history from which they attempt to disassociate themselves and a herstorical determination to identify the origins of oppression. Similarly, Walker's and Gearhart's novels are inspired by "rediscoveries" of the repressed and "forgotten" origins of female "power," although, as Purkiss correctly argues, there is no hard evidence to suggest that the majority of those accused of witchcraft were either healers or midwives. They have been selected here as examples of "matriarchal" narratives subverting the course of patriarchal history, indebted to the identity principle that is crucial to much early feminist work. In blending myth, history, and fantasy, Gearhart's radical ecofeminist and Walker's Afra-American witch figures set out to deconstruct the phallocentric philosophy of sameness by identifying with what has been repressed or underrepresented. Both Gearhart's and Walker's characters of women have been conceptualized as different on purpose, connecting with a supposedly "feminine" pleasure "outside" of culture. Resonating with these US-American feminist recuperations of the traditionally negative figure of the witch, Morgner's herstorical fantasies in Amanda are equally strategic and political, using a withdrawal into the "fantasmatic" as a tool for cultural transformation and a therapeutic way out of a female cultural vacuum. The short stories analyzed in the final section of this chapter, which are to some extent representative of the new wave of
popular women's literature in contemporary Germany, provide an explicit example of conceptual simplifications of women's (witches') independence, rebellion, and authority, ending up as an appropriation rather than a deconstruction of sameness.

One of the risks to be negotiated by the radical feminist projects discussed in this chapter is that of merging, intentionally or not, with the patriarchal definitions of women that de Beauvoir struggled to contest, confining women to the mysterious and not quite human other, as a muse incapable of taking responsible actions in the "symbolic." Although significant as radically positive and empowering rewritings of the historical witch into a therapeutic narrative figure, the narratives analyzed here demonstrate how difficult and sometimes risky it is to work against the phallocentric structure, especially once we start to diversify feminist herstories across race, class, and political systems. The stigma of the female body, evoked by the radical feminist "we" and projected as the commonness of female experience, proves to be constructive only in a limited way, since the concepts of femininity, bodily empowerments, and spirituality have different implications in Walker's African American proposal of an androgynous ideal, Gearhart's ecofeminist separatism, or Morgner's East European socialist feminism. In this sense, "speaking as a woman" can be seen as "a fact determined by some biological condition" and "by a strategic, theoretical position," both by anatomy and by culture (Felman 9). However, if the feminist position of "speaking as a woman" is not a "natural" given, we need to start examining the splits between women themselves rather than between "women" and "men"—between mothers and daughters, to follow Irigaray's example. Employing a feminist psychoanalytical awareness, the narratives considered in the second chapter offer therefore an important expansion of the witch as an archaic figure who does not fit the model of symbolical castration. While disclosing their own versions of women's entrapment in ensnaring maternal territories and their own hysterical erasures, these texts posit the witch both as a phallic mother (establishing the paternal law at the level of the semiotic) and an om-phalic, a symbolically inarticulate one.