

Loss for Words—Subversive Starvation

Fanny Söderbäck

En prenant le corps anorexique comme exemple, j'examine dans ce qui suit la possibilité d'un autre langage. La femme anorexique, en utilisant son corps comme une bouche, essaie d'exprimer ce qui ne peut pas l'être par le langage (phallogocentrique) dont nous disposons. Elle rend visible la position marginalisée qui lui est assignée comme femme, comme Autre absolu, comme ce qui «ne peut pas être dit», et proteste contre cette position. Elle y parvient hyperlittéralement en poussant la catégorisation des genres jusqu'à ses limites extrêmes, aux frontières de la mort. Par les notions d'imitation, empruntée à Luce Irigaray, et de parodie/performativité, formulée par Judith Butler, je suggère que la femme anorexique, en exagérant les idéaux féminins, les montre comme une construction culturelle faisant souffrir les femmes.

My friend neither eats nor drinks. She floats through life, weightless, wordless. Out of emptiness, she creates a self. She exceeds boundaries, refuses to be defined. She mimics and mocks, is a lightweight magician.

...

In the pursuit of femininity, she goes beyond it, my fading friend. She raises her voice and shouts at the world. Without a single word breaking the surface.

...

She smashes test tubes, my beautiful friend. Fills boxes with shards of knowledge. Breaks theories and creates a new world. Where hysterics laugh and Oedipus sees again.

Introduction: Anorexia and Language

"A woman can but be excluded by the nature of things, which is the nature of words, and it must be said that if there is something that women themselves complain about enough for the time being, that's it. It's just that *they don't know what they're saying*—that's the whole difference between them and me."

Jacques Lacan

"Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity. [. . .] Nor will *you* have escaped worrying over this problem—those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply—*you are yourselves the problem.*"

Sigmund Freud

If we are to believe the two most important psychoanalytic figures of our times, Jacques Lacan and Sigmund Freud, woman is a problem, a riddle. She must be examined and scrutinized, but this can only be done according to "masculine" parameters, according to a phallographic order, since she herself does not know what she is saying, since she *is* the problem, since she is already defined as excluded (from discourse), as "not-whole," as "lack," as "negativity." When Lacan, in his seminar on Feminine Sexuality, said that "~~woman~~ cannot be said," his choice of vocabulary, the French *se dire*, ultimately points to the fact that it is women themselves who are unable to "say themselves," to pronounce their own existence, to verbalize their being (Lacan 1998, 81). Women not only lack (and envy) the male organ, the penis. They (precisely because they do not have a penis?) also lack language. They are mute, silent, or limited to idle chatter.

Many feminist psychoanalysts and philosophers (like Braidotti, Butler, Cixous, de Lauretis, Irigaray, Kristeva and others) have, of course, criticized this "truth" about women, and seen as their task to find ways out of the phallographic order, to reclaim their subjectivity and agency beyond the masculine parameters. A different logic. A female voice. A language of their own.

This paper is an attempt to formulate an alternative, or rather a critical response, to the excluded position that has been ascribed to women in our culture and within psychoanalytic theory. With the *anorexic woman* as example, I want to examine the possibility of a *different kind of language*. Using her body as mouthpiece, the anorexic woman, one might say, is trying to articulate something that cannot be expressed in the (phallographic) language available to us, something that escapes or transcends the "signification of the Phallus" (Lacan 2004, 271 ff.). From her *own* perspective, she tries to make visible and protest against the marginalized position ascribed to her as woman, as absolute Other, as that which

“cannot be said.” And even though her protest might be seen as a failure, since she herself risks dying (and oftentimes does die—up to eighteen percent of anorexics die from their illness), it is nevertheless, I think, a protest worth our attention.ⁱ

Language Lost

More than ninety percent of all anorexics are women. One in five women is likely to suffer from an eating disorder, anorexia or bulimia, during her lifetime (Farrell xiii). Women who starve themselves have occurred throughout history. Rudolph Bell, in *Holy Anorexia*, makes a convincing case that Catherine of Sienna (1347-80), along with many of her contemporaries, was anorexic (if not anorexic bulimic). There is no doubt that these medieval women, who fasted, vomited and were overactive, gained political powers and prestige by their actions.

Freud linked bulimic symptoms of food cravings and vomiting to hysteria, which was then long seen as the aetiology of anorexia (Farrell 22). And even though many anorexics do not have a hysterical character structure, feminists have drawn parallels between the two, since they are both typically female illnesses (there are male anorexics, just as there were male hysterics, but the large majority are and were female), and since the two have been understood not only in clinical (physical/psychological) terms, but also, and maybe more so than any other illness, as “symptoms” of a sexist *culture*.ⁱⁱ

The early Freud assumed that hysteria was caused by unconscious trauma that manifested itself in physical symptoms, since the hysteric woman herself could not express the unconscious in words. Hysteria was thus assumed to exist in a sphere where “ordinary” (masculine?) language was insufficient, and the body became a spokesperson for something that could not be kept back in the unconscious. Anorexics, too, use their bodies rather than words to express their suffering. Em Farrell, psychoanalyst who has worked with more than 170 women with eating disorders, writes that “words are as, if not more, problematic for women with eating disorders than their relationship to food” (Farrell xiv). Words are either seen as a useless form of communication, or as being overwhelmingly powerful, so powerful that one may drown in them, or be torn to pieces by them. Words are “dangerous” and “unwanted.” Or, as one of Farrell’s patients explains: “Words are useless, I want to *make* you feel what I feel, words are no good” (Farrell xiv).

This woman, Farrell suggests, expresses frustration with the *difference* implicit in language: “Difference has implicitly to be acknowledged when words are used to attempt communication” (Farrell xiv). For her, the only satisfactory way of communicating is two people feeling intensely and identically (“I want to make you feel what I feel”), a state of fusion, of non-differentiation. A return to the pre-verbal relationship with the mother, the original symbiosis (mother as food)? An attempt to escape adulthood and, more importantly, womanhood? This seems to be Farrell’s argument, and many psychoanalysts understand anorexia exactly as such an attempt to avoid separation.ⁱⁱⁱ I will, instead, make the claim

that the anorexic, in her fear for words, rather than trying to *return* to a pre-verbal, undifferentiated state, is attempting to *reformulate our language*, which is based on (binary) difference and oppositions, to find a language of her own, a language that transcends binaries, that uses a wholly different logic than that which we are used to.^{iv} A *feminine* language?

Woman as Lack

Luce Irigaray is one of the French thinkers who have sharply criticized our patriarchal and dualistic use of language and attempted to formulate a pluralistic language with feminine overtones. Her reasoning is based on a criticism of the blindness of psychoanalysis to sexual difference, and the dualistic structure that is the basic metaphysical premise of western philosophy. Her aim is to escape the polarization that ensnares us in the identities of "man" and "woman," to open up the "self" to "the Other." But what does this mean?

Irigaray returns to the *female body* in order to formulate an alternative to the phallogormism that dominates our culture. Throughout her work, she emphasizes the fact that female sexuality has been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters—women, for Freud, are "failed men," their genitals are seen as a male organ turned back upon itself, a "non-sex"—while it must, instead, be understood on the basis of a wholly different logic, a different alphabet, a different language. For while man is *one*, woman is always (at least) *two*, within her own body. Her genitals are formed of "two lips in continuous contact" (Irigaray 24). Within herself, she is always already two, but a specific kind of two, a two that is not divisible into one(s). She touches herself in and of herself, and therefore immediately falls outside of the (typical) distinction between *active* and *passive* (which, throughout history, has been equaled with the dichotomy male/female). She touches *and* is being touched.^v

Such a sexual organ, which is never *one*, in our culture, counts as *none*. And this is how it has become impossible to define, to name, to count. This is the mystery of the "dark continent" we call woman. In a culture "claiming to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities," woman becomes the negative, the lack, "the reverse of the only visible and morphologically designatable organ"—the penis (Irigaray 26).

So, when Farrell's patient says: "Words are useless, I want to *make* you feel what I feel," she inscribes herself in this other logic, a logic that gives privilege to morphology rather than visibility, to touching rather than seeing, to a kind of subjectivity which contains the "other" within the "self," which is always already at least two, undifferentiated, mixed. She places herself outside the economy of the same, in a place where that which is traditionally described as desire for *nothing* (*an* = non, *orexis* = desire), ultimately is a desire for *everything*, for "something more and something else besides that *one*—sexual organ, for example—that [we] give them, attribute to them" (Irigaray 29). And the whole idea of unity, of truth, of propriety of words, as Irigaray writes in her poetic essay "When Our Lips Speak Together," comes from men's lack of lips, from "their forgetting of lips" (208).

Irigaray encourages all women to “come out of their [the men’s] language,” to move beyond the Phallus, because if we speak “as we have been taught to speak,” we will “miss each other, fail ourselves” (205). How so? If we “divide light from night, we give up the lightness of our mixture, solidify those heterogeneities that make us so consistently whole” (217). A language based on oppositions ignores, or denies, the possibility of plurality and mixture. And it is through this very language, the language we have been taught to speak, that we constitute ourselves as lacks. Representation cuts us up, divides us, separates us. And all we are left with is bodies that do not count, voids awaiting sustenance from the other. No wonder the anorexic woman wants to rid herself of this body, a body “divided” by language. She erases herself as lack, negates negation so to speak. Or, as an anorexic woman, Tricia, puts it: “I remember sort of looking in the mirror and actually being surprised that I saw a form in the mirror, and not just a nothingness” (Malson 145).

The anorexic woman thus protests against a culture where sexual difference has been produced through the *negation* of the body. The Cartesian cogito is placed within a phallogentric economy of the Same, in which the sexual specificities of the female body are translated as absence. Or, as formulated by Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook: “the Cartesian cogito constitutes a phallogentric, disembodied denial of the fecund and creative differences of female corporeality” (Bray and Colebrook 174 f.).

Mimicry and Mockery

Anorexia, then, would constitute an attempt to move outside of the language that we have at our disposal. The anorexic woman formulates an alternative, a protest. But isn’t she rather the ultimate “victim” of this language, of our phallogentric society? She suffers from it, that much is clear, so how could her skeletal body ever be subversive? Alternative? Women have always been seen as nurturers. They learn to feed others (physically and emotionally), rather than themselves; they develop an “other-oriented” emotional economy (Bordo 174 f.). Their own desire is seen as “greedy” and “excessive,” they must thus be controlled, tamed. And for women, thin is beautiful. Calories are enemies, body fat a sign of weakness. Thin but nurturing—the feminine ideal. Does this not mean that the anorexic woman has *adapted* to the role society has assigned to her, rather than that she protests against it?

The anorexic body, writes Susan Bordo in her classic *Unbearable Weight*, “may be viewed as a surface on which conventional constructions of femininity are exposed starkly to view, through their inscription in extreme or hyperliteral form” (171). She brings feminine ideals to their very extreme, caricatures them, one could say. And this, according to Irigaray, is exactly the way in which women must protest. Irigaray’s own search for a feminine language is based on a *mimetic position*, an exaggerated imitation of the masculine discourse, designed to criticize and reformulate it. There is, she writes, “in an initial phase, perhaps only one ‘path,’ the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of *mimicry*” (76).

This is the only way to disrupt dichotomization, to “destroy” the discursive mechanism as such. What is at stake is to *make visible* that our language is phallocentric, because if we “return the masculine to its own language,” we also open the possibility for a “different language” (Irigaray 80).

“To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it [. . .] so as to make ‘visible,’ by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to be invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language,” Irigaray writes (76). The anorexic woman becomes visible by making herself invisible, becomes reduced to body by erasing her own body. And by bringing female beauty ideals or the nourishing feminine stereotypes to their extreme, she shows how absurd and *unnatural* these tropes are. She even manages to manipulate and destroy the ultimate symbols of “natural” femininity: She loses her breasts, her periods—her nourishing and reproductive abilities. Her body is speaking to us of the pathology and violence that constitute the very basis for “normal” femininity. And by doing so, it shows that there is no such thing, that it, at its very root, is a pantomime.

Mimicry has thus been the “path” historically assigned to the feminine, and it is the only, at least for Irigaray, strategic way “out” of femininity, way “out” of femininity, in so far as it is defined as lack, as the negation of masculinity. For Lacan, the very fact that woman *is* rather than *has* Phallus (that she signifies the Phallus by being its Other, its absence, its lack, the dialectical confirmation of its identity), that she “appears” to be the Phallus, the lack that embodies and affirms it, means that the notion of “masquerade” is essential to the feminine position as such (Butler 1999, 59).

This kind of “unconscious” masquerade, woman *as* masquerade, would be an image of the phallic economy’s denial of feminine desire. It, again, constitutes her as lack. And our anorexic woman, being “a surface on which conventional constructions of femininity are exposed starkly to view, through their inscription in extreme or hyperliteral form,” transforms her very body into a slender and erect penis (the anorexic body could be seen as a fetish—a substitute for the loss of the phallic mother?), she literally *becomes* the Phallus, the lack (“I remember [. . .] being surprised that I saw a form in the mirror, and not just a nothingness”), and thereby makes visible the absurdity of the Lacanian understanding of female desire, takes the masquerade to its very extreme, and thereby reveals it as a construction.^{vi}

To find a language of her own, the anorexic woman, using her body as a mouthpiece, must thus utilize the patriarchal structure, infiltrate it and make it her own. She has to occupy and reclaim territory lost. Only when she does this is the structure revealed, and its dualistic dialectic can be dismantled. For Irigaray, however, it is not a question of creating a new type of woman, but rather of liberating the actual concept from the dualistic economy of the Logos. The feminine is not the Other, but rather, in a literal sense, the unrepresentable.

Performance and Parody

The mimetic method has, in different terms and with different implications, been articulated by Judith Butler, for whom gender is a *performative* construct of a normative culture.^{vii} Butler's reality turns on the idea of language as *gesture*. By *behaving* as women we *become* women. Gender is an act, a repeated act. And our bodies are effects of signification, *created by language*. Discourse, or language, "is productive, constitutive, one might even argue *performative*, inasmuch as this signifying act delimits and contours the body that it then claims to find prior to any and all signification" (Butler 1993, 30). Language is thus not mimetic or representative, signs do not follow bodies as their necessary mirrors, but it is, on the contrary, our bodies that "mime" language.^{viii} As we saw, female bodies have, through a discourse that constitutes them as lack, *become lack*. To *erase* one's body, as the anorexic woman does, means to erase an (unwanted) product of phallogocentric representation. Again, to negate negation, to get rid of oneself as lack. To escape a kind of representation that negates (feminine) corporeality.

By seeking out *subversive* physical acts, Butler argues, we can help to expose the semiotic system and make visible that gender is a construction without natural foundation: "gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin" (Butler 1999, 175). For Butler, just as for Irigaray, it is thus only "*within* the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible" (1999, 185).

For Butler, drag is the best example of how the sedimentation of identity-based thinking can be questioned. Here, it is a man in women's clothing who, by imitating and exaggerating feminine attributes, also *exposes* them as being culturally constructed. "In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency" (Butler 1999, 175). The same, as we have seen, applies to the anorexic woman who, by exaggerating the restrictive beauty ideals to which modern women are expected to conform, reveals them as absurd and culturally constructed. Em Farrell, moreover, confirms that in her clinical experience "many bulimics and anorexics attempt to postpone indefinitely the realization of which sex they belong to, as though it was a decision that could be made by choice alone. They attempt to identify with being both male and female and so imagine they can provide everything or themselves" (26).

So, while Butler's analysis is based on the Foucauldian notion of discourse as that which *produces* us as subjects, she is more optimistic than him about the possibility of, maybe not *escaping* discourse but at least formulating a subversive *protest* against it, by making it *visible*.^{ix} The fact that we are constructed by discourse is actually, for Butler, the very condition for the possibility of agency: "Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible" (1999, 187).

The conceptualization of identity as an effect, as something produced or generated, opens up possibilities of agency. The anorexic woman, just like all

women (and men!), is an effect of phallographic culture, a "victim" of it, but she utilizes the very fact that the "natural" femininity that she is expected to adapt to is nothing but a construction, nothing but a copy of a copy, and by multiplying it as copy, by miming it and exaggerating it, by bringing it to the brink of death, she reveals it, unmasks it, and, therefore, potentially undermines it.

So, while some would argue that her self-starvation is a corporeal response to the *incorporation* of, and living out of, phallographic representations, I would argue, in line with Irigaray's and Butler's notions of mimicry or parody, that she *utilizes* it to reveal it as a construction and that she, literally, erases and rids herself of the very product of representation—her own body. And by doing so, she draws attention not only to her body as a construct, but also to (feminine) corporeality as such, to that which has been repressed (or ignored) by discourse.^x

Conclusion: Subversion or Failure?

But is anorexia really parodic and playful? Is there anything amusing about these starving women? Are they not rather tragic? It might be more appropriate, here, to talk of *pastiche* than of parody. Pastiche, according to Frederic Jameson, "is blank parody, parody that has lost its humor" (Butler 1999, 176). Mimicry without laughter. And, furthermore (as we have seen), pastiche, as opposed to parody, disputes and puts into question the very possibility of an "original" or, as in the case of gender, "reveals the 'original' as a failed effort to 'copy' a phantasmatic ideal that cannot be copied without failure" (Butler 1999, 201, no. 56).

Just as the "original" as such is a *failure* (since it turns out to be nothing but a copy), the imitation of it, in terms of potentially being a subversive act, also always risks failure. Not every parodic repetition is effectively disruptive, Butler reminds us. Some "rather become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (Butler 1999, 177). Anorexia is clearly a failed protest. As Bordo points out, it "isolates" and "weakens" its sufferers, and it is always a protest that risks collapsing into its opposite, to proclaim "the utter capitulation of the subjects to the contracted female world" (176). It is a constant balancing act and, as many have pointed out before me, even if anorexia is understood as protest, it is most commonly a protest that not even its sufferers are aware of. An unconscious protest.

Nevertheless, by moving within and alongside the patriarchal structure that defined (the anorexic) woman from the start, she mimes it, and simultaneously creates a criticism of it. Or, as formulated by Jan Jagodzinski: "By 'following' the rules of patriarchy to the 'letter' [. . .] she manipulates them" (31). She reveals the order and oppression of the discourse and becomes a spokesperson for the narrowly defined template to which we as women are expected to conform. The anorexic body demonstrates that the traditional or "natural" feminine role is a social and cultural construct and, moreover, one that clearly makes women suffer.

Notes

ⁱ I want to emphasize that this reading is *not* an attempt to romanticize eating disorders or to promote them as a constructive and effective protest. I am very aware that anorexic women inflict extreme pain, not only upon themselves but also on people around them and people who care for them. They have taken on a very dangerous task, oftentimes a deadly one, and their pain and suffering must not be underestimated.

ⁱⁱ In “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault,” Susan Bordo places *agoraphobia* in the same category of illnesses. Hysteria, agoraphobia and anorexia, she claims, are all extensions or extremes of cultural sex role stereotypes for women in different times (the Victorian era, the 1950s and our contemporary epoch). On the epidemic of hysteria (and neurasthenia)—specifically as symptoms of stereotypical femininity, see Elaine Showalter’s *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980*. Showalter points out that the term *hysterical* itself became almost interchangeable with the term *feminine* in the literature of the period (129). *Hysteria*, too, has been interpreted by feminists as a protest against patriarchy and phallogocentrism. Hélène Cixous, for example, speaks of “those wonderful hysterics, who subjected Freud to so many voluptuous moments too shameful to mention, bombarding his mosaic statute/law of Moses with their carnal, passionate body-words, haunting him with their inaudible thundering denunciations.” For Cixous, Dora, who so frustrated Freud, is “the core example of the protesting force in women” (Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman*. Quoted from Bordo 175).

ⁱⁱⁱ Lane, in “Anorexia, Masochism, Self-Mutilation, and Autoerotism: The Spider Mother,” summarizes psychoanalytic views on anorexia, and claims that the symptom “helps the girl to avoid dealing with both sexuality and separation, as the symptoms encourage further enmeshment and attachment to and by the mother.” And further: “The symptoms are adaptive as they protect the girl from the demands of maturity for which she is ill prepared” (113).

^{iv} I am hereby not simply rejecting the traditional psychoanalytic understanding of anorexia as a fear of separation, but I would argue that the psychologicistic model is insufficient for a full understanding of eating disorders, and that it has to be combined with a structural understanding of the symptoms, taking the question of *gender* and *language* into account. This being said, however, I think that every case of anorexia has to be seen in its very uniqueness, and that these symptoms are far too complex and complicated to be squeezed into some universal conceptualization. I am simply trying to add one interpretation, in the hope of further balancing our understanding of this epidemic.

^v This mixture of activity and passivity is one of the ultimate characteristics of the anorexic woman, who, through her self-destructive behavior, is sadistic and masochistic at once. She takes on an *intermediate* position between the typical pair of opposites. This could be seen as a kind of “negative” or “destructive” version of autoerotism, as described by Freud in “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes.”

Freud, in this text, points out how both scopophilia and exhibitionism begin with a yet earlier drive, namely that in which one looks at an object that is part of one's own body. One looks and is being looked at simultaneously (Freud 130). Also compare Merleau-Ponty's notion of the *chiasm*, which is based on the idea of simultaneously touching and being touched.

^{vi} The most famous conceptualization of femininity as masquerade is Joan Riviere's 1929 essay "Womanliness as Masquerade."

^{vii} Austin was the first to conceptualize the notion of the performative. Performative utterances, as opposed to statements (or declarative utterances), are neither true nor false. Statements like "I apologize," "I advise you to do it," "I promise you that I will be there," or "I hereby name this ship *Liberté*," all *perform an action*. To say "I promise" is the very act of making a promise, whether you keep that promise or not. It is a speech-act, a performative.

^{viii} This means, in line with Foucault's emphasis on discourse as a constant practice, that identity is the result of practices, that it is "doing" rather than "being." Consequently, as Bray and Colebrook have pointed out, anorexia, too, is a series of practices and comportments; "there are no anorexics, only activities of dietetics, measuring, regulation and calculation" (Bray and Colebrook 62).

^{ix} Foucault, throughout his work, emphasized the *productive* character of discourse (and of power). He showed, maybe most clearly in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, that it is the very speech that is introduced to "liberate" us (confession, psychoanalysis) that actually produces us as subjects. His understanding of power and discourse has been criticized for paralyzing the subject and making (political) agency impossible. The final Foucault, though, in volume two and three of *The History of Sexuality*, introduces what he calls "technologies of the self" as a possible way towards agency and freedom.

^x One could ask, here, whether it makes sense to postulate some kind of "true" femininity, which then would have been repressed/ignored/excluded from discourse, if we, at the same time, see femininity and masculinity as discursive constructs. Irigaray and Butler have often been situated at two different sides of the traditional division between essentialism and constructivism, and Butler, in *Gender Trouble*, criticizes Irigaray exactly for being essentialist. A full discussion about this would require much more space than I have here, and I will not even attempt to "solve" the problem. I would, however, at least imply that I think Irigaray, exactly through her notion of mimesis, has accomplished the challenging task of reconciling the traditional feminist split, and that her account may seem more essentialist than it actually is. Her biological essentialism could be seen as a rhetorical strategy. What Irigaray tries to do, and this is where the inside/outside distinction becomes problematic and invalid, is to situate the feminine as the unspeakable condition of figuration, that which can never be figured but whose exclusion from that propriety is its enabling condition. When Irigaray mimes the language of philosophy or psychoanalysis, she takes on a language that effectively cannot belong to her, only to call into question the exclusionary rules of proprietariness that govern the use of discourse. This is a point actually made by Judith Butler, when she re-reads Irigaray after having

published *Gender Trouble*, and problematizes her own critical reading of her. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler compares Irigaray's gesture with that of Derrida who, in his consideration of the form/matter distinction (in *Positions*) suggests that "matter must be redoubled, at once as a pole within a binary opposition, and as that which exceeds that binary coupling, as a figure for its nonsystematizability." So, when Irigaray, in *Marine Lover*, writes that "woman neither is nor has essence," she basically means that the phallic economy, which claims to include the feminine as the subordinate term in a binary opposition of masculine/feminine, actually rather *excludes* the feminine, that is, *produces it* as that which must be excluded from the phallic economy, in order for it to operate at all. For both Derrida and Irigaray, Butler argues, it seems like "what is excluded from this binary is also *produced* by it in the mode of exclusion and has no separable or fully independent existence as an absolute outside." The case is then rather that it "emerges within the system as incoherence, disruption, a threat to its own systematicity" (Butler 1993, 37 ff.). It is thus not a matter of "true" femininity, but nevertheless of a kind of "constitutive outside," although produced by (and from within) discourse.

Works Cited

- Austin, J. L.** "Performative-Constatative." *Philosophical Papers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.
— "Performative Utterances." *The Philosophy of Language*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Bell, Rudolph M.** *Holy Anorexia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- Bordo, Susan.** *Unbearable Weight—Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Butler, Judith.** *Gender Trouble—Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
— *Bodies That Matter—On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Bray, Abigail and Colebrook, Claire.** "The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1998.
- Farrell, Em.** *Lost for Words: The Psychoanalysis of Anorexia and Bulimia*. New York: Other Press, 2000.
- Foucault, Michel.** *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.
— *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.
— *The History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self*. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.
- Freud, Sigmund.** *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*. Standard Edition, vol. 14. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000.

Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which is not One*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Jagodzinski, Jan. "Women's Bodies of Performative Excess: Miming, Feigning, Refusing, and Rejecting the Phallus." *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture & Society*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2003.

Lacan, Jacques. *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-1973*. Seminar XX. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998.

— *Écrits, A Selection*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: W. W Norton & Company, 2004.

Lane, Robert C. "Anorexia, Masochism, Self-Mutilation, and Autoerotism: The Spider Mother." *Psychoanalytic Review*, vol. 89, no. 1, 2002.

Malson, Helen. "Women under Erasure: Anorexic Bodies in Postmodern Context." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 9, 1999.

Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980*. New York: Pantheon, 1985.