

Resistance, Flight, Creation

Feminist Enactments of French Philosophy

Edited by

DOROTHEA OLKOWSKI

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS
Ithaca and London

2000

Thirteen women at the forefront of philosophy locate new feminist points of view within the discipline by rigorously engaging works of contemporary French philosophy. In so doing, they transform the standard practices of the field and carve out new territory. These writers amplify the work of feminist philosophers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, and Sarah Kofman in ways that are both stylistically and substantively creative. They also integrate for radical feminist use the works of male philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

The essays illustrate the manner in which feminist philosophers bypass traditional methodology in favor of a disciplinary freedom characterized by fluid methodologies—best exemplified in Beauvoir's work—and by the employment of imaginative forms, including the autobiographical and the poetic. The modes of inquiry used range from psychoanalysis and existentialism to deconstruction, post-structuralism, and newly resurgent phenomenology. The collection also contains a comprehensive bibliography of feminist thinkers who are enacting French philosophy in English, German, and French.

Dorothea Olkowski is Co-Chair of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. She is the author of *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation* and coeditor of *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*; *Merleau-Ponty, Interiority and Exteriority, Psychic Life and the World*; and *Rereading Merleau-Ponty: Essays beyond the Continental-Analytic Divide*.

"*Resistance, Flight, Creation* contains some major figures in the field and thus sets the stage for becoming a classic in feminist theory. The book's range is quite extraordinary in that it addresses both feminist theory at its limits and current appropriations of male thinkers. A useful contribution to current and future studies."

—Irene Harvey,

Pennsylvania State
University

Cornell Paperbacks

Cornell University Press

www.cornellpress.cornell.edu

ISBN 0-8014-8645-9



9 780801 486456

Disappropriations: Luce Irigaray and Sarah Kofman

PENELOPE DEUTSCHER

One runs . . . a greater danger of madness with repetition, even the deconstructive repetition with which I work, than with "original invention." . . . My "mimetic" or "hysterical" writing runs the risk of madness, not only because the authors I write on are just about all mad, but because this method leads one to a permanent disappropriation.

—Sarah Kofman, "Apprendre aux hommes
à tenir parole"—portrait de Sarah Kofman"

Appropriations

In his reading of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida makes a distinction between what Rousseau's work ostensibly "declares" and what it actually "describes."¹ There are, reminds Robert Bernasconi in the wake of Paul de Man, occasional passages where Derrida seems to introduce an "ethical overtone of deceit," speaking as if Rousseau chooses to remain blind to what his texts really describe.² In *Blindness and Insight*, Paul de Man argues against "those critics" who "pretend" to have a superior access to what Rousseau "really did" mean to say.³ Does Derrida suppose he has access to what Rousseau did not intend his text to "declare"?

Or is it de Man who returns to the language of the author's intentions? Claiming that Rousseau is in control of the unstable elements in his work, de Man reinstates the language about the author's consciousness that he also undermines. He locates in Rousseau's work examples of what he terms "controlled contradiction."⁴ Controlled contradictions are those that are part of, rather than disruptive to, an author's theoretical schema. For example, rather than being paralyzed by difficulties in his argument, Rousseau sometimes discusses or draws philosophical inferences from those difficulties (*Allegories*, 229).⁵

It is with no small fascination that one witnesses a parallel debate between

Luce Irigaray and Sarah Kofman in their readings of Freud. In *The Enigma of Woman*, Kofman defends Freud against Irigaray's interpretation:

Luce Irigaray was the first to draw attention to the phallogocentric character of [Freud's "Femininity"]. I shall arrive at a similar conclusion while offering a quite different reading, one that emphasizes the complexity of the Freudian undertaking.⁶

Kofman acknowledges that she and Irigaray offer complementary interpretations of Freud's phallogocentrism. According to Kofman, however, Irigaray mistranslates Freud, renders his work simplistic, undoes the order of his argumentation, cites him in a misleading fashion, and selectively cites that which reinforces her argument, while suppressing that which does not. Above all, Irigaray underestimates the complexity of Freud's work.

How does Kofman manage to so distance herself from Irigaray's reading of Freud whilst also agreeing with it? She presents herself as a reader who is better prepared than Irigaray to appreciate Freud's complexity. The author in question—Rousseau or Freud—contains a "deconstructible" level to their work, de Man and Kofman agree. But this demonstrates the complexity of Rousseau's and Freud's thought. This complexity has not been appreciated, indeed, it has been appropriated, by those who seek to read the author's text against the author's declarations. Thus, de Man and Kofman appear, unexpectedly, as apologists for Rousseau and Freud against deconstructive interpretations of those authors (from Derrida and Irigaray) with which they also accord.

When de Man and Kofman locate "complexity" in Rousseau's and Freud's texts, this gesture collapses into the language about the author's intentions they also resist. Kofman proposes that "the double appeal to poetry in 'Femininity' has to be interpreted as part of a strategy" (*Enigma*, 103; my emphasis). Freud's modesty, says Kofman, is "feigned and tactical" (*Enigma*, 104); "Freud only pretends to be giving way to the specialists (specialists in female sexuality, in this case) whose 'truths' he exhibits the better to criticize or deconstruct them" (*Enigma*, 104). Freud is engaged in a complex project of presenting the reader with distinctions so as to complicate those distinctions. He risks being misread as a self-contradictory author who undermines distinctions to which he also appeals. He risks the arrival of a deconstructive critic at the scene of his text who sifts out one refrain as the "declared level," another as the inconsistent "described level," thereby thinking to have turned Freud's own text against himself. This is how Kofman represents the arrival of Luce Irigaray at the scene of Freud's text:

[Freud] risks being misunderstood, being criticized (as Luce Irigaray has not failed to do) for holding onto the old words *masculine* and *feminine* in their most traditional, most metaphysical sense at the very point where he is attempting to reevaluate them, at the moment when he is seriously complicating the conventional schema that identifies masculine with *active* and feminine with *passive*. (*Enigma*, 115)

The positions taken by de Man and Kofman make surprising property claims concerning deconstructive activity and the boundaries between Irigaray and Freud, Derrida and Rousseau. Irigaray and Derrida are taken to be mistakenly attributing deconstructive activity to "themselves" rather than to Rousseau and Freud, and so to be misappropriating the latter's textual complexity. According to de Man and Kofman, it is by failing to appreciate the extent to which these authors are already deconstructive that Derrida and Irigaray take themselves to be deconstructing the texts of Rousseau and Freud.⁷

The debate, then, is partly about the status of deconstruction. If a deconstructive reading demonstrates that a text is more complicated than its explicit "declared" level suggests, for de Man and Kofman the object in question (Rousseau or Freud) is therefore more complicated than is usually thought. In this way, Sarah Kofman is led into proprietorial issues: Does Irigaray misappropriate Freud's complexity? A debate about the status of deconstructive readings converts into the implicit return to concepts of "proper" boundaries between author, text, and critic. For Kofman, Irigaray has preyed upon Freud, inappropriately attributing to her own reading the level of complexity found in Freud's text, which should be recognized as belonging to "Freud."⁸

Disappropriations

I shall later argue that Kofman's best work acutely calls into question just such issues of intellectual property rights and renders all the more questionable her arguments against Irigaray. Working towards that argument, I shall first make some comments about Kofman's response to Irigaray. When Kofman accuses Irigaray of a misappropriation of Freud's complexity, the most obvious response is to wonder at the level of disappropriation the (critical) self Kofman engages in through her own reading of Freud. When, in *The Enigma of Woman*, Kofman ingeniously demonstrates the complexity of "Freud," she displaces onto the figure of Freud the complex reading she has effected. Kofman's defense of Freud contra Irigaray sug-

gests in turn Kofman's willful disappropriation of her own complexity. If a deconstructive reading of Freud can lead to an insistence on the complexity of Freud, or can lead to the deconstructive critic understanding his or her work as an intervention into the text, then why does Kofman so downplay the extent to which she has intervened into Freud's work?

Having attributed the complexity of Freud's text to "Freud," Kofman is in a position to present herself as a critic who (merely) mimics or repeats the Freudian text, rather than making a more critical intervention into that text. Because (disappropriating herself) she attributes her reading of Freud to "Freud," she is able to identify her interpretation as (merely) repeating the deconstructive complexity of "Freud." In an interview, she acknowledges the risk of this practice: disappropriation of herself in favor of Freud.⁹ Elsewhere, Kofman does avow that her project is to repeat Freud *while very lightly displacing his text*.¹⁰ Kofman's project, then, is not to "merely" repeat Freud—even were "mere" repetition possible. Yet she is at pains to downplay the level of textual intervention she makes into the Freudian corpus.

The comparison with Irigaray throws into relief the curiousness of Kofman's role. Kofman and Irigaray concur in their demonstration of Freud's phallogentrism. But Irigaray has no investment in downplaying her level of (feminist) intervention, and we must ask, why does Kofman? Irigaray's is an explicitly political project to subvert phallogentric accounts of women. This renders all the more stark the oddness of Kofman's *identification* with Freud in the context of a parallel and assiduous analysis of phallogentrism. Luce Irigaray's work has been much analyzed and debated by critics. The juxtaposition of her work with that of Sarah Kofman is intended to open debate on the lesser-known Kofman. I shall pursue the relationship between feminist intervention and identification, and between modes of appropriation and disappropriation, in the work of both philosophers.

Kofman and Irigaray

Kofman died in 1994, the author of a huge and little-interpreted corpus. In more than twenty works, she had explored phallogentric renderings of femininity in the history of philosophy, arguing that they are symptomatic of blind spots and weaknesses in philosophical systems. Only a few English translations of Kofman's work appeared during her lifetime, and she was best known to Anglophone audiences for *The Enigma of Woman*, which appeared in English concurrently with Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* in 1985. Though Kofman's book is highly critical of Irigaray's project, there are considerable parallels between the interpretations Irigaray and Kofman offer of Freud in these works.¹¹ Both argue that his account

of sexual difference excludes concepts of femininity as radically other and is riddled with textual instability, contradiction, inconsistency, and blind spots. Both, with varying degrees of irony, get Freud on the couch, locating Freud's desire to seduce the daughter, or his fear of looking directly at the mother, or analyzing his theory of penis envy as Freud's own fetish solution.

If Irigaray fared far better than Kofman in terms of the progress of English translations and immeasurably better in terms of the progress of Anglophone commentary on her work, Kofman's book was from the first well known and well received, favorably compared with Irigaray's reading of Freud: "more detailed, more scholarly," suggested Gayatri Spivak, "more sophisticated in its methodology, and perhaps more perceptive."¹² But in comparison to Irigaray's work, it could be said that Kofman's work did not get a footing among feminist readers.

Kofman had shared Irigaray's vigilance in analyzing phallogentric projections of femininity in the work of figures such as Nietzsche, Freud, Hegel, Plato, Kant, and Rousseau. But Irigaray's work is infinitely easier to identify as a feminist intervention. Like Irigaray, Kofman exposed femininity as the blind spot of great works of the history of philosophy. But unlike Irigaray, she did not attempt to disrupt those texts by generating alternative figures of the feminine or by refiguring sexual difference. What, then, was the point of her project? Her criticisms of Irigaray's reading of Freud are confusing and telling in this regard. As Monique Schneider asked of Kofman, was it a matter of defending Freud against Irigaray's accusation of misogyny?¹³ Clearly not—Kofman's reading is in close proximity with that of Irigaray. What then are the politics of Kofman's readings, and can her work be seen as a feminist enactment of philosophy?

If it is Irigaray's politics of textual intervention that most allows us to distinguish the style of her work from that of Kofman, the tone Kofman takes to Irigaray has served her badly. Kofman appears, and presents herself, as she who repeats the text, she who charts its phallogentrism, but not she who makes her subversive intervention. From this perspective, it is telling that Kofman identifies a deconstructive reading—her own style of deconstructive reading—as repetition of a text ("Apprendre," 7). Isn't deconstruction usually thought of as making an intervention into the text, not redoubling a text (*Grammatology*, 158)? This is the depiction to be found in *Sexual Subversions*, for example:

In opposition to Freud's containment of women in men's self-reflecting representations. . . . Irigaray attempts a feminist deconstruction of psychoanalysis. Her project is both to undo the phallogentric constriction of women as men's others and to create a means by which women's specificity may figure in discourse in autonomous terms.¹⁴

Kofman appears, by contrast, to be a theorist who analyzes the containment of women in men's self-reflecting representations in texts in the history of philosophy, while not attempting to undo those representations.

Although Kofman goes to extraordinary lengths to discount the originality of her work, specifically distinguishing her methodology from that of "original invention" ("Apprendre," 7), it is wrong to relegate her to the ranks of commentators whose brief is to repeat faithfully. Moreover, Kofman's original and critical interventions may be located at the heart of her maverick project of identification with phallogocentric philosophers. Irigaray and Kofman both engage in projects of mimesis with the philosophers they interpret, and Kofman's project of mimesis renders questionable the metaphors of intellectual property she draws upon to criticize Irigaray. Nevertheless, by comparing the little-known Kofman style of mimesis with the much-discussed Irigarayan politics of mimesis, we are better able to identify the strange interventions practiced by Kofman.

Reappropriation

Much has been written about Irigaray and her projects of mimesis. In order to evoke concepts of femininity excluded from culture and theory, she mimics conventional concepts of femininity so as to displace them:

One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it . . . To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to re-cover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself . . . to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible.¹⁵

Debate has turned on whether this is a prudent project. Some critics have suggested that Irigaray's repetition of conventional tropes of femininity simply reinforce those tropes. As Margaret Whitford points out, "It is this deliberate mimetic assumption of male metaphors, male images of the feminine which has led to accusations of essentialism and logocentrism" (Irigaray, 71). But Whitford also points out that "one cannot alter symbolic meanings by fiat; one cannot simply step outside phallogocentrism" (Irigaray, 70). What tools are at Irigaray's disposal to "thwart the feminine role"? Irigaray cannot simply invent new feminine roles out of thin air, and for this reason she returns to many of the conventional associations of femininity, such as matter, the bodily, the maternal, fluidity, and formless-

ness. To do so deliberately is a different project, she argues, from being subordinated to conventional representations of femininity: it is an affirmative and subversive resistance. Woman is not reducible to those roles if she is deliberately mimicking them. Women's excess to a conventional feminine mimicry is underlined by their ability to undertake playful repetition. Furthermore, Irigaray argues that the dependence of masculine identity on femininity-as-other is culturally invisible. Therefore, she claims that a subversive function is served by a mimesis of conventional femininity. For women to mimic femininity deliberately is a means of demonstrating that women are always mimicking femininity: they are always produced and producing themselves in accordance with conventional tropes of femininity. To render this visible is, by Irigaray's argument, subversive because it demonstrates that women, by the very fact of their mimicry, always necessarily resist or exceed their role as other to masculinity. Therefore, *playing* with mimesis, suggests Irigaray:

also means "to unveil" the fact that, if women are such good mimics, is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. *They also remain elsewhere*: another case of the persistence of "matter" . . . [I]f women can play with mimesis, it is because they are capable of bringing new nourishment to its operation. Because they have always nourished this operation? (*This Sex*, 76)

The outlines of this project of displacing mimesis are less abstract when seen in the context of a specific intervention into a philosophical account of femininity. The first section in Irigaray's work on Nietzsche, *Marine Lover*, reiterates her project of mimicry and the steps laid out in interviews from which the above comments are drawn. Irigaray reconstructs the figure of femininity such as she takes it to operate in the Nietzschean corpus. In a project of mimesis, we see Irigaray adopt the voice of the feminine as she has reconstructed it, in order to interrogate and resist Nietzsche. Adopting this voice, we see Irigaray claim of the Nietzschean figures of women that they are cut to reflect desirable images of a masculine self. Says Irigaray as the feminine speaker, addressing herself to Nietzsche:

Either you seize hold of me or you throw me away, but always according to your whim of the moment. I am good or bad according to your latest good or evil. Muse or fallen angel to suit the needs of your most recent notion.¹⁶

Says the feminine speaker to Nietzsche, "Doesn't your gaze reduce me to your images or illusions" (*Marine*, 31)? And the trope of mimicry is introduced: where in "Power of Discourse" we are told that women "are such

good mimics," (*This Sex*, 76); in *Marine Lover* the feminine speaker asks, "Is this not the worst reversal of all, to make me mimic your mirages" (*Marine*, 31)? Irigaray, therefore, uses feminine mimicry to articulate the mimic's excess to that enactment of femininity. Embodying the voice of the mimic, Irigaray embodies the voice of she who is the remainder to her own performance of masculine mirages of femininity. In using the phrase, "to make me mimic your mirages," a voice is inserted of she who is more than her mimicry. Irigaray tries to reinsert and then expand on this concept of the feminine who can be seen as "remainder." A familiar gesture is Irigaray's use of the concept of "reduction." If the feminine is represented as other-to-the-masculine, the representation is limited and reductive. Stating, therefore, that the feminine has been "reduced" to this role, Irigaray is able to embody the voice of the feminine who could be understood as "having been" reduced.

The gesture is less straightforward than it seems. Rather than supposing there is a coherent identity to a true femininity underneath false phallogocentric distortions, Irigaray asks, If women mimic, are shaped and shape themselves, could we not suppose that all of the possibilities for women are not exhausted in these shapings? As a device, she attempts to speak as the feminine exceeding these shapings within a Nietzschean text. This is not asserting a truth to the feminine.

Given that women are asked to "reflect" desirable images, Irigaray uses the concept of a mirror to underscore the concept of women exceeding these reflections. There must, she proposes, be a material element to the mirror out of which is constituted a reflecting surface. Again, Irigaray attempts to speak "as" or from the position of this "material" element, in a resistance to the Nietzschean references to femininity:

You had fashioned me into a mirror but . . . I have washed off your masks and make up, scrubbed away your multicolored projections and designs, stripped off your veils and wraps. (*Marine*, 4)

Irigaray's embodiment of the feminine, for example of the "me" who has been "made to mimic" or the "me" who scrubs away the projections, is not an attempt to suggest that there is some sort of locatable, authentic feminine identity distinct from Nietzschean tropes for women. Rather, Irigaray would have it that the Nietzschean tropes themselves serve as an indirect affirmation of excess or remainder to those tropes. It is in this sense that Irigaray both occupies and resists Nietzsche. Nietzsche's requirement of mimicry from women affirms that they must exceed the mimicry in question. This is a statement about the logic of Nietzsche's demand, not about some "truth" to women's identity. In occupying the speaking voice of the feminine "me," Irigaray speaks, not from the place of feminine truth but

from the place of excess opened up by Nietzsche's demand. Thus, one sees the connection between Irigaray's assertion that there is a phallogocentric demand for feminine mimicry and her attempt to deliberately mimic the feminine by assuming a "suppressed" feminine voice.

So, it is through (re)appropriating this voice that Irigaray resists Nietzsche by asserting that what is required within the Nietzschean corpus is a feminine that reflects desirable images of masculinity:

Of course it's true that she can send you back the melancholy effects of your self-marriage. But isn't this a strange love you are preaching: love for a looking glass eternally set opposite you. (*Marine*, 32-33)

She suggests that this demand reflects an economy of sameness also seen in the Nietzschean concept of eternal recurrence. Thus, Irigaray suggests to Nietzsche, "For you pleasure is the return of the same" (*Marine*, 10). Therefore he suppresses concepts of sexual difference, and Irigaray accordingly cautions Nietzsche about the need to affirm relations with a feminine other in terms of difference:

Your dawn harbors degeneracy and decline if you . . . refuse to wed that other (woman) as a stranger. (*Marine*, 61)

Nietzsche fails to relate to the feminine as strange, other, nonrelational. This failure is not mitigated by the Nietzschean images of femininity in terms of enigma and distance. Like Kofman, Irigaray takes the trope of "distance" to amount to a desire to keep the feminine at a distance, rather than engaging with women in terms of sexual difference.

This leads to an indictment of expressions of otherness in Nietzsche's work in general. Nietzsche does speak of his requirement for a worthy enemy and a good friend and of the ideal of two subjects who heighten each other's forces in their encounter. This might seem to be a positive affirmation of alterity: of the encounter between two equal but different selves. But, says Irigaray, "your search for a rival who can match up to you, . . . the urge to fight on equal terms" is not this another manifestation of the hope that "someone *like yourself* turns up . . . someone other, and yet like, a faithful mirror" (*Marine*, 66; my emphasis). Here Irigaray challenges the status of the other with whom Nietzsche wants to engage. Nietzsche expresses the need for engagement with the worthy other. Still, his ideal is not, she suggests, an encounter with the other as foreign, strange, but as "like myself"—thus not really other but same. Just as the role of the feminine is to serve as mirror to the (masculine) self, Irigaray suggests that in general, ideals of alterity, of encounters between different selves, which Nietzsche paints in the glorious terms of the friend as worthy enemy, is really, again,

no more than the desire for a mirror. The other, suggests Irigaray, in the Nietzschean corpus "has no role except as counterweight or balance arm between you and yourself" (*Marine*, 73).

Adopting the voice of the Nietzschean feminine, Irigaray converts the voice into one that would resist the demands made on her by Nietzsche and who would promote an ethos of the encounter between sexually different subjects. Asks this voice, "Why are we not, the one for the other, a resource of life and air?" (*Marine*, 31). For such an encounter to take place, the feminine voice converted into voice of resistance admonishes, "You will hear nothing of women as long [as] you are bending them thus to your will . . . you will never have pleasure (jouir) in woman . . . If you insist to making her a stage in your process" (*Marine*, 39).

This, then, is an exemplary instance of Irigaray's project of mimesis. She draws on her own diagnosis that woman is being asked to play the role of man's other, to locate a rhetorical point of excess to the performance. Personifying that voice of a feminine identity who performs for Nietzsche, Irigaray evokes the performer's resistance:

I shall escape a mask custom-made to beguile you. For smothering myself in such vain show repels me. (*Marine*, 59)

I am no longer the lining to your coat, your—faithful—understudy. (*Marine*, 4)

Irigaray identifies with and mimics the feminine voice as it is evoked in Nietzsche's work. But the project is clearly feminist and political. It resists the phallogocentric casting of femininity and does so according to a politics that would articulate resistance while avoiding assertions about the truth of the feminine.

Appropriate Readings

Kofman never commented on Irigaray's interpretation of Nietzsche. Her criticisms of Irigaray are directed at the possibility that the latter overtly stabilizes Freud's network of thoughts into a solidified line, so as to expose its phallogocentrism. Irigaray is trying too hard to catch Freud out, excessively foregrounding one tendency in Freud's texts as the real meaning of the text and underemphasizing Freud's textual heterogeneity. Irigaray's reading, therefore, fails to reconstruct the complex, unstable lines of Freudian argument concerning femininity, because her critique depends on a preliminary work of exaggerated textual stabilization. What is odd is that Kofman's

commitment to emphasizing Freud's plural voices outweighs her considerable points of agreement with Irigaray.

To interrogate the political impetus of Kofman's readings, one must therefore interrogate the stakes of her insistence on textual heterogeneity. For Kofman, textual heterogeneity is the inescapable mark of the fact that the philosopher writes in the ambivalent play between systematicity, and what she designates as his or her sexual positioning, rationality, and the philosopher's drives, instincts, body, passions:

Even in a philosophical text, a so-called rational and systematic text, independent of all empirical and pathological subjectivity, and therefore of sexuality, it isn't possible to separate the text from the sexual positioning of its author.¹⁷

An appropriate reading of a philosophical text attends to its necessary expression of passion and desire, ambivalent identifications and ambivalent claims, textual levels that produce unstable and inconsistent texts. Though Irigaray is acutely attentive to Freud's inconsistencies, inconsistencies, passions, and desires, Kofman's concern is that Irigaray can only locate these in a mode of reading *against the grain of the text*. Kofman places the emphasis on the fact the grain of a text is multiple and ambivalent and is therefore unimpressed with the idea that reading Freud's multiple voices is inevitably to read against Freud.

To what danger is Irigaray supposed to have succumbed by supposing she is reading Freud *against* Freud? Perhaps the manner of her unveiling of Freud's impropriety—his inconsistent voices—reinforces the idea that the proper text would be stable, consistent, not ridden with contradictory desires. When Irigaray takes herself to be reading "against Freud," exposing what she takes to be his underbelly, she underemphasizes the way in which all texts are heterogeneous, multiple, dehiscent. For Kofman, the politics of emphasizing the heterogeneity of all philosophical texts is crucial and must accompany the exposure of Freud's phallogocentrism.

I have asked what the politics are of this emphasis of his textual complexity. If not clearly feminist, is it at least a subversive enactment of philosophy? Should Kofman's work be interpreted as a project of subversion of philosophy? Yes, suggests Ann Smock, because of Kofman's demonstration of how "the greatest thinkers are led all unknowingly by the very drives and instincts from which they believe their thought to be utterly independent."¹⁸ In the words of Kofman,

Haven't we . . . always known that a writer writes with their blood? Hasn't an entire tradition opposed philosophy to literature under the pretext that the former is produced independently of the life of the philosopher?¹⁹

Kofman's intervention into the history of philosophy is to expose its unspoken debts to the embodiment, the life of the philosopher. If Comte manages to construct an early positivist system, she argues, it is in interconnection with his repression of the feminine. Rousseau's political philosophy, which relegates women to a private sphere crucial to the good operation of the public sphere, is not disconnected from his sexual economy in which there is a desire both to idolize women and to keep them at a distance. And, according to Kofman, Kant's sexual economy inaugurates his ethics.²⁰

About one-third of Kofman's corpus consists of critical readings directed at a series of philosophers who might pretend that their theory transcends or offers some escape from the domain of the body and the passions, such as Comte and Kant. Kofman attempts to subvert the pretensions of these philosophers through readings that constitute an overall claim that no philosophical position can be divorced from its sexual economy.²¹ As Kofman explains the genesis of her project:

I came to the conclusion . . . on the basis of my work on Auguste Comte, that there is no philosophical thought which is separable from a certain sexual position. I then undertook the same kind of interpretation of Kant and Rousseau . . . in *Le Respect de femmes*. ("Interview," 12)

We have seen that the series of Kant, Comte, Rousseau, and others consists of those who might hope, through the device of philosophy, to divorce themselves from their sexual economy. What then of her readings of Derrida, Freud, and Nietzsche? These figures do not represent to Kofman philosophers with such pretensions. Kofman particularly figures these three as avowing the association between life, body, and text, and a theorization of life and body as text.

For example, she presents us with the Freud, who "compares the great social productions of art, religion, and philosophy to the neuroses . . . establish[ing] relations of one-to-one correspondence between the different social productions and the different mental illnesses which echo them. . . . [T]he totality of productions are but different dialects of a single language: that of the unconscious. . . . Art, religion, and philosophy . . . are social solutions that spare the artist, the religious man, and the philosopher the corresponding neurosis from which he was 'not far removed.'"²² In other words, Freud is not committed to a life/work dichotomy, and indeed, agrees that systematic philosophy has parallels with paranoid psychic structures.

The stakes of reading the philosopher's work in terms of his sexual economy must be different in the context of figures such as Freud and Nietzsche, who do not disavow such a connection. How then should we interpret Kofman's philosophical project in relation to such figures? In *Camera Obscura* and elsewhere Kofman also accuses Nietzsche of sharing a sexual

economy that can be likened to that of Rousseau, a castration anxiety in which one desires, but fears to look upon, the woman (mother).²³ Kofman locates phallogentrism in Nietzsche's work as in that of Rousseau. And as before, her suspicion is that phallogentric representations of women indicate more general weak spots in the philosopher's argument. Nietzsche's antimetaphysical position is that no truth remains a truth without its veil; there are, in other words, no truths behind veils. However, Kofman reads Nietzsche's position on women as symptomatic of a possible return of conventional concepts of truth. Thus the importance of the Baubô chapter in *Nietzsche et la scène philosophique*, in which Kofman interrogates Nietzsche's figures of women.²⁴ Her aim is not to denounce misogyny as such, but to interrogate the presence of fetishism in Nietzsche's textual, sexual economy. A fetishist economy, she argues, indicates a reemergence of a metaphysical concept of truth in Nietzsche's work.

However literally we wish to take the suggestion that Comte, Rousseau, and others are paranoid, melancholic, and fetishist, Kofman's readings are intended as subversive. Traditional metaphysical philosophy has the pretension to be free of neurosis, psychosis, and perversion. But, argues Kofman, such domains articulate themselves in the philosopher's position on women. And, more strongly still, perhaps the metaphysics can't be articulated without the position on women and the feminine ("Interview," 13-14).

It's because of their expression of the drives of the body that Kofman argues that texts are complex and heterogeneous, riddled with multiple lines. It may well be in the interests of a feminist approach to the history of philosophy to hold out for a textual reading of a given philosopher in these terms. Philosophy that avows the debt to the body may not be a transparently feminist enactment of philosophy, but its importance can be seen in Kofman's demonstration that the denial of that debt tends to be accompanied by an overt marginalization of femininity in that same text.

What is remarkable is that Kofman makes these points through an occupation of the works of Freud and Nietzsche, which both resists their accounts of femininity while affirming and identifying with their analyses of the philosopher's debt to the body. In constructing her own critical persona, Kofman leaves fluid the boundaries between it and the Freudian and Nietzschean critical personae. Again, the politics of this methodology remain ambiguous. Why identify with figures whose phallogentrism one has criticized?

Kofman on Nietzsche

Comparing the readings of Irigaray and Kofman of Freud and Nietzsche, one more clearly dislodges the nature of Kofman's reading as subversive in-

intervention. Although Kofman did not respond to Irigaray's interpretation of Nietzsche, an exchange between their interventions into Nietzsche can be staged. One major difference between Irigaray and Kofman in their readings of Freud is that whereas Irigaray attempts a subversion of Freud's phallogocentrism, Kofman's critical intervention into Freud's work is synthesized with her identification with Freud. Where Irigaray identifies with the feminine appropriated by Nietzsche, Kofman identifies with Nietzsche himself. Irigaray reappropriates the Nietzschean feminine so as to personify it in resistant fashion. Yet Kofman disappropriates herself in favor of a personification of Nietzsche. I turn, then, to Kofman's last major work, the most dramatically identificatory of her projects on Nietzsche.

In 1992 and 1993, Kofman published *Explosion I* and *II*, a 770-page monument to, and occupation of, Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*. With this long project, Kofman concludes that she has become one of Nietzsche's children (*Explosion II*, 371). She has, she declares, followed Nietzsche step by step, and so she asks:

Has one properly understood Nietzsche? . . . at any rate, one will have loved him, one will have been with him symbiotically to the point of being confused with him. (*Explosion II*, 371)

From her earliest work on Nietzsche, in the first pages of *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, Kofman had asked what it would mean to be faithful to Nietzsche.²⁵ As Duncan Large writes in introducing that work, "Her aim is to give a 'faithfully' Nietzschean reading of Nietzsche."²⁶ It is the issue of fidelity that is particularly foreign to the Irigarayan project of textual occupation. And on first glance, Kofman will seem to have been assiduously faithful throughout her career to Nietzsche, returning to him repeatedly in commentary (in *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, *Nietzsche et la scène philosophique*, *Le mépris des juifs*, and the two *Explosion* volumes) and in the style of that commentary: a study of Nietzsche and his account of metaphor; a study of Nietzsche on "the philosophers"; a defense of Nietzsche against charges of anti-Semitism, the monument to *Ecce Homo*. Yet the bemused reception by certain critics of *Nietzsche and Metaphor* alone should alert us to the misleading nature of Kofman's fidelity, because it is precisely on the grounds of infidelity that critics tend to tax Kofman. In the most agitated of these readings, for example, one critic accuses Kofman precisely of everything from inaccurate citation of Nietzsche, mistranslation, omission of passages that contradict her own argument, and even of "what Nietzsche would have called interpretive 'dishonesty'" by translating words misleadingly so that they further her own exegesis, leaving interpretations untrue to Nietzsche's images.²⁷ As we hear the Sarah Kofman as painted

by Richard Weisberg, I think of the figure of Luce Irigaray as scathingly painted by Sarah Kofman: that poor translator, selective citer, and so forth. How resoundingly Kofman speaks in the name of the standards of faithful citation and translation, while thwarting and undermining those standards as well. Kofman's work speaks and acts under the sign of fidelity while constituting the challenge to that sign.

Kofman may espouse fidelity to Freud, but who does she think "Freud" is? If one turns to *The Enigma of Woman*, in which Kofman, stinging on the subject of Irigaray's "inappropriate" appropriation of Freud, speaks in the name of fidelity to Freud, we find, not conventional faithful commentary on Freud, but a Freud very lightly synthesized with Nietzsche. For example, Freud, Kofman suggests, may well consider that the enigma of femininity is a masculine concern, but he need not be condemned on this basis.

One might interpret that gesture, indeed, in a Nietzschean sense: to speak of a riddle of femininity and to try to solve that riddle are a strictly masculine enterprise; women are not concerned with Truth, they are profoundly skeptical; they know perfectly well that there is no such thing as "truth." (*Enigma*, 104-5)

Furthermore, if we turn back again to the early Nietzschean works, we find a Nietzsche becoming Freud. Kofman discusses metaphor in terms of Freudian concepts of repression (*Metaphor*, 35) and sublimation (*Metaphor*, 169 n. 16) and claims that Nietzsche's discussion of dreams is "very close to Freud's" (*Metaphor*, 170 n. 17). She discusses the Nietzschean concept of benefiting from fictions in terms of the Freudian concept of benefiting from illness, and in discussing the forgetting of metaphor, Kofman will declare, "Freudian concepts are essential here" (*Metaphor*, 76, 157 n. 13). In *Nietzsche et la scène philosophique*, Kofman asks if Nietzsche's notion of fetishism is not close to that of Freud (*Nietzsche*, 176). "Well before Freud," we are told, "many passages in Freud do invoke the notion of castration" (*Nietzsche*, 176). Noticeably, Kofman tends to invoke the parallel with Freud to defend Nietzsche—or vice versa—against certain otherwise inevitable accusations. Above we have seen that it is Freud's proximity to Nietzsche that suggests we should not "condemn" him for his positing of the enigma of woman as a masculine preoccupation. In *Nietzsche et la scène philosophique*, we see the reverse gesture operate in favor of Nietzsche:

Let us not then rush headlong to "decide" this question and pronounce Nietzsche "misogynist." Rather we must weave a cloth from both theological perversion and the veils whose reality one cannot or will not see, a

reality which one has a reason to hide. Freud, himself, taught that women invented cloth, by which this dissimulation operates. And Freud, again, called attention to the importance of clothes for fetishism, especially the undergarments of a beloved woman. (*Nietzsche*, 180)

Kofman's interweaving of texts and corpses can involve anything from rendering Nietzsche and Freud parallel or interchangeable figures, locating points at which they concur or differ, locating apparently echoing concepts, proposing how Nietzsche might respond to Freud, or offering a "psycho-analytic" interpretation of Nietzsche.

The most regular technique used by Kofman is this cross-fertilization of material by Freud, Nietzsche, and also Derrida. When interpreting Nietzsche, Kofman cannot refrain from her references to Freud. Her work on Freud is marked by her tenacious fidelity to Nietzsche. The constant in Kofman's work is not fidelity but the refusal to treat philosophical corpses as homogenous, stable or self-enclosed entities. Kofman plays with a deployment of authors amidst each other. Where Kofman is tenaciously faithful to Freud, she is tenaciously faithful to the multiple Freudian voices she locates. Kofman will not read Freud without unleashing multiple Freudian voices against each other, will not read Freud without unleashing Nietzsche amongst Freudian concepts, and will not read Nietzsche without syn-thesis with Freud.

Turning to *Explosion I* and *II*, on the one hand we are confronted with a work of grandiose fidelity to Nietzsche. Yet the work is a monument not to Nietzsche but to an appropriation of Nietzsche for the purposes of cross-fertilization: with literary figures (Nerval, Hoffman), with philosophers (Plato, Rousseau), with Freud and Derrida, with paintings by Bosch, with Nietzsche's letters throughout his life from early childhood onwards, and so on. True to the cross-fertilization with Freud, the *Explosion* volumes conclude with a reference to the death of Nietzsche's little brother, the proposal that the death corresponded to Nietzsche's death wish, an interpretation of a dream recounted by Nietzsche, the relationship this may have had with his madness. Perhaps the missing brother is the missing counterpart Nietzsche craved, suggests Kofman. Thus Kofman's reading of Nietzsche concludes again with a "becoming-Freud" on the part of Kofman. As she says herself, reading Freud, she has read him with a Nietzschean ear; while reading Nietzsche, she reads him with a Freudian ear:

Perhaps this is what constitutes the specificity of my reading: at the closest proximity to Nietzsche I cross-fertilise and lightly displace him thanks to my Freudian ear. (*Explosion II*, 372)

While Kofman rarely discussed her methodology, she does so at the conclusion of *Explosion II*. Freud and Nietzsche, she explains, have been for her the two rival "geniuses" I always needed to hold together so that neither held sway definitively over the other nor over "me." Endlessly playing the one and the other and the one against the other in "me" I prevent both from having the upper hand. (*Explosion II*, 372)

These comments clarify the stakes of Kofman's light displacement of Nietzsche and Freud. Kofman's readings are a styling of self whose purpose is to break down the concept of the unified critical self. Kofman reads Nietzsche and Freud in a becoming-Nietzsche-and-Freud, acquiring Freudian and Nietzschean "ears," to use one of her metaphors, or becoming their "child," to use another.

So, despite the mask of faithful reader adopted by Kofman when she criticizes Irigaray, Kofman and Irigaray can be distinguished not in terms of fidelity versus intervention and appropriation, but in terms of their different variations on intervention and appropriation. Irigaray isolates, occupies, and implodes so as to reappropriate the Nietzschean account of the feminine. For Kofman, by contrast, the stakes are whether, in an engagement with a particular text, both she and the text alter in the encounter. For example, she explains that she never offered a reading of Heidegger precisely because she never changed nor was changed by Heidegger in her engagement with him ("Apprendre," 7). By contrast, her own summary of her reading of Nietzsche is precisely that in a symbiosis with him, she and Nietzsche ceaselessly cross-fertilized each other. Notice the depersonalized voice she uses to declare in reference to herself, "One has been symbolically united with him, to the point of being confusable with him, one has been continuously cross-fertilised by him while trying also, a little, to cross-fertilise him in return" (*Explosion II*, 371).

No Propriety: Kofman and Irigaray

Where Irigaray's project is the identification with and appropriation of the Nietzschean feminine, Kofman's project is an identification with Nietzsche that calls into question the boundaries between Freud, Nietzsche, and Kofman. When Kofman reads Nietzsche, are there entirely discrete boundaries between the two? When Kofman reads Nietzsche and Freud, will not Kofman become partly Nietzsche, partly Freud? Is Kofman not partly a composite of all she has read? Is Kofman not a company or corporation of

"three+n authors, what Derrida jokingly calls a "sarl"?²⁸ Her autobiography, she declares, would be no more than an assemblage of citations of diverse authors ("Apprendre," 7). Where, then, are the boundaries between Kofman and Nietzsche? When Kofman reads Nietzsche, is Nietzsche not then going to become partly Freud; the Freud of Kofman's reading? Speaking in the name of fidelity, Kofman breaks down the boundaries between the different figures to whom one would be faithful. Kofman's work of apparent fidelity is a work of appropriation and intervention, which far from respecting the proper boundaries of texts, calls into question the possibility of proper boundaries.

Kofman so destabilizes the concept of the unified critical self "Kofman" that she declares herself to be a composite of Freud, Nietzsche, and other figures she has identified with and about whom she has written. She does not hesitate to disappropriate herself in the sense of seeing herself as no "more" than the figures of which she is a composite. She also does not hesitate to disappropriate herself by attributing to the philosophers she analyzes the textual complexity she locates. Yet she is so severe with Irigaray for her appropriation of Freud's textual complexity to herself. It might seem as if, according to Kofman's practice of disappropriation, the devaluation of Irigarayan "appropriation" is only to be expected. What is unusual in this context is Kofman's adherence to an ethos of the property of the critical self. We see this adherence in the very notion that Freud's complexity has been appropriated by Irigaray. Kofman destabilizes the integrity of one critical self "Kofman," all the while affirming the integrity of the critical self "Freud." We do not see this affirmation where Kofman directly discusses Freud, for where she does we are presented with a complex, polyvocal, and textually self-conflicting Freud. But where we see the challenge to Irigaray in the name of demarcating "who" is doing the deconstructing, we do see a reinvoication of boundary lines between texts, the deconstructor and deconstructed, reader and author. And it is Kofman's work that allows us to question her own invocation of these boundary lines.

Although Kofman is sometimes thought of as the mere commentator or the overly faithful reader, her corpus stages an extremely complex styling of critical personae and intertextuality. In reading "Freud," "Nietzsche," and so forth, Kofman becomes Freud or Nietzsche. This is disappropriation, but not simply so, for the figures in whose names she disappropriates herself are figures already become Kofman, sometimes on grand scale, as in *Explosion I and II*. The concept of appropriation implies critical boundaries between appropriator and the appropriated object, between reader and text read, between deconstructor and deconstructed, between Nietzsche, Freud, Kofman, and/or Irigaray, and it is precisely these boundaries that are challenged by Kofman.

The criticisms of Derrida and Irigaray by Paul de Man and Kofman are erroneous in suggesting the possibility of neat boundaries between the work a text does "alone" and the intervention rendered by a deconstructive reading. They are also surprising, because they are made by critics whose work challenges these boundaries. But, from another perspective, the criticisms aptly summarize the Derridean and Irigarayan projects. Of course these projects are appropriations of the texts in question. What is at stake in deconstructive reading—and in all reading—is appropriation: the failure to secure proper boundaries between text and reader. Readings, one identifies, attributes to the reader what is found in the text, or attributes to the text what one reads into to it. One alters, incorporating fragments of voice, tone, persona, standpoint, perspective. Reader and text alter each other in the disappropriation of the reader and the appropriation of the text. To suppose that Derrida and Irigaray have *misappropriated* Nietzsche and Freud is to presuppose that we can keep an entirely secure grip on the differences between Rousseau and Derrida's reading of Rousseau, Freud, and Irigaray's reading of Freud—and that Derrida and Irigaray should have kept such a grip. The fact that reading is always appropriation renders far more unstable than the criticisms directed at Derrida and Irigaray would suggest from the category of a misappropriative reading.

I have shifted the discussion from the question of the ethical reading (in terms of which Kofman challenged Irigaray) to the question of the political reading (in terms of which Kofman herself has been challenged). Kofman challenges Irigaray for not keeping the boundaries between "Freud" and "Irigaray" distinct. But it is Kofman who takes as her project a deliberate blurring of the boundaries between "Freud" and "Kofman." The politics of Irigaray's reading practice are very clear. Irigaray's is an identifiably feminist reading that resists the tropes for women to be found in theorists such as Nietzsche and Freud. By comparison, the politics of Kofman's reading practice have appeared less clear. Although both theorists analyze the phallogentrism of Freud and Nietzsche, the reader is left wondering if Kofman's relationship to Nietzsche and Freud is more conservative than that of Irigaray. Irigaray is inserting a definitive, markedly parrying voice into Freud's and Nietzsche's texts, and above all, is attempting to embody the feminine foreclosed by Nietzsche and Freud. We are quite clear about what Irigaray is doing. What is Kofman doing? Not only does she seem to halt her analysis of phallogentrism, not attempting a project of resistance, but at times she merges with Nietzsche and Freud to the point where she ostensibly loses her grip on herself. What is subversive about the project is its destabilization of the ideals of textual control, homogeneity and systematicity, rationalism, and rational transcendence of the drives, which philosophers have traditionally taken to be most dear.