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The Feminist Foundations of Narrative Theory

Feminist writers and literary scholars have pushed narrative theorists to take sexual difference into account as a foundational aspect of narrative structure. Approaching the binary practices of structuralism primarily from three perspectives – the representation of women in narrative and women's writing, feminist film theory, and the feminist critique of psychoanalysis – feminist theorists and critics have amply demonstrated that no theory of narrative has neutral terms or assumptions. From this basic premise it follows that all narrative and all theories about its structure and operations have ideological premises and functions, starting with the asymmetries of sex itself. This assessment begins in earnest as narrative structure and practice make their way into the forefront of consideration in the early twentieth century.

Morphologies

In his 1928 "Forward" to *Morphology of the Folktale*, Soviet folklorist Vladimir Propp offers the possibility of making "an examination of the forms of the tale which will be as exact as the morphology of organic formations."[1] Propp compares his version of folktale morphology (that is, the study of the *form* of the folktale) to botanical morphology, giving an analogy between the elements of folktales, taken as an exemplary class, and "the component parts of a plant, of their relationship to each other and to the whole – in other words, the study of a plant's structure."[2] Propp's study revealed the correlation between the roles and the sexes of the agents in the tale's plot. In Propp's schema, active, subject roles belong to male agents; passive object roles are the place of female characters. In exposing the sexed bases for plot and action in folk tales, Propp's *Morphology* also exposes the sexism that has systematically undergirded narrative itself.

Virginia Woolf's 1929 meditation *A Room of One's Own* fleshes out experientially what Propp's narrative binaries represent. As Woolf writes,

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"It is strange what a difference a tail makes."[3] Pondering the differential relationships enjoyed by the male and female components in the cultural project of literature, Woolf elucidates the inequities that have made writing fiction difficult for women – and as an effect and cause of that, the inequities represented in literature itself, which reflect a "morphology" that would produce a baseless inequity in the first place. "I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in; and thinking of the safety and prosperity of the one sex and of the poverty and the insecurity of the other and of the effect of tradition and of the lack of tradition upon the mind of the writer, I thought at last that it was time to roll up the crumpled skin of the day."[4]

Treating broad cultural narratives about the relative values and capabilities of the sexes, Woolf's essay intervenes at the point of the production of the sexed author, showing the ways cultural myths deriving from these narratives distribute imagined capabilities for authorship between the sexes. This distribution in turn tends to characterize the narratives each sex is likely to produce, which in the end then tend to repeat the cultural myths about sex that generated the narratives in the first place. Critics, whose tastes reiterate sexed cultural values, then, value these sexed narratives. "Speaking crudely," Woolf notes, "football and sport are 'important'; the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes 'trivial.' And these values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction. This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room."[5] That Woolf demonstrates the connections between the layers of literary production and reception and cultural myths about the sexes suggests that narrative itself operates on the same multiple levels and that the broadest level – cultural myths about the relative values and capabilities of the sexes – may be intrinsic to narrative insofar as its structural asymmetries delimit the creative capabilities of both women and men.

Showing that assumptions about the relative value of the sexes are themselves the product of narrative, Woolf's essay produces a map of the incipient field of narrative theory as, first of all, consisting of multiple sites – culture, literature, criticism – for the operations of narrative. Second, narrative always both produces and reflects a socio-political imaginary that shapes and delimits cultural forms and expression; and third, narrative involves, and in fact may depend upon, sexed assumptions about the very minds and temperaments – the psychologies – of both writers and subject matter. Narrative is a powerful agent that reproduces itself, but its terms can be parsed – morphologized – as a way both to envision its operations and imagine social change. This change occurs not only as an effect of the kinds

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of stories that circulate, but also in the ways that the relations between character and role take on new configurations – the female scholar/author, for example, as Woolf suggests.

Woolf's linking of cultural narratives to social conditions accompanies the broader academic turn to structuralism in the mid-twentieth century, which offers both the means through which the relations between sexes might be understood as binary positions in often-patriarchal kinship structures *and* a method by which narrative might be analyzed as a parsable process in a similar binary protocol. Offering, thus, a vision of the parallelism among social structures, their narratives, and narrative in general, structuralism makes apparent narrative's function as a dynamic pattern iterated throughout cultures.

In its acknowledgment of both conscious and unconscious processes, structuralism also becomes an important element of contemporaneous psychoanalysis, linking the social and psychical to structures such as myth and kinship. The encounters between structuralist thinking, feminism, and psychoanalysis that together forge a portion of feminism's contributions to narrative theory come together spectacularly in 1949 in Simone de Beauvoir's review of structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, which appeared in the philosophical journal *Les Temps modernes*.[6] Writing the review at the same time that she was completing work on *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir incorporated structuralist insights into her encyclopedic analysis of the phenomenon of the woman.[7]

"Lévi-Strauss's discovery, in de Beauvoir's eyes, is that the exchange of women transforms them from their natural and biological condition to social values capable of circulating and of producing the desire of males," Frédéric Keck observes in his review of de Beauvoir's review.[8] According to Keck, de Beauvoir was less interested in Lévi-Strauss's emphasis on avoiding incest than on the function of marriage itself in a patriarchal structure that relegates woman to the place of "other": "All marriage is social incest," de Beauvoir commented in her review, "in so far as the husband absorbs in himself a certain wellbeing instead of escaping himself towards otherness; at the very least society exists but in the breast of this egotistical act where communication might be maintained: this is why, even if the female might be something other than a sign, she is nonetheless, like a word, something which is exchanged."[9]

Just as Lévi-Strauss's 1958 *Structural Anthropology* makes his structural method even clearer and even more significant to studies of narrative, de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* ranges through available cultural discourses – "Destiny," "History," "Myths," "The Formative Years," "Situation,"

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"Justifications," and "Toward Liberation" – evincing the same structural narrative of male/self and female/other that Lévi-Strauss outlines in his anthropological studies.[10] Both Lévi-Strauss and de Beauvoir understand that with structural methods they can discern the interrelation of cultural elements as well as the relation of these elements to the whole of culture. Lévi-Strauss comments as he compares myth to structuralist understandings of language that "[t]he only method we can suggest at this stage is to proceed tentatively, by trial and error, using as a check the principles which serve as the basis for any kind of structural analysis: economy of explanation; unity of solution; and ability to reconstruct the whole from a fragment, as well as later stages from previous ones."[11] Structuralist readings of culture and narrative go one step further, linking manifest socio-cultural phenomena to unconscious structures:

> In anthropology as in linguistics, it is not comparison that supports generalization, but the other way around. If, as we believe to be the case, the unconscious activity of the mind consists in imposing forms upon content, and if these forms are fundamentally the same for all minds – ancient and modern, primitive and civilized (as the study of the symbolic function, expressed in language, so strikingly indicates) – it is necessary and sufficient to grasp the unconscious structure underlying each institution and each custom, in order to obtain a principle of interpretation valid for other institutions and other customs, provided of course that the analysis is carried far enough.[12]

De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* indeed makes this "unconscious" structure visible as it defines broadly the relations between the sexes (and perhaps even defines the sexes as binary in the first place). And while de Beauvoir does not directly address the sexualized roles of narrative that Propp makes explicit, she does continue Woolf's exposition of sexual asymmetry and inequitable patterns both as cultural narratives (part IX, part XI) and in the work of five fiction writers – Henri de Montherlant, D. H. Lawrence, Paul Claudel, André Breton, and Stendhal (part X) – reading against their renditions of the sexes and showing the ways plot depends upon the alignment of oppositional binaries around sex. Echoing Woolf's analysis of the inequality of roles as defined by a pervasive narrative of relative value, de Beauvoir observes: "The terms *masculine* and *feminine* are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of *man* to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity."[13] Beginning her study by listing many of the cultural narratives of the contemporaneous

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"failure" of females – which, as she notes, might be corrected if only those females became more feminine and took on their proper roles – de Beauvoir rejects these myths, recasting the question as "What is a woman?" *The Second Sex* is a thorough examination of what "woman" is if we discard the biases of pervasive cultural narratives that confirm sexual asymmetry as a foundational fact of life.

The conception of feminism as actively trying to undo the sacrifice of one sex for the benefit of the other exists in explicit relation to narrative understood in the structuralist sense as an account that relates parts to a whole "unity" subtending social relations as well as the unconscious of both individuals and their cultures. "She is," as de Beauvoir comments at the end of the section "Dreams, Fears, Idols," "servant and companion, but he expects her also to be his audience and critic and to confirm him in his sense of being, but she opposes him with her indifference, even with her mockery and laughter. He projects upon her what he desires and what he fears, what he loves and what he hates. And if it is difficult to say anything specific about her, that is because man seeks the whole of himself in her and because she is All. She is All, that is, on the plane of the inessential; she is all the Other."[14] De Beauvoir's feminist analysis thus not only links the analysis of narrative to the political stakes of exposing the inequities of sexual difference – *narrative theorizing is a feminist act* – but also offers several narrative fronts upon which feminist analysis might be enacted: the study of narrative (and narratives) as the formal expression and proliferation of oppressive sexual ideologies; the analysis of socio-cultural myths and the practices the myths rationalize as these undergird feminist political struggle; and the study and critique of psychoanalysis as both explanation and justification of the effects of sexual difference in the psyche as the basis for understanding and critiquing representations of women in culture and the media.

Theory and Praxis I: Feminist Criticism of Narratives

Examining not only specific stories but also the narrative dynamics and ideologies that subtend them is an overtly feminist process that instigates, forges, and contributes to conceptions of narrative theory itself as formulating a dynamic shaped by the binary asymmetrical positions (or roles) of patriarchal ideology. As 1960s feminist critics and activists discerned, studying the inequities inherent to Western notions of narrative also means reproducing the narrative itself. Even if, as both Woolf and de Beauvoir argue, sexual egalitarianism would be the desired product of a narrative analysis that makes visible the sexist elements of narrative patterns, the very process of exposing narrative's undergirding sexual ideology paradoxically

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reproduces the same asymmetrical narrative dynamic. Thus, in analyzing what appear to be narrative's structural elements, feminist critics have often ended up pleading (albeit eminently rationally) from the perspective of the sex whom narrative praxis suggests is not able to narrate in the first place – and hence trying to overcome narrative's structural asymmetries by merely reiterating them. One counter to simple revelation is to offer corrective stories (both literary and cultural). Thus both academic critics and feminist activists have contrasted narratives by male and female writers and the ways these narratives portray and deploy female characters in order to bend narrative analysis toward a liberationist end, and to elaborate a feminist narrative theory.

Kate Millett published *Sexual Politics* twenty years after de Beauvoir's critique of male writers' renditions of women characters. A much more overtly politicized examination of "sexual politics," Millett's book, like *The Second Sex*, includes sections on both psychoanalysis and the work of male writers.[15] As Millett declares in her preface, "[t]he first part of this essay is devoted to the proposition that sex has a frequently neglected political aspect. I have attempted to illustrate this first of all by giving attention to the role which concepts of power and domination play in some contemporary literary descriptions of sexual activity itself." More overtly inclined toward "politics," as its title would suggest, Millett's study focuses explicitly on patriarchy as undergirding disparate power relations between the sexes as a matter of a pervasive ideology that aligns "sex roles" with lived disparities. Millett's work moved narrative theorizing from Woolf and de Beauvoir's more broadly socio-cultural query about women's contribution toward an act that in itself constitutes a feminist politics. Tracing the "sexual revolution" through its various "Political," "Polemical," and finally "Literary" manifestations, *Sexual Politics* envisions the "Literary" as a testament to the ongoing struggle between the sexes. The book thus positions its final "literary" analyses as "responses to the sexual revolution in the literature of the period." Millett's work divides literature into stages in which the first two – the "realistic or revolutionary" moment of reformers and the "sentimental and chivalrous school" of polite delay – occupy progressive if reluctant change in sexual relations. The third stage, dubbed "fantasy," is, according to Millett, reactionary; it "expresses the unconscious emotions of male response to what it perceives as feminine evil, namely sexuality."[16] The book's extended readings of the misogynist writings of D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer enact narrative analysis as a mode of political critique, and critique as a mode of narrative theory.

After *Sexual Politics*, feminist critics commenced several decades of recovery work, continuing the analysis of the ways women are represented

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in narrative, exploring the characteristics of women's writing, and discerning the specific practices of female-generated and female-centered narratives. Such 1970s critical projects as Patricia Meyer Spacks's *The Female Imagination* (1975), Mary Ann Ferguson's *Images of Women in Literature* (1975), Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land* (1975), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), and Josephine Donovan's *Feminist Literary Criticism* (1974), as well as the proliferation of essay collections on women's writing, images of women in literature, and critiques of patriarchal narratives, characterized the next two decades' development of a specifically feminist criticism focused on narrative practice.[17] While these tended to flesh out the ways patriarchal ideologies inflected specific narratives, contributions from such French feminist theorists as Hélène Cixous and feminist narratologists, including Susan Lanser, rendered narrative theory itself a field more attentive to its own presumptions and political effects.

In her 1975 essay "The Laugh of the Medusa," Hélène Cixous examines the relations between sex and writing as themselves both foundation and effect of a cultural unconscious steeped in a masculinity defined as neutral.[18] "Nearly the entire history of writing," Cixous declares, "is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of the privileged alibis. It has been one with phallocentric tradition." Linking the practice of writing to bodily experience both literally and metaphorically, Cixous exhorts women to write as a way to change history – and with history, narrative itself: "The new history is coming; it's not a dream, though it does extend beyond men's imagination, and for good reason. It's going to deprive them of their conceptual orthopedics." And, Cixous continues, "There is, there will be more, and more rapidly pervasive now, a fiction that produces irreducible effects of femininity."[19]

These phallocentric structures are also the object of narratology, the study of the ways narratives resolve the relations between story (the ordering of events) and discourse (the way the narrative renders events). Founded on Propp's structuralist parsing of folktales, narratology (as opposed to the broader field of narrative theory) was less directly challenged by feminist commentators, as Susan Lanser suggests, at least partly because "the technical, often neologistic, vocabulary of narratology has alienated critics with political concerns." But, Lanser continues, there are "at least three crucial issues about which feminism and narratology might differ: the role of gender in the construction of narrative theory, the status of narrative as mimesis or semiosis, and the importance of context for determining meaning in narrative." Asking, "Upon what body of texts, upon what understandings of narrative and referential universe, have the insights of narratology been

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based?" Lanser notes that narratological study (and by extension narrative theory itself) has an intrinsic limitation produced by its partial (i.e., male-centered) field of investigation. Noting too that "feminist thinking about narrative" is primarily mimetic (concerned representation and social reference), while narratology has been "primarily semiotic," Lanser's essay asks what might happen if feminist narrative insights revised the underlying assumptions of narratology – and by extension how a specifically feminist narratology might shift narrative theory itself.[20]

Theory and Praxis II: In Media

Taking cinema as their object, feminist film theorists also began questioning and analyzing both narrative renditions of females in film and the structural dynamics of narrative as film deployed it. But their project rapidly outstripped its medium to question the inherent binaries of structuralism, structuralist theories of narrative, and their conjoined dependence upon the asymmetries of the sexual binary. Beginning in the 1970s, such theorists as Claire Johnston, Molly Haskell, and Laura Mulvey began to link systematically the subject matter and addressees of cinema with narrative topoi and structures. Claire Johnston's "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema" (1973) not only returns to the function of "myth" as that which "transmits and transforms the ideology of sexism and renders it invisible," but also works against film's presentation of myth as verisimilitude to disengage story from cinematic style and thus make visible a film's underlying ideologies.[21] Molly Haskell's "The Woman's Film" (1974) not only maps the typical narrative of films addressed to female viewers, but like Propp's *Morphology* discerns a set of thematic actions that undergird the narratives of women's film, seeing them, as did Propp, akin to "grammatical models from which linguistic examples are formed."[22]

Laura Mulvey's oft-cited 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" examines the interrelation of image and narrative in cinema, working with concepts of narrative and psychoanalysis to demonstrate the ways female characters are passive spectacle, while male characters are active agents. "The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story-line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation." The film narrative works psychologically to restage a drama of castration anxiety for male viewers, as female characters imply "a threat of castration and hence unpleasure," offering "an icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look," but which also "threatens to evoke" the castration anxiety signaled by images of the female

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body. Thus, film narrative, according to Mulvey, offers the "male unconscious" the possibilities of either a "preoccupation with the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery) which is counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object" or fetishizing the woman so as to endow her figure with the missing object, thus overcoming fears of castration.[23]

Feminist film theory's introduction of psychoanalysis as a discourse through which narrative itself might be interrogated not only opens narrative theorizing to a broad realm of theories and practices focused on the question of the subject (including most specifically issues of sexual difference), but also links psychoanalysis to the structuralist assumptions and methods of extant narrative theory to critique and continue the development of narrative theory itself. Most significant in crafting a theory linking sexual difference, structuralism, and psychoanalysis a decade later are the essays in Teresa de Lauretis's *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*.[24] A crucial meditation on the intersection of structuralist notions of narrative, sexual difference, subjectivity, and cinematic practice, de Lauretis's study enacts the ways feminist attention to the foundational role of sexual difference produces a critique of structuralism that makes apparent the sexualized shape and stakes of narrative dynamics.

Taking up, for example, the question of "Desire in Narrative," de Lauretis assesses the state of narrative theory in the early 1980s: "Today narrative theory is not longer or not primarily intent on establishing a logic, grammar, or a formal rhetoric of narrative; what it seeks to understand is the nature of the structuring and restructuring, even destructive processes at work in textual and semiotic production." Some of this "restructuring" is due to the work of feminist critics such as Cixous, whom de Lauretis cites later in the chapter in a face-off with Sigmund Freud over sex-specific responses to the figure of Medusa. Suggesting that the concerns of narrative theory in film study had been "displaced by semiotic studies," de Lauretis returns to Laura Mulvey's 1974 assertion that "sadism demands a story," linked to the possible attitudes offered by film narrative to its viewers. De Lauretis sees the connection between sadism and narrative as "constitutive of narrative and of the very work of narrativity."[25]

The connection between sadism and narrative depends upon a third term, psychoanalysis, from which issues of spectacle, fetishism, voyeurism, masochism, and the castrating threat of females derive. Focusing on the question of whose desire it is upon which the myths and assumptions of narrative operate, de Lauretis points to the centrality of the Oedipus myth in both psychoanalysis and narrative theory. De Lauretis turns to Freud's deployment of *Oedipus Rex*, noting that just as the Sphinx's question to Oedipus

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becomes Oedipus' question, so "Oedipus' question then, like Freud's, generates a narrative, turns into a quest. Thus not only is a question, as [Shoshana] Felman says, always a question of desire; a story too is always a question of desire."[26] Demonstrating the connections among the Oedipal narrative's question, quest, and desire as narrative's motivating dynamics, de Lauretis analyzes the ways Propp's structural analyses ultimately reflect the shift to patriarchal cultures for which Oedipus becomes the archetypal narrative structure, focusing on the roles of the "mythical subjects" acting in this drama.

De Lauretis's chapter continues to explore the question of the evolution of narrative from Propp's account of mythical structures to semiotician Jurij Lotman's notion that "the origin of plot must be traced to a text-generating mechanism located 'at the center of the cultural *massif*' and thus coextensive with the origin of culture itself."[27] De Lauretis notes Lotman's conclusions about the reduction of myths to fewer functions – identifying the role of "immobilized characters" who operate at boundary points, condensing the primary characters to hero and antagonist, and distilling Propp's thirty-one narrative functions to what becomes a gendered duo interpreted in terms of movement through space: "entry into a closed space, and emergence from it." Pointing out the binary sexual character of the opposition of space and hero, de Lauretis's interpretation of Propp and Lotman demonstrates the inevitable relation between structural binaries and sexual difference in which the female occupies the empty space and the male the role of the hero. "Female," she notes, "is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter." Her analysis of the tradition of structural narrative theory leads her to conclude that "[t]he work of narrative, then, is a mapping of differences, and specifically, first and foremost, of sexual difference into each text; and hence, by a sort of accumulation, into the universe of meaning, fiction, and history, represented by the literary-artistic tradition and all the texts of culture."[28]

The question of desire in narrative requires finally, as de Lauretis shows, the combination of narrative and psychoanalysis in analyzing the functions of the subject and sexual difference. When an Oedipal narrative defines cultural and subjective development, how could sadism not demand a story (or, as de Lauretis reverses it, "story demands sadism") insofar as female subjects occupy the extra-subjective role of topoi instead of the part of agents? As an effect of the same myths by which structuralist notions of narrative cast females as objects of exchange and as lacking the capacity to consent, rebel, or act, how can any female character undertake the kind of agency necessary to fend off sadism, to be anything other than that which is

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sacrificed to patriarchy generally (culturally, biologically, psychologically)? Desire in narrative is finally the desire promulgated by a "politics of the unconscious," which moves to secure narrative's uncertain and uncontrollable sense of closure by gaining "women's consent" in one way or another to acceding to "femininity" – to playing the role of the conquered and meaningless cipher to males' questions about their own meaning.[29]

Theory and Praxis III: Feminism and Psychoanalysis

De Lauretis's combination of structuralist narrative theory and psychoanalysis parallels and consolidates feminist critiques of psychoanalysis as itself a specifically narrative practice. As de Lauretis points out, "it is Freud who allows us to see, in the very process of narrativity (the movement of narrative, its dramatic necessity, its driving tension) the inscription of desire, and thus – only thus – of the subject and its representations."[30] Freud's work reveals the necessary intercalation of narrative, subjective processes, and sexual difference insofar as Freudian psychoanalysis deploys narratives (both Oedipus and the narratives of analysands) as ways of understanding developmental trajectories and of discerning individual symptoms. That sexual difference is intrinsic to both of these narrative processes is an element feminist psychoanalytic critics teased out of Freud's work. In the process, they continued the work of producing a narrative theory that envisioned the sexual and subjective stakes of narrative dynamics.

De Lauretis's focus on desire develops earlier feminist work that questioned – from the perspective of psychoanalysis itself – the very conditions in which the co-conspirators' narrative and psychoanalysis must depend upon this hierarchized, sexual dichotomy. In essays in her 1977 collection, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Luce Irigaray (following de Beauvoir) interrogates the structuralist insight that women are the objects of exchange among men. "Are men all equally desirable?" Irigaray asks. "Do women have a tendency toward polygamy? The good anthropologist does not raise such questions. *A fortiori*: why are men not objects of exchange among women?" Why, in other words, is the story not different – or differential? "It would be interesting to know," Irigaray observes in "The Power of Discourse," "what might become of psychoanalytic notions in a culture that did not repress the feminine." "What meaning," she asks, "could the Oedipus complex have in a symbolic system other than patriarchy?"[31]

Irigaray's work demonstrates the extent to which structuralist notions of narrative and psychoanalysis are imbricated, sustaining one another around Oedipus as the signal and symptomatic artifact of patriarchy. Stimulated by French feminists' interrogations of psychoanalysis and its dependence on

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narrative, feminist critics of the 1980s began analyzing narrative and psychoanalysis together as two aspects of the same problem of a binary asymmetry based on an imaginary of sexual difference that pervaded all cultural and subjective experience – and that also provided the means for its self-perpetuation. Even challenging the story on its own terms reproduces the same old story. Irigaray illustrates this circular logic in "Commodities among Themselves": "*How can relationships among women be accounted for in this system of exchange?* Except by the assertion that as soon as she desires (herself), as soon as she speaks (expresses herself, to herself), a woman is a man."[32] No female can narrate herself, nor others like her. As the structural alibi of an ever-compensatory patriarchal fiction, narrative subtends and perpetuates the binary inequalities upon which it is premised.

It is thus difficult to deploy narrative to unman narrative, to push understandings of narrative beyond their apparent binary aegis into a mode of thinking that can imagine multiples instead of a hierarchized pair, or to perceive a narrative practice that has always existed beyond the parameters of Oedipus. Narrative is not intrinsically a structuralist phenomenon; our ways of looking at narrative are. And the recognition that theory has a kind of stranglehold on the notion of story derives from the practice of feminist psychoanalytic critics who began to untangle the knotted skeins by which the two practices reinforced one another – by which narrative and psychoanalysis were virtually the same dynamics asking the same questions, but arriving at slightly different accounts.

One crucial narrative in feminist critical estimations of the collaboration of narrative and psychoanalysis is Freud's *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, or "Dora's Case."[33] Freud's analysis of his hysterical patient Dora depended upon Dora's narrative of her own circumstances and Freud's ability to interpret the inconsistencies and omissions in her accounts. The case also turned on Freud's misreading of transference, or the analysand's emotional investment in the analyst himself, when it was perhaps Freud who had invested – "counter-transferred" – in Dora. What feminist critics of Freud's published case study discerned, as collected in the anthology *In Dora's Case*, were the patriarchal and masculinist preconceptions at the heart of Freud's account, which made it impossible for him really to hear Dora's story.[34] Assuming, for example, that Dora's repulsion at the molesting Herr K. was really an attraction to him, Freud read Dora's cough as a repressed desire to perform fellatio. Feminist readers of Freud's narrative – and especially of the note Freud himself added to a later version, in which he admitted that he had mistaken the object of Dora's romantic interest, which was really Frau K. – identified the blind spot in Freud's (and perhaps much) psychoanalytic narrative as the now-visible presumption of

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male centrality that had less to do with some psychical reality and more to do with the narratives of psychoanalysis itself.

Other influential studies of this matrix of psychoanalysis, narrative, and sexual difference magisterially carry forward French feminists' insights about psychoanalysis's assumptions. Jane Gallop's *The Daughter's Seduction* (1982) offers elegant close readings of the symptoms of psychoanalysis's assumptions; Jacqueline Rose's *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (1986) engages in a crucial analysis of the intersections of feminism, psychoanalysis, subjectivity, and narratives.[35] Numerous collections of essays on feminism, psychoanalysis, and literature and film appeared in the 1980s, all of which demonstrated the extent to which narrative and psychoanalysis comprise two related aspects of the same conceptual asymmetry based upon and expressed in terms of a naturalized sexual difference, reinscribed not only in narratives but also as the foundational dynamic of narrative itself.

Building on the bases offered by feminist narrative theory and criticism of the 1980s, the study of narrative and feminism continued through the 1990s as a fleshing out of the possibilities of altering the sex/gender/sexuality of structural positions and/or narrating from the point of view of various underrepresented subject positions, including work on questions of narrative and race, class, and post-colonialism.[36] In the past decade, narrative theory has begun to engage new, nonstructuralist, dynamic models of narrative derived from systems theory and a new critical focus on the psychoanalytic notion of the "drive" that suggest that the mutual reinforcement of binary asymmetries that persists in traditionally structuralist conceptions of narrative's deployment of sex/genders might finally give way to a more varied, less rigidly positional way of both narrating and understanding the narratives we create.[37]

Notes

1. Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd ed., trans. Laurence Scott, ed. Louis A. Wagner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), xxv.
2. Ibid.
3. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929), 13.
4. Ibid., 24.
5. Ibid., 77.
6. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (Paris: PUF, 1949); Simone de Beauvoir, "Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté," *Les Temps Modernes* 49 (1949), 943–949.

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7. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York, NY: Bantam, 1953).
8. "La découverte de Lévi-Strauss, aux yeux de Beauvoir, c'est que l'échange des femmes les transforme, de données naturelles et biologiques, en valeurs sociales capables de circuler et de produire le désir des hommes" (Frédéric Keck, "Beauvoir lectrice de Lévi-Strauss. Les relations hommes/femmes entre existentialisme et structuralisme," *Les Temps Modernes* 647–648 [2008]: 242–255).
9. "Tout mariage est un inceste social, puisque l'époux absorbe en soi un certain bien au lieu de s'échapper vers autrui; du moins la société exige-t-elle qu'au sein de cet acte égoïste la communication soit maintenue; c'est pourquoi, bien que la femme soit autre chose encore qu'un signe, elle est cependant comme la parole quelque chose qui s'échange" (cited in Keck, "Beauvoir lectrice de Lévi-Strauss," 248).
10. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1963).
11. Ibid., 211.
12. Ibid., 21.
13. Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, xv.
14. Ibid., 185.
15. Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969).
16. Ibid., xix, 127, 127–128.
17. Patricia Mayer Spacks, *The Female Imagination* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1975); Mary Anne Ferguson, *Images of Women in Literature* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1973); Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984); Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974).
18. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1 (1976): 875–893.
19. Ibid., 879, 883.
20. Susan Lanser, "Toward a Feminist Narratology," *Style* 20 (1986): 343.
21. Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," in Sue Thornham, ed., *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 32.
22. Molly Haskell, "The Woman's Film," *Feminist Film Theory*, 24. The collection's excerpt is from Haskell's book, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974).
23. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 19, 21. The original essay was published in *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6–18.
24. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
25. Ibid., 105, 135, 22, 109.
26. Ibid., 112. De Lauretis refers here to Shoshana Felman's essay, "Rereading Femininity," *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981): 19–44.
27. De Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*, 116.

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28. Ibid., 118, 119, 121.
29. Ibid., 134.
30. Ibid., 129.
31. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 171, 73.
32. Irigaray, *This Sex*, 194.
33. Sigmund Freud, *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. 7, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1905), 3–122.
34. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane, eds. *In Dora's Case: Freud-Hysteria-Feminism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1985). Dora's analysis was ultimately a failure.
35. Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982); Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986).
36. See for example, Hortense Spillers's collection, *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991); Judith Roof, *Come as You Are: Narrative and Sexuality* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996); Sangeeta Ray, *En-Gendering India: Woman and Nation in Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Teresa de Lauretis, *Freud's Drive: Psychoanalysis, Literature and Film* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). See also the essays in the present volume by Matthew Garrett, Valerie Rohy, and Amy Tang.
37. Bruce Clarke offers a systems theory analysis of narrative in *Posthuman Metamorphosis: Narrative and Systems* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008). For a feminist take on systems and narrative, see Judith Roof, "Out of the Bind: From Structure to System in Popular Narrative," in *Narrative Unbound: Queer and Feminist Approaches*, ed. Robyn Warhol and Susan Lanser (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015), 43–58.

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