From Technologies of Gender
by Teresa de Lauretis

1

THE TECHNOLOGY OF GENDER

In the feminist writings and cultural practices of the 1960s and 1970s, the
tonotion of gender as sexual difference was central to the critique of repre-
sentation, the rereading of cultural images and narratives, the questioning
of theories of subjectivity and sexuality, of reading, writing, and spec-
torship. The notion of gender as sexual difference has grounded and
sustained feminist interventions in the arena of formal and abstract knowl-
dge, in the epistemologies and cognitive fields defined by the social and
physical sciences as well as the human sciences or humanities. Concurrent
and interdependent with those interventions were the elaboration of spe-
cific practices and discourses, and the creation of social spaces (gendered
spaces, in the sense of the “women’s room,” such as CR groups, women’s
caucuses within the disciplines, Women’s Studies, feminist journal or media
collectives, and so on) in which sexual difference itself could be affirmed,
addressed, analyzed, specified, or verified. But that notion of gender as
sexual difference and its derivative notions—women’s culture, mothering,
feminine writing, femininity, etc.—have now become a limitation, some-
thing of a liability to feminist thought.

With its emphasis on the sexual, “sexual difference” is in the first and last
instance a difference of women from men, female from male, and even the
more abstract notion of “sexual differences” resulting not from biology or
socialization but from signification and discursive effects (the emphasis
here being less on the sexual than on differences as difference), ends up
being in the last instance a difference (of woman) from man—or better, the
very instance of difference in man. To continue to pose the question of
gender in either of these terms, once the critique of patriarchy has been
fully outlined, keeps feminist thinking bound to the terms of Western
patriarchy itself, contained within the frame of a conceptual opposition that
is “always already” inscribed in what Fredric Jameson would call “the
political unconscious” of dominant cultural discourses and their underlying
“master narratives”—be they biological, medical, legal, philosophical, or
Technologies of Gender

like—literary—and so will tend to reproduce itself, to retextualize itself, as we shall see, even in feminist rewritings of cultural narratives.

The first limit of “sexual differences,” then, is that it constrains feminist critical thought within the conceptual frame of a universal sex opposition (woman as the difference from man, both universalized; or woman as difference tout court, and hence equally universalized), which makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to articulate the differences of women from Woman, that is to say, the differences among women or, perhaps more exactly, the differences within women. For example, the differences among women who wear the veil, women who “wear the mask” (in the words of Paul Laurence Dunbar often quoted by black American women writers), and women who “masquerade” (the word is Joan Riviere’s) cannot be understood as sexual differences. From that point of view, they would not be differences at all, and all women would but render either different embodiments of some archetypal essence of woman, or more or less sophisticated impersonations of a metaphysical-discursive femininity.

A second limitation of the notion of sexual difference(s) is that it tends to recontain or recapitulate the radical epistemological potential of feminist thought inside the walls of the master’s house, to borrow Audre Lorde’s metaphor rather than Nietzsche’s “prison-house of language,” for reasons that will presently become apparent. By radical epistemological potential I mean the possibility, already emergent in feminist writings of the 1980s, to conceive of the social subject and of the relations of subjectivity to sociality in another way: a subject constituted in gender, to be sure, though not by sexual difference alone, but rather across languages and cultural representations; a subject re-gendered in the experiencing of race and class, as well as sexual relations; a subject, therefore, not unified but rather multiple, and not so much divided as contradicted.

In order to begin to specify this other kind of subject and to articulate its relations to a heterogeneous social field, we need a notion of gender that is not so bound up with sexual difference as to be virtually coextensive with it and, thus, on the one hand, gender is assumed to derive unproblematically from sexual difference while, on the other, gender can be subsumed in sexual differences as an effect of language, or as pure imaginary—and gender and sexual difference(s), needs to be unraveled and deconstructed. A starting point may be to think of gender along the lines of Michel Foucault’s theory of sexuality as a “technology of sex” and to propose that gender, too, both as representation and as self-representation, is the product of various social technologies, such as cinema, and of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices, as well as practices of daily

The Technology of Gender

Like sexuality, we might then say, gender is not a property of bodies or something originally existent in human beings, but “the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations,” in Foucault’s words, by the deployment of “a complex political technology.” But it must be said first off, and hence the title of this essay, that to think of gender as the product and the process of a number of social technologies, of technosocial or bio-medical apparatus, is to have already gone beyond Foucault, for his critical understanding of the technology of sex did not take into account its differential solicitation of male and female subjects, and by ignoring the conflicting investments of men and women in the discourses and practices of sexuality, Foucault’s theory, in fact, excludes, though it does not preclude, the consideration of gender.

I will proceed by stating a series of four propositions in decreasing order of self-evidence and subsequently will go back to elaborate on each in more detail.

1. Gender is (a) representation—which is to say that it does not have concrete or real implications, both social and subjective, for the material life of individuals. On the contrary,

2. The representation of gender is its construction—and in the simplest sense it can be said that all of Western Art and high culture is the engraving of the history of that construction.

3. The construction of gender goes on as busily today as it did in earlier times, say the Victorian era. And it goes on not only where one might expect it to—in the media, the private and public schools, the courts, the family, nuclear or extended or single-parented—in short, in what Louis Althusser has called the “ideological state apparatus.” The construction of gender also goes on, if less obviously, in the academy, in the intellectual community, in avant-garde artistic practices and radical theories, even, and indeed especially, in feminism.

4. Paradoxically, therefore, the construction of gender is also effected by its deconstruction; that is to say, by any discourse, feminist or otherwise, that would discard it as ideological misrepresentation. For gender, like the real, is not only the effect of representation but also its excess, what remains outside discourse as a potential trauma which can rupture or destabilize, if not contained, any representation.

1.
category by which words and grammatical forms are classified according to not only sex or the absence of sex (which is one particular category, called "natural gender" and typical of the English language, for example) but also other characteristics, such as morphological characteristics in what is called "grammatical gender," found in Romance languages, for example. (I recall a paper by Roman Jakobson entitled "The Sex of the Heavenly Bodies" which, after analyzing the gender of the words for sun and moon in a great variety of languages, came to the refreshing conclusion that no pattern could be detected to support the idea of a universal law determining the masculinity or the femininity of either the sun or the moon. Thank heaven for that.)

The second meaning of gender given in the dictionary is "classification of sex; sex." This proximity of grammar and sex, interestingly enough, is not there in Romance languages (which, it is commonly believed, are spoken by people rather more romantic than Anglo-Saxons). The Spanish género, the Italian genere, and the French genre do not carry even the connotation of a person's gender; that is conveyed instead by the word for sex. And for this reason, it would seem, the word genre, adopted from French to refer to the specific classification of artistic and literary forms (in the first place, painting), is also devoid of any sexual denotation, as is the word genus, the Latin etymology of gender, used in English as a classificatory term in biology and logic. An interesting corollary of this linguistic peculiarity of English, i.e., the accretion of gender which refers to sex, is that the notion of gender I am discussing, and thus the whole tangled question of the relationship of human gender to representation, are totally untranslatable in any Romance language, a sobering thought for anyone who might be still tempted to espouse an internationalist, not to say universal, view of the project of theorizing gender.

Going back to the dictionary, then, we find that the term gender is a representation; and not only a representation in the sense in which every word, every sign, refers to (represents) its referent, but that an object, a thing, or an animate being. The term gender is, actually, the representation of a relation, that of belonging to a class, a group, a category. Gender is the representation of a relation, or, if it may trespass for a moment into my second proposition, gender constructs a relation between one entity and other entities, which are previously constituted as a class, and that relation is one of belonging: thus, gender assigns to one entity, say an individual, a position within a class, and therefore also a position vis-á-vis other pre-established classes. (I am using the term class advisedly, although here I do not mean social class(es), because I want to retain Marx's understanding of class as a group of individuals bound together by social determinants and interests—including, very pointedly, ideology—which are neither freely chosen nor arbitrarily set.) So gender represents not an individual but a relation, and a social relation; in other words, it represents an individual for a class.

The neuter gender in English, a language that relies on natural gender (we note, in passing, that "nature" is ever-present in our culture, from the very beginning, which is, precisely, language), is assigned to words referring to sexless or asexual entities, objects or individuals marked by the absence of sex. The exceptions to this rule show the popular wisdom of usage: a child is neuter in gender, and its correct possessive modifier is its, as I was taught in learning English many years ago, though most people use his, and some, quite recently and rarely, and even then inconsistently, use his or her. Although a child does have a sex from "nature," it isn't until it becomes (i.e., until it is signified as) a boy or a girl that it acquires a gender. What the popular wisdom knows, then, is that gender is not sex, a state of nature, but the representation of each individual in terms of a particular social relation which pre-exists the individual and is predicated on the conceptual and rigid (structural) opposition of two biological sexes. This conceptual structure is what feminist social scientists have designated "the sex-gender system."

The cultural conceptions of male and female as two complementary yet mutually exclusive categories into which all human beings are placed constitute within each culture a gender system, a symbolic system or system of meanings, that correlates sex to cultural contents according to social values and hierarchies. Although the meanings vary with each culture, a sex-gender system is always intimately interconnected with political and economic factors in each society. In this light, the cultural construction of sex into gender and the asymmetry that characterizes all gender systems cross-culturally (though each in its particular ways) are understood as "systematically linked to the organization of social inequality."

The sex-gender system, in short, is both a sociocultural construct and a semiotic apparatus, a system of representation which assigns meaning (identity, value, prestige, location in kinship, status in the social hierarchy, etc.) to individuals within the society. If gender representations are social positions which carry differential meanings, then for someone to be represented and to represent oneself as male or as female implies the assumption of the whole of those meaning effects. Thus, the proposition that the representation of gender is its construction, each term being at once the product and the process of the other, can be restated more accurately: The construction of gender is both the product and the process of its representation.
The Technology of Gender

fundamentally, by means of its engagement of subjectivity ("The category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology," he writes on p. 171). It is, thus, paradoxical and yet quite evident that the connection between gender and ideology—or the understanding of gender as an instance of ideology—could not be made by him. But the connection has been explored by other Marxist thinkers who are feminists, and better still the other way around, by some feminist thinkers who are also Marxists. Michele Barrett, for one, argues that not only is ideology a primary site of the construction of gender, but the ideology of gender has played an important part in the historical construction of the capitalist division of labour and in the reproduction of labour power, and therefore is an accurate demonstration of "the integral connection between ideology and the relations of production." 9

The context of Barrett's argument (originally made in her 1980 book Women's Oppression Today) is the debate elicited in England by "discourse theory" and other post-Althusserian developments in the theory of ideology, and more specifically the critique of ideology promoted by the British feminist journal *New Left Review* on the basis of notions of representation and difference drawn from Lacan and Derrida. She quotes Parveen Adams's "A Note on the Distinction between Sexual Division and Sexual Difference," where sexual division refers to the two mutually exclusive categories of men and women as given in reality: "In terms of sexual differences, on the other hand, what has to be grasped is, precisely, the production of differences through systems of representation; the work of representation produces differences that cannot be known in advance." 10

Adams's critique of a feminist (Marxist) theory of ideology that relies on the notion of patriarchy as a given in social reality (in other words, a theory based on the fact of women's oppression by men) is that such a theory is based on an essentialism, whether biological or sociological, which crops up again even in the work of those, such as Juliet Mitchell, who would insist that gender is an effect of representation. "In feminist analyses," Adams maintains, the concept of a feminine subject "relies on a homogeneous oppression of women in a state, reality, given prior to representational practices" (p. 56). By stressing that gender construction is nothing but the effect of a variety of representations and discursive practices which produce sexual differences "not known in advance" (or, in my own paraphrase, gender is nothing but the variable configuration of sexual-discursive positionalities), Adams believes she can avoid "the simplicities of an always already antagonistic relation" between the sexes, which is an obstacle, in her eyes, to both feminist analysis and feminist political practice (p. 57). Barrett's response to this point is one I concur with, especially as regards its implications for feminist politics: "We do not need to talk of sexual division
as 'always already' there; we can explore the historical construction of the categories of masculinity and femininity without being obliged to deny that, historically specific as they are, they nevertheless exist today in systematic and even predictable terms" (Barrett, pp. 70-71).

However, Barrett's conceptual framework does not permit an understanding of the ideology of gender in specifically feminist theoretical terms. In a note added to the 1985 reprinting of her essay, from which I have been tantant site of the construction of gender but that it should be understood as (p. 83). This notion of "social totality" and the thorny problem of the "relativity" autonomy of ideology (in general, and presumably of the idea and/or "the social relations of production" remain quite vague and unresolved in Barrett's argument, which becomes less focused and less engaging as she goes on to discuss the ways in which the ideology of gender is (re)produced in cultural (literary) practice.

Another and potentially more useful way to pose the question of gender ideology is suggested, though not followed through, in Joan Kelly's 1979 feminist notion that the personal is political, Kelly argues, it is no longer possible to maintain that there are two spheres of social reality: the public sphere of work and productivity (which would include all of the forces and most of the relations of production in Barrett's terms). Instead we can envision several interconnected sets of social relations—relations of work, of class, of race, and of sex/gender: "What we see are not two spheres, but two (or three) sets of social relations. For now, I would not only are men and women positioned differently in these relations, but this is an important point—women are affected differently in different sets.

The "doubled" perspective of contemporary feminist analysis, Kelly continues, is one in which we can see the two orders, the sexual and the economic, operate together: "in any of the historical forms that patriarchal society takes (feudal, capitalist, socialist, etc., a sex/gender system and a system of productive relations operate simultaneously... to reproduce the order" (p. 61). Within that "doubled" perspective, therefore, it is possible to see quite clearly the working of the ideology of gender: "woman's place," i.e., the position assigned to women by our sex/gender system, as she empha-

sizes, "is not a separate sphere or domain of existence but a position within social existence generally" (p. 57). That is another very important point.

For if the sex-gender system (which I prefer to call gender tout court in order to retain the ambiguity of the term, which makes it eminently susceptible to the grasp of ideology, as well as deconstruction) is a set of social relations obtaining throughout social existence, then gender is indeed a primary instance of ideology, and obviously not only for women. Furthermore, that is so regardless of whether particular individuals see themselves primarily defined (and oppressed) by gender, as white cultural feminists do, or primarily defined (and oppressed) by race and class relations, as women of color do. The importance of Althusser's formulation of the subjective working of ideology—again, briefly, that ideology needs a subject, a concrete individual or person to work on—appears more clearly now, and more central to the feminist project of theorizing gender as a personal-political force both negative and positive, as I will propose.

To assert that the social representation of gender affects its subjective construction and that, vice versa, the subjective representation of gender—or self-representation—affects its social construction, leaves open a possibility of agency and self-determination at the subjective and even individual level of micropolitical and everyday practices which Althusser himself would clearly disclaim. I, nevertheless, will claim that possibility and postpone discussing it until sections 3 and 4 of this essay. For the moment, going back to proposition 2, which was revised as "The construction of gender is both the product and the process of its representation," I can rewrite it: The construction of gender is the product and the process of both representation and self-representation.

But now I must discuss a further problem with Althusser, insofar as a theory of gender is concerned, and that is that in his view, "ideology has no outside." It is a foolproof system whose effect is to erase its own traces completely, so that anyone who is "in ideology," caught in its web, believes "himself" to be outside and free of it. Nevertheless, there is an outside, a place from where ideology can be seen for what it is—mystification, imaginary relation, wool over one's eyes; and that place is, for Althusser, science, or scientific knowledge. Such is simply not the case for feminism and for what I propose to call, avoiding further equivocations, the subject of feminism.

By the phrase "the subject of feminism" I mean a conception or an understanding of the (female) subject as not only distinct from Woman with the capital letter, the representation of an essence inherent in all women (which has been seen as Nature, Mother, Mystery, Evil Incarnate, Object of Masculine) Desire and Knowledge, Proper Womanhood, Femininity, et
technologies of Gender

cetera), but also distinct from women, the real, historical beings and social
subjects who are defined by the technology of gender and actually en-
genendered in social relations. The subject of feminism I have in mind is one
not so defined, one whose definition or concept is in progress, in this and
other feminist critical texts; and, to insist on this point one more time, the
subject of feminism, much like Althusser’s subject, is a theoretical construct
(a way of conceptualizing, of understanding, of accounting for certain
processes, not women). However, unlike Althusser’s subject, who, being
completely “in” ideology, believes himself to be outside and free of it, the
subject that I see emerging from current writings and debates within
feminism is one that is at the same time inside and outside the ideology of
gender, and conscious of being so, conscious of that twofold pull, of that
division, that doubled vision.

My own argument in *Alice Doesn’t* was to that effect: the discrepancy, the
tension, and the constant slippage between Woman as representation, as
the object and the very condition of representation, and, on the other
hand, women as historical beings, subjects of “real relations,” are motivated
and sustained by a logical contradiction in our culture and an irreconcilable
one: women are both inside and outside gender, at once within and without
representation. That women continue to become Woman, continue to be
cought in gender as Althusser’s subject is in ideology, and that we persist in
that imaginary relation even as we know, as feminists, that we are not that,
but we are historical subjects governed by real social relations, which
centrally include gender—such is the contradiction that feminist theory
must be built on, and its very condition of possibility. Obviously, then,
feminism cannot cast itself as science, as a discourse or a reality that is
outside of ideology, or outside of gender as an instance of ideology.

In fact, the shift in feminist consciousness that has been taking place
during this decade may be said to have begun (if a convenient date is
needed) with 1981, the year of publication of *This Bridge Called My Back*,
the collection of writings by radical women of color edited by Cherrie Moraga
and Gloria Anzaldúa, which was followed in 1982 by the Feminist Press
anthology edited by Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith
with the title *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are
Brave*. It was these books that first made available to all feminists the
feelings, the analyses, and the political positions of feminists of color, and
their critiques of white or mainstream feminism. The shift in feminist
consciousness that was initially prompted by works such as these is best
characterized by the awareness and the effort to work through feminism’s
complicity with ideology, both ideology in general (including classism or
bourgeois liberalism, racism, colonialism, imperialism, and, I would also
add, with some qualifications, humanism) and the ideology of gender in
particular—that is to say, heterosexism.

I said complicity, not full adherence, for it is obvious that feminism and a
full adherence to the ideology of gender, in male-centered societies, are
mutually exclusive. And I would add, further, that the consciousness of our
complicity with gender ideology, and the divisions and contradictions atten-
dant upon that, are what must characterize all feminisms today in the
United States, no longer just white and middle-class women, who were the
first to be forced to examine our relation to institutions, political practice,
cultural apparatus, and then to racism, anti-Semitism, hetero-sexism,
classism, and so forth; for the consciousness of complicity with the gender
ideologies of their particular cultures and subcultures is also emerging in
the more recent writings of black women and Latinas, and of those lesbians,
of whatever color, who identify themselves as feminists. To what extent
this newer or emerging consciousness of complicity acts with or against the
consciousness of oppression, is a question central to the understanding of
ideology in these postmodern and postcolonial times.

That is why, in spite of the divergences, the political and personal dif-
fferences, and the pain that surround feminist debates within and across
racial, ethnic, and sexual lines, we may be encouraged in the hope that
feminism will continue to develop a radical theory and a practice of so-
icultural transformation. For that to be, however, the ambiguity of gen-
der must be retained—and that is only seemingly a paradox. We cannot
resolve or dispel the uncomfortable condition of being at once inside and
outside gender either by desexualizing it (making gender merely a meta-
phor, a question of difference, of purely discursive effects) or by an-
derogynizing it (claiming the same experience of material conditions for
both genders in a given class, race, or culture). But I have already antic-
pated what I shall discuss further on. I have trespassed again, for I have not
yet worked through the third proposition, which stated that the con-
struction of gender through its representation goes on today as much as or
more than in any other times. I will begin with a very simple, everyday
example and then go on to more lofty proofs.

3.

Most of us—those of us who are women; to those who are men this will
not apply—probably check the F box rather than the M box when filling
out an application form. It would hardly occur to us to mark M. It would be
like cheating or, worse, not existing, like erasing ourselves from the world.
Technologies of Gender

(For men to check the F box, were they ever tempted to do so, would have quite another set of implications.) For since the very first time we put a check mark on the little square next to the F on the form, we have officially entered the sex-gender system, the social relations of gender, and have become en-gendered as men; that is to say, not only do other people consider us females, but from that moment on we have been representing ourselves as women. Now, I ask, isn’t that the same as saying that the F next to the little box, which we marked in filling out the form, has stuck to us like a wet silk dress? Or that while we thought that we were marking the F on the form, in fact the F was marking itself on us?

This is, of course, the process described by Althusser with the word *interpellation*, the process whereby a social representation is accepted and absorbed by an individual as her (or his) own representation, and so becomes, for that individual, real, even though it is in fact imaginary. However, my example is all too simple. It does not explain how the representation is constructed and how it is then accepted and absorbed. For that purpose we turn, first, to Michel Foucault.

The first volume of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* has become highly influential, especially his bold thesis that sexuality, commonly thought to be a natural as well as a private, intimate matter, is in fact completely constructed in culture according to the political aims of the society’s dominant class. Foucault’s analysis begins from a paradox: the prohibitions and regulations pertaining to sexual behaviors, whether spoken by religious, legal, or scientific authorities, far from constraining or repressing sexuality, have on the contrary produced it, and continue to produce it, in the sense in which industrial machinery produces goods or commodities, and in so doing produce social relations.

Hence the notion of a “technology of sex,” which he defines as “a set of techniques for maximizing life” that have been developed and deployed by the bourgeoisie since the end of the eighteenth century in order to ensure its class survival and continued hegemony. Those techniques involved the elaboration of discourses (classification, measurements, evaluation, etc.) and about four privileged “figures” of knowledge: the sexualization of children and of the female body, the control of procreation, and the psychiatricization of anomalous sexual behavior as perversion. These discourses, which were implemented through pedagogy, medicine, demography, and economics, were anchored or supported by the institutions of the state, and became especially focused on the family; they served to disseminate and to “implant,” in Foucault’s suggestive term, those figures and modes of knowledge into each individual, family, and institution. This technology, he remarked, “made sex not only a secular concern but a concern of the state as well; to be more exact, sex became a matter that required the social body as a whole, and virtually all of its individuals, to place themselves under surveillance.”

The sexualization of the female body has indeed been a favorite figure or object of knowledge in the discourses of medical science, religion, art, literature, popular culture, and so on. Since Foucault, several studies have appeared that address the topic, more or less explicitly, in his historical methodological framework; but the connection between woman and sexuality, and the identification of the sexual with the female body, so pervasive in Western culture, had long been a major concern of feminist criticism and of the women’s movement quite independently of Foucault, of course. In particular, feminist film criticism had been addressing itself to that issue in a conceptual framework which, though not derived from Foucault, yet was not altogether dissimilar.

For some time before the publication of volume I of *History of Sexuality* in France (La volonté de savoir, 1976), feminist film theorists had been writing on the sexualization of the female star in narrative cinema and analyzing the cinematic techniques (lighting, framing, editing, etc.) and the specific cinematic codes (e.g., the system of the look) that construct woman as image, as the object of the spectator’s voyeurist gaze; and they had been developing both an account and a critique of the psycho-social, aesthetic, and philosophical discourses that underlie the representation of the female body as the primary site of sexuality and visual pleasure. The understanding of cinema as a social technology, as a “cinematic apparatus,” was developed in film theory contemporaneously with Foucault’s work, but independently of it; rather, as the word *apparatus* suggests, it was directly influenced by the work of Althusser and Lacan. There is little doubt, at any rate, that cinema—the cinematic apparatus—is a technology of gender, as I have argued throughout *Alice Doesn’t*, if not in these very words, I hope convincingly.

The theory of the cinematic apparatus is more concerned than Foucault’s with answering both parts of the question I started from: not only how the representation of gender is constructed by the given technology, but also how it becomes absorbed subjectively by each individual whom that technology addresses. For the second part of the question, the crucial notion is the concept of spectatorship, which feminist film theory has established as a gendered concept; that is to say, the ways in which each individual spectator is addressed by the film, the ways in which his/her identification is solicited and structured in the single film, are intimately and intentionally, if not usually explicitly, connected to the spectators’ gender. Both in the critical writings and in the practices of women’s cinema, the exploration of female
spectatorship is giving us a more subtly articulated analysis of the modalities of film viewing for women and increasingly sophisticated forms of address in filmmaking (as discussed in chapters 7 and 8).

This critical work is producing a knowledge of cinema and of the technology of the subject which Foucault's theory could not lead to, on its own terms; for there, sexuality is not understood as gendered, as having a male form and a female form, but is taken to be one and the same for all—and consequently male (further discussion of this point is to be found in chapter 2). I am not speaking of the libidinal, which Freud said to be only one, and I think he may have been right about that. I am speaking here of sexuality as a construct and a (self-) representation; and that does have both a male form and a female form, although the patriarchal or male-centered frame of mind, the female form is a projection of the male's, its complementary opposite, its supplementation—Adam's rib, so to speak. So that, even when it is located in the woman's body (seen, Foucault wrote, "as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality," p. 104), sexuality is perceived as an attribute or a property of the male.

As Lucy Bland states in response to an article on the historical construction of sexuality along Foucauldian lines—an article which not surprisingly omits what she considers "one of the central aspects of the historical construction of sexuality, namely its construction as gender specific"—the various conceptions of sexuality throughout Western history, however diverse among themselves, have been based on "the perennial contrast of 'male' to 'female' sexuality." In other words, female sexuality has been invariably defined both in contrast and in relation to the male. The conception of sexuality held by feminists of the first wave, at the turn of the century, was no exception: whether they called for "purity" and opposed all sexual activity for degrading women to the level of men, or whether they called for a free expression of the "natural" function and "spiritual" quality of sex on the part of women, sex meant heterosexual intercourse and primacy of penetration. It is only in contemporary feminism that the notion of a different or autonomous sexuality of women and of non-male-related sexual identities for women have emerged. But even so, Bland observes, "the displacement of the sexual act as penetration from the centre of the sexual stage remains a task still facing us today" (p. 67).

If we do not ask this question the change of paradigm from a biologist to a discourse theorist of gender difference does not constitute much of an advance. If the concept of discourses is just a replacement for the notion of ideology, then we are left with one of two possibilities. Either the account sees discourses as mechanically repeating themselves, or—and this is the tendency of materialist theory of ideology—changes in ideology follow from changes in material conditions. According to such a use of discourse theory people are the victims of certain systems of ideas which are outside of them. Discourse determinism comes up against the old problem of agency typical of all sorts of social determinisms. (p. 237)
The "gap" in Foucault's theory, as she sees it, consists in his account of historical changes in discourses. "He stresses the mutually constitutive relation between power and knowledge: how each constitutes the other to oppression. Foucault sees it as productive of meanings, values, knowledges, and practices, but inherently neither positive nor negative. However, Hollway remarks, "he still does not account for how people are constituted as a result of certain truths being current rather than others." (p. 237). She then that power is what motivates (and not necessarily in a conscious or rational manner) individuals' "investments" in discursive positions. If at any one time there are several competing, even contradictory, discourses on sexuality—rather than a single, all-encompassing or monolithic, ideology—then what makes one take up a position in a certain discourse rather than another is an "investment" (this term translates the German Besitzung, a word used by Freud and rendered in English as cathexis), something between an emotional commitment and a vested interest, in the relative power (satisfaction, reward, payoff) which that position promises (but does not necessarily fulfill).

Hollway's is an interesting attempt to reconceptualize power in such a manner that agency (rather than choice) may be seen to exist for the subject, and especially for those subjects who have been (perceived as) "victims" of social oppression, or especially disempowered by the discursive monopoly of power/knowledge. It not only may explain why, for example, women (who are people of one gender) have historically made different investments and thus taken up different positions in gender and sexual practices and identities (celibacy, monogamy, non-monogamy, frigidity, sexual-role playing, romanticism, heterosexuality, feminism, antimilitarism, postfeminism, etc.); it may explain, as well, the fact that "other major dimensions of social difference such as class, race and age intersect with gender to favor or disfavor certain positions" (p. 239), as Hollway suggests. However, her conclusion that "every relation and every practice is a site of potential change as much as it is a site of reproduction" does not say what relation the potential for change in gender relations—if it is a change both in consciousness and in social reality—may bear to the hegemony of discourses.

How do changes in consciousness affect or effect changes in dominant discourses? Or, put another way, whose investments yield more relative power? For example, if we say that certain discourses and practices, even though marginal with regard to institutions, but nonetheless disruptive or oppositional (e.g., women's cinema and health collectives, Women's Studies' and Afro-American Studies' revisions of the literary canon and college curricula, the developing critique of colonial discourse), do have the power to "imprint" new objects and modes of knowledge in individual subjects, does it follow that these oppositional discourses or counter-practices (as Claire Johnston called women's cinema in the early 1970s "counter-cinema") can become dominant or hegemonic? And if so, how? Or need they not become dominant in order for social relations to change? And if not, how will the social relations of gender change? I may restate these questions into one, as follows: If, as Hollway writes, "gender difference is... reproduced in day-to-day interactions in heterosexual couples, through the denial of the non-unitary, non-rational, relational character of subjectivity" (p. 252), what will persuade women to invest in other positions, in other sources of power capable of changing gender relations, when they have assumed the current position (of female in the couple), in the first place, because that position afforded them, as women, a certain relative power?

The point I am trying to make, much as I agree with Hollway in most of her argument, and much as I like her effort to redistribute power among most of us, is that to theorize as positive the "relative" power of those oppressed by current social relations necessitates something more radical, or perhaps more drastic, than she seems willing to stake. The problem is compounded by the fact that the investments studied by Hollway are secured and bonded by a heterosexual contract; that is to say, her object of study is the very site in which the social relations of gender and thus gender ideology are reproduced in everyday life. Any changes that may result therein, however they may occur, are likely to be changes in "gender difference," precisely, rather than changes in the social relations of gender, changes, in short, in the direction of more or less "equality" of women to men.

Here is, clearly in evidence, the problem in the notion of sexual difference(s), its conservative force limiting and working against the effort to rethink its very representations. I believe that to envision gender (men and women) otherwise, and to (re)construct it in terms other than those dictated by the patriarchal contract, we must walk out of the male-centered frame of reference in which gender and sexuality are (re)produced by the discourse of male sexuality—or, as Luce Irigaray has so well written it, of homo(m)osexuality. This essay would like to be a rough map of the first steps of the way out.

Taking up position in quite another frame of reference, Monique Wittig has stressed the power of discourses to "do violence" to people, a violence which is material and physical, although produced by abstract and scientific discourses as well as the discourses of the mass media.

If the discourse of modern theoretical systems and social science exert[s] a power upon us, it is because it works with concepts which closely touch
The Technology of Gender

developed, that observation suggests to me that what I was trying to define with the notion of a complex of habits, associations, perceptions, and dispositions which en-genders one as female—what I was getting at was precisely the experience of gender, the meaning effects and self-representations produced in the subject by the sociocultural practices, discourses, and institutions devoted to the production of women and men. And it was surely not coincidental, then, that my analyses had been concerned with cinema, narrative, and theory. For these themselves, of course, are all technologies of gender.

Now, to assert that theory (a generic term for any theoretical discourse seeking to account for a particular object of knowledge, and in effect constructing that object in a field of meaning as its proper domain of knowledge, the domain being often called "discipline") is a technology of gender may seem paradoxical given the fact I have been lamenting for most of these pages; namely, that the theories that are available to help us map the passage from sociality to subjectivity, from symbolic systems to individual perception, or from cultural representations to self-representation—a passage in discontinuous space, I might say—are either unconcerned with gender or unable to conceive of a female subject. They are unconcerned with gender, like Althusser's and Foucault's, or the earlier work of Julia Kristeva or of Umberto Eco; or else, if they do concern themselves with gender, as Freud's theory of psychoanalysis does (more than any other, in fact, with the exception of feminist theory), and if they do then offer a model of the construction of gender in sexual difference, nevertheless their map of the terrain between sociality and subjectivity is one that leaves the female subject hopelessly caught in patriarchal swamps or stranded somewhere between the devil and the deep blue sea. However, and this is my argument in the present book, both kinds of theories, and the fictions they inspire, contain and promote some representation of gender, no less than cinema does.

A case in point is Kaja Silverman's illuminating work on subjectivity and language in psychoanalysis. In arguing that subjectivity is produced through language, and that the human subject is a semiotic and therefore also a gendered subject, Silverman makes a valiant effort, in her words, "to create a space for the female subject within its pages, even if that space is only a negative one." And indeed, in the Lacanian framework of her analysis, the issue of gender does not fit, and the female subject can be defined only vaguely as a "point of resistance" (p. 144, p. 232) to patriarchal culture, as "potentially subversive" (p. 233), or as structured negatively "in relation to the phallus" (p. 191). This negativity of woman, her lacking or transcending the laws and processes of signification, has a counterpart, in poststructuralist psychoanalytic theory, in the notion of femininity as a
The technologies of gender

privileged condition, a nearness to nature, the body, the side of the maternal, or the unconscious. However, we are cautioned, this femininity is purely a representation, a positionality within the phallic model of desire and signification; it is not a quality or a property of women. Which amounts to saying that woman, as subject of desire or of signification, is unrepresentable; or, better, that in the phallic order of patriarchal culture and in its theory, woman is unrepresentable except as representation.

But even when it diverges from the Lacanian version of that is predominant in literary criticism and film theory, and when it does pose the question of how one becomes a woman (as does, for instance, object-relations theory, which has appealed to feminists as much as if not more than Lacan or Freud), psychoanalysis defines woman in relation to man, from within the same frame of reference and with the analytical categories elaborated to account for the psychosocial development of the male. That is why psychoanalysis does not address, cannot address, the complex and contradictory relation of women to Woman, which it instead defines as a simple equation: Woman = Mother. And that, as I have suggested, is one of the most deeply rooted effects of the ideology of gender.

Before I go on to consider the representations of gender that are contained in the current discourses of interest to feminism, I want to return briefly to my own position vis-à-vis the problem of understanding gender in the film and film theory. I should mention that I disagree with some of the conclusions of this paper. For instance, I would argue that cinema and narrative theories were technologies of gender, it was not only that I had read Foucault and Althusser (they had said nothing about gender) and Woolf and MacKinnon (they had), but also that I had absorbed as my experience (through my own history and engagement in social reality and in the gendered spaces of feminist communities) the analytical and critical method of feminism, the practice of self-consciousness. For the understanding of one's personal condition as a woman in terms social and political, and the constant revision, re-evaluation, and re-conceptualization of that condition in relation to other women's understanding of their sociosexual positions, generate a mode of apprehension of all social reality that derives from the consciousness of gender. And from that apprehension, from that personal, intimate, analytical, and political knowledge of the pervasiveness of gender, there is no going back to the innocence of “biological.”

That is why I find it impossible to share some women's belief in a matriarchal past or a contemporary “matristic” realm presided over by the goddess, a realm of female tradition, marginal and subterranean and yet all positive and good, peace-loving, ecologically correct, matrilineal, maternal, non-Indo-European, and so forth; in short, a world untouched by ideology, class and racial struggle, television — a world untroubled by the contradictory demands and oppressive rewards of gender as I, and surely those women, too, have daily experienced it. On the other hand, and much for the same reasons, I find it equally impossible to dismiss gender either as an essentialist and mythical idea of the kind I have just described, or as the liberal-bourgeois idea encouraged by media advertisees: someday soon, somehow, women will have careers, their own last names and property, children, husbands, and/or female lovers according to preference — and all that without altering the existing social relations and the hetero-structures to which our society, and most others, are securely screwed.

Even this scenario, which, honestly I must admit, looms often enough in the background of a certain feminist discourse on gender, even this Ideal State of gender equality is not sufficient to deter me from claiming gender as a radical issue for feminist theory. And so I come to the last of the four propositions.

4.

The ideal state of gender equality, as I have just described it, is an easy target for deconstructors. Granted. (Although it is not altogether a straw man, because it is a real representation, as it were: just go to the movies on your next date, and you may see it.) But besides the blantly examples of ideological representation of gender in cinema, where the technology's intentionality is virtually foregrounded on the screen; and besides psychoanalysis, whose medical practice is much more of a technology of gender than its theory, there are other, subtler efforts to contain the trauma of gender — the potential disruption of the social fabric and of white male privilege that could ensue if this feminist critique of gender as ideologico-technological production were to become widespread.

Consider, for one, the new wave of critical writings by men on feminism that have appeared of late. Male philosophers writing as women, male critics reading as a woman, men on feminism — what is it all about? Clearly it is an homage (the pun is too tempting to save it), but to what end? For the most part in the form of short mentions or occasional papers, these works do not support or valorize within the academy the feminist project per se. What they valorize and legitimate are certain positions within academic feminism, those positions that accommodate either or both the critic's personal interests and male-centered theoretical concerns.28

As the introduction to a recent collection of essays on Gender and Reading remarks, there is evidence that men are “resisting readers” of women's fiction. More precisely, "it is not that men can't read women's texts; it is,
rather, that they won't. As far as theory goes, the evidence is very easy to check by a quick glance through the index of names of any book that does not specifically identify itself as feminist. The poverty of references to both feminist and female critics there is so consistent that one may be tempted, as Elaine Showalter was, to welcome "the move to feminist criticism on the part of (prominent) male theorists." And the temptation may be irresistible if, like the editors of Gender and Reading, one is concerned "that discussions of gender difference do not foreclose the recognition of individual variability and of the common ground shared by all humans" (p. xx: emphasis added).

The limits and the liability of this view of gender as "gender difference" become especially apparent when, in one of the essays of the collection, which proposes "A Theory for Lesbian Readers," Jean Kennard finds herself in agreement with Jonathan Culler (quoting Showalter) and re-inscribes his-and-her words directly into her own: "Reading as a lesbian is not necessarily what happens when a lesbian reads. . . . The hypothesis of a lesbian reader is what changes our apprehension of a given text." Ironically, or, I should rather say, thanks to poetic justice, this last statement contradicts and runs in the opposite direction of Kennard's own critical project, clearly stated a few pages earlier: "What I wish to suggest here is a theory of reading which will not oversimplify the concept of identification, which will not subsume lesbian difference under a universal female. . . . It is an attempt to suggest a way in which lesbians could reread and write about texts" (p. 66).

The irony is that Culler's statement—in line with Derridean deconstruction, which is the context of his statement—is intended to make gender synonymous with discursive difference(s), differences that are effects of language or positions in discourse, and thus indeed independent of the reader's gender (this notion of difference was already mentioned in the.propos of Michèle Barrett's critique of it). What Kennard is suggesting, then, is that Culler can read not only as a woman but also as a lesbian, and that would "subsume lesbian difference" not only "under a universal female" but also under the universal male (which Jonathan Culler himself might not accept to represent, in the name of differences). The poetic justice is welcome in that Kennard's critical hunch and initial assumption (that lesbians read differently from committed heterosexual women as well as men) are quite correct, in my opinion; only, they need to be justified, or rendered justice to, by other means than male theories of reading or Gestalt psychology (for in addition to Lacan and Derrida, via Culler, Kennard draws her theory of "polar reading" from Joseph Zinker's theory of opposing characteristics or "polities"). For the purposes of the matter at hand, poetic justice may be impersonated by Tania Modleski's critical assessment of the Showalter-Culler "hypothesis":

For Culler, each stage of feminist criticism rendered increasingly problematic the idea of "women's experience." By calling this notion into question, Culler manages to carve a space for male feminist interpretations of literary texts. Thus, at one point he quotes Peggy Kamal's remark about feminism as a way of reading, and he borrows a term, ironically enough, from Elaine Showalter in order to suggest that "reading as a woman" is ultimately not a matter of any actual reader's gender: over and over again, Culler speaks of the need for the critic to adopt what Showalter has called the "hypothesis" of a woman reader in lieu of appealing to the experience of real readers.

Then, showing how Culler accepts Freud's account in Moses and Monotheism, and hence speculates that a literary criticism bent on ascertaining the legitimate meanings of a text must be seen as "patriarchal," Modleski suggests that Culler is himself patriarchal "just at the point when he seems to be most feminine—when he arrogates to himself and to other male critics the ability to read as women by 'hypothesizing' women readers" (p. 133). A feminist criticism, she concludes, should reject "the hypothesis of a woman reader" and instead promote the "actual female reader."

Paradoxically, as I point out in chapter 2 with regard to Foucault's stance on the issue of rape, some of the more subtle attempts to contain this trauma of gender are inscribed in the theoretical discourses that most explicitly aim to deconstruct the status quo in the Text of Western Culture: anti-humanist philosophy and Derridean deconstruction itself, re-fashioned in literary and textual studies in the Anglo-American Academy. In her analysis of the notion of femininity in contemporary French philosophy, Rosi Braidotti sees that notion as central to its foremost preoccupations: the critique of rationality, the demystification of unified subjectivity (the individual as subject of knowledge), and the investigation of the complexity between knowledge and power. The radical critique of subjectivity, she argues, "has become focused on a number of questions concerning the role and the status of 'femininity' in the conceptual frame of philosophic discourse." This interest appears to be "an extraordinary co-occurrence of phenomena: the rebirth of the women's movement, on the one hand, and the need to reevaluate the foundations of rational discourse felt by the majority of European philosophers," on the other. Braidotti then goes on to discuss the various forms that femininity assumes in the work of Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard, and Derrida, and, concurrently, the consistent refusal by each philosopher to identify femininity with real women. On the contrary, it is only by giving up the insistence on sexual specificity (gender) that women, in their eyes, would be the social group best qualified (because they
are oppressed by sexuality) to foster a radically "other" subject, de-centered and de-sexualized.

So it is that, by displacing the question of gender onto an ahistorical, purely textual figure of femininity (Derrida); or by shifting the sexual basis of gender quite beyond sexual difference, onto a body of diffuse pleasures (Foucault) and indifferently invested surfaces (Loyard), or a body-site of undifferentiated affectivity, and hence a subject freed from (self-)representation and the constraints of identity (Deleuze); and finally by displacing diffuse, de-centered, or deconstructed (but certainly not female) subject—women, naming the process of such displacing with the term becoming woman (devenir-femme).

In other words, only by denying sexual difference (and gender) as components of subjectivity in real women, and hence by denying the history of women's political oppression and resistance, as well as the epistemological contribution of feminism to the redefinition of subjectivity and sociality, can the philosophers see in "women" the privileged repository of "the future of mankind." That, Braidotti observes, "is nothing but the old mental habit, [of philosophers] of thinking the masculine as synchronous with universal . . . the mental habit of translating women into metaphor" (pp. 34–35). That this habit is older, and so harder to break than the Cartesian subject, may account for the predominant disregard, when it is not outright contempt, that male intellectuals have for feminist theorizing, in spite of occasional gestures in the direction of "women's struggles" or the granting of political status to the women's movement. That should not, and does not, prevent feminist theorists from reading, re-reading and rewriting their works.

On the contrary, the need for feminist theory to continue its radical critique of dominant discourses on gender, such as these, is even as they attempt to do away with sexual difference altogether, is all the more pressing since the word postfeminism has been spoken, and not in vain. This kind of deconstruction of the subject is effectively a way to reposition women in femininity (Woman) and to reposition female subjectivity in the male subject, however that will be defined. Furthermore, it closes the door in the face of the emergent social subject which these discourses are purportedly seeking to address, a subject constituted across a multiplicity of differences in discursive and material heterogeneity. Again, then, I rewrite: If the deconstruction of gender inevitably effects its (re)construction, the question is, in which terms and in whose interest is the de-reconstruction being effected?

Returning now to the problem I tried to elucidate in discussing Jean

Kennard's essay, the difficulty we find in theorizing the construction of subjectivity in sexuality is greatly increased, and the task proportionately more urgent, when the subjectivity in question is co-gendered in a relation to sexuality that is altogether unrepresentable in the terms of hegemonic discourses on sexuality and gender. The problem, which is a problem for all feminist scholars and teachers, is one we face almost daily in our work, namely, that most of the available theories of reading, writing, sexuality, ideology, or any other cultural production are built on male narratives of gender, whether oedipal or anti-oedipal, bound by the heteronormative contract; narratives which persistently tend to re-produce themselves in feminist theories. They tend to, and will do so unless one constantly resists, suspending of their drift. Which is why the critique of all discourses concerning gender, including those produced or promoted as feminist, continues to be as vital a part of feminism as is the ongoing effort to create new spaces of discourse, to rewrite cultural narratives, and to define the terms of another perspective—a view from "elsewhere."

For, if that view is nowhere to be seen, not given in a single text, not recognizable as a representation, it is not that we—feminists, women—have not yet succeeded in producing it. It is, rather, that what we have produced is not recognizable, precisely, as a representation. For that "elsewhere" is not some mythic distant past or some utopian future history; it is the elsewhere of discourse here and now, the blind spots, or the space-off, of its representations. I think of it as spaces in the margins of hegemonic discourses, social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions and in the cracks and crevices of the power-knowledge apparatus. And it is there that the terms of a different construction of gender can be posed—terms that do have effect and take hold at the level of subjectivity and self-representation: in the micropolitical practices of daily life and daily resistances that afford both agency and sources of power or empowering investments; and in the cultural productions of women, feminists, which inscribe that movement in and out of ideology, that crossing back and forth of the boundaries—and of the limits—of sexual difference(s).

I want to be very clear about this movement back and forth across the boundaries of sexual difference. I do not mean a movement from one space to another beyond it, or outside: say, from the space of a representation, the image produced by representation in a discursive or visual field, to the space outside the representation, the space outside discourse, which would then be thought of as "real": or, as Althusser would say, from the space of ideology to the space of scientific and real knowledge; or again, from the symbolic space constructed by the sex/gender system to a "reality" external to it. For, clearly, no social reality exists for a given society outside of its
particular sex-gender system (the mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories of male and female). What I mean, instead, is a movement from the space represented by the representation, by a discourse, by a sex-gender system, to the space not represented yet implied (unseen) in it.

A while ago I used the expression "space-off," borrowed from film theory: the space not visible in the frame but inferable from what is visible. In classical and commercial cinema, the space-off is, in fact, erased or, better, reconstituted and sealed into the image by the cinematic rules of narration (first among them, the shot/reverse-shot system). But avant-garde cinema has shown the space-off to exist concurrently and in the absence from the frame in the succession of frames, and has shown it to include not only the camera (the point of articulation and perspective from which the image is constructed) but also the spectator (the point where the image is received, reconstituted, and re-produced in/as subjectivity).

Now, the movement in and out of gender as ideological representation, which I propose characterizes the subject of feminism, is a movement back and forth between the representation of gender (in its male-centered frame of reference) and what that representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable. It is a movement between the (represented) discursive space of the positions made available by hegemonic discourses and the space-off, the elsewhere, of those discourses: those other spaces both discursive and social that exist, since feminist practices have reconstituted them, in the margins (or "between the lines," or "against the grain") of hegemonic discourses and in the interstices of institutions, in counterpractices and new forms of community. These two kinds of spaces are neither in opposition to one another nor strung along a chain of signification, but they coexist concurrently and in contradiction. The movement between them, therefore, is not that of a dialectic, of integration, of a combinatory, or of difference, but is the tension of contradiction, multiplicity, and heteronomy.

If in the master narratives, cinematic and otherwise, the two kinds of spaces are reconciled and integrated, as men reconstitute woman in his (man)kind, his hom(n)osexuality, nevertheless the cultural productions and micropractices of feminism have shown them to be separate and heteronomous spaces. Thus, to inhabit both kinds of spaces at once is to live the contradiction which, I have suggested, is the condition of feminism here and now: the tension of a twofold pull in contrary directions—the critical negativity of its theory, and the affirmative positivity of its politics—is both the historical condition of existence of feminism and its theoretical condition of possibility. The subject of feminism is en-gendered there. That is to say, elsewhere.

---

**Notes**

I wish to thank my students in the History of Consciousness seminar in "Topics in Feminist Theory: Technologies of Gender" for their comments and observations, and my colleague Hayden White for his careful reading of this essay, all of which helped me formulate more clearly some of the issues discussed here.

1. For further discussion of these terms, see Teresa de Lauretis, *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), especially the essays by Sondra O'Neale and Mary Russo.


3. I need not detail other well-known exceptions in English usage, such as ships' and automobiles' and people's and cultures' being feminine. See Dale Spender, *Women and Madness* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1989), for a useful summary of the issues raised in Anglo-American feminist sociolinguistic research. On the philosophical issue of gender in language, and especially its use in practices of writing by the strategic employment of personal pronouns, see Monique Wittig, *The Mark of Gender*, *Feminist Issues* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 3-12.


8. A clear exposition of the theoretical context of Althusser's subject in ideology can be found in Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 37-65. In Lacan's theory of the subject, "the woman" is, of course, a fundamental category, but precisely as fantasy and symptom for the man, as Jacqueline Rose explains: "Woman is constructed as an absolute category (excluded and elevated at one and the same time), a category which seems to guarantee that units on the side of the man... is that the once the notion of 'woman' has been so relentlessly exposed as a fantasy, than any such question [their question of her own jouissance] becomes impossible to pose" [Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), pp. 49-51]. On both Lacan's and Althusser's subjects together, see Stephen Heath, *The Turn of the Subject*, *Cin-Tracts*, no. 8 (Summer-Fall 1979): 32-48.


The Technology of Gender

21. In the single film text, but always by way of the entire apparatus, including cinematic genre, the "film industry," and the whole "history of the cinema-machine," as Stephen Heath has defined it ("The Cinematic Apparatus: Technology as Historical and Cultural Form," in de Lauretis and Heath, The Cinematic Apparatus, p. 7).

22. Lucy Bland, "The Domain of the Sexual: A Response," Seven Education, no. 39 (Summer 1981): 60. Subsequent references to this work are included in the text.


25. It may also sound paradoxical to assert that theory is a social technology in view of the common belief that theory (and similarly science) is the opposite of technique; empirical know-how, "hands-on" expertise, practical or applied knowledge—short, all that is associated with the term "technology." But I trust that everything said so far in the essay applies to the social problem of defining what I mean by technology.


27. I find that I wrote the following, for example: "Narrative and cinematic solicit women's consent and by a surpass of pleasure hope to subdue women into femininity" (Alice Doesn't, p. 10).


29. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocinio P. Schweickardt, eds., Gender and Reading, Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 87. This passage in the introduction refers specifically to the essay by Judith Fetterley, "Reading about Reading," in Fetterley, Women Reading, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 147-64. Subsequent references to this essay are included in the text.

30. The programmatic emphasis of this reticence is corroborated by the historical evidence that Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar bring to this effect that within a reaction-formation of intensified misogyny with which male [modernist] writers greeted the entrance of women into the "literary marketplace" since the end of the nineteenth century, in their essay "Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality," New Literary History, 16, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 524.

31. Showalter, "Critical Cross-Dressing," p. 151. However, as Gilbert and Gubar also point out, such a move is not unprecedented or necessarily disinterested. It may well be—and why not?—that the effort of European (male) writers to transform the maternal lingua, or mother tongue (the vernacular), into a cultivated language, or the cultivation of a disengaged, or other (in Walter Ong's terms), as a more suitable instrument for the art, has been an effort to explore the effects of language with which male [modernist] writers greeted the entrance of women into the "literary marketplace" since the end of the nineteenth century, in their essay "Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality," New Literary History, 16, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 524.

32. Showalter, "Critical Cross-Dressing," p. 151. However, as Gilbert and Gubar also point out, such a move is not unprecedented or necessarily disinterested. It may well be—and why not?—that the effort of European (male) writers to transform the maternal lingua, or mother tongue (the vernacular), into a cultivated language, or the cultivation of a disengaged, or other (in Walter Ong's terms), as a more suitable instrument for the art, has been an effort to explore the effects of language...


33. Modleski’s “actual female reader” seems to parallel Kennard’s “individual lesbian readers.” For example, and I quote from her conclusion, Kennard states: “Polar reading, then, is not a theory of lesbian reading, but a method particularly appropriate to lesbian readers” (p. 77). This sentence, however, is also put into question by the author’s preoccupation, a few lines above, with satisfying all possible readers: “Polar reading permits the participation of any reader in any text and thus opens up the possibility of enjoying the widest range of literary experience.” In the end, this reader remains confused.

34. Rosi Braidotti, “Modelli di dissonanza: donne e filosofia,” in Patrizia Magli, ed., *Le donne e i segni* (Urbino: Il lavoro editoriale, 1985), p. 25. Although, as I understand, an English version of this paper is available, this and subsequent references included in the text are to the Italian version, in my translation.