ABSTRACT

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*RE*THINKING REVISION: TOWARDS AN ETHICAL FEMINIST HYSTERIOGRAPHY
(Under the Direction of DR. MICHELLE BALLIF)

During the last two decades, feminist historiographers of rhetoric have tended to conflate a feminist historiographic methodology with a revisionary one. The result of this conflation of terms is that feminist historiographies of rhetoric are largely limited to works that focus on the recovery and rehabilitation of forgotten female rhetors, within the dominant narrative of rhetorical history. This paper draws an analogy between this situation in feminist historiography and the therapeutic relationship between Freud and Dora, wherein Freud's objective was to put Dora "in possession of her own story," which is really Freud's own Oedipal story. It is my position here that Freud's failure to validate Dora's hysterical subjectivity as capable of a legitimate memory of the past is analogous to the feminist adherence to the conventions of the dominant historical narrative. I argue, therefore, for the importance of developing an historical interaction with the Other that refuses to circumscribe her in the very ideology that marginalizes and negates her in the first place.

INDEX WORDS: Rhetoric, Hysteriography, Historiography, Hysteria, Feminism

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by

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: HYSTERICAL STANDOFFS IN FEMINIST HISTORIOGRAPHIES OF RHETORIC

In October of 1900, Philip Bauer brought his eighteen year old daughter to Sigmund Freud for treatment. The young woman, whom Freud would later identify as “Dora,” was suffering from symptoms of hysteria—symptoms which had worsened since Dora had become an unwilling participant in a sordid family drama that was unfolding around her. Bauer was involved in an affair with Frau K. who, with her husband, were intimate friends of the family. It becomes evident, in the course of Dora’s treatment, that her father and his mistress had conspired to hand Dora over to Herr K., in exchange for his tolerance of his wife’s affair. It was shortly after Dora confronted her parents about Herr K.’s advances that Bauer brought Dora before Freud, begging him to “bring her to reason.” It is obvious, then, that Bauer’s primary motivation for seeking treatment was not so that his daughter might be psychological and physiologically cured, but rather because her hysterical *symptoms* (especially as those symptoms constituted a way of speaking in protest) were threatening his sexual agenda. In other words, Dora came (unwillingly) to Freud *in order to be disciplined and silenced*.

The subjection of Dora to Bauer’s sense of “reason” is, of course, a necessity of institutional inclusion—that is to say, Dora’s continued participation in the institution of the bourgeoise family *depended upon* her reassuming her silent place, under the patriarchal will. Thinking inductively, and broadening the scope of this observation, we might argue that one can only participate in *any* metanarrative to the extent that one is willing to subject oneself to a

particular “reason,” or a particular “will.” We might consider the ways in which this compulsory subjection has problematized women’s participation in the history of rhetoric—or rather, in the *narrative* of rhetoric’s history. Just as Bauer required that Dora remain silent within the structure of the family, so the phallogocentrism of the historical narrative determines who is authorized to speak within that narrative, and who is not—hence the marginalization of women’s (disruptive) voices, and the perpetuation of the fiction that “most women simply do not have what it takes to play the public, rhetorical game” (Biesecker 142).

The feminist response to this problem has usually been to remedy absence with presence, through practices of historical revision, or “revisionary” historiography. The fiction of women’s rhetorical ineptitude has not only placed the history of women’s rhetorical acts under erasure, but this absence in historical narratives has contributed to a perpetuation of rhetorical inequality into our present moment. If we agree that the continued problem of women’s silence (or, perhaps, the silencing of women) is founded on historical exclusions, then the remedy to this problem ought to be quite clear—reinsert women, with all their rhetorical skill, *back into the history of rhetoric*. The (re)inclusion of women into these historical narratives will demonstrate that women do “have what it takes to play the rhetorical game,” and women’s voices will be granted a legitimacy in our present moment which, up to this point, has been reserved for the voices of men.

Or so the revisionary logic goes—and at this moment, there seems to be virtually no skepticism towards it, among feminists. Of course, this may not always have been the case—indeed, with the publication of the debates between Barbara Biesecker and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell beginning in 1992, the methodology of feminist historiography emerged as a contested subject. In Biesecker’s critique of the revisionary method deployed by Campbell and others, Biesecker argues

that the revisionary project cannot cover the territory it claims (the territory of "woman") fully enough. She asserts that because women throughout the history of rhetoric have, like men, had varying degrees of rhetorical opportunity and privilege, the construction of a feminist canon must continue to marginalize some female voices, while privileging others. It is the work of feminist historiography, Biesecker claims, to constantly (re)evaluate "its own practices of inclusion and exclusion" (157). It is important to note, however, that the conclusion Biesecker draws here sees no way out of the revisionary framework itself—it asks only that feminists maintain an uneasy relationship to the authority of the emerging feminist canon.

While there is a proliferation of scholarly works on the methodology of feminist historiography during the 1990s and early twenty-first century, most of this work demonstrates an inability (and at times, an unwillingness) to move outside the methodological boundaries of revisionism. Perhaps the most significant works of this decade are the ones which acknowledge that women's rhetorical achievements, throughout history, have not been recognized as such because women's participation in the rhetorical game has often taken previously unrecognizable forms. Molly Wertheimer, for example, argues that the traditional scope of rhetorical participation as oral civic engagement has marginalized the rhetorical acts found "on sturdy shards of pottery, in the secondary accounts of philosophers and historians, in silent collaboration, [and] in writings published under pseudonyms" (2). Similarly, in *Unspoken: The Rhetoric of Silence*, Glenn points to silence as "the most undervalued and under-understood traditionally feminine site and concomitent rhetorical art" (2).

While I recognize this work as particularly important in the development of a feminist historiographical method, I should point out that the achievement of these works is merely a

broadening of the possibilities of what may be *recovered*, in the revisionary framework. Certainly, historiographers of rhetoric (outside, or somewhat outside the feminist conventions) have developed methodologies beyond the practice of historical revision. Victor J. Vitanza is particularly important in these developments—what he calls "subversive" historiographies of rhetoric were being theorized and practiced as early as the 1987 issue of *Pre/Text*, and further in Vitanza's 1994 edited volume, *Writing Histories of Rhetoric.* The question, then, is not why feminist scholars have not developed historiographical strategies outside of revisionism, but why feminist scholars have not *taken advantage of* the subversive strategies developed elsewhere in the field.

In *Negation, Subjectivity, and the History of Rhetoric*, Vitanza characterizes the therapeutic relationship between Freud and Dora as an "hysterical standoff," wherein each one's discourse serves to neutralize the discourse of the other. While Dora's hysterical symptoms (for example, her stubborn amnesia) certainly resisted the "Freudian research protocol," inherent to that protocol is the compulsion to eternally impose narrative order on the eternally fragmenting hysterical consciousness. I see this situation as roughly analogous to the situation in feminist historiographies of rhetoric—a situation in which investment in the *subject* of Woman (an investment in keeping the subject intact) neutralizes a poststructuralist discourse which would emancipate this subject from History, precisely by eliminating the conditions of its possibility.

It is easy, though, to see what is at stake for feminist scholars, in the contestation of any notion of subjecthood—if we can no longer speak of a *cohesive* subject, then we can no longer hope to recover and reinsert a cohesive subject into historical accounts. The problem, of course, is that any paradigm that necessitates the materialization of a cohesive subject (as, for example,

feminist historiographies have required the materialization of women) inevitably subjects that subject to the ontological violence of representation. Freud, for example, believed that the key to hysteria lay in the project of putting a patient "into possession of [her] own story." In other words, it was Freud's therapeutic goal to instill a certain memory of the past within his patients, and to position them in a certain relationship to that memory—a relationship determined by a particular matrix of sexual drives.[1] For feminist historiographers, the landscape of traditional historical narratives is, speaking symptomatically, *hysterical.* That is, the initial view of history is not unlike the initial view of the hysteric's own personal narrative—amnesiac, fragmented, full of holes. And feminist historiographers of rhetoric—at least, those that claim the revisionary methodology—react to this hysterical landscape *just as Freud did*, putting their subjects back into possession of a memory (and then, an identity) that was never theirs to begin with.

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[1] Claire Kahane writes that "Since hysterics suffered from gaps in their memories, holes in their stories—the sign of repression—Freud's aim was to fill those gaps. Listening closely to the patient's communications—words, gestures, tone—Freud suggested meanings of which the patient was unaware, meanings which, extended to the symptoms, made of them signifiers—i.e. coded representations, that, when understood, formed part of a coherent narrative" (21).

CHAPTER 2
DISCLAIMERS: A *RE*THINKING OF HYSTERIA FOR FEMINISM

First, a note on terminology and my own hysterical posture: this paper is founded on the notion of an "hysterical standoff," the fuller meaning of which will be elucidated as I move through the series of analogues which will constitute my argument. I will not only appropriate Vitanza's notion of the "hysterical standoff," but also the notion of hysteria itself as an extra-historical phenomenon—an appropriation which is undoubtedly problematic, and may be particularly troublesome for some feminists. I am thinking particularly of Susan Bordo's complaints of those interpretations of hysteria which "[romanticize] the hysteric's symbolic subversion of the phallocentric order" while ignoring the ways in which the physical, material dimensions of the illness inscribed itself on women's bodies in a real, debilitating sense (25). While using the term "hysteria" in this way is undoubtedly problematic, it is necessary in order to facilitate some of the connections I will make, and to describe the fragmented subject at the center of poststructuralism. Even further, though, I hope to offer a compelling argument, not for a feminist *reclamation* of the term "hysteria" (which would, of course, be counterproductive to the larger goals of this paper), but for a thinking of "hysteria" which might enable feminist scholarship to negotiate the paradigm shift that a poststructuralist turn necessitates.

Of course, the very hysterical force I am celebrating here will pose some unique problems to this text. While I am, for the most part, following the conventions of discourse and composition, I do so while I acknowledge the inability of those conventions to contain the disruptive force I will seek to describe. Even in performing this text, I find myself suspended in paradox—in an

hysterical standoff vís-a-vís my would-be audience—because we will inevitably reach some discursive impasse, wherein both our discourses will be neutralized. But I am also suspended in the paradox of my own hysterical voice and the compositional conventions which that voice is subject to. In this sense, the scene of the hysterical standoff shifts from the analyst's office to the text—I am the hysteric (displaying all the symptoms of fragmentation) and the text is the disciplining force, always begging me (as Philip Bauer, and eventually Freud, begged Dora) to "see reason."

CHAPTER 3
THE *DIFFEREND*: LITIGATION, NEGATION, AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF (HISTORICAL) MEMORY

Let us look first, then, at some of the ethical dilemmas that present themselves within a revisionary method of historiography. Since I have already spoken briefly of "memory" and the problem of putting one into possession of a memory that is at odds with one's identity, I will turn first to Jean-François Lyotard and the problem of the *differend*. Women, throughout the histories of both rhetoric and literature, are largely defined by their absence from these accounts—indeed, by absence in general. Luce Irigaray, for example, has demonstrated how, in the Lacanian account of "being," woman is perceived as "lacking," or as having only the *absence* of the phallus, compared to man's phallic *presence*. For Irigaray, the question is: ". . . wrapped up in the intangible sensation of absence, how can we continue to live as ourselves? How can we keep ourselves from becoming absorbed once again in [man's] violating language?" (215). This paper poses these questions, and others, based on a certainty that revision—the insertion or the materialization of women within dominant histories of rhetoric—is precisely to subject woman to a "violating language," to present her for (re)absorption into the very system of thought that has negated her in the first place.

The *differend* is the name for this subjection—for what happens to woman as she materializes within dominant narratives, and is subjected to the ontological violence that is contingent on this representational imperative. Lyotard writes that a differend:

> Would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments.

> One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy. However, applying a single rule of judgment to both in order to settle the differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them. (xi)

We need not, however, imagine the *differend* as operating only at the level of overt conflict. This paper will not be so concerned with the rendering of discrete, legalistic "judgments" (although judgment is, of course, always implicit in the *differend*), but with the exclusionary "rule of judgment" itself, which negates all that which it is incapable of accounting for. Consider, for example, Freud's belief that "when [hysterical] patients came into possession of their own stories . . . they would not have to speak across the body" (Kahane 21). Freud's therapeutic strategy, described here, is convenient for the analyst, because the patient's "own story," the possession of which supposedly holds the key to the patient's hysteria, is really Freud's story—his own Oedipal myth, which inscribes hysteria in its own discourse, even as it fails to totally count or account for hysteria's position *outside of* Freud's logocentrism. It is, then, the Oedipal narrative that provides the framework, the "rule of judgment" by which the very "being" of the hysteric is (mis)understood, subjected as she is to the *differend*.

Revisionary historiography imposes a similar "rule of judgment." Feminist scholars would, like Freud, put their subject ("woman") into "possession of [her] own story," by materializing her within dominant historical narratives. Here again, woman's "own story" is really the historiographer's story—her own political or social agenda, her own ideological or intellectual program. One must wonder, then, if feminist revisionary historiography might be guilty of imposing its own methodological *differend*, its own "rule of judgment" that paradoxically "wrongs" the very figure it works to save. Certainly, the advancement of a feminist revisionary

methodology as *the* ethical framework (*the* "rule of judgment") for feminist scholars of rhetoric forecloses on the possibility of a truly subversive history—a narrative, that is, which affirms a subject position outside the boundaries of the dominant rule of judgment.

Hysterical Standoffs and the Boundaries of Feminist Thought

Why, then, do so many feminist historiographers of rhetoric refuse to take advantage of the poststructural strategies which have been developed for the advancement of precisely this sort of *hystery*? Feminist resistance to anti-foundational methodologies is unsurprising, and even less surprising is the resultant impulse to reinforce the boundaries of what counts as "acceptable" feminist scholarship. This is precisely the impulse of many pragmatic feminist scholars, both inside and outside the field of rhetoric and composition,[2] whose emphasis on "transformative politics" (Ebert, "Difference" 887) leads to a privileging of embodied resistance and of what Martha Nussbaum and others term "the real situation of real women" (38) as the appropriate area of inquiry for feminist scholars.

Working within the paradigm of revisionary historiography—a methodology which, in some important ways, is the historiographical answer to the call of these "real women"—necessitates that we materialize woman-as-subject, which will inevitably subject woman to the ontological violence of representation. Indeed, much feminist scholarship proceeds from an assumption that we can "[know] what women truly are." Even more troubling, some scholars make these sorts of assumptions *despite* their belief in the un-representability of Woman, because they privilege *embodied* resistance over what Biddy Martin dismissively calls "theoretical correctness." The result is that feminist scholarship is dominated by work that is founded on the ontological

[2] Delphy (1975, 1980), Ebert (1992), Hennessy (1993, 1997), Jackson (2001)

violence of defining and representing Woman, *so that* she can be subjected to the subsequent feminist critique. In short, the feminist representational impulse (that is, a feminist insistence on *embodiment*) serves to discipline feminist scholarship that begins with another impulse, one which is skeptical of the discursive violence inherent to the revisionary framework.

Interestingly, this representational impulse turns up elsewhere, outside the theoretical concerns of historiographical method. Consider, for example, the question posed to Judith Butler, which later became the point of departure for *Bodies that Matter*: ""What about the materiality of the body, *Judy?*" (ix)—a question intended to recall Butler's attention to the "real situations of real women," to wrangle her back within the boundaries of acceptable feminist (representational) scholarship. It is, in other words, a question meant to put Butler herself "into possession of [her] own story," which is really the "feminist" story (if we can speak of such a thing). Given the feminist tendency towards discursive discipline, the tendency to en/force the dominant "feminist" emancipatory narrative, it is important to consider *what is at stake* in these rebukes of anti-foundational historiographies—what is at stake in the maintenance of the "primary premises" of feminist scholarship?

Judith Butler observes that the shoring up of feminism's intellectual boundaries involves the insistence that "any theory of politics requires a subject, needs from the start to presume its subject, the referentiality of language, the integrity of the institutional descriptions it provides" ("Contingent" 153). If what Teresa Ebert calls "transformational politics" (what I will refer to here as "reactive" or revisionary historiographies) require a grounded subject, then anti-foundational approaches provide no ground from which to launch the emancipatory narrative, and must therefore be ruled insufficient in terms of their liberatory potentials. Perhaps the preservation

of feminism's liberatory potential is the motivating principle behind Cheryl Glenn's support of a feminist historiography that "address[es] silences, challeng[es] absences, and assert[s] women's contributions to public life" (389).

CHAPTER 4
ISSUING THE HYSTERICAL HAIL: THEORIZING AN ETHICAL THINKING OF OTHERNESS

That revisionary historiography has so easily been appropriated by feminist historiographers of rhetoric demonstrates that while feminist scholars have successfully recognized the "call of the Other" resounding in historical absences, we have yet to realize that we all too often answer that call with ears always already made deaf by our tendency toward ontology. Ontology, writes Emmanuel Levinas, is characterized by "a reduction of the Other to the Same" (43). He continues, noting that:

> The neutralization of the other who becomes a theme or an object—appearing, that is, taking its place in the light—is precisely his reduction to the same. To know ontologically is to surprise in an existent confronted that by which it is not this existent, this stranger, that by which it is somehow betrayed, surrenders, is given in the horizon in which it loses itself and appears, lays itself open to grasp, becomes a concept. To know amounts to grasping being out of nothing or reducing it to nothing, *removing from it its alterity*. (43-44)

If this notion sounds familiar, it is perhaps because Levinas' critique of ontology approximates the indictment I am leveling here, against feminist revisionary historiography. I have already demonstrated that revisionary methodologies, along with "transformative [feminist] politics" necessitate the materialization of the subject at the center of their critiques. Here, Levinas is

showing us what is at stake in the feminist representational impulse—nothing less than alterity, a position with which, as Levinas reminds us elsewhere, woman is closely associated.

Diane Davis has commented similarly on the basic assumptions of (American) feminist liberatory endeavors, calling into question the foundations of the revisionary method: “that re/presentation, in general, is possible; that a female subject position is desirable; and that an important aim for feminism(s) should be to speak (for) the silenced *flip-side* of a certain metaphysical structure in which ‘women’ have already been imprinted” (150). The problem with these assumptions, Davis continues, is that revisionary practices (re)circumscribe women within dominant historical narratives, without problematizing either the inadequacy of their own representations, or the violent nature of the structure of thought that has produced those dominant narratives in the first place. She observes that “the logocentric linguistic structure that many American feminists uphold in their struggle is a phallocratic one that will continually misfire for ‘women’ *because* it demands that one be either male or female, active or passive, subject or object” (151). Inscribing what Michel Foucault might call a “counter-memory” into dominant narratives will not, it seems, get us very far in responding to the call of the Other, who is by nature (according to Levinas) unrepresentable.

What is interesting here—what becomes clear as we take a step back—is the transformational power of ontology, or what Levinas calls the process of “grasping being out of nothing.” For Levinas, this transformation manifests in the reduction of the Other to the Same: “The relation with Being that is enacted as ontology consists in neutralizing the existent in order to comprehend or *grasp* it. It is hence not a relation with the other as such but the reduction of the other to the same” (46). Stepping back, we find that the representational violence Levinas

describes here might represent another way of articulating the violence inherent to Freud's psychoanalytic ontology—another way of describing the project of putting the Other in "possession of [her] own story" which is, as I have already argued, never really *her* story but rather the effect of her representation in a particular logocentric discourse. This imperative to inscribe the Other in the discourses of the Same is at the heart of Freud's psychoanalytic enterprise, but also at the heart of the feminist revisionary enterprise.

Sometimes, of course, these transformations take unpredictable (often *undesirable*) forms. Consider, for example, Page du Bois' compelling work in *Sowing the Body*. Working in the sphere of classical rhetoric, and noticing the transformational force of ontology, du Bois observes that it is "clear the motive of domination implicit in the Greeks' penchant for metaphorizing, for analogizing, the woman's body. . . to use metaphors in this way, as the Greeks do, is eventually to instrumentalize the female, to reduce her to the status of the thing, an object to be manipulated, to be filled up, broken into, erased. . ." (34). Here, du Bois helpfully points out that ontological transformations—reductions of the Other to the Same, as alterity is neutralized by the discourse in which it is circumscribed—are not only unfortunate effects of the will-to-represent, but also important strategies for the maintenance of hegemonic discursive power. What are the implications, for example, of woman's materialization within Freudian psychoanalytic discourses? She appears, but not as woman herself. Rather, she is transformed by Freud's Oedipal narrative into a castrated male. She appears, importantly, not precisely as the Same but as *a version of the Same*. She is a man *negated*, lacking the symbolic instrument of masculine discursive power—the same "instrument," of course, that structures our dominant historical narratives.

Feminists Read(ing) Levinas

Given what is now a commonplace reference, with respect to Emmanuel Levinas' position on the question of woman, to Simone de Beauvoir's accusatory footnote in the opening pages of *The Second Sex*,[3] some feminist scholars may find my appropriation of these Levinasian principles suspect. For de Beauvoir and other feminist scholars, Levinas participates in a long tradition of Western Philosophy, in which "woman" is portrayed or explained as "other"—an intellectual maneuver which, feminist scholars have rightly argued, has facilitated her erasure from dominant histories of, for example, philosophy. This certainly seems to be what de Beauvoir is pointing to, when she complains that, in his association of the "feminine" with alterity, Levinas "takes a man's point of view, disregarding the reciprocity of subject and object." She concludes that "his description, which is intended to be objective, is in fact an assertion of masculine privilege" (18).

Two points are worth making here, concerning de Beauvoir's complaints. The first is that, as Tina Chanter has also observed, the translation of Levinas' essay that de Beauvoir cites here, done by H. M. Parshley, mishandles the passage—"L'altérité s'accomplit dans le féminine." Parshey, Chanter notes, "[obscures] the term *accomplishes*, a technical term in Levinas that Parshley . . . reduces . . . to the banal, rendering Levinas's ideas on women akin to stereotypical notions of femininity, and drawing Levinas back into the Romantic tradition he seeks to overturn" (4). And certainly, while Levinas (who, remember, was writing *against* the Western philosophical tradition) can legitimately be read as associating the "feminine" with otherness, it is

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[3] The footnote I am referencing here comes just after de Beauvoir's now-famous assertion that "[Woman] is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. *He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other*" (13, my emphasis).

In the footnote, de Beauvoir quotes Levinas at length, from his essay "Temps et l'Autre," but the phrase that really seems to get under de Beauvoir's skin is Levinas' assertion that "Otherness reaches its full flowering in the feminine, a term of the same rank as consciousness but of the opposite meaning."

important to remember Levinas's philosophical orientation, relative to the alterity that the "feminine" describes. This second point has already been eloquently made by Jacques Derrida, who was rereading *Totality and Infinity* upon Levinas's death. Derrida argues that is is possible to read this text as "a sort of feminist manifesto," given that it the way in which Levinas situates the notion of the "feminine" in relation to his notion of "ethics":

> . . . this text defines the welcome par excellence, the welcome or welcoming of absolute, absolutely originary, or even pre-originary hospitality, nothing less than the pre-ethical origin of ethics, on the basis of femininity. That gesture reaches a depth of essential or meta-empirical radicality that takes sexual difference into account in an ethics emancipated from ontology. It confers the opening of the welcome upon "the feminine being" and not upon the *fact* of empirical women. The welcome, the anarchic origin of ethics, belongs to 'the dimension of femininity' and not to the empirical presence of a human being of the 'feminine' sex. (*Adieu* 44)

The point here is that for Levinas, contrary to the Western philosophical tradition, the notion of *alterity* (which provides the condition of possibility for this "welcome par excellence") has "priority . . . over the one." Chanter agrees that "the idea that alterity is accomplished in the feminine amounts to a radical claim, which must alter the traditional association of the feminine with otherness" (5).

Let us turn, then, to remark upon the ways in which this thinking of the feminine engages with the problem at hand, concerning feminist historiographies of rhetoric. Notice, for example, that Levinas's position on the question of "woman" is redeemed, in the eyes of certain scholars, by

the separation he maintains between the term “female” and the terms of the “feminine”—or, as Derrida puts it, “the feminine being” from the “*fact* of empirical women.” This is, in some ways I think, a significant challenge to the conflation of “feminist” and “revisionary” methodologies, and therefore represents an important move in the critique of feminist historiography as such. What I mean to say is that, in Levinas’s separation of “the female” from her “femininity”, he supports the argument of this paper—that the materialization of “woman” within dominant phallogocentric narratives is not necessarily to represent her *femininity*—the very thing, if we believe Levinas, that would enable the subversion of hegemonic narratives. The appearance of woman-as-humanist-subject within history does not, that is, describe the act of her Being in that history.

“Hey, you there!”: Being Subject, Being Subjected

Levinas, in fact, objected to Heidegger’s notion that Being might be *possessed* by the one who supposedly “is” (*Existence* 30, my emphasis). This objection is helpful, given this paper’s concern with the trope of ontological “possession,” as indicated by Freud’s therapeutic strategy—for the psychoanalytic imperative to put the hysteric “in possession of [her] own story” is to assume that the “normally functioning” subject (who is, perhaps, the humanist subject) is in possession of the story of her existence, in possession of her Being. Of course, in the Freudian discourse, this “possession” is not pre-ontological in any sense, but comes about as a result of the patient’s response to the “hail” of Freud’s Oedipal law.

Kelly Oliver, linking the work of Levinas with the insights of Louis Althusser, writes that “Both Althusser and Levinas describe the subject’s predilection to turn, to obey the hail or the call” (180), noting Althusser’s agreement that the subject appears, not as an effect of its Being, but as an effect of the call that materializes the subject as such. “*All ideology*,” Althusser asserts, “*hails*

or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject" (173, his emphasis). Althusser's oft-cited example of the hail of the police is emblematic of this line of thinking. He argues that, at the moment when one recognizes (or *mis*recognizes) oneself as the addressee of the police's call ("Hey, you there!")—that is, at the moment when one turns to respond to this call—"by this one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, [s]he becomes a subject" (174). This is important because it suggests that the "possession" of one's own Being—by which one is transformed, according to Althusser, from an individual to "concrete subject"—is not in the hands of the one being addressed, but in the hands of the one who addresses her.

This might sound like pleasant news for the feminist revisionary method—after all, if the historiographer (the one whose ideology "hails" woman from her absence) has the capacity to bestow subjecthood upon the one she hails, then it seems that revisionary historiography would be uniquely positioned in the struggle for historical "emancipation." But before we get carried away here, I should point out that for Althusser (and particularly for Judith Butler, reading Althusser), ideology's interpellation of the subject is, as Diane Davis puts it, "*both a poison and a cure*." On the one hand, interpellation is representative of *recognition*. The hail of ideology "plucks the not-yet-One from pre-symbolic obscurity and deposits her into the discursive domain of the subject" (79). This, perhaps, is the potential that feminist scholars perceive in revisionary methodologies—the potential to call "woman" out of obscurity and into a recognized/recognizable position within histories of rhetoric. And yet, it is precisely that discursive domain that circumscribes the new-subject even as it calls her into subjecthood. Davis explains further that "through the hail of language, the individual is called into a subject position s/he then denotes with

the identity-term 'I.' Therefore, when that 'I' speaks, s/he necessarily speaks from the position into which language has always-already called her/him" (79).

In the scene with the police, then, one might say that the subject is circumscribed by the discourses of "the Law" (to the extent, of course, that the police can be said to represent this "Law), even as the hail of the Law bestows subjecthood upon the individual. That is to say that, in performing the "one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion" towards the Law, the individual both *becomes subject*, and becomes *subject(ed) to* the Law. Consider, for example, Butler's discussion of Althusser in *Bodies that Matter*. "The call," Butler tells us, "is formative, if not *per*formative, precisely because it initiates the individual into the subjected status of the subject" (121). Indeed, there is no subject position beyond subjection to a certain discursive Law—and so the Law constitutes the subject, making the individual's response to its call, in itself, an act of obedience to it.

With respect to Freud's relationship with Dora, it is important to acknowledge that we *can know Dora only insofar as she responds to Freud's call*—that is, only insofar as Freud manages to *subject* her to (or to bring her into subjecthood within) the ideology of his Oedipal narrative. It is, after all, only Freud himself who is in a position to write Dora's subjecthood—a subjecthood that is, frustratingly, only relatable within the discourse in which it appears. The waters are muddied even further by the notion that *Freud is not the police.* Freud, that is, may not be the one who has hailed Dora into the Oedipal narrative, having been hailed himself (made subject and made to be subjected) by the same ideological structure he later imposes. If this is true, then we might agree that it is ideology itself, as a "linguistic structuration," that calls both analyst and analysand into it.

CHAPTER 5
FINAL SOLUTIONS: WOMEN UNDER ERASURE

Let us look, once again, at the problem of the *differend*, as posited by Jean-François Lyotard. This return to Lyotard, though, first requires me to be very clear about some of the links I am making. Believing, as I have just mentioned, that *neither* the addresser nor the addressee of the hail is exempt from interpellation by ideology—believing, that is, that even as the police issues the "hail" of the Law, (s)he too is circumscribed in the same ideology into which (s)he is engaged in hailing o/Others, suggests that a conflict between addresser and addressee takes place under a common "rule of judgment," which is contingent on whatever ideology the parties have been hailed into. But to believe this, clearly, has its own set of attendant problems. Why, for example, if both the police and, say, the "criminal" are hailed by the same Law, do the two exist within that Law in such obviously different positions of discursive privilege? We can best answer this question, it seems, by considering the ways in which Althusser's "ideology" approximates the "rule of judgment" that Lyotard describes in his explication of the *differend*. This approximation is abundantly clear in the case of Freud and Dora—both, to be sure, hailed by the same Oedipal ideology, and yet, as the case history makes clear, locked in a sort of irreducible ontological conflict (a conflict which Victor J. Vitanza has aptly characterized as an "hysterical standoff").

I have already, in the introduction to this paper, provided Lyotard's definition of the *differend.* Here is Lyotard, with one eye on "the so-called Final Solution," explaining what this sort of failed litigation might look like:

> To have 'really seen with his own eyes' a gas chamber would be the condition which gives on authority to say that it exists and to persuade the unbeliever. Yet it is still necessary to prove that the gas chamber was used to kill at the time it was seen. The only acceptable proof that it was used to kill is that one died from it. But if one is dead, one cannot testify that it is on account of the gas chamber . . . there is no victim that is not dead; otherwise, this gas chamber would not be what he or she claims it to be. There is, therefore, no gas chamber. (3-4)

The *differend*, then, represents the means by which History edits itself—the method by which it erases and excludes that which cannot (or will not) prove itself according to the *differend's* ontological conditions. To link this notion with Althusser's idea of the ideology's "hail" is compelling precisely because the individual becomes *known* (that is, "recognized" and thus "represented") only to the extent that she responds to, and is thus subjected by, the ideology that hails her. Woman, for example, does not show up to the differend *as herself* (if we can speak of such a thing as *oneself*), but as one whose subjecthood is paradoxically activated and deactivated by the terms of the *differend*.

Consider the *differend* Lyotard describes, concerning the conflict between Jews and the history that would erase the atrocity of the gas chamber from its narrative. Here, the *differend* is based on an epistemological "rule of judgment" that admits only that which is "seen with [one's] own eyes" as legitimate evidence. Since there is clearly no one *living* who can offer valid testimony, based on this impossible rule, the only possible conclusion is that what cannot be said (with certainty) to have been seen does not exist. Consider, too, how a similar situation evolves in feminist historiographies of rhetoric. There is a *differend* between "woman" and the history that

would erase "femininity" (that is, "femininity" in a Levinasian sense) from its account—but it is a *differend* that is created, not by history itself, but by revisionary attempts to inscribe this "woman," this subject that is hailed into subjecthood by feminist ideology, into historical narratives.

This assertion will, no doubt, seem counterintuitive. But recall, in my earlier discussion of Levinas, the distinction that has been drawn between the terms of "femininity" as a radical alterity, and the figure of "woman" who is not the Other, but rather is always becoming the Same. Histories of rhetoric, it seems, have been all-too-willing to assimilate "woman" (as the Same) into their narratives—indeed, the receptiveness of dominant narratives to "revision" is well evidenced by the proliferation of feminist revisions to these histories themselves. What is at stake in this particular *differend* is not, then, the assimilation of woman-as-Same into historical narratives, but rather the preservation of the radical alterity that Levinas gestures toward—the unrepresentable which expertly exposes the limitations of phallogocentrism, forcing its phallocratic histories to close their account of the world with what Judith Butler has called "an embarrassed 'etc.'" (*Gender Trouble* 143).

The important point here is that feminist revisionary methodology has bought into the very "rule of judgment" that has made the Levinasian idea of the "feminine" impossible to realize within dominant historical narratives—the same epistemological assumption that erases the fact of the gas chamber. Realizing, perhaps, that history has a tendency to ignore that which is beyond its ontological grasp, revisionary scholars hail "woman" to the same oppressive ideology (the ideology of *presence*) that underpins the phallogocentric histories they would otherwise resist. This is problematic because the very act of hailing "woman" into presence necessarily transforms her, a transformation that Althusser describes as the interpellation of "concrete individuals as concrete

subjects." Levinas offers a similar description of the transformation of the Other into the Same. Either way, it is important to grasp that the *differend* wrongs "woman" because even in the application of the "rule of judgment," which demands that woman materialize in history in order to be accounted for, "woman" has already lost in the conflict, by becoming other-than-woman in order to satisfy the *differend'*s ontological conditions.

Negation and Exclusion as Functions of Ontology

One might argue, of course, that even (mis)representations of "woman" in histories of rhetoric are more desirable than an outright *lack* of representation—and indeed, there is certainly merit to this argument. It has not been my goal here to denigrate the important work done by revisionist scholars. It is, after all, from that work that I am, in some ways, taking a lesson here. But the problem with this "*something* is better than *nothing*" approach to historiography is the tendency of phallogocentric narratives to dissolve the feminine "presence" that these methodologies prop up, again and again, back into *nothingness*. History, it seems, has more than one strategy for effacing the presence of "woman" from its narratives.

Consider, for example, that the insertion of "woman" into history necessitates representation—which in turn requires knowledge. In other words, any revisionary project must begin with the problematic task of *knowing* what "woman" truly is, so that she can be represented and made present within historical narratives. Even more problematically, this task necessitates that revisionist scholars ask of "woman" the violent, ontological question: "What is it/What are you?"—a question which demands that "woman" be situated within the limits of our knowing. She must, in other words, be situated within phallogocentrism's network of binary oppositions (she is Man or she is Woman, she is Present or she is Absent). Victor J. Vitanza has observed that by

employing this "dividing practice" as a means of *knowing* woman, we "destroy the conditions of [her] possibility" (13).

Phallogocentrism, after all, represents the rules of "a culture that claims to enumerate everything, cipher everything into units, inventory everything by individualities" (Irigaray 325), and whatever cannot be accounted for in this manner (according to the phallus, according to *logos*) is erased. Vitanza explains, "When we move out of *litigation* and create the (ontological) conditions for the possibilities of a *differend*…we inevitably purify, silence, and exclude" (45-46). Vitanza points to Edward Schiappa's investigation and negation of the Sophists as case in point. He writes that when Schiappa asks the dividing ontological question of the Sophists, "he asks it in terms of whether the Sophists are an 'oasis' or a 'mirage'"—a tidy binary that allows Schiappa, through *diaeresis* ("division, naming"), to conclude that the Sophists are merely a "mirage"—"a mere imitation without an original"—and finally that " . . . *we do not need the fiction of 'sophistic rhetoric'*" (14). Thus is the "anti/logic" of sophistry supplanted by the unified rhetoric of philosophy—thus is the (mis)representation of the "mirage" erased in favor of "the real thing."

The *fiction* of "sophistic rhetoric"! Clearly, it is not only woman-as-absence that is under threat from the ontological conditions of the *differend.* Indeed, as Schiappa demonstrates, even that which is (re)presented in historical narratives can be delegitimated, assimilated into another binary (dividing practice) which distinguishes what is the "real thing" (that is, what is self-identical), from that which, having no original, is always backsliding into the abyss of the non-referential. What I am suggesting here, to put it simply, is that feminist liberatory strategies that focus exclusively on the representational and representable, whether in politics or in academe, will, as Davis puts it, "continually misfire for 'women'" because representations of "woman" ("woman" made *present*),

having responded to the revisionary call to presence, become subject to that same ideology—an ideology that demands not only (re)presentation, but a sort of self-identical authenticity which, considering Levinas's association of the "feminine" with alterity, may not be possible for "woman," short of what Irigaray calls her "[transformation] by phallocratism" (111).

CHAPTER 6
HYSTERIOGRAPHY: A CHALLENGE TO FEMINIST HISTORIOGRAPHIES OF RHETORIC

What, in light of all this, are the prospects for histories of rhetoric that respond to the call of the (“feminine”) Other, refusing to materialize this *femininity* as “woman,” embodied? How are we to (re)think the writing history in such a way as to avoid the imperative of “putting [one] in possession of [one’s] own story? Up to this point, I have been attempting to demonstrate that, by insisting on the material *presence* of woman within histories of rhetoric, feminist scholars subject woman to the same *differend* that has contributed to the negation of woman in the first place. In putting woman “in possession of her own story,” revisionary historiographies neutralize the subversive potential of the *feminine* by materializing it what Derrida calls the “empirical fact of woman.” Now, I begin to look for a *way out* of the logocentric House-of-Mirrors I have, up to this point, been concerned with describing.

Let us, then, think back to Victor J. Vitanza’s characterization of Freud’s relationship with Dora as an “hysterical standoff.” It runs counter to my argument that, in order to make myself clear, I should return to the realm of the representational—and yet, part of what makes this particular relationship so compelling is the ways in which Freud’s case study exposes the limits of representation. Hélène Cixous reads the case study similarly, drawing a hard-line distinction between Dora-as-“woman” and Dora-as-Being. In their discussion of the hysteric, Catherine Clément tells Cixous, “Listen, you really like Dora, but as for me, she has never seemed to me to be a revolutionary heroine.” Cixous snaps back, “*I don’t give a damn about Dora.* I don’t fetishize

her. She is the name of a certain disturbing force which means that the little circus no longer runs" (289, my emphasis). The distinction between these two positions, concerning the potential of the hysteric as subversive, is worth zeroing in on here—in looking at the ways in which Clément and Cixous understand "Dora" as operating in historical and cultural narratives, we are able to see what is at stake in the materialization of "Dora" as a concrete subject.

And indeed, Clément's understanding of Dora is built on a similar set of assumptions to those that undergird the revisionary enterprise. Clément, it seems, only understands Dora within the realm of the representational—either Dora (as materialized subject) acts (with agency) as a poststructuralist "revolutionary heroine," or she does not. For Clément, Dora does not possess nearly the subversive potential which Cixous, in her own understanding of "Dora," so vehemently asserts. Why not? Because Clément sees Dora's disruptions as so localized—so limited by the scope of the subject's agency—that whatever ruptures she is able to induce into the fabric of phallogocentrism are eventually "shut back up" by the structures (like the bourgeois family, like psychoanalysis) which will eternally "bring her to reason" by assimilating her within their ideologies (156-7). Jane Gallop explains further that "Rather than seeing the hysteric's role as ambiguous, Clément now argues that it is only deluded, co-opted rebellion. She may appear to disturb, but the hysteric actually provides an opportunity for the family to revitalize itself through the assimilation of something outside itself" (203).

Cixous, however, maintains a distinction between Dora as a concrete subject, and "Dora" as representing hysterical Being—the power of an unassimilatable alterity. This distinction allows Cixous to posit Dora as the "the name of a certain disturbing force," and to assert Dora's insusceptibility to the various ideologies into which she is hailed. But the fact is, Dora is inevitably

interpellated as a subject, through the hail of ideology—both in what Clément calls the "bourgeois family" ideology, and in Freud's Oedipal ideology. That is to say that (at least) these two structures recognize Dora as an individual displaying the fragmented symptoms of hysteria, and they hail her, interpellate her as an hysterical subject. It is very clear how this interpellation works for Freud, who maps Dora's "own story" onto his Oedipal narrative, by pretending to *know* what is "behind" her hysterical symptoms.

Along these same lines, Michelle Ballif argues that Freud plays the "'psycho-gynecologist' *par excellence* who desires to know: what is it that Woman wants? What is the truth of Woman?" (1). In other words, in seeking the source of hysteria, Freud also seeks the secret, the unconscious desire of Woman. In this sense, Freud's analysis begins at the same place as revisionary feminists—in ontological violence, by establishing power/authority over Woman through the will-to-knowledge, and by circumscribing the materialized subject in a predetermined and prescriptive ideology. But, in admitting with Clément that Dora's subversive potential is, in some ways, neutralized or "shut back up" by the ideological structures into which she is hailed, we are not necessarily delegitimizing Cixous' view of "Dora" as a force that, in turn, neutralizes these oppressive structures.

Consider, for example, Paul Verhaeghe's compelling observation that "every time [Freud] managed to put a finger on the sore spot [the actual trauma, the real nucleus], another trauma emerged, a new desire" (56). Verhaeghe's account is helpful because it demonstrates a third possibility for understanding Dora, which acknowledges both Clément's and Cixous' respective positions. Verhaeghe's account does not deny that, in a sense, "Dora" as a disruptive, fragmented force is neutralized by Freud's ideology, which attempts to synthesize all the fragments

(symptoms) into a unified account of Dora's being—that is, it acknowledges Freud's marginal success in the project of transforming the Other (the hysteric) into the Same (Oedipus). It also does not necessarily deny that Dora, however resistantly, answers the call of Oedipal ideology— after all, her (partial) materialization within the Oedipal narrative is what allows Freud to find any "sore spot" on which to put his psychoanalytic finger.

Yet even while acknowledging these problems, Verhaeghe's account (re)opens the possibility that, even as Dora responds to the hail of Freud's ideology, and even as that ideology renders her as the *subject*ed subject, Freud's ideology can never cover its territory fully enough—that is, that "Dora" (the name of a certain "disturbing force") will always exceed the boundaries of Freud's interpretive framework. While Freud is compelled to return to Dora again and again to put her "into possession of [her] own story," which is not Dora's story at all (that story would, of course, be un*tell*able, unrepresentable within Freud's discourse), Dora too returns again and again to Freud, blurring what had previously been well-maintained boundaries between Freud-as-analyst and Dora-as-hysteric. Indeed, we can learn from the case of Freud and Dora that the will-to-knowledge has a difficult time disengaging with the hysterical forces it seeks to discipline. Even after Dora terminated her clinical relationship with Freud, he could not let her go. Instead, he immediately began work on the case history that would eventually become *Fragments of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, in what appears to be one last attempt at bringing (oedipal) order to Dora's fragmented narrative. Of course, even the title Freud gave to the case history betrays the impossibility of his task. The narrative that Freud attempts to impose on Dora-the-hysteric fails to even refer directly to the hysteria it would discipline—it is not "A Case of Hysteria," nor even "An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," but "A *Fragment* of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria." The

disrupting force of Dora's hysteria defies Freud's representation of it, and even more radically, it renders his disciplining narrative as *fragmented* (hysterical) in itself.

Breaking with Representation

These hysterical transactions between Freud and Dora suggest an analogous situation in feminist scholarship. Freud looked for a fully interpellated subject in the figure of "Dora," but found Dora-the-hysteric—the excess that could not be accounted for within the structure of his ideology, which haunts the legitimacy of Freud's Oedipal narrative as a complete account of being. That is to say that the subject at the center of his analysis was already undone, so as to render any account of her similarly fragmented. This, I believe, is the crucial point for the future of feminist historiography. Revisionary historiographers, in playing the role of the *analyst* with the will-to-knowledge, hail a subject that is *already undone*—already, as Vitanza would put it, "becoming-hysterical." And, similarly to Freud, these attempts at interpellation can neither disengage from the fragmented subject, nor can they withstand the poststructural critique inherent to its fragmentation.

With Emmanuel Levinas and, perhaps, with "Dora," this paper has sought a way out of historiographies which have responded to the call of the Other with ears made deaf by a compulsion towards (mis)representation. The problem in overcoming our own deafness—the same problem that Levinas struggled with—is that as an historiographer of rhetoric, one must (perhaps) inevitably engage in the practice of naming, which Michelle Ballif has argued is the determinant of understanding: "it is naming (or the categorizing of difference) that makes knowing or understanding the world . . . possible" ("Negotiating" 588). But I am reminded, just as Ballif is, of Jean-François Lyotard's conclusion in *The Postmodern Condition* that "the postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself" and finally that

"it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented" (81). As Lyotard's conclusion makes clear, we-scholars have yet to suggest a rhetoric of absence (a rhetoric of "the unpresentable") that does not remain bound, in some way, to presence (to the presentable). In referring to the absence, we must always glance toward (allude to) what is present, or exterior—thus can we only refer to the absent in terms of the present. The invention of allusions that Lyotard recommends demonstrates again the transformations/transfigurations which become necessary when we endeavor to recognize or to understand beyond the conventions of our thought.

Jean-Luc Nancy writes that "Representation is what determines itself by its own limit. It is the delimitation for a subject, and by this subject, of what 'in itself' would be neither represented nor representable" (1). This paper, with Nancy and in contrast to revisionary methodologies, has recognized the stark impossibility of representing any thing "in itself," and perhaps more importantly draws a distinction between that elusive, impossible thing "in itself" and the represented thing, which will necessarily be transformed, as I have argued, into something else. There is no "woman," no "thing in itself" with *a priori* presence, outside of the inadequacies of our representation. There is only, then, the transfigured representation. And yet, to incline our critical ear only towards the (represented) woman is to see only difference(s) which, as Ballif points out, we are already too inclined to do: "Listening for difference(s) always already precludes listening for *différance.* That is . . . that understanding difference(s) is all too possible, that it is our epistemological impulse to render difference(s) into the (self)same" (587). Listening for *différance*, on the other hand, necessitates a break with the representational. It is not, therefore, the woman

(the other) toward whom we should strain, but toward Woman (the radical alterity of the Other, which is outside even our structures of knowing).

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