

# Historicism and Lacanian theory

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In 1977 Luce Irigaray published a passionately written article in the journal *Critique*, entitled 'The Poverty of Psychoanalysis'. The text is a richly woven tapestry of diverse references and poetic resonances, and merits a close reading. However, rather than using Irigaray's essay as an exercise in textual analysis, I will use it here as a springboard for discussing certain aspects of the relationship between historicism and psychoanalytic theory.\*

This relationship is evoked by the very title of Irigaray's text. This title, which Irigaray declared would be incomprehensible to most of the analysts at whom the article was directed,<sup>1</sup> alludes to the title of a book by Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847). Marx's work is an attack on the economic doctrines of Proudhon, whom he accuses of ignoring the historical relativity of economic categories. Marx argues that Proudhon is guilty of one of the characteristic fallacies of bourgeois ideology: in de-historicizing the ideas of his society, Proudhon presents capitalism, not as a transient mode of production, but as a universal feature of the human condition. Refuting Proudhon with typical aplomb, Marx states that 'these ideas, these categories, are as little eternal as the relations they express. They are historical and transitory products.'<sup>2</sup>

In alluding to this work by Marx, Irigaray makes it clear that her article will proceed along the same lines. Indeed, the parallel is perfect. Just as Marx criticizes Proudhon for his failure to realize that his economic concepts were products of a specific historical epoch, so Irigaray accuses Lacan and his followers of ignoring the historical relativity of their own theoretical constructs. According to Irigaray, Lacanian analysts foreclose all questions relating to the history in which psychoanalytic theory is inscribed, as if this theory were 'whole, absolute and without any historical foundations'. In this way, like Proudhon, Lacanians had conferred universal validity

on the social relations that characterized a specific moment in history, thus becoming 'the defenders of an *existing order*, the agents or servants of repression and censorship ensuring that this order subsists as though it were the only possible order'.<sup>3</sup>

In her references to Marx, and specifically in her attack on the ahistoricism of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Irigaray must herself be inscribed in a historical tradition within psychoanalytic theory. This tradition goes back to the 1920s, when dialectical materialism first locked horns with psychoanalysis. Before this time, psychoanalysts seem to have given no consideration to the question of the historical relativity of their models of psychic structure. In most of Freud's writings, for example, it is as if the dimension of history had been suspended, so that it is easy to see the model of the ego, the id and the superego as an eternal Platonic form, a shining jewel invulnerable to the vagaries of time. In so far as history is discussed, it is always in terms of a myth of origins which anchors the unchangeability of the psyche in a primal crime of biblical proportions.

In the first decades of this century, then, Freudian theory seemed positively to invite a critique of the kind Marx levelled at Proudhon. The Communist Party was not long in accepting this invitation and by 1930 it had declared Pavlovian psychology to be the only one compatible with dialectical materialism, while psychoanalysis was accused of being a bourgeois ideology.

It was not long before analysts themselves began to respond to this accusation. In his pathbreaking essay of 1932, Erich Fromm conceded that most analysts had 'almost completely overlooked the fact that the family itself ... is the product of a specific social and ... class structure' and that in doing so 'they had turned bourgeois capitalist society into an absolute'. However, Fromm argued that the blame for this ideological distortion 'did not rest with psycho-

analysis as such' but with the bourgeois psychoanalysts who 'did not utilize this method in a correct way when they transferred it from the individual to social groups and social phenomena'. When the classical psychoanalytic method is applied 'in a logical way' to social phenomena, said Fromm, psychoanalysis and historical materialism are seen to dovetail harmoniously. Historical materialism could enrich psychoanalysis by bringing to light the economic conditions which influenced psychic structures, and psychoanalysis could enrich historical materialism by providing 'a more comprehensive knowledge of ... the nature of man himself'.<sup>4</sup>

Fromm's great interlocutor, Herbert Marcuse, was another writer to confront the problem of the historical relativity of psychoanalytic categories. Like Fromm, Marcuse regarded psychic structure as a relatively mutable entity, changing in accordance with the structure of society, but differed from Fromm in his analysis of these changes. In his 1963 essay 'The Obsolescence of the Freudian Concept of Man' he argued that the structure of the human psyche had been so affected by industrialization that Freud's models of psychic structure were no longer applicable. Primary among the changes wrought by industrialization was the 'decline in the role of the father', which led to a 'shrinkage of the ego', by which Marcuse meant a loss of private autonomy and rationality.<sup>5</sup>

The questions raised in Irigaray's paper are thus hardly new to psychoanalysis. What is original about her paper is the specific targeting of Lacanian psychoanalysis as the object of the critique. Whereas Fromm and Marcuse address themselves to Freud, Irigaray addresses herself to Lacan, explicitly denouncing what she dubs 'the Lacanian code'.

Irigaray is certainly not alone in representing Lacan as an ahistorical thinker. As both David Macey and Theresa Brennan point out, commentators have tended to assimilate Lacan into the structuralist movement, thus neglecting the thoroughly historical dimension of his thought. Both Macey and Brennan have attempted to remedy this misrepresentation, although in different ways: Macey by setting Lacan in the context of his own historical and theoretical background, Brennan by elaborating what she calls 'Lacan's theory of the ego's era'.<sup>6</sup>

Brennan construes Lacan as providing the basis of a new general theory of history to fill the void left by the death of Marxism. She elaborates a notion of what she calls 'Lacan's spatial dialectic' to explain a variety of phenomena ranging from urbanization and the ecological crisis through to imperialism and war.

The crux of her argument, however, turns on what she calls Lacan's concept of 'the psychical fantasy of woman'. Brennan links this concept to what she describes as 'Lacan's theory of the ego's era' and concludes that Lacan provides us with a way of understanding modernity and its discontents, which she terms a 'social psychosis'. This, she argues, is sufficient to rebut claims that Lacan is an ahistorical thinker.<sup>7</sup>

Brennan's reading of Lacan is not only highly idiosyncratic; it also gets a number of things wrong. It was not Lacan, as Brennan seems to suggest, who first proposed that men tend to split women into two types, mother and whore, who are idealized and denigrated accordingly, but Freud.<sup>8</sup> She also ignores the most important texts in which Lacan discusses questions of history, as I hope to demonstrate. Finally, the phrases on which Brennan places so much importance, and which she attributes to Lacan – 'the ego's era' and the 'psychical fantasy of woman' – are in fact nowhere to be found in any of Lacan's works.

In the rest of this paper, I will attempt to defend Lacan against the accusations of ahistoricism levelled against him by Irigaray and others. In line with Theresa Brennan I will argue that Lacan does in fact engage in a profound and complex way with problems of history. However, whereas Brennan attempts to develop a historical metanarrative on the basis of Lacan's works, I am more concerned to show how Lacan stresses the historical relativity of psychoanalytical concepts. I will focus particularly on Lacan's discussion of the historical emergence of the Oedipus complex and of the modern ego, before presenting Lacan's concept of the 'lure of the already-there' as a way of exploring the problems which beset attempts by psychoanalysis to theorize its historical bases. I will conclude with an attempt to situate Irigaray's paper in its own historical context.

### **The relativity of the Oedipus complex**

In his first work to address the Oedipus complex in any detail, an article on the family published in 1938, Lacan insists that the complex must not be understood outside its sociological relativity, which he takes to be the context of the 'paternalist family'. Only a decade after the famous dispute between Malinowski and Jones over the cultural relativity of the Oedipus complex, Lacan clearly aligns himself with Malinowski in arguing that the complex is relative to a particular (patriarchal) social structure. Referring to Malinowski's research on the family

structure of the Trobriand Islanders, which is based on a matrilineal system of inheritance, Lacan concurs that it is impossible to speak of an Oedipus complex here. Instead, he posits a different kind of psychic structure, in which the embodiment of the authority figure and the protective function in separate people (the uncle and the father, respectively) leads not only to the absence of neurosis but also to the smothering of sublimatory potential and the consequent uniformity of cultural artefacts.<sup>9</sup>

According to Lacan's argument, then, the Oedipus complex is not an eternal aspect of 'human nature', but only appears at a specific moment in human history. This moment is the moment of the passage from matriarchy to patriarchy, and Lacan argues that this is illustrated in the Oedipus story itself by the figure of the Sphinx, a lion with a female face, whose defeat, he states, represents 'emancipation from the matriarchal tyrannies'. The passage from matriarchy to patriarchy is also the origin of written history. The fact that these two events occurred simultaneously is not, Lacan argues, merely fortuitous, but testifies to a structural link. He takes up the same point again in 1946, when he writes:

I think that the Oedipus complex did not appear with the origin of man (insofar as it is not meaningless to attempt to write the history of this origin), but alongside history, 'historical' history, at the limit of 'ethnographic' cultures. It can clearly only appear in the patriarchal form of the family institution...<sup>10</sup>

Whatever one might think of this argument, it is at least sufficient evidence that, from very early on in his work, Lacan addresses the question of the historical relativity of psychoanalytic theory. He does not assume that the psychoanalytic emphasis on the Oedipus complex is due to the essential importance of this complex in the human psyche *per se*, but argues that its importance is due to the fact that 'the Oedipus complex occupies a privileged position in the present state of Western civilisation'.<sup>11</sup>

Lacan takes a similarly historical approach to the concept of the ego, in the opening lecture of his 1954–55 seminar. In this lecture Lacan argues that the ego is a specifically modern form of conceiving of self-identity which only emerged at a point in history 'which we can locate towards the middle of the sixteenth, beginning of the seventeenth centuries'. Hence, while this concept may seem self-evident today, while 'the man of today ... may think that [this conception of himself] is the result of a natural inclination', it is in fact an entirely cultural construct

that 'comes to him from all sides'.<sup>12</sup> Similar notions are put forward by Lacan in his 1938 article on the family, where he mentions in passing that the 'psychology of modern man' arose simultaneously with bourgeois society out of the economic revolution of the fifteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

This historical moment – the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century – is also linked with the origin of the modern ego in another way. When Lacan discusses the history of art in the ethics seminar, he lays great emphasis on 'the establishment of geometrical laws of perspective formulated at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries'.<sup>14</sup> If this is linked up with Lacan's proposal that the ego is an illusion of synthesis based on an imaginary 'point of convergence',<sup>15</sup> this lends strength to his argument for positing the origin of the ego at this particular historical moment.

It is clear from the preceding comments that Lacan is attentive to the historical relativity of the psychic structures identified by psychoanalytic theory. However, Lacan is not content to remain at the level of this historical enquiry. What is even more interesting to him is the problem of why it is so difficult for psychoanalysis to theorize the historical bases of its own concepts. When Lacan remarks that '[i]t is very difficult for us to imagine that the whole of this psychology isn't eternal',<sup>16</sup> he is immediately faced with the problem of explaining this difficulty.

### **The lure of the already-there**

The explanation that Lacan elaborates might be designated, to borrow his own terminology, 'the lure of the already-there'. While this phrase is not exactly Lacan's, it is based on a similar phrase that he uses.<sup>17</sup> Although the phrase is not used until 1966, it nicely summarizes the ideas Lacan puts forward in the first lecture of his 1954–55 seminar. It is here that, in connection with his thesis on the emergence of the ego around the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Lacan argues that this makes the psychology of classical antiquity impossible to imagine today. This impossibility is due to the fact that whenever we try to understand historical figures (Lacan's example is Socrates) we inevitably project our own psychic structure onto them, even when this is unjustifiable. We automatically assume that Socrates had an ego, when in fact his sense of self-identity 'was probably not made like the ego'.<sup>18</sup> In other words, once the ego has appeared in history, and psychic structure comes to be articulated around this particular category, it becomes impossible to think outside it.

...we can no longer do our thinking without this register of the ego which we have acquired over the course of history, even when we are concerned with traces of man's speculation about himself at times when this register was not pursued as such.<sup>19</sup>

Whereas Brennan attributes this difficulty of thinking outside the register of the ego to the historical blindness of the ego itself, Lacan's argument is that the tendency to eternalize present-day psychology is not limited to the ego but also 'applies to anything whatsoever, including the origin of the world'. For example, it also applies to language, since once language has appeared 'we find it absolutely impossible to speculate on what preceded it other than by symbols' which are themselves linguistic.<sup>20</sup> Lacan's point here anticipates by over a decade Derrida's argument about the impossibility of writing (like Rousseau) about the origin of language.<sup>21</sup>

Lacan thus seems to be proposing that it is a general law of human experience that

When something comes to light, something which we are forced to consider as new ... it creates its own perspective within the past, and we say – *This can never not have been there, this has existed from the beginning....* What appears to be new thus always seems to extend itself indefinitely into perpetuity, prior to itself.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, the tendency to transform 'the psychology of modern man' into an absolute, which Marx identified as one of the typical fallacies of ideological thought, is seen by Lacan as a basic feature of all thought. However, this does not excuse the psychoanalyst from constantly being aware of this tendency. The analyst, Lacan seems to be saying, must both be aware of the historical limitations of his concepts and renounce any pretension to go beyond those limitations. Lacan engages in what could be called an 'anti-critique', in the sense that whereas the Kantian critique is an attempt to theorize the conditions of the possibility of thought, Lacan does the opposite: he attempts to theorize the conditions of impossibility of thought, to explain the impossibility of transcending the historical limitations of thought, to account for fact that '[w]e cannot, through thought, abolish a new order'.<sup>23</sup>

However, as has already been observed, to acknowledge the historical limitations to thought does not excuse the analyst from being aware of precisely what those limitations are. Lacan repeatedly criticizes those analysts who are not aware of the historical relativity of their theoretical constructs, and who claim to have 'access to a reality transcending aspects of history'.<sup>24</sup> The analysts at whom Lacan directs these criti-

cisms are, not surprisingly, the Americans, and Lacan goes so far as to say that the whole of American culture is dominated by 'ahistoricism'. Thus, for example, he slams Heinz Hartmann for producing a reading of Freud which abstracts away the historical development of his thought.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to these consequences for psychoanalytic theory, Lacan's approach to history also has consequences for political theory. While it is beyond the scope of this article to explore these consequences, it is worth noting that the concept of 'the lure of the already there' suggests a correlate, which could perhaps be phrased as 'the lure of the not-here-yet'. That is, Lacan's admonitions about the dangers of seeing the present in the past can equally serve to warn us of the difficulties involved in imagining the future. If every political project involves some attempt to imagine the future differently, then Lacan's warning might seem merely to inhibit political action. However, this need not be the case. Rather, the political implications of Lacan's approach to history might turn out to have a surprisingly Foucauldian flavour. That is, the impossibility of mapping out the future according to some grand metahistorical narrative might lead, not to political inaction, but to a series of intelligently fought tactical battles.

In the light of all this, it is clear that Irigaray's criticisms of Lacan are not borne out by the evidence. When she labels his work an 'eternal discourse', or accuses him of existing 'outside any historical period',<sup>26</sup> she is ignoring whole portions of Lacan's work. When she states that the concept of the symbolic order is proposed (or imposed) as 'a universal, innocent of any empirical or historical contingency',<sup>27</sup> she neglects Lacan's profound questioning of the historical relativity of the Oedipus complex and the ego.

### **A pop-psychological response?**

Are we to conclude, then, that Irigaray was unaware of these aspects of Lacan's work when she wrote her paper? This seems highly unlikely, given the intimate knowledge of Lacan displayed in the paper, not to mention her long association with the École Freudienne de Paris. It seems more likely that she was confusing the views of Lacan himself with the reductionist interpretation of his ideas that had become current among many of his followers in the École Freudienne by the late 1970s. In these years, which were to prove the last years of Lacan's innovative school, it seemed to some that the original dynamism of the organization was being suffocated by a growing dogmatism which reified Lacan's subtle discourse, turning his teaching into a fixed and

immutable doctrine. Irigaray's objections to this dogmatism are understandable. What is not quite so understandable, however, is why she should include Lacan himself among those at whom she levelled her charges of ahistoricism. Did she hold him responsible for the errors of his followers? Did she think he could have done more to correct their misunderstandings? Was she unaware that Lacan had criticized on repeated occasions the tendency of his students to take his teaching as a timeless truth?

Perhaps we should be content to note these questions without seeking any answers, falling back onto the uncontested notion that there will always be lacunae in anyone's knowledge. To adopt such an approach would certainly have the merit of avoiding the kind of pop-psychological response which explains textual inadequacies by reference to the author's 'feelings'. However, one of the most interesting features of Irigaray's article is that it seems positively to invite this kind of response. The cryptic epigraph which heads the article – 'On Certain All Too Topical Considerations. *Juliette L.: In Memoriam*' – is an invitation to look for an emotive subtext linking the text to recent events. These recent events are explained by Irigaray in a footnote where she states that she wrote the paper in a moment of bitter sadness the day after a friend and fellow member of the *École Freudienne* committed suicide.<sup>28</sup> Juliette Labin committed suicide on 4 March 1977, little more than a month after being informed by the *École Freudienne* that she had failed in her bid to achieve the title of *Analyste de l'École*, the most prestigious category of membership. The suicide triggered a wave of protest among the members of *École Freudienne*, and served as a focus for the resentment that had grown up around many other issues, including the problem of the perceived dogmatism of some of Lacan's followers.<sup>29</sup> Irigaray herself spearheaded this wave of protest: in the footnote to her text she lays the blame for Juliette Labin's suicide entirely on 'the workings of the analytic world'.<sup>30</sup> Thus the kind of pop-psychological response which might explain Irigaray's failure to do justice to Lacan's historicism by reference to her own 'deep sense of anger' is actually invited by the text itself.

However, at the same time as inviting such a response in the epigraph and the final footnote, in the main body of the text Irigaray anticipates this response and refuses it:

No doubt your all too mechanical mode of listening will already have found some interpretative palliative to what I am trying to say to you. You will see it as a 'desire for vengeance', for 'revenge' against 'my father' ... Or perhaps you will read it as my inability to accomplish the work of mourning.<sup>31</sup>

Her response to the pop-psychological interpretation of her text is to 'laugh out loud for a while': not to engage in any detailed argument, but to mock her interlocutors, and to accuse them of understanding things only according to pre-given schemas 'which really are far too partial' and which support 'the phallo-capitalist-fetishist market economy'.<sup>32</sup> It is almost as if, having accused Lacanian psychoanalysts of refusing to recognize the historical context of their concepts, Irigaray wishes to deny them the possibility of inscribing her critique within a historical context of its own.

## Notes

\* This is a slightly modified version of a paper originally given at the Second Annual Conference of the Universities Association of Psychoanalytic Studies, Sheffield, 20 May 1995.

1. Luce Irigaray, 'The Poverty of Psychoanalysis' (1977), trans. David Macey with Margaret Whitford, in *The Irigaray Reader*, edited by Margaret Whitford, Blackwell, Oxford, 1991, p. 79.
2. Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, edited by David McLellan, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977, p. 202.
3. 'The Poverty of Psychoanalysis', pp. 80, 82.
4. Erich Fromm, 'The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology: Notes on Psychoanalysis and Historical Materialism' (1932), in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, Blackwell, Oxford, 1978, pp. 483–4, 485, 490.
5. Herbert Marcuse, 'The Obsolescence of the Freudian Concept of Man' (1963), in *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, edited by Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas MacKay Kellner, Routledge, London and New York, 1989, pp. 235, 245. According to Jeremy Shapiro and Shierry Weber, this essay was originally delivered as a lecture entitled 'The Obsolescence of Psychoanalysis' at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in 1963. It was first published in Herbert Marcuse, *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, Utopia*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro and Sherry M. Weber, Penguin, London, 1970. It is interesting to note the parallel between Marcuse's comments on the decline in the role of the father, and Lacan's comments, twenty-five years previously, about the decline of the paternal imago, leading to images of humiliated, divided and absent fathers (Jacques Lacan, *Les Complexes familiaux dans la formation de l'individu. Essai d'analyse d'une fonction en psychologie* (1938), Navarin, Paris, 1984, p. 73). Theresa Brennan also notes certain 'parallels between Lacan and the early Frankfurt school' (Theresa Brennan, *History After Lacan*, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 8), but focuses on Benjamin and Adorno rather than on Fromm and Marcuse. Peter Dews has also pointed out links between the early Lacan and the early Frankfurt School, but he opts to focus on Horkheimer (Peter Dews, 'The Crisis of Oedipal Identity: The Early Lacan and the Frankfurt School', in Anthony Elliott and Stephen Frosh, eds, *Psychoanalysis in Contexts: Paths between Theory and Modern Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995). Foucault makes a similar point to Marcuse, in *The*

- History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, arguing that psychoanalytic theories of sexuality and family structure are out of date. However, whereas Marcuse argues that Freud's theories were accurate descriptions of late-nineteenth-century psychic structure which only became obsolete because of the massive social changes of the twentieth century, Foucault argues that these theories were already obsolete at the time Freud conceived them. According to Foucault, by the nineteenth century power was no longer organized around the concept of alliance, as it had been before the sixteenth century, but around the concept of sexuality. By reasserting the importance of primal family ties, psychoanalysis harks back to the pre-bourgeois organization of power, and thus reveals itself to be, in the last analysis, a historical 'retro-version' (Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (1976), trans. Robert Hurley, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1990, p. 150).
6. David Macey, *Lacan in Contexts*, Verso, London, 1988; Brennan, *History After Lacan*, p. 7.
  7. *Ibid.*, pp. 26–7.
  8. *Ibid.*, p. 9; cf. Sigmund Freud, 'On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love' (1912), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XI, Hogarth Press, London, 1953–74.
  9. Lacan, *Les Complexes familiaux dans la formation de l'individu*, p. 66.
  10. Jacques Lacan, 'Propos sur la causalité psychique' (1946), in *Écrits*, Seuil, Paris, 1966, p. 184.
  11. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953–54*, trans. John Forrester, with notes by John Forrester, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 198.
  12. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954–55*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, notes by John Forrester, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 7, 5.
  13. Jacques Lacan, *Les Complexes familiaux dans la formation de l'individu*, p. 69.
  14. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–60*, trans. Dennis Porter, with notes by Dennis Porter, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 140.
  15. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book III: The Psychoses, 1955–56*, trans. Russell Grigg, with notes by Russell Grigg, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 36.
  16. Lacan, *The Seminar, Book II*, p. 6.
  17. The actual phrase used by Lacan is as follows: 'Il arrive que nos élèves se leurrent dans nos écrits de trouver "déjà là" ce à quoi notre enseignement nous a porté depuis' (Jacques Lacan, 'De nos antécédents', in *Écrits*). Lacan is criticizing the tendency of some of his followers to read his own writings ahistorically.
  18. *The Seminar, Book II*, p. 7.
  19. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
  20. *Ibid.*
  21. Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967), trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1974.
  22. *The Seminar, Book II* (emphasis in original).
  23. *Ibid.*
  24. Jacques Lacan, 'The Freudian Thing' (1955), in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Routledge, London, 1977, pp. 119–20, my translation. I have used my own translation here since, as Muller and Richardson note (John Muller and William Richardson, *Lacan and Language: A Reader's Guide to 'Écrits'*, International Universities Press, New York, 1982, p. 151), Sheridan's translation of this phrase actually inverts the meaning. Rather than saying 'these forms provide access to a transcendent reality possessing the characteristics of history', as Sheridan translates, Lacan actually says 'elles détiennent l'accès à une réalité transcendante aux aspects de l'histoire' (Jacques Lacan, 'La Chose freudienne' (1955), in *Écrits*). This must surely be a classic example of *verschreiben*, symbolizing not the historical *méconnaissance* of Lacan but rather the desire of so many of his commentators and translators to foreclose the historical dimension of his work.
  25. Lacan, *The Seminar, Book I*, p. 37; Lacan, *The Seminar, Book II*, p. 147.
  26. Irigaray, 'The Poverty of Psychoanalysis', pp. 92, 93.
  27. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
  28. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
  29. Cf. Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925–1985*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, Free Association Books, London, 1990.
  30. Irigaray, 'The Poverty of Psychoanalysis', p. 104.
  31. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
  32. *Ibid.*

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