

Review Article¹

An (Unmourned) Success Story and an (Unreflected) Tragic Drama

LORRAINE MARKOTIC

ONCE THE SPURNED object of feminist rancour, psychoanalysis has become increasingly pertinent to feminist theory and feminist literary criticism. Psychoanalytic theory is the focus of *The Compulsion to Create: A Psychoanalytic Study of Women Artists*, a recent work that analyzes renowned female writers. Its author, Susan Kavalier-Adler, is herself a practicing psychoanalyst. Psychoanalysis is also at work, or rather at play, in Jane Gallop's symptomatic readings in *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory*. Gallop, who has written on Lacan, and who generally works out of the French tradition,² has turned her attention to American feminist criticism. Both books augur a new configuration of feminism, literary criticism, and psychoanalysis. Exceedingly different in style and content, they are most illuminative when juxtaposed. While Kavalier-Adler's psychoanalytic study reassesses the work and lives of women writers, Gallop's deconstructive readings chart the course and development of recent academic feminist literary criticism. Employing literary terms, one could say that Kavalier-Adler recreates a drama, stages a tragedy, while Gallop tells a story, weaves a narrative. Using psychoanalytic terms, one could say that Kavalier-Adler—following object relations theory—explores the child's preoedipal relation to and separation from the mother, while Gallop—following Freud and Lacan—depicts a successful oedipal struggle.

In *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory*, Gallop accesses twelve anthologies of feminist criticism written over a fifteen-year period, relating them to the institutional establishment of feminist literary criticism, to "what led up to it and the

subsequent effect it had on feminist criticism" (3). Each of Gallop's chapters contends with a different anthology. Instead of summarizing the anthologies and expounding their historical significance, she endeavours to capture their relevance by reading them against themselves. She does this, first, by locating a unifying voice (usually the editor's) in each anthology and, second, by ferreting out dissonances through a symptomatic reading that calls this voice into question.

Typically, I identify a central, hegemonic voice in the anthology, usually the editor(s)'s, which would organize all the voices into a unity and then I locate points of resistance within the volume to that unification. I place my weight behind those internal differences as a wedge against the centrist drive. (165)

Because the diversity of any collection of essays is bound to strain the ability of a unifying voice to contain it, Gallop's method is appropriate. She uses productively dissonances against an alleged consonance to expose difficulties, dilemmas, or tensions that underlie each collection. Then she insightfully indicates how these tensions are symptomatic of the particular anthology's historical and theoretical import. In the chapter "The Problem of Definition," for example, she reads *The New Feminist Criticism* in terms of the dilemma concerning the reluctance to define feminist criticism and the need to demarcate it; in "French Feminism," she reads *L'Arc 61* (devoted to Simone de Beauvoir) in terms of the quandary involving the feminist assault on the ideology of the exceptional and the concomitant wish to acclaim accomplished women.

Most distinctive about Gallop's work is probably her method of textual analysis, which she refers to as "symptomatic." Gallop attends to details, places texts under a microscope. Rather than summarize the anthologies she successively examines, she pinpoints slips (even typographical errors), incongruities, contradictions, and repetitions. She locks onto something trivial, almost trifling, and uses it to unlock something integral to the text, critical to its force and flow. Gallop does not deny the explicit themes of the anthologies; she often underlines them, demonstrating their constitutive power. Yet she also uncovers implicit themes; she indicates that more may be going on than

what is openly being said, precisely by looking at *exactly* what is being said, down to the last detail.³ Seemingly insignificant elements are treated as though they were instances of what Freud refers to as displacement and condensation: in displacement, thoughts and emotions relating to a person, idea, or object are associatively transferred to another person, idea, or object (most often in dreams); in condensation, a number of thoughts, desires, or wishes are represented by a single dream element. Gallop is not, however, dealing with dreams but with academic criticism. It is difficult not to see her as “reading into” the works she reads, as overinterpreting rather than interpreting. In fitting psychoanalytic fashion, her symptomatic readings are likely to meet with our resistance.

Kavaler-Adler's *The Compulsion to Create: A Psychoanalytic Study of Women Artists* also reads works against the grain, or at least against the aesthetic tradition that extols them. The book presents new interpretations of the writings of renowned female writers: Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, Anaïs Nin, and Edith Sitwell. Kavaler-Adler argues that the works of these authors can be understood to be expressions of psychic trauma. While interest in the psychological processes of male literary figures is profuse—studies on D. H. Lawrence, James, Keats, Shaw, Hemingway, Fitzgerald abound—far less attention has been accorded to “the psychological dynamics of the creative process in women” (2). Without doubt, a study of the psychology of female artists is long overdue. Ultimately, however, Kavaler-Adler is less concerned with her interpretations than with elucidating her own psychoanalytic theory. She believes it has something indispensable to offer women artists. She professes that many talented, creative women suffer from psychic conflicts that disrupt not only their personal lives but interfere with their creative abilities as well. Her book is an attack upon the romantic assumption—one she considers prevalent even in psychoanalytic circles—of the self-healing capacity of creative expression.⁴ Both the life and the work of the artist are endangered by the myth of reparative creativity, she asserts, insisting that only the therapeutic context can provide the conditions necessary for working out the repercussions of early traumas.

Kavaler-Adler concerns herself with that complex, prelinguistic stage when the symbiotic relation with the mother (or primary caretaker)⁵ dissolves and the child develops a self (what Lacan refers to as primordial “castration,” the originary loss experienced by all human beings). This transition from preoedipal symbiosis to oedipal self is salient, she stresses, even in those cases where ensuing conflicts are overlaid by an oedipal drama. Kavaler-Adler is an object relations theorist who draws heavily upon the work of Melanie Klein and D. W. Winnicott, and who explicitly attacks the self psychology of Heinz Kohut and his followers. She vehemently disputes Kohut’s presumption that “there is a self exclusive of interpersonal object relations” (8); moreover, she believes that “the essence of creativity is object related, although the objects may be infantile or pathological part objects” (8).

Through recourse to Klein’s notion of the way in which the child splits and incorporates objects (originally: good breast/bad breast), Kavaler-Adler elaborates the circumstances in which, and the consequences of, the child *incorporating* part objects instead of identifying with and *internalizing* whole parental objects. According to Kavaler-Adler, this deleterious situation is the result of a mother who—during the extremely sensitive phase when the child is in the process of separating from her—is either unavailable or smothers the child by desiring contact because of her own needs. By contrast, the “good enough” mother⁶ is responsive to the child’s burgeoning independence, allowing it both to turn away from her and return to her knowing its independence will be appreciated and supported. Equally important is that the child learn to recognize this mother—who is not *too* good, only good *enough*—as a person with both desirable and undesirable features. The child’s grandiose self, which originally includes both aspects of the mother-child unity, is then gradually deflated as the child’s archaic idealization is “transformed into an awareness of an objectively perceived other” (17). Consequently, the child is able to internalize the mother as a whole object (13), integrating her into its inner world instead of incorporating her as a split-off object of its aggression.

Kavaler-Adler argues that it is essential for the child to be allowed to mourn the loss of its primordial, symbiotic relation-

ship with the mother. Following Klein (and Hanna Segal), she states: "Psychic structure is created through the mourning process, i.e., through the assimilation of external objects and split-off parts of the self into the psyche so that they can become a fixed part of the intrapsychic structure as internal objects" (53). When encounters with the mother threaten the child's budding self, these encounters may be split off from consciousness and the mother incorporated as a malevolent even demonic part object. Lack of whole object internalization leads to blocked integration of self and object, and to arrested development. The child seals off its inner psychic self from further external relations, remaining in a frozen state of pathological mourning, unable to feel ordinary sadness. The traumatized child experiences intense grief and rage, yet is unable to express these emotions. Because its trauma takes place at the preoedipal phase, the child has not yet acquired language and therefore does not have recourse to words as a way of representing its experiences. Kavalier-Adler stresses—though perhaps she does not stress this enough—that the severity of these early traumas is linked to their pre-linguistic context.

An obvious difficulty with Kavalier-Adler's account of preoedipal development is that it echoes a general tendency to "blame the mother," to hold her responsible for the child's psychological well-being. It seems to me that Kavalier-Adler's "good enough" mother is an idealized mother, one who attends to the child's needs and responds to its desires but is never overattentive, a mother always able to find the perfect middle ground.⁷ Furthermore, Kavalier-Adler speaks of the "healthy enough" mother as if a mother's caring ability is exclusively dependent upon her psychological well-being, as if socio-economic conditions do not also circumscribe her ability to nurture her child. As well, Kavalier-Adler does not consider how shared parenting, or a situation in which fathers are primary caretakers, would affect her theory.⁸

In Kavalier-Adler's preoedipally arrested female child, "inadequate" mothering at the preoedipal level results in the father becoming pivotal, a key figure in what she refers to as the "demon lover complex," a concept central to her book. Orig-

nally a Jungian term alluding to seduction and betrayal, the demon lover is defined by Kavalier-Adler as the internalized object of the girl's fear as well as her desire. To a preoedipally arrested girl, the father is an especially enticing figure: he proffers the possibility of another symbiosis (the loss of the original one not having been mourned) and motivates her to separate from the mother (from whom she has not really been able to detach herself). Attempting to compensate for the lack of a good maternal object, the preoedipally arrested girl turns to the father as rescuer; she idealizes and attempts to merge with him: "[a]lready injured by her infant-level encounter with her primary mother, [the girl] easily becomes addicted to the father who holds out the promise of rescue through erotic enthrallment" (78). When the girl's desire for maternal support fuses with erotic desire for the father, he is incorporated as a part object, *merging with already internalized maternal part objects*.⁹ This split off internal object becomes the "demon lover." Coloured by the father's personality, it both entices and threatens. The girl's self now splits into idealized, desired part object, on the one hand, and fearful, demonic part object, on the other. Her attempts to rid herself of these part objects are in vain, for they are now aspects of her self.

Kavalier-Adler's idea that a daughter's apparent conflict with a father figure might have its basis in a more primary relationship with the mother is worth pursuing—despite the fact that it continues to make the mother responsible for the child's difficulties. This idea bolsters recent feminist interest in the preoedipal phase (fostered mainly by Irigaray), as well as in the transition from the preoedipal to the oedipal and the suggestion that the two phases are hardly as distinct as is often assumed (advocated mainly by Kristeva).¹⁰ Unfortunately, Kavalier-Adler's demon lover complex, worked out in great detail in her studies and presented in an especially convincingly manner in relation to Sylvia Plath's poetry, is marred by its heterosexual presumption. Kavalier-Adler accepts the classical oedipal heterosexual model, which even Freud himself eventually questioned. Her theory is grounded in the assumption that the preoedipal girl's turn to the father is infused with erotic desire.¹¹ Not surprisingly, Kavalier-

Adler limits her study to heterosexual writers (at least, no homosexual tendencies are mentioned).

Without attempting to make Kavalier-Adler's book into something it is not, I would suggest that problems with the notion of the "demon lover complex" could be ameliorated by recourse to Lacan's idea of the "Law" or the "Name-of-the-Father." Lacan contends that when the child leaves the preoedipal dyad and enters the social world it is confronted with what he refers to as the "Symbolic" order, the realm of language and symbols, but also of sexual difference and patriarchal social arrangements. The self emerging into the "Symbolic" encounters not only the actual father, but the "paternal-metaphor," representative of culture and authority.¹² If one understands the father in this way, it seems to me, Kavalier-Adler's account of the demon lover complex becomes more plausible. In this case, the demon lover would emerge as an internal part object when the "Name-of-the-Father" impinges upon a preoedipal unity whose loss the girl has not been able to mourn. The girl is drawn to the father not because of an innate heterosexual desire, but because the father lures (and threatens) as the "Law." Also Kavalier-Adler's emphasis upon the importance of the actual father in fostering the daughter's creativity is somewhat more convincing if one considers the father to be linked to the "Symbolic," the realm of language and culture. Although Kavalier-Adler is either unaware of or uninterested in Lacan's work, precisely those interested in Lacanian psychoanalysis might find her notion of the demon lover complex worth exploring and her readings of the individual authors especially interesting.

Kavalier-Adler's analyses of women writers outline how creative work can be motivated by the urge to repair a part object, and hence to repair the self, which requires a whole and healthy internal object (52). Creative activity can be a "developmental mourning process" (52) in which early parental objects, thought to be lost, are re-created. For creativity is both close to the unconscious and a form of symbolic expression. But according to Kavalier-Adler this form of expression does not often initiate a healing process. In a woman with a demon lover complex, creative expression is likely to anchor her addiction to the de-

mon lover. By preoccupying herself with internal objects, such a woman further seals herself off from the external world: "imprisoned within this complex [she] becomes sealed off in an isolated psychic domain, in which the only nourishment is increasing psychic intimacy with the idealized father-muse, thus perpetuating an untimely and addictive symbiosis" (81). She creates and keeps creating because this is her only way of both expressing herself and maintaining contact with the world. In addition, the intensity of creativity can be narcissistically flattering, which only perpetuates its compulsive quality. The demon lover becomes the woman's muse and the source of her compulsion; her art becomes "the concrete expression of the symbolic spiritual marriage with the idealized father" (80). Why some preoedipally arrested women develop a compulsion to create, others a more prosaic obsession, is not addressed.

The demon lover is not only the woman writer's muse as well as what compels her to keep creating; it is also a theme in her writings. Indeed, Kavalier-Adler's detection of this theme, though repetitious, is one of the most interesting facets of her book. Locked into her psychic world, the preoedipally arrested woman's only way of communicating with the interpersonal world may be through symbolic expression; she voices the demon lover literary theme either directly (as in the poetry of Sylvia Plath) or indirectly (as in the poetry of Emily Dickinson). Her instinctual relations with internal objects predominate over external whole object relations (84) as the demon lover becomes a recurring figure and the woman's relation to him a recurrent theme:

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,
 In the picture I have of you,
 A cleft in your chin instead of your foot
 But no less a devil for that, no not
 Any less the black man who
 Bit my pretty red heart in two.

(Sylvia Plath, "Daddy"; qtd. 23)

Yet creatively expressing the idea of the demon lover is not enough to heal the woman writer with the demon lover complex. Only two of the writers discussed (Charlotte Brontë and Anaïs Nin) are able to use their creativity to work through their con-

flicts; significantly, both women are oedipally, not preoedipally disturbed. The other writers lead tragic lives, feel alienated and are suicidal. The preoedipally arrested artist, Kavalier-Adler maintains, needs another person to help her open up to her infant grief and trauma. While I agree that preoedipal, pre-linguistic disturbances are extraordinarily recondite, and while I appreciate the sustaining environment that the psychoanalytic setting offers, I have misgivings about the variant of psychotherapy espoused by Kavalier-Adler. In the case study of a living artist with which she concludes her book, Kavalier-Adler writes: "As Ms A. owned, and thus understood, all of her feelings . . ." (316). The claim that psychoanalysis can help one own (whatever that means) and understand *all* of one's feelings is presumptuous, to say the least. It is also a serious misunderstanding of the psychoanalytic unconscious, which can never be exhaustively probed. Also problematic, in my opinion, is Kavalier-Adler's assumption that psychoanalysis can help disclose an essential self. Notions of the "true" self, the "real" self, and the terms "authentic" and "authenticity" abound in her work; she even refers to the "primary and feminine self" (68) and to "the basic feminine self" (71). Most significant, she is prone to speaking of "normal development" (72) as if this were something both self-evident and obviously worth pursuing.¹³ Her book is fraught with the very prescriptive notions that provoked the earlier feminist abhorrence of psychoanalysis. Kavalier-Adler's normative tone severely undermines her theory, and resonates—in a sometimes stifling way—in her delineation of the traumas experienced by the writers.

My final critique of *The Compulsion to Create* is that Kavalier-Adler has too simple a notion of the relationship between a writer's psychic state and her creative output. This becomes apparent in her discussion of Charlotte Brontë's novels, which she reads as reflective of Brontë's psychological development. While most literary critics are likely to agree that a novel with realistic characters and a plausible plot is preferable to a gothic romance, and thus might generally prefer Brontë's *Villette* over *Jane Eyre*, I do not think the shift from a less to a more mature protagonist should be considered indicative of the progressing

maturity of the author. A writer's psychic state can seldom be mapped onto her creative writings in the one-to-one manner Kavalier-Adler espouses. Most important, a more balanced personality will not necessarily create a superior work of art. While critics may favour Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* over her *Jane Eyre*, they will not necessarily favour either novel over Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, even if the latter work stems from grave psychic disturbances, as Kavalier-Adler herself contends.

But let me again stress that Kavalier-Adler's work does warrant attention. Though she propagates a somewhat dubious psychoanalytic theory, her depiction of the demon lover complex is original and can certainly be read against the grain (with Lacan, for example). Furthermore, her reading strategies indicate that the artists discussed (especially the poets) have hitherto been read too literally or at least too conventionally. For example, she interprets Edith Sitwell's "Still Falls the Rain," a poem apparently about the deaths of World War II, in terms of an "externalized flow of tears" that represents the perpetual bereavement "symptomatic of the pathological mourning state" (286). While I disagree with the way in which Kavalier-Adler presumes to deduce a writer's psychic state from her works, I do think she makes clear that the literary tradition has had scarce interest in the ways in which women's psychological dynamics might be reflected in their creative writing and that it has suffered from this paucity of interest.

Gallop's book is unusually self-reflective for an academic work, even for a feminist academic work, and it is certainly more self-reflective than Kavalier-Adler's study. Gallop's textual analyses take account of her own subjective position (this is especially true of the chapter "The Monster in the Mirror"). She reflects upon her own interactions with and reactions to the texts: upon her own biases, romantic notions, and latent hostilities. After providing a particular reading, she then calls it into question by turning and examining her own expectations and projections; she is familiar enough with psychoanalysis to realize that reading involves desire, invokes identifications, rivalries, and wish-fulfillment. One should commend theorists, it seems to me, who ponder their own blind spots and unconscious thought pro-

cesses. Yet what characterizes blind spots is not only that we all have them, but that we are unable to perceive them. And what characterizes unconscious thought processes is that they are not easily accessible to conscious reflection. Because Gallop persistently reflects upon her own projections, identifications, and even resentments, she generates the impression that her readings are freed of *repressed* projections, identifications, and resentments. This cannot, of course, be the case—as Gallop herself would probably be the first to admit. The desire she discerns is hardly as transparent as it seems. Self-reflection is inherently limited, psychoanalysis has always stressed, and should not be intimated as exhaustive.

While the object of Gallop's investigation is the anthologies she symptomatically reads, her subject is the feminist literary critic as collective subject. In Gallop's view, those doing academic feminist literary theory constitute a collective subject not because of their similarity, but because they "speak within the same cultural enterprise and thus share its historical contradictions" (8)—the most fundamental one being that between feminism and literary criticism. Naturally, Gallop includes herself in her rendition of the collective subject, locating herself within the historical forces that circumscribe her relation to the anthologies (clearly, anthologies are particularly useful for exploring a collective subject). She writes her/their/our story (9). She is both subject and object of investigation and, for this reason, does not regard her subjective, symptomatic, textual analyses as idiosyncratic or arbitrary. Instead, she sees herself as providing a representative response to what transpired at specific historical junctures.

Gallop's book, in which the object of study is anthologies of feminist literary criticism and in which the collective subject is the feminist literary critic, is actually about a specific historical event: the institutional acceptance of feminist literary criticism. Gallop's study of anthologies published between 1973 and 1987 encompasses the story of how feminist literary criticism moved away from the margins and into the mainstream.¹⁴ She considers this event to have occurred around 1981.¹⁵ This was also the time when poststructuralism was all the rage, when discussions among

feminist literary critics revolved around the relationship between French poststructuralist theory and American criticism, an issue then considered central to feminist literary studies. Hence, after opening her study with an examination of anthologies that appeared around 1981, Gallop side-steps to anthologies concerning French feminism or psychoanalysis (before she back-tracks to anthologies of American feminist criticism and jumps ahead to anthologies involving issues of race and writings by Afro-American women). An important sub-plot of *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory* concerns how feminist literary criticism and poststructuralism entered the academy hand in hand.

While poststructuralism was the focus of debate in 1981, by the late eighties it—like feminist literary criticism (in Gallop's view)—had established itself in the institution, and other issues drew fire.¹⁶ By 1987, she writes, “the theoretical action had moved to ‘institutions’ and ‘history’” (3). Gallop's own “change of focus from theoretical debate to institutional history” (3) not only follows this shift, she points out, but responds to the very fact that such shifts occur. For such swift changes insistently remind us that we are living in history (3). Rapid transformations within the discipline of literary criticism deter Gallop from obliviousness to history. She realizes that she writes “a history told by a subject in history” (2). The theoretical tensions she uncovers in the anthologies are also historical tensions, doubly so: tied both to the historical context of the subject who writes (Gallop representing the collective subject, the feminist literary critic) and the historical context of feminist literary criticism (above all, its integrated or marginal status).

Gallop contends that she by no means considers the institutional acceptance of feminist literary criticism to be inherently positive, but sees it as an occurrence to be responded to and coped with, rather than celebrated or bemoaned. She calls for a less value-laden, more practical approach to what is, in her view, an already ensconced event.¹⁷ Nevertheless, she does seem to regard institutional criteria as decisive. In her chapter, “Writing About Ourselves,” she looks at *Images of Women in Fiction*, one of the earliest anthologies of feminist literary criticism. There she writes: “As much as I found myself excited by and enjoying some

of the more sophisticated essays . . . I was extremely embarrassed by some of the articles which I took to be written by undergraduates" (80). Now even if these essays—which she rejects with "energetic disgust" (80)—are as bad as she alleges, this does not mean that their authors are undergraduates; indubitably, graduate students are capable of producing simplistic papers, as are academics with PhDs. By the next page, however, Gallop's conjecture has grown into a presumption: she now refers to one of the essays as "almost certainly an undergraduate paper" (82). Her equation of inferior quality with undergraduate status is symptomatic of her deference toward institutional rank. Her relation to the academy is hardly as neutral as she alleges.

The term *undergraduate*, like the term *preoedipal*, is anachronistic, defined in terms of what follows; and what follows is assumed to be a higher stage. Although Gallop's history of the institutional integration of academic feminist literary criticism is not organized in a neatly linear manner, it *is* an account of a *progressive* development. In her introduction, Gallop writes: "By 1987 I felt that what most distinguished the various feminist critical anthologies was their alignment in some sort of chronological progression, rather than their positioning on some theoretical issue" (7). Her book delineates the increasingly complex, increasingly nuanced relationship between feminism and literary criticism espoused in the anthologies she assesses. While she rebukes historical designations of the (not so distant) past as a time when feminist criticism was far more simple, far less sophisticated than it is today,¹⁸ she does not question her basic assumption that feminist literary theory has advanced. Her account of feminist literary criticism is an account of advancement and progress, albeit of subtle advancement, non-linear progress. Her study implicitly equates the changing face of feminist literary criticism with its gradual betterment.

Without doubt, feminist criticism has made strides and it would be nothing less than dishonest to slight our many achievements; significantly, the challenge to the privileging of Euro-American authors in literature departments may have only been possible, as Gallop alleges, because feminist criticism had won a place for itself in the academy. The establishment of feminist

criticism has paved the way for very important gains, which should neither be overlooked nor down-played. At the same time, the integration of feminist literary criticism must have also involved losses, which should neither be overlooked nor forgotten. Certain types of feminist criticism are bound to have disappeared, certain works or ideas to have been left behind. Although touched on in Gallop's chapter "An Idea Presented Before Its Time," this theme is lacking in her work as a whole. Clearly, one cannot expect her to explicate the losses involved in the academic acceptance of feminist literary criticism; most of them cannot but remain unknown to her, precisely because they have been lost. Still, I think it possible at least to keep in mind that the institutional integration of feminist literary criticism also involved leaving things by the wayside.¹⁹ Despite its self-reflection, Gallop's book is insulated against the echo of forgotten voices. Full of American optimism, it has little time for regrets about what might have been left behind.

In a way, Gallop's book is about the growing pains of feminist criticism—though she has little interest in contending with these pains or the losses with which they are linked. A critic, a theorist, Gallop wants—when all is said and done—to tell a story, a success story. Theory has become involved with history, she writes; yet her work seems less a history than a narrative, a work of literature. Gallop's book resembles a *Bildungsroman*—one with a happy end. She pens the story of the feminist critic's coming of age. Simultaneously, however, her interest in the feminist literary critic as collective subject, together with her desire to chart progress and to delineate development, seems almost Hegelian. Gallop ferrets out contradictions and makes them productive; even though her work embraces no resolution, no ultimate reconciliation of consciousness and history, and even though the contradictions of one stage are not subsumed in the next, Hegelian tones resound. Yet Gallop is one of the last persons I would associate with Hegel. Does happily recounting the story of the institutional integration of feminist literary criticism lead to a Hegelian type of account? Is the cost of entering the mainstream that one begins to sound like Hegel the dialectician disinterested in the debris of history?

Gallop is rightly critical of those who attempt to deny the academicization of feminist literary criticism. Yet it is possible to acknowledge that feminist literary criticism has been institutionally accepted, to note the benefits and gains attributable to its newly acquired status, and still mourn the losses involved. Gallop states that the institutional recognition of feminist criticism is a fact and that instead of denying this fact, we should come to terms with it, figure out how best to use our voice—now that we have one—within the institution. I agree, but I also think that the “fact” of which Gallop speaks is not a “mere fact”; it is configured by an interpretive context (as she of course knows). Significant is not just how we deal with the “fact” of feminist criticism’s entrance into the academy but how we interpret it, contextualize it, write and speak about it—how its story is told. In her introduction, Gallop states: “I want to understand why we are located here, how we got here, what we sacrificed to get here, what we gained: all as preliminaries to the question of how do we do the most good, as feminists, as social and cultural critics, speaking from this location” (5). An understanding of how we got where we are and what we sacrificed to get here can never be *only* a preliminary to the question of how we might best speak now. Our relation to the past invariably configures our current speech and stance. If we regard sacrifices as necessary aspects of progress not to be dwelled upon, we will speak altogether differently than if we consider it important to mourn these sacrifices. Our sense of how we can do the most good as feminists and as social and cultural critics within the institution is inseparable from our understanding of how we entered the institution. Near the end of her book, Kavalier-Adler writes: “We grieve for unfulfilled fantasies and wishes, as well as for that which we truly encountered in the past” (312). Perhaps those feminists who disavow the institutional acceptance of feminist criticism are clinging to an unfulfilled fantasy whose loss they are unable to mourn. *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory* is not likely to assist them in this activity.

Kavalier-Adler’s work is not a story, certainly not a *Bildungsroman*; it is more of a drama, a tragedy, one that is repeatedly reenacted. Over and over again, Kavalier-Adler recounts the “ar-

rested development" of women writers. One after another, each is shown to experience a psychic trauma that leaves her trapped in compulsive creativity. While Charlotte Brontë and Anaïs Nin develop a self secure enough to contend with their *oedipal* disturbances, the other authors seem condemned to re-enact their *preoedipal* traumas. The accounts in *The Compulsion to Create* echo one another, accounts of pain, isolation, death. There is little *Bildung*, just rigid re-enactment. Kavalier-Adler laments this lack of development and concludes her work with an account of a living woman artist who undergoes a successful analysis, juxtaposing this artist with the women writers fated to remain trapped in their traumas. Psychoanalytic treatment, of the sort Kavalier-Adler practices, is presented as the only way out.

While reading Gallop's playful, self-reflective work, in which little is beyond scrutiny, it is easy for us to forget that a book as recent as Kavalier-Adler's may still contain notions of a "primary and feminine self" (68), heterosexual presuppositions, and a call for "normal" development. Gallop's thematizing of the desire involved in her own subject position and her undermining of notions of objective knowledge contrast sharply with Kavalier-Adler's lack of reflection on either her position as an analyst or the presuppositions of her psychoanalytic theory. Kavalier-Adler does not thematize her authority as an analyst, or the authority bequeathed upon her by the analytic situation, or the authority of psychoanalysis as an institutionally accepted system of beliefs. And she does not question her ability to distinguish between "pathological mourning" and "ordinary sadness." Certainly, Kavalier-Adler's work could use a dose of the reflection and self-reflection that Gallop's work displays.

Without doubt, Gallop's and Kavalier-Adler's books are fundamentally different. Gallop probes the institutional integration of academic feminist literary criticism whereas Kavalier-Adler analyzes the compulsive creativity of preoedipally disturbed women writers. In a certain sense, however, the books are similar. Both uphold a type of teleology. In *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory*, our oedipal struggle with academic institutions is successfully negotiated as we take our rightful place alongside the fathers and guardians of literary criticism. In *The Compulsion*

to *Create: A Psychoanalytic Study of Women Artists*, psychotherapy proffers help for preoedipally arrested women who have not been able to develop integrated and healthy selves. Each book supports developments regarded as advancements and improvements. Because of this, it seems to me, each might serve as a corrective to the other. While Jane Gallop's success story might benefit from a pause for mourning what it might have left behind, Susan Kavalier-Adler's tragic dramas might benefit from some reflection and self-reflection.

NOTES

- 1 Gallop, Jane. *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory*. London: Routledge, 1992. Pp. 276. \$13.95. Kavalier-Adler, Susan. *The Compulsion to Create: A Psychoanalytic Study of Women Artists*. London: Routledge, 1993. Pp. 356. \$17.95 pb.
- 2 Gallop's previous books include *Intersections: A Reading of Sade with Bataille, Blanchot and Klossowski*; *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*; *Reading Lacan*; and *Thinking Through the Body*.
- 3 Gallop argues that the force of her symptomatic approach derives, in part, from the residual influence of the once prominent "new criticism." Because new criticism prided itself on its close textual analysis of canonical texts, her own symptomatic reading is able both to undermine such texts and to elevate exiled ones: when applied to an illustrious text, it "squeezes the text tight to force it to reveal its perversities" (7); when the same technique is applied to a text assumed to be less distinguished, the very concentration upon the work, the focused attention, at least temporarily elevates it into the company of the canonical.
- 4 Although some psychoanalysts hold this view, I hardly think it is common among artists. Artists are less likely to avoid psychoanalysis because they believe that they will be able to heal themselves through their creative work than because they fear that successfully undergoing an analysis might rob them of their creative powers. For example, in a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, dated 28 December 1911, Rilke writes: "Psychoanalysis is a too thorough a means of help for me. It helps once and for all; it clears away, and to one day find myself cleared is perhaps even more hopeless than this disarray" ["Die Psychoanalyse ist eine zu gründliche Hilfe für mich, sie hilft ein für alle Mal, sie räumt auf, und mich aufgeräumt zu finden eines Tages, wäre vielleicht noch aussichtsloser als diese Unordnung"] (240).
- 5 The issue of whether to employ the term "mother" or the term "primary caretaker" is a complex one. While the term "primary caretaker" undermines the idea that caretaking is women's "natural role" and encourages men to become involved in the care of young children, it also covers over the social reality of women's continued, almost exclusive responsibility for the care of young children in our culture. Because I here discuss the work of Kavalier-Adler, who most of the time employs the term mother, and more important, because Kavalier-Adler's argument is based upon the influence of the father upon the female child's disengagement from the mother-child dyad, I have chosen to retain the term mother.
- 6 The concept is borrowed from Winnicott, who distinguishes between the "good enough mother" and the "not good enough mother" in "Ego Distortion in Terms of True and False Self." Problems with this notion are discussed below.

- ⁷ Kristeva, to the contrary, regards the "good enough mother" as one whose world does *not* revolve around the child. She says "the good-enough mother, which is an enigma, nobody knows what the good-enough mother is. I wouldn't try to explain what this is but I would try to suggest that maybe the good-enough mother is the mother who has something else to love besides her child, it could be her work, her husband, her lovers etc. If for a mother the child is the meaning of her life, it's too heavy. She has to have another meaning in her life" ("Conversation," 23).
- ⁸ Chodorow, an object relations theorist whose work has had extensive influence upon feminist thinking, believes that co-parenting will drastically modify psychosexual development and inaugurate dramatic social changes. Rather peculiar is Kavalier-Adler's complete lack of reference to Chodorow's work. Presuming, like Kavalier-Adler, upon an innate drive for autonomy, Chodorow argues that the preoedipal boy's sexual difference acts as a wedge between mother and son, encouraging separation (and male autonomy), whereas the fact that mother and daughter are of same sex discourages the mother from "letting go" of the daughter, and fosters the daughter's more relational sense of self. Gallop discusses Chodorow's work on pages 50, 54, 57-58.
- ⁹ Here Kavalier-Adler's depiction seems to touch on Freud's notion of the girl's "negative oedipus complex," which involves her *Oedipal* (rather than the customary *pre-Oedipal*) desire for her mother. Freud first discusses the negative Oedipus complex in "The Ego and the Id," and again in "Female Sexuality" (372), where he rejects the idea that the psychosexual development of girls runs parallel to that of boys.
- ¹⁰ See Irigaray's *Speculum* and Kristeva's *Tales of Love*, especially the chapter "Freud and Love: Treatment and Its Discontents."
- ¹¹ It is perhaps telling that Kavalier-Adler never compares the preoedipally arrested girl, who develops a demon lover complex, with the preoedipally arrested boy, who—according to her own theory—should configure his relationship to his father in a different way; she simply presumes upon their difference, assuming differing objects of desire is itself the differentiating factor.
- ¹² At one point Kavalier-Adler poses the following question: "Is there a built-in image of an ideal father with which all women must contend?" (66). An understanding of the Lacanian "Symbolic," it seems to me, is more likely to allow for an affirmative response to this question.
- ¹³ Kavalier-Adler's work rests upon the presumption that the distinction between pathological mourning and ordinary sadness is one that can be made (at least by an analyst), that "arrested development" is identifiable. Kavalier-Adler does not consider the possibility that the notion of "arrested development" might involve a normative labelling of women who do not act in accordance with social expectations. And even if the notion of arrested development is a neutral term (descriptive rather than constrictive), it is still possible that the ability of women writers to work creatively through their traumas is circumscribed by their social world. The title of Plath's *The Bell Jar* may indeed symbolize the theme of psychic "sealing off," as Kavalier-Adler suggests (83), but the novel is concerned with prevailing hypocrisy and with double standards. More to the point, *The Bell Jar* explicitly thematizes the social constraints upon, and lack of interest in, women's creativity. It is possible that in a world more supportive of women's creative work this creativity might more readily contribute to a healing process.
- ¹⁴ Although certain types of feminist criticism have indeed infiltrated *many* literature departments and have even become *somewhat* established (feminist studies of renowned women writers, poststructuralist readings of texts by women), others remain outcast (many interdisciplinary approaches and much theory not influenced by poststructuralism); although the canon has certainly swelled to include previously ignored authors (many African-American women writers), others remain occluded (non-American women writers of colour).

- 15 As Gallop notes at the end of her introduction, 1981 was not only when feminist criticism made it into the academy, it was also the time of the backlash against feminism in society at large. Feminism may have gained footing in the academy, but institutional authority must itself continuously be negotiated and it seems to me that the academy itself may be steadily losing ground. Just as women's entrance into traditionally male jobs is usually concurrent with a decrease in the status and pay of the job (for example, pharmacy), so one should not discount the possibility that the institutional acceptance of feminism may be confluent with the increasingly marginalized status of academic institutions in society as a whole.
- 16 Gallop writes: "The image of deconstruction, for example, goes from dangerous outsider to established rearguard in less than a decade" (3). That deconstruction has become an "established rearguard" is of course debatable.
- 17 Yet any account of the institutional integration of feminist criticism written from the standpoint of this integration invariably risks becoming a self-validating account as well as a tacit validation of the institution.
- 18 In her chapter "Writing About Ourselves," she relates her surprise at discovering that one of the earliest anthologies of feminist literary criticism is far more theoretical and sophisticated than she ever imagined. She explains how reading this volume forced her to reflect upon the prevalent myth of simple origins.
- 19 As Gallop herself realizes, the acceptance of feminist criticism actually meant that certain strains of feminist criticism (usually those most compatible with dominant paradigms) were promoted while others were neglected.

In her afterword, Gallop summarizes recent trends in literary theory. She refers to the turn to popular culture and the challenge such a turn presents to the very notion of high culture and great literature. Within the context of the challenge to the elitism of high culture, she writes, the "claims that Euro-American or even African-American women can produce high culture may seem merely reformist" (243). This is true, of course, but looked at the other way round, one can find it curious that high culture is being depreciated at the very moment when these writers have begun to enter its hallowed halls.

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