

ABSTRACT The argument of this paper is based on water, i.e. on the metaphor of something that does not have a form, but is forming. Attempting to write herself without representing herself, the author invites the reader to understand her/his self without having to define it. In order to do that the question 'What IS a woman?' must be put in question. Then the definite existence of the IS can be turned into a paradoxical (non-)being like that of utopia. The space of geography is a space of what IS. Could woman feel at home in such a framework? Or does she inhabit the paradoxical space of utopia? What would a geography of the utopia be like? What is the space of the woman?

Woman as utopia¹ **Against relations of representation**

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In my writing I experience "woman as never completely present and never completely absent, as one who does not have a place to exist, and who cannot turn herself into a subject. (...) And still one would have to say that I, by writing, have in fact turned myself into a man. Perhaps this is where my disorientation comes from, that I am in fact a man, but do not know what a man is and hence do not know what I am. It will probably be a third one, one which I catapult out of myself." E. Jelinek²

3. The Archimedean Principle: A body dipped into water is affected by a static buoyancy which is equal to the weight of the amount of water it displaces.

4. Further characteristics:

4.1. Water does not have a form. Rather it tends to transform into an all-encompassing sphere. Dew builds drops, drops flow together, streams form circuits.

4.2. Water builds forms. They emerge in the balance between its tendency towards the sphere and other forces such as gravitation, and result in currents of meanders, waves, or funnel-shaped whirls. Whirls. 4.3. Currents are surfaces, twisted planes of water, gliding past each other. They form, where water touches other substances or water of a different speed, composition or temperature Boundary layers react on minimal

*changes in the balance of forces in displacing and
condensing each other they form resistance without
solidity, an impulse continues as a wave moving
over a smooth surface, the dynamic equilibrium
of a river forms standing waves
they are shot through by water
horizontal and vertical currents meet*

1 This text was written in the fall of 1991 and presented at the Basel meeting of the "Deutscher Geographentag 1991". I would like to thank Accedo/Munich for the copyright. The four quotes used to separate the different sections of the paper (from "was indistinguishable" to "smooth and shining") stem from Virginia Woolf's book *The Waves*.

2 Elfride Jelinek in: *Das vampirische Zwischenleben*, Interview in *Die Tageszeitung*, Berlin, 9.5.1990

*and curl up
forming closed bodies
pulsating in their particular rhythm
funnels extend and contract the movement gradually
balances the differing forces and dissolves them...*

Basel, March 15th 1518: A certain, well known scholar, called Erasmus and born in Rotterdam, turns the leaves of an old friend's book. It has just been delivered from the printers, and even though he does not agree completely with everything he now reads there, he still feels that what he holds in his hand could become an important book, perhaps even one that will make history. Name of the author: Thomas More. Name of the book: *Utopia*.

Out of some inner compulsion that book really made history, and although it was not the first book of this kind, it gave its name to a whole series of subsequent works and even to a whole genre: the name "Utopia" was invented by Thomas More as a combination of the Greek adverb *ou* – non – and the substantive *topos* – place.

Utopia, More's non-place is – like Plato's Atlantis³ – an imaginary island beyond the limits of the old world. But Utopia – alluding to the greek *eutopia* – is also "the happy place", and the name was soon associated with descriptions of a better world and an ideal society, be it a society dominated by authoritarian ideals like that of Plato's *State*, the scientifically organized society Francis Bacon (New Atlantis, 1982) described, or a society based on personal responsibility as in H.G. Wells's imagination⁴ or in William Morris's *News from Nowhere*. But it is not these utopias that I intend to write about in describing "woman as utopia", nor will I interpret classical feminist utopias such as *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Much has been written about the different ways in which contemporary social concerns, such as gender relations, were resolved in utopian societies, and much has also been written about the utopias of women authors.⁵ This is not surprising, for there is no better way of understanding a society's self-conception than by studying its utopias. As descriptions of non-places, not only do they reflect their culture's most fundamental problems, but they also reveal their deepest taken for granted.⁶ Nevertheless, I do not intend to write about women in, or as authors of, utopias, but about woman as utopia. "Woman as utopia" in its double singular form, is not meant to be a presumptuous generalization, nor an attempt at unification. It is not some particular woman or utopia I am concerned with here, but the idea of woman and of utopia itself. The idea and its geography.

It would be fascinating for geographical thought to compare history's different utopias. A "geography of utopias" could reveal displacements in the place of non-places and show how they were connected with changing ideas of the shape of the world and with the world's progressive

3 Platon (1959) *Kritias*, Chapter 6, 112 ff. and Platon (1959) *Timaios*, Chapter 3, 25ff.

4 In his utopia *Menschen, Göttern gleich*.

5 Apart from *Herland*, the feminist utopias of Sally Gearhart (*Das Wanderland*, 1982), Joanna Russ (*The Female Man*, 1985), and Marge Piercy (*Women On the Edge of Time*, 1979) also became well known and discussed. See for example Hillary Rose's paper 'Dreaming the future' (1988), in which she writes about both feminist and classical utopias. See also Ulla Zöhrer-Ernst's critique 'Von der Sinnenfeindlichkeit utopischer Modelle' (1989) where she refers to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*. The creation of ideal images of women and their influence on women's reality is a theme of Christina von Braun's excellent literary analysis in "Die schamlose Schönheit des Vergangenen" (1989).

6 See for example Michael Curry's *After Nuclear War: possible worlds and the cult of expertise* (1985), where contemporary scenarios of a world after a nuclear holocaust are used to indicate some things deeply taken for granted in our culture. These can be seen in institutions and modes of behaviour which – as the texts of the scenarios reveal – the authors find difficult to change, even after such an event.

investigation: the utopias of the 17th and 18th centuries were significantly inspired by the discovery of the New World. But in the second half of the 18th century (Cook had just discovered the Australian east coast), there were no more empty spaces left in the world for non-places, and utopias were transferred on to the dimension of time.⁷ Thus the ideal society was situated as a more or less attainable aim⁸ on the axis of progress. In our century however, the utopias seem to have transgressed into yet another dimension: a dimension we are already counting on, but are not yet able to name or designate by anything other than that which it is not: not space, but hyperspace; not time, but simultaneity. It may be that this dimension is foreshadowed at the points where it intersects with our usual space-time axes – Tokyo's stock exchange or the third world metropolis, which encompasses all the world's places. Technological development and the increase in trade of signs and goods seem to have unfolded this new dimension which contains white spots for the non-places of today. It is a dimension in which the old striving towards the *telos* of history, which has lost its place, can find a new direction.

But there is another reason why a geography of utopias is particularly interesting to me. It is because the space it is concerned with is that of the paradox. The paradox is a position which is logically not allowed to exist, because it is, although deduced correctly, contradictory. But although it is logically excluded, this position still takes place; in utopia for example. There are several reasons why utopia is a paradox. One is that, unlike other texts about fictitious societies, it presupposes that the society it describes exists somewhere already. Somewhere in the nowhere. And it is due to this paradoxical position that places such as Atlantis, Bensalem, Erewhon, the Sun-state, or Ikarien, are so difficult to map.

In order to map something, it must have a place. A place is a position in an ordering-space, geographical, social, or of whatever kind. It is a rigid order of solidity that holds sway there, the rigid order of solid things. Its basic rules are:

§1: $A=A$ (axiom of identity)

That which is to be located has to be clearly identifiable. This means that it must not change during the process of localization nor be changed through this process.⁹ In addition to this, everything that is to be located has to be measurable on a scale it shares with at least one other thing.

§2: $A \neq A$ (axiom of prohibited contradiction)

There may be empty space, but there cannot be two objects in the same location in space.

§3: $A=A \vee A=B$ (axiom of excluded third)

That which is to be located must have unequivocal and homogeneous characteristics. It has to have clear and solid boundaries¹⁰, i.e. has to be clearly defined. Thus it will not be mixed with something else nor will there be two different things in one place. Within an occupied location there must be no ambiguous realms. Of each position within the ordering-space, one must be able to determine exactly whether or not it is something's place.

The axioms of logic are the basic rules of mapping, of cartography. Whatever violates these axioms cannot have a place in space; not geographical space, not social space, nor any other order.

7 There are also some classical utopias which are situated in a non-place in time. It is, however, a place within the cyclical time of a returning golden age. Kosselleck (1982, p.1) dates the 'jump' into a linear axis of time and the start of temporal utopias in 1770, when Luis-Sebastien Mercier's novel *The Year 2440* was published in France.

8 See Ernst Bloch, 1982, vol. 1, chapter 18.

9 This means that the act of locating and the object located have to be strictly separated. Nothing may locate itself. The ordering-space has to be absolutely independent of the elements it orders.

10 They may well have fuzzy boundaries (i.e. be 'fuzzy sets'), but ones which can be defined clearly.

Surprisingly perhaps, closer interpretation shows that not even the space of possibility is capable of accommodating utopias. They are too paradoxical for that: there is within every utopia, for example, the inherent contradiction that there is, even at the end of all desire, still something to live towards. When the ideal society is achieved, change is no longer sought for and the journey is over; change has become a meaningless concept. Even so, people in utopian societies do still strive towards things, still hope and fear change, still create.

Thus if the idea of utopia is too paradoxical to be possible, the intention to write utopia cannot be anything but a paradox: it establishes an ideal society which it can only hope to reach by not adhering to it too rigidly. To allow the utopian possibility of reforming the social, utopian thought must remain open to continuous redefinition. Social reform does not go according to plan or with a fixed apparatus of order. The breakdown of Soviet Communism¹¹ and the tragic outcomes of social engineering's best intentions show the something about the consequences of neglecting this inherent paradox.

... the water was indistinguishable from the sky, except that it was slightly creased, like a wrinkled cloth. Gradually, as the sky whitened, a dark line lay on the horizon dividing it from the sky, and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after the other, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually...

Utopias cannot be located. They are too fluid for topo-logic,¹² nonetheless they exist and they work. Reality is more than that which can be defined and located.¹³ Reality is also that which gives direction and meaning to our actions. One might say that utopias are a base, but a base without place, a real non-place: non-place as well as a "place", both and neither. And this is why I can speak of "the utopia of woman".

For woman, too, is utopia.

Talking of woman's non-place, I am not just calling for more space for woman, her right to a room of her own, I am not just demanding recognition for her place in society. These changes are necessary, but faced with the consequences of defining a place at all, such demands are not radical enough! It is not enough to draw a "topography of gender" and show that Western tradition locates woman outside culture, in nature, in the wilderness. If Antigone was not

11 But it is certainly not also automatically a breakdown of collectivist or Marxist utopias, as some journals recently interpreted it. See for example the headline of the Swiss journal *Wochenzeitung* on 12 July 1991: 'Lebe nach der Utopie'. Its argument about the end of utopia implies, as demonstrated by A. Gross (1991, p. 107), that there is neither the demand nor the capacity for change.

12 In 'On boundaries' (Reichert, 1992) I have described the topo-logic and its central role in philosophy in more detail.

13 In his world-order Plato distinguished three basic types of being: The 'ideal', which can be thought and exists in an ever-unchanging form; the 'reproduction' which is visible and is becoming and passing away; and a third, 'difficult and dark kind', of which he says that it is taking up all becoming, like a mother. It is not to be perceived and can only be apprehended by "a kind of spurious reason, and (it) is hardly real – which we, beholding as in a dream, say of all existence that it must of necessity be in some place and occupy a space, but that what is neither in heaven nor in earth has no existence. Of these and other things of the same kind, relating to the true and waking reality of nature, we have only this dreamlike sense, and we are unable to ... determine the truth about them" (Platon (1959) *Timaios*, Kap. 18, 52b).

understood in the city of Kreon, it was not because her proper place was outside its gates¹⁴, but because her language could not be located at all. It was because her language was utopian. Is it not written that she had left nothing but traces in the dust, no visible, lasting sign of representation? Antigone is not a subject of representation, and her language, the language of a woman, is not one that could have been laid down in a past. Those who try to do it nevertheless, those who draw a map of the ex-clusion of woman, still work on the basis of our patriarchic culture, our cartographic culture, a culture in which every "thing", even woman's non-place has to be located, defined, and fixed in its position. It is from the specific perspective of the One, that the Other is territorialized, named and bound¹⁵. And the One, who turns the Other into an object such that both lose their lifeliness, is the modern subject, traditionally the man. For it is only in relation to that subject that the object exists, She Other, who is judged by his standards¹⁶. Only in this relation she exists, has presence. She is represented by him¹⁷. Only at the expense of a represented Other can the modern subject hope to gain the security and autonomy it so urgently seeks. Only in this form can it speak of its identity.

Representation characterizes every dualistic subject-object relationship, the presently dominating gender-relations as well as humanity's relation with the environment. Everywhere two characteristics hold:

1. Identity is achieved by delimiting: the Other is that which the One is not. They exclude one another, always remaining in distant contradistinction. Crossing this distance means death of the Self. Man is that which is not nature. And woman? In the mirror of her eyes he recognizes himself.

2. The dualistic subject-object relationship is assymetrical. The One is always the first one, he who was there before, the origin out of whose rib, out of whose looks, out of whose imagination the Other is supposed to receive her identity¹⁸. It is for this reason that he has to be master and the one who is on top. Relations of representation have their own spatial order.

The more man's self-understanding as Subject grew and the further it spread, the more it became evident that it could not achieve the certainty and autonomy it wanted. Isolated from the Other which endangered its identity while nourishing it, isolated from nature, from woman, from the insane, ... and from utopia, it became empty¹⁹. Today it is not only the Subject which is

14 As was proposed by Sigrid Weigel (1990, pp. 10-11). But I take it to be an inexact expression of her, because elsewhere she writes about the problem of "the double place of the woman" (p. 261). On the other hand she rejects any characterization of 'woman' as undefined, unequivocal and flowing, and thus I wonder if she would not nevertheless disagree.

15 See Sigrid Weigel, 1990, p. 269.

16 Irigaray calls a woman who defines her identity in such a relation „L'afemme“, woman and un-woman, other gender and impossible gender at the same time (e.g. 1977, p. 112).

17 An intelligent and very amusing demonstration of this relation of representation is given by Irigaray in the first chapters of her book *Speculum*. There she dismantles the Freudian theory of female sexuality and of the development of the female child – in a very fair way in fact – and shows to what extent they rely on the norms and function of male sexuality and the development of the male child. For example, in the context of suggesting that for Freud, becoming a woman consists mainly of recognizing and accepting "one's own phallic shortcoming", Irigaray concludes: "A man, minus the ability to (re-)present oneself as a man = a normal woman" (1980, p. 30).

18 In her book *Zählen und Erzählen* Eva Meyer demonstrates the possibility of female language and writing as a simultaneous movement behind and beside the identity (the identical subject) of classical logic. She relates to gender relations what Günther (1980) showed in different myths of creation, namely that the creation of a One, a being capable of reflection, requires a second Other deduced from it (1983, p.43ff. and 80ff.).

19 Julia Kristeva writes: "A 'subject' only exists in a thinking of the sign, which compensates the parallel multiplicity hidden in the semiotic practices of the domination of the sign, by conceding itself 'secondary'- or

threatened with decay, that which used to be the Object also no longer confines itself to positions of obedient servitude.

For me, a critique of subject-object relations and of man's understanding of its self through these relations seems today even more important. Such a critique would point to the underlying reasons for environmental destruction, the dominating gender relations, and the connection between sex and violence²⁰. On the basis of all that, it would uncover a cartographic logic, a logic of place and solid bodies in space, which has gone too far.

In a critique of the topo-logical identity of the modern subject, the interests of feminism and human ecology meet. The ecological questions Francisco Varela (1975) or Herbert Spencer Brown have been asking resemble the concerns of feminists like Julia Kristeva or Eva Meyer. Together they question the understanding of the modern Self, in order to open up possibilities for change. For feminists, however, this involves one further problem: how can woman, who has traditionally been the Other, leave (t)his representational position without having to define an Other herself, without having to become a topo-logical subject herself? How can she gain a voice in society and its institutions without being a Subject, without treating other human beings as the Others, and without defining her territory against them? It would be too easy to be satisfied with joining that game and too moderate to be satisfied with a place, blank space, a few pages. Maintaining here, what her critique of the topo-logical subject demands, is the difficulty, but also – at least for me – the fascination, of being a woman now. It means trying to balance on the tightrope of utopia, moving between the order of place and that of nothing. It is not impossible enough not to try!

... their quivering mackerel sparkling was darkened; they massed themselves; their green hollows deepened and dark might be traversed by shoals of wandering fish. As they splashed and drew back they left a black rim...

So far I have simply assumed it: woman as utopia, non-place. But why should she be? Is it not presumptuous to talk about "woman as utopia"?

I claim that woman is non-place because I am sure that she is more than the relationally represented object, and because I hope that she will be more than the dominating subject²¹. In this assumption I start with myself. While it might be the outer side of the Other that the majority of women come from, I first knew the boundaries of the autonomous subject from the inside, and only later discovered the other possibility. Now I think that both experiences have to come together to challenge and transcend the boundaries of the dominating subject. It yields a "more" which may at first sight appear as less, as a lack of property on the reality market²²; the "lack" of a

'peripheral' phenomena (dream, lyric, madness) that remain subordinated to the sign" (in: Semiotike. Recherches pour une sèmanalyse, p. 274, translated after E. Meyer, 1983, p. 66).

20 In her paper ,*Herrschafts-Knechtschaft. Die Phantasie von der erotischen Unterwerfung* (1989) Benjamin demonstrates how the presently dominating idea of ,rationality' is characterised by a structure of dualistic subject_object relations in just the same way as the presently dominating forms of sexuality. On both cases it results in mutual violence, because such a relation does not allow the vital interplay of openness and closure, dependency and autonomy in each particular person. It only, and with predetermined, fixed distribution, allows it between different persons. The violence, whose logic Benjamin demonstrates in the extreme of sado-masochistic relations, arises in the attempt to break free from these predetermined roles.

21 In this respect it is interesting to note that Theodor Adorno, arguing in another context, writes that 'utopia', for him, consists in a "nonidentity of the subject that goes without sacrifice"

22 See Irigaray's paper ,*Waren untereinander*' (1977, pp.199-204 and p. 31 ff.). There she sketches the economy as an exchange relation based on men's desire of other men (minetic desire). Heterosexuality would then be an

human being who has given up solid identity and changes it from one place to the other, forever remaining a nomad, a vagabond perhaps, a woman who does not subject herself to the territorial order, but is not lost in formless chaos either. What a mistake to think she would settle for less! Breaking this self-conception of the modern subject would be as reasonable for men as for women. Why then should it be the woman who should carry this shift? The answer is clear: woman, because she does not fear death! Because woman, it is claimed,²³ does not have to search for the origin by means of the subject, but stands in relation to the past already. Because she knows pleasure, enjoyment, unaware of the singularity of desire.

But fear not! This is not to propose the new super-woman! The meaning of such assertions may become clearer if they are considered against the background of certain theories of the child's ego-development. I will describe them briefly:

These theories of the children's development of a sense of self are based on the psychoanalytic works of Freud on the one hand, and Saussure's structuralist theory of language on the other. These were brought together, criticised, and further developed by Melanie Klein and by Jacques Lacan in particular, and later in the more or less homogeneous schools which emerged out of their work, by the English representatives of the object relations school²⁴ and the French post-Lacanian school.

According to these theories, the ego develops as follows²⁵: it begins in a contradiction. The newborn child feels its body stimulated which leads to unpleasure. Pleasure, on the other hand, is achieved through the discharge of sensation. Its body does not yet grasp itself, and unites with – or separates from – its environment, the mother's body, depending on the pleasure it receives from it. It has no fixed boundaries. It is thus difficult to name and define, as it is not something for anybody, is nobody. Kristeva (1978) calls it "Chora" and describes how it is flown through by rhythmical energies, how they glide against each other, transferring their intensities to each other, displacing and condensing them according to (biological and socio-historical) forces of coercion²⁶. Between the 6th and 18th month, in the so-called "mirror-phase", the growth of the child leads to a qualitative change: the child recognises its Self in the Other. Encouraged by the outside world's reactions it begins to consider itself as a separate being, limited by the contours of its body, and as such, equipped with a continuous and coherent identity. Although it is not able to

assignment of roles in this economy: 'men' would be the exchanging subjects, and the 'women' would be the goods, objects with an exchange value between men and a use value for them.

23 Gilles Deleuze, quoted in Kristeva, 1978, p. 11

24 Benjamin (1990, p.220) gives an overview of the contemporary representatives of the theory of object relations.

25 I base this rough description on Kristeva (1978) and Lacan (1986,1987) without, however, using their precise terminology.

26 This description refers to Freud's passages about the primary processes (*'Primärvorgänge'*) of the unconscious in *his Interpretation of Dreams*. There he talks about "...processes to which the dream-thoughts, previously constructed on rational lines are subjected to in the course of dream-work", and describes them as follows:

- (1) the intensities of the individual ideas become capable of discharge *en bloc* and pass over from one idea to the other, so that certain ideas are formed which are endowed with great intensity (compression or condensation).
- (2) ... 'intermediate ideas', resembling compromises, are constructed under the sway of condensation ... Composite structures and compromises occur with remarkable frequency when we try to express preconscious thought in speech. They are then regarded as species of 'slips of the tongue'.
- (3) The ideas which transfer their intensities to each other stand in the loosest mutual relations. They are linked by associations of a kind that is scorned by our normal thinking and relegated to the use of jokes (in particular associations based on homonyms and verbal similarities).
- (4) Thoughts which are mutually contradictory make no attempt to do away with each other, but persist side by side. They often combine to form condensations just as though there were no contradictions between them, or arrive at compromises that our conscious thoughts would never tolerate but that are often admitted in our actions. (Freud, 1976, p.753).

control this body, the child identifies with it as "I" and thereby cuts itself off from its past, from the non-continuous and non-coherent, non-limited Chora, and the flowing connection to the mother. In a later stage of this development, in the so-called "Oedipal phase", this process of separation is completed. Now the child further loosens the tie to the person who nurtures it, and who previously still was the embodiment of the child's satisfaction. In this phase, the ego-development and the differentiation of male and female sexual identity coincide. In a culture like ours, where persons nurturing small children are predominantly women, this is the point, where male and female ego-demarcations begin to differ²⁷. To develop her sexual identity, the girl does not have to distance itself as much from the nurturing person, a woman, as the boy. Developing a male sexual identity demands a clearer separation from the mother (the nurturing woman), which also means a stronger denial of the pre-oedipal Chora. The male "I" defines itself by this separation and hence concentrates the experience of pleasure in its genitals. In our culture such self-conception is not necessary for the development of the female "I".

The emergence of the child's ability to speak is closely linked with this process: with the "I" with which the child learns to address itself, it begins to think of itself in terms of terms, in terms, however, with which it can only address itself because it thereby misses itself to some extent. It misses its past, misses what it used to be before the cut of separation, i.e. the rhythmically pulsating, spatially non-definable Chora. The desire to express itself – and any desire – aims at a suspension and dissolution of this separation.

This description is very rough. It does not specify how ego-development can be explained by means of semiotic concepts of language, sign, and the relationship between signifier and signified. Nor does it mention the differences that exist between the representatives of the various schools in the interpretations of the pre-Oedipal and Oedipal processes of separation²⁸. But it may suffice to explain why it could be claimed that it will be woman who could break the current construction of the modern subject: woman, because she remains closer to the Chora and can therefore remind the solid, sovereign I of the rhythmical flow from which it has separated itself. She, because she can remind the subject, which has learned to recognize itself in the mirror of the Other, that it does not understand it(s)self, and remind the subject that it can never hope to find an origin in the unbroken identity it represents – even if it has to insist on such a hope. Woman can remind the modern subject of another past, of its emergence from contradiction, and she can demonstrate that it will not be able to sustain a whole and pure idea of itself, but must instead recognize that it also owes itself to all the imperfections of the real²⁹.

If, therefore, woman knows pleasure, enjoyment, and is unaware of the singularity of desire, then it is for these reasons. She who did not completely cut herself off from a relationship with the Chora, the mother, and is not Identity, not One – she can experience an enjoyment that is enough in itself³⁰ and cannot be located. It is an enjoyment of which she knows nothing except the fact

27 See particularly the theses of Chodorow, 1986.

28 The feminist critique of Lacan also starts off at this point. See for example, Irigaray, 1977, p.121.

29 See Mayer, 1983, p. 42

30 Kristeva writes that it would perhaps not be mere chance to be woman who did not speak the language of the modern subject and of the society based on it:

Because remaining in her pleasure immediately general and foreign to the singularity of desire, the woman ... represents the Negative in the homogeneity of society, the eternal 'irony of the community'. Which means ... that she is concerned with enjoyment (immediate and general), which distinguishes herself from the body (singular, place of desire and pleasure), whereby she knows very well that there is only an enjoyment of the body (singular). Or, said differently, that her knowledge is a knowledge of enjoyment (immediate and general), beyond the pleasure principle (the pleasure of the body, and be it perverse). Thus her problem is not the fear of death – because she has nothing to

that she feels it³¹.

If one claims that the woman does not fear death, it is for that reason too: the loss of self-identity in the Other cannot frighten her, she who in her knowledge of the past remembers the fractures of herself. She has no solidity to lose.

This woman, who thus lives in connection to her past, is not a subject, but she is not an object either, not a mere Other. She is not negation, but Negativity, an "external being, internal in every identical closure"³², and as such she acts according to a logic which is wider than topo-logic. Neither is her individuality a closed form that could be located, nor a formless chaos, but – flown through by intensities – is always in the process of formation, of building forms out of its relatedness. Neither is she place, nor nothing, but rather non-place, utopia.

... they broke and spread their waters swiftly over the shore. One after another they massed themselves and fell; the spray tossed itself back with the energy of their fall. They were steeped deep-blue save for a pattern of diamond-pointed light on their backs which rippled as the backs of great horses ripple with muscles as they move. They fell; withdrew and fell again, like the thud of a great beast stamping...

But. Such a woman? Such should a woman be? Should a woman be such? Is this not dream rather than utopia? Is this not yet another attempt to pin woman down to a new ideal, to place her once more? To identify her as a "non-place" this time, as the "ship which, with its white sails, like an immense butterfly, passes over the dark sea"? Once more woman as the "calm enchanting being" which the "man in the midst of his hubbub, in the midst of the breakers of his plots and plans ... sees gliding past him, (and) for whose happiness and retirement he longs"³³ – and this time not only man, but the self-imprisoned modern subject in general?

This criticism is frequent, but it fails. No. Calling her "utopia" and "non-place" I am not simply defining and locating woman yet again. This is important, and there are two reasons for claiming it:

The first one is that this text is not about anything, but it is itself what it is. If it has to be about something at all, it is at the most about mere tautologies³⁴. If it is correct that woman is utopia, then I have not said anything other than "utopia is utopia", or that "woman stands in closer relation to the Chora" because she who stands in closer relation to the Chora is a woman. A woman is a woman. (And not a rose.)

Tautologies do not tell us anything about the world. They represent nothing. And I shall take good care not to represent! Certainly not quietly, by counting on a silent agreement on social conventions, blinking with an eye "well, we all know who belongs to us women, don't we?" But apart from that, there is no one I could tell anything about. This is the second reason: I could not

be castrated – but rather how to maintain this enjoyment as more than enjoyment, before it turns into a value or an object, i.e. before it comes to a stop.)In: *Matière, sens, dialectique*, translated after E. Meyer, 1983, p. 41)

31 In *Gott und das Genießen der Frau* Jacques Lacan writes: „There is an enjoyment for her, fort his her that does not exist and does not mean anything. There is an enjoyment for her, of which she herself might perhaps not know anything apart from the fact that she feels it – and that, that she knows” (1989,p. 81).

32 Kristeva, 1978, p. 27. The distinction between negation and negativity is also stressed in this book. Julia Kristeva and Eva Meyer call the woman the “zerological subject”, the “subject zero which is nobody, because it annuls itself in a praxis that does not subject itself to the sign” (Meyer, 1983, p.66).

33 F. Nietzsche, *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Kap. 60/p.20ff.

34 See Wittgenstein’s definition of meaningful assertions in the *Tractatus*.

characterize anybody as a woman or utopia in the way I have done, because I would immediately contradict myself. If being a woman means being in a non-place, I cannot lay down this non-place to put a particular person there. It is not solid enough for that. Neither can I tie the word "woman" to where I presume a woman to be, to a non-place: no places to lay down, no one to tie. Time beyond representation.

But if you like, you can take this self as yours and go with it. Luce Irigaray once said that the point should not be to "develop a new theory, whose subject or object would be the woman, but rather to put a stop to the theoretical machine and suspend its claim of a far too unequivocal truth and a far too unequivocal meaning". Hence I stick to my tautology and insist that I am doing nothing but writing myself. I write this as a woman, and if the woman is utopia she cannot be described, but she can try to be it in the course of reading and writing. This is my utopia, the utopia of a woman.

... they no longer visited the further pools or reached the dotted black line which lay irregularly on the beach. The sand was pearl white, smooth and shining...

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