

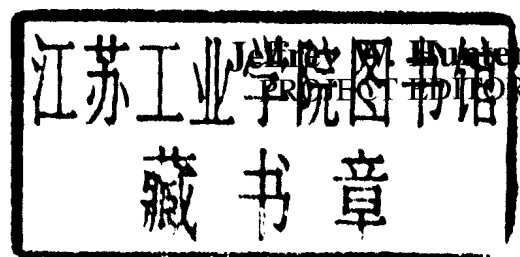
☐ Contemporary  
Literary Criticism

**CLC 253**

Volume 253

# Contemporary Literary Criticism

Criticism of the Works  
of Today's Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,  
Short Story Writers, Scriptwriters, and  
Other Creative Writers



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**Contemporary Literary Criticism, Vol. 253**

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# Preface

**N**amed “one of the twenty-five most distinguished reference titles published during the past twenty-five years” by *Reference Quarterly*, the *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)* series provides readers with critical commentary and general information on more than 2,000 authors now living or who died after December 31, 1999. Volumes published from 1973 through 1999 include authors who died after December 31, 1959. Previous to the publication of the first volume of *CLC* in 1973, there was no ongoing digest monitoring scholarly and popular sources of critical opinion and explication of modern literature. *CLC*, therefore, has fulfilled an essential need, particularly since the complexity and variety of contemporary literature makes the function of criticism especially important to today’s reader.

## Scope of the Series

*CLC* provides significant passages from published criticism of works by creative writers. Since many of the authors covered in *CLC* inspire continual critical commentary, writers are often represented in more than one volume. There is, of course, no duplication of reprinted criticism.

Authors are selected for inclusion for a variety of reasons, among them the publication or dramatic production of a critically acclaimed new work, the reception of a major literary award, revival of interest in past writings, or the adaptation of a literary work to film or television.

Attention is also given to several other groups of writers—authors of considerable public interest—about whose work criticism is often difficult to locate. These include mystery and science fiction writers, literary and social critics, foreign authors, and authors who represent particular ethnic groups.

Each *CLC* volume contains individual essays and reviews taken from hundreds of book review periodicals, general magazines, scholarly journals, monographs, and books. Entries include critical evaluations spanning from the beginning of an author’s career to the most current commentary. Interviews, feature articles, and other published writings that offer insight into the author’s works are also presented. Students, teachers, librarians, and researchers will find that the general critical and biographical material in *CLC* provides them with vital information required to write a term paper, analyze a poem, or lead a book discussion group. In addition, complete bibliographical citations note the original source and all of the information necessary for a term paper footnote or bibliography.

## Organization of the Book

A *CLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose



works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
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- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

## Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *CLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *CLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, films, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces an annual cumulative title index that alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in *CLC* and is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

## Citing Contemporary Literary Criticism

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

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Wesley, Marilyn C. "Anne Hèbert: The Tragic Melodramas." In *Canadian Women Writing Fiction*, edited by Mickey Pearlman, 41-52. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993. Reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 246, edited by Jeffrey W. Hunter, 276-82. Detroit: Gale, 2008.

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Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Associate Product Manager:

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# Hélène Cixous

1937-

Algerian-born French theorist, novelist, short story writer, essayist, nonfiction writer, dramatist, screenwriter, and librettist.

The following entry presents an overview of Cixous's career through 2006. For further information on her life and works, see *CLC*, Volume 92.

## INTRODUCTION

A major figure in contemporary feminist critical theory, Cixous is known for works that analyze and attempt to counter Western culture's traditional concepts of male and female. A proponent of *écriture féminine*, or feminine writing, Cixous asserts that her intention in all of her works is to establish a uniquely feminine perspective, both as a kind of corrective to what she and many feminist theorists view as the traditionally masculine character of Western discourse and as a methodology with which to critique that discourse.

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Cixous was born in Oran, Algeria. Her father, who was of French-colonial background, was a physician, and her mother, of Austro-German heritage, was a midwife. Members of her family were Sephardic Jews, and Cixous grew up with a sense of kinship with persecuted groups. Her father died when she was very young, an event some critics suggest informs her writing. In her teens, Cixous read myths, the German Romantics (including Heinrich von Kleist), and English literature, especially the writings of William Shakespeare. Cixous moved to France in her late teens, where she earned an *aggregation d'anglais* degree in 1959 and became a *docteur des lettres* in 1968. She was a founder of the University of Paris VIII-Vincennes, a liberal school offering an alternative to traditional education, and the Centre de Recherches en Études Féminines in 1974. She also cofounded, with Gérard Genette and Tzvetan Todorov, the prestigious literary and critical journal *Poétique* in 1968. Cixous has taught at various universities in France, including the University of Paris, the Sorbonne, and the University of Bordeaux; she has also been a visiting professor at such institutions as Yale University, Columbia University, and Dartmouth College.

## MAJOR WORKS

In the United States, Cixous's best-known work is *La jeune née* (1975; *The Newly Born Woman*), which is recognized as markedly influenced by the writings of Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher and founder of the critical method known as deconstructionism; Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst and philosopher who proposed a linguistic theory of the unconscious; and Sigmund Freud, the originator of psychoanalysis. Also that year, Cixous's essay "Le rire de la Méduse" ("The Laugh of the Medusa") was published. In it Cixous examines Freud's concept of castration anxiety, which she argues has broad social and political implications and manifestations. *"Coming to Writing," and Other Essays* (1991) collects translations of a number of Cixous's critical works written between 1976 and 1989. In 1993 she published *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, a series of lectures that elucidate her theory of writing.

With the influential French director Ariane Mnouchkine, Cixous has written and staged several dramatic productions. *L'Indiade ou L'Inde de leurs rêves* (1986) focuses on the period leading up to Indian independence and partition. *La Ville parjure ou le réveil de Erinyes* (1994; *The Perjured City, or the Awakening of the Furies*) chronicles the French "blood trials," where it was revealed that several blood donor organizations had deliberately supplied HIV-contaminated blood to hemophiliacs for monetary reasons. Also in 1994 *L'Histoire (qu'on ne connaîtra jamais)*, Cixous's rewriting of the Nibelungen legend, was staged. Her recent play *Tambours sur la digue* (1999) chronicles the story of a devastating flood in an imaginary Asian empire. In addition to her writing for the theater, Cixous has written novels, short stories, and works which fit no particular genre and which she characterizes simply as "fictions"; these fictional works are characterized by her use of many styles of writing, such as free verse, interior monologue, philosophical passages, diary entries, and third-person narrative prose.

## CRITICAL RECEPTION

Reaction to Cixous's critical works has been mixed. Many critics have praised her attempts to revolutionize traditional beliefs about women and writing. Oth-

ers, however, have castigated what they consider the contradictory nature of her work and her intentional resistance to analysis. Some reviewers also suggest that Cixous's attempts to redefine gender differences reduce women to what one critic has called an "anatomical essence," and that her works are, in fact, antifeminist. Others argue that Cixous's work is expansive rather than reductive. Most critics, however, praise Cixous's belief that the creation of a new language is part of a new reality. Cixous herself has asserted: "Writing is the very possibility of change, the space from which a subversive thought can spring forth, the forward runner in any movement to change social and cultural strategies."

---

### PRINCIPAL WORKS

*L'exil de James Joyce ou l'art du remplacement* [*The Exile of James Joyce or the Art of Replacement*] (essay) 1968  
*Dedans* [*Inside*] (novel) 1969  
*Le troisième corps* [*The Third Body*] (novel) 1970  
*La* (novel) 1971  
*Neutre* (novel) 1972  
*La pupille* (play) 1972  
*Tombe* (novel) 1972  
*Portrait du soleil* (novel) 1974  
*La jeune née* [*The Newly Born Woman*] [with Catherine Clément] (essays) 1975  
*Portrait de Dora* [*Portrait of Dora*] (play) 1975  
*Souffles* (novel) 1975  
*La venue à l'écriture* [with Annie Leclerc and Madeleine Gagnon] (essay) 1977  
*Le nom d'Œdipe: Chant du corps interdit* (libretto) 1978  
*Le livre de Promethea* (novel) 1983  
*L'histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk roi du Cambodge* [*The Terrible but Unfinished Story of Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia*] (play) 1984  
*La prise de l'école de Madhubai* (play) 1984  
*La bataille d'Arcachon* (novel) 1986  
*Entre l'écriture* (essays) 1986  
*L'Indiade ou L'Inde de leurs rêves* (play) 1986  
*Théâtre* (plays) 1986  
*Manne aux Mandelstams aux Mandelas* [*Manna for the Mandelstams for the Mandelas*] (play and fiction) 1988  
*Jours de l'an* (nonfiction) 1990  
*L'ange au secret* (nonfiction) 1991  
*"Coming to Writing," and Other Essays* (essays) 1991  
*On ne part pas, on ne revient pas* (play) 1991  
*Déluge* (nonfiction) 1992

*Beethoven à jamais, ou, l'existence de Dieu* (nonfiction) 1993  
*Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (lectures) 1993  
*The Hélène Cixous Reader* (plays, novels, essays, and criticism) 1994  
*L'histoire (qu'on ne connaîtra jamais)* (play) 1994  
*La Ville parjure ou Le réveil de Erinyes* [*The Perjured City, or The Awakening of the Furies*; with Ariane Mnouchkine] (play) 1994  
*La fiancée juive de la tentation* (novel) 1995  
*Messie* (novel) 1996  
*Or, les lettres de mon pere* (novel) 1997  
*Hélène Cixous, Rootprints: Memory and Life-Writing* [with Mireille Calle-Gruber] (essays, plays, interviews, notebooks, and bibliography) 1997  
*Et soudain, des nuits d'éveil* (play) 1998  
*First Days of the Year* (essays) 1998  
*Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (essays) 1998  
*Osnabrück* (novel) 1999  
*Tambours sur la digue* (play) 1999  
*Le jour où je n'étais pas là* (essays) 2000  
*Benjamin à Montaigne; Il ne faut pas le dire* (essays) 2002  
*The Plays of Hélène Cixous* (plays) 2003  
*Tours promises* [*Promised Towers*] (fiction) 2004

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### CRITICISM

**Arnold Goldman (review date 16 April 1976)**

SOURCE: Goldman, Arnold. "Brother Cannibal." *New Statesman* 91, no. 2352 (16 April 1976): 513-14.

[In the following laudatory review of *The Exile of James Joyce*, Goldman calls Cixous's study "a sustained act of critical intelligence, her texture a machine for generating insights."]

The development of James Joyce as an artist remains endlessly fascinating, as though, if we could but understand it, we would pierce the centre of the 'modern' in art. In the young Joyce's own term, such an understanding might be the ultimate 'epiphany'. The mystery does not lie in his art alone, analysable though it is outside the life Joyce led. Nor is it simply that the life provides clues to the art, even perhaps necessary ones. The mystery lies in the relation between the life and the art, and this formidable study by Mme Cixous meditates, asserts, argues, and speculates that relationship for nearly 800 pages. Her study is a sustained act of critical intelligence, her texture a machine for generating insights. Almost wilfully condemning herself to examining everything, at

whatever length is necessary, she will not let go of a topic until she has wrung significance out of it. The reader participates in her determination, grinding molars at the agony of the investigation, experiencing blissful relief when the moment of release arrives. The miracle is that it does arrive, and so often.

Had *The Exile of James Joyce* been offered as three separate studies, the reader would never have experienced the dread that accompanies broaching this kraken of a work. But despite its inordinate length, it is one argument. Joyce's fictions are broken up and redistributed over its length and breadth to develop and illustrate a clear progress: first the nexus out of which the individual is to develop, the family; next the individual in three developing stages, the heroic, the heretical (or rebellious), and the exilic. Finally, Mme Cixous concludes with the 'poetics' of this development.

Hélène Cixous is illuminating on Joyce's relationship to his parents and to his brother Stanislaus, seeing clearly the uses to which he put them in life and in art—seeing and cumulating more uses than one ever imagined. She notes the importance of Stanislaus's *Dublin Diary* for James, and how the brother appears not just in Mr Duffy, of *Dubliners*' 'A Painful Case', and in *Finnegans Wake*'s Shaun the Post, but also in Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, Stanislaus is the most complete case of 'cannibalism' in James's life and work. Mme Cixous does not burke the human implications, but neither is she ever dismissive or simply disparaging. She sees the extraordinary egotism but also the strength and complexity of the will to survival. Joyce didn't have it easy, but he operated on a principle of making it harder, hardest: it was what he called his 'moral nature'.

Madame Cixous examines all the major relationships in Joyce's life, in all their complexities. This 'life' feeds the fictions, but the fictions also create and determine the life: it is not a one-way street. If at times she seems to conflate Joyce and his artist Stephen Dedalus, the commonest of literary trespasses, she does not do so essentially and is capable of quite exquisite differentiation. She shows how Joyce presented Stephen as more victimised by mother than father, and how useful and necessary that distortion of life was. She shows how Joyce deals constantly in 'replacements' of these figures—themselves perhaps replacements for the Virgin and God the Father—but she warns against our regarding such substitutions as 'simply the results of childish frustration infinitely prolonged'. With such a viewpoint life, which the Freudian reduction evacuates from the text, positively floods back into every cranny. She reads Joyce like a book.

**Sharon Willis (essay date October 1985)**

SOURCE: Willis, Sharon. "Hélène Cixous's *Portrait de Dora*: The Unseen and the Un-scene." *Theatre Journal* 37, no. 3 (October 1985): 287-301.

[In the following essay, Willis probes the relationship between Cixous's *Portrait of Dora*, Sigmund Freud's *Dora*, feminism, and psychoanalysis.]

With *Portrait de Dora*, Hélène Cixous re-opens Freud's *Dora* case. "Cracking" the case, breaking the frame of the portrait, this spectacle of circulating voices and images stages a particular theoretical encounter: that of feminism and psychoanalysis.

*Dora: A Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* is one of Freud's more compelling case histories. In its urgency to unravel the enigma of *Dora*'s symptoms and to demonstrate in an unassailable theoretical formulation the sexual aetiology of hysterical neurosis, as well as neuroses in general, the case produces remarkable narrative effects. In some respects, the case reads like a detective novel, with Freud weaving ever more complex and startling interpretations around the clues he uncovers in the hysteric's symptoms and dreams. Freud repeatedly stresses the need for a narrative, which translates the symptoms into discourse. His anxiety to "get the story straight" is particularly intense because hysterics are marked by their inability to give complete and logical accounts; their narratives are full of gaps and blockages.

But this narrative strategy of recovery and disclosure—a full account—is linked in the *Dora* case to a certain blindness on Freud's part. By his own admission, as expressed in supplementary footnotes, Freud overlooked certain crucial features of the case. The principal among these was *Dora*'s homosexual attraction for Frau K. It is this non-recognition of a feminine love object, as well as Freud's confining himself to an exploration of *Dora*'s relationship with her father, thereby excluding the mother from his investigation, that has led feminist critics to re-read the case in a critical light. These re-readings, my own included, are marked by a particular intensity.<sup>1</sup> What is compelling about the case is its occlusion of feminine figures as objects of both desire and identification in a text that aims to eliminate a disturbance in sexuality, to make female sexual development run its proper Oedipal course, to tell the right story, to reach the proper conclusion. In so doing, the case contradicts psychoanalysis's own major currents, for it refuses the complexity and overdetermination of the family romance, just as it implicitly separates the analytic scene from the social world. And, in this case, the social world is one in which *Dora* finds herself to be an object of exchange between her father and his lover's husband, Herr K.

Feminist response to the case has focused on these features, coupled with the emblematic status of hysteria as the female disease par excellence of the nineteenth century. Hysteria, a disturbance of women's sexuality, constitutes a rupture in the social sexual economy. Moreover, the nature of hysterical attacks—a physical display where the body becomes a symptomatic map to be read by the clinical gaze—produces a site of condensation of major issues for feminist theory: woman as body-image-spectacle for a gaze historically construed as masculine.

In making a case of *Dora*, Cixous's text enters a peculiar bind: its efficacy depends on the spectator's knowledge of its pretext, and more generally, on some idea of the historical status of hysteria and its importance for the origins of psychoanalysis. Such a risk might be unreasonable were it not for the question that casts its shadow across Cixous's text: why should theatre be the arena in which such a meeting of theoretical discourses is staged, in which such an interpretive re-reading is enacted? Because *Portrait de Dora* reframes Freud's text in a way that puts into question the theatrical frame, and the body staged within it, it becomes exemplary of the critical operations of certain feminist performance practice, particularly in its steadfast refusal of the categories theory and practice.

Now, this text's relation to both psychoanalysis and theatre is highly ambivalent, if not contradictory. It is from psychoanalysis that we learn that interpretation is performance and performance interpretation. But psychoanalysis has also fallen in line with classical means of coding sexual difference and the gaze, by making a spectacle of the hysterical body. Although psychoanalysis has provided feminist theories with the groundwork for a theory of the construction of gendered subjects, and of sexual difference, the relationship between the two discourses remains uneasy precisely because psychoanalysis often codes the visible absence of a penis as lack. To play with visibility, with femininity as spectacle, allows feminist performance practice to uncover certain contradictions which inhabit psychoanalysis and the logic of the gaze. But to seize the apparatus of spectacle, to expose and to display a feminine body on stage demands that this practice maintain a critical relation to its own discourse, a consciousness of the risk of reinstating these structures.<sup>2</sup>

But what of theatre, and its relation to the feminine spectacle—parade or fetish—and to the body? to desire? to fantasy? What can this scene that opens and closes before us, in its intermittancy, its shifting geometry, tell us about the body as spectacle? What can it tell us about the spectators, the gendered subjects

who are addressed, however obliquely, and therefore set in place by the spectacle?

#### PORTRAIT DE DORA

The scene that opens before us is already split, divided; the stage contains a scrim on which images are projected: some filmed, some stills. These potential interference effects—the struggle between images and “real” bodies to capture our attention, the juxtaposition of moving images and immobile ones, the tension between speech and voice—contain all the contradictions this play asks us to work through, as well as the ones that underlie Freud's own case.

As the play opens, “Projected on the scrim is the ‘incident by the lake.’ . . . Freud's voice [in the French: *la voix de la pièce*], seated, from behind. ‘. . . these events project themselves like a shadow in dreams, they often become so clear that we feel we can grasp them, but yet they escape our final interpretation, and if we proceed without skill and special caution, we cannot know if they really took place.’”<sup>3</sup> The scrim is a screen which both conceals and makes visible.

Screens, in general, function both as barriers and as supports for projection, and this, not without *framing*, enclosing an image while excluding something else—as its outside. This citation also opens the question of reference, a question that haunted Freud's analytical research on the seduction theory (could there be a real referent, a real scene of seduction?), whose analysis eventually produced the theory of the Oedipus complex.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the problem of the referent was a source of constant struggle between Freud and Dora (she really was being sexually and emotionally manipulated by her father and his friends), and finally, in an oblique way, halted the progress of the analysis, since Freud insisted on too narrow a referential frame (by his own admission) for Dora's symptoms.<sup>5</sup> That is, he framed the case around the male principals, completely excluding Dora's mother, and failing to recognize Frau K. as a possible object of Dora's desire as well as her identification. Part of the play's project is thus to re-frame the case, shifting the structure of inclusion and exclusion and, in so doing, to call attention to the necessary consequences of any framing.

In another striking moment of citation, the play's Freud repeats a passage from the Dora case: “This first account may be compared to an unnavigable river whose stream is at one moment choked by masses of rock and at another divided and lost among shallows and sandbanks” (p. 4).<sup>6</sup> Here Freud refers to the hysteric's life story as told on entry into analysis: it is full of gaps and blockages, or amnesias, which the analysis sets about to restore.



What Freud strove to organize into a complete narrative account is reproduced in the play as fragmented, divided, a stream that is perpetually disrupted by obstacles or diverted in detours. The analysis, and the narrative coherence it aims for, are “pricked, pierced, stitched, unstitched. It’s all women’s work,” as Dora comments (p. 16). “Women’s work” here consists of fragmentation, juxtaposition, and interruption. In *Portrait*, Freud appears as both character and “voice of the play.” The above citation adopts the ruse of a central controlling voice, a narrator, but this position is progressively undermined. The central voice’s authority is undercut by the intervention of multiple, conflicting voices—another interference effect.

In the same vein, the texture of scenic coherence is fissured; the stage is quite literally split. As the Freud character speaks, the “incident by the lake,” the moment of sexual trauma isolated in the Dora case—when Herr K. kisses Dora passionately—is represented on film. The analytic discourse here might be taken to explain the *referent*, the incident by the lake, just as the filmed scene might be taken as an illustration—the imagistic doubling of speech. But the staging of two representational modes here still leaves open the question of referentiality: how are we to read it, as memory or fantasy? While the spoken discourse throws into question the historical status of the events recounted by the hysteric, the filmed image might be taken to contradict speech, since the images necessarily attest to the existence of some *pro-filmic* event.

The split of the stage/scene—where performance works against narrative—is redoubled as the play produces a schism in its narrative pretext, the case history. Speaking as the “voice of the play,” the Freud character *narrates* a new “take” on the incident by the lake.

(Very cold and monotone, Freud’s voice) during which time the incident by the lake is projected on the screen with several modifications.

Doctor Freud could have dreamt this, at the end of December, 1899. Dora is an exuberant girl . . . She has something contradictory and strange about her which is attractive . . . Dr. Freud cannot take his eyes off her . . . Then, without any warning, she raises her dress in a purposely seductive gesture . . . (then, a chorus of voices, Herr B., Herr K., Frau K. and Freud speak in succession).

[p. 19]

In this re-inscription of the traumatic incident by the lake, the speaking subject, the figure of Freud, who is already split into the voice of the play and the character, is again split—this time into narrator and narrated. The content of this fantasy scene reflects yet another split, one that conditioned the Dora case itself.

“Freud,” here, figures both the transference and the counter-transference. Such a narrative split works against any stable consolidation of a narrating instance as organizing authority that guarantees sense and legibility. The canon of voices splinters that central instance—multiplies and fragments it. Narration is continually diverted. The Freud figure is caught up in a hysterical relay of identifications, where filmed images and the staged scenes and a chorus of voices consistently set themselves *against* narrative. This split necessarily affects the position of the spectator, who is bound into narrative structure at its point of address, the subject for its meaning.

In a later effect of fragmentation, Dora tells a story which she simultaneously “acts out on a side stage” (p. 7). This performance becomes, in effect, the theatre within the analytic scene. It is a play on the technical term “acting out”—exactly what the analysand’s discursive rendition is supposed to eliminate. The hysteric becomes an actress to make visible the scene she describes, thus sundering the analytic space and literalizing the figuration of the hysteric as an “actress,” as a faker.

Cutting and segmentation are the crucial gestures of Cixous’s text, on the structural and performative levels. *Portrait of Dora* is constructed like a collage—segments are ripped from the surrounding material of the case and juxtaposed with invented fragments. Speech and citations are lifted from the case, stolen from the characters to whom they are attributed in Freud’s text and assigned/grafted onto other figures in *Portrait* in a montage effect.

Collage capitalizes on effects of interference, on a de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing that combines mutually exclusive or interfering discourses in such a way that both the selective and limiting functions of the *frame* are thrown into relief. At the same time, the re-framing necessarily stresses the division within the object (signifier-signified) even prior to its transposition.<sup>7</sup> In another kind of transference, a literal one, Cixous’s text calls our attention to distinct, mutually interfering levels of reading, and to the reciprocal structuring effect between frame and field.

Not only does *Portrait of Dora* produce a fragmented ventriloquization of Freud’s text, disseminating “citations” from it throughout, but it also choreographs a scene that is no longer the closed dialogue between analyst and analysand, or the third person structure of narration. Rather, the spectator is presented with an orchestration, a circulation of voices. Such a reversal of the implicit scenic space of the case (where “background” figures enter the scene) reflects the chal-

lenge that performance poses to narrative order and desire. Effects of circulation block “normal” narrative development from ignorance and concealment to knowledge and disclosure.

Such circulation is apparent on the level of discourse, signifiers, pronouns, and voices. For instance, on page 15 of *Portrait*. Dora cites Herr K.: “there was no reason to hope. Everything separates us. He told me: (Frau K.’s voice) ‘Thus, nothing is different.’” Here the stroke of quotation marks, the citation, constitutes a radical detachment: the cited words are literally spoken by another voice, but *not* by the person to whom they are attributed. Partially or completely untethered from character, the ventriloquized voices, citations from the case, wander across the text. Voice takes on a life of its own, enters the scene as an agency. An exchange between Freud and Dora moves from vocal miming to complete autonomy of voice.

Freud: No, it’s a former patient; she has stayed in touch with my family since she was cured.

Dora: In touch with my family.

Freud: Come on, don’t be a baby. Believe me. Tell me your dream.

Dora: Don’t be a baby.

(Frau K. is there, sitting not too far from Dora, who doesn’t see her but who hears her. Frau K.’s voice reaches Dora from the back, goes right through her).

[p. 23]

Voice becomes an impossible element to stage. How could one represent it “going right through her”? An instrument that blocks exchange through ventriloquism, which produces an uncanny doubling, voice is split off from body. It is not clear whether the actress playing Frau K. *speaks* the words, or whether a mechanically reproduced voice is projected from another site on the set. In this detachment, Frau K.’s voice occupies the place of the analyst—who sits behind the analysand. She is heard, but not seen, by Dora. Voice overturns the privilege of sight and destabilizes the configuration of staged space through the non-coincidence of body and speech.

On another level, the circulation of voices disturbs relations among the characters, as criss-crossing identifications conflate identities—all of which turn on the reversibility or breakdown of subject-object relation. Following the lines of force of the original case, the drama is established around men’s exchange and substitution of women. But identity is problematic on another level as well, for Dora’s hysteria dramatizes a series of identifications: with Freud, with her mother, with Frau K. *and* Herr K. In the play Dora states this clearly: “She sometimes wondered if she weren’t Herr

K. herself. In his place, how she would have loved her” (p. 21). This utterance detaches gender from the body and from enunciative position.

A later dream of Dora’s again displaces identity through identification:

“I wanted to speak to Doctor K. I knew all the time that he wasn’t a real doctor. I wanted to ask his advice. I ask for him on the phone. Finally I get him. It’s not he, it’s his wife. I feel her presence there, veiled, white, intriguing.”

Frau K. (on the phone): “Who’s calling?”

Dora: “She asks me. Frau K. speaking . . . I say.”

Frau K. (on the phone): “That’s going too far.”

[p. 29]

Not only does Dora claim the place and the name of Frau K., whose voice *we* hear as telephonic as well, but she succeeds in superimposing three major figures: Frau K., Herr K., and Freud himself. Behind Frau K. is the veiled, unmentioned, intriguing figure of Freud, the doctor (whose status is in question), who is obsessed with anxiety around the charge that he is not a “real” or legitimate doctor. The moment of Dora’s occupation of Frau K.’s place—mirroring her to herself, stealing her name—effects a vertiginous rotation of pronominal position, from “I” to “you” to “he/she.” This gesture undermines all interlocutive situations, while foregrounding the imaginary and specular investments by which theatrical spectatorship is implicated here.

Toward the end of the text, this disruptive function reaches a heightened intensity in Freud’s last words to Dora: “I’d like to hear from me. . . . Write to me” (p. 32). Within parentheses, the stage directions indicate, ironically, that “this slip of the tongue is not necessarily noticeable.” This little disavowal naturally only heightens its effect: this is the culmination of the identificatory circuit, the utter collapse of the I-You opposition, as well as a playful turn on the phrase “slip of the tongue.” Freud’s Freudian slip here works to disclose the network of slips that are really slippages, displacements that dramatize not only Freud’s final “hysterical” identification with Dora, but also a kind of hystericization of the entire stage through rampant identificatory exchanges among its characters. The instability of first and second persons necessarily rebounds upon the spectator position as well, since we are the invisible, unacknowledged, and also privileged “you” to whom the performance is addressed, whose desire it solicits.

The textual machine stages a complex and expanding fantasy structure, which may exceed the boundary of the stage. Fantasy structure is constituted as a

“scenario with multiple entries,” according to Laplanche and Pontalis. “Fantasy . . . is not the object of desire, but its setting. In fantasy the subject does not pursue the object or its representation, but is himself represented in the scene, although, in the earliest forms of fantasy, he cannot be assigned any fixed place in it.”<sup>8</sup> The subject cannot occupy a fixed place; rather, it is “in the very syntax of the sequence in question.” Desire is articulated in the fantasy, indissociable from the structure itself, which offers multiple entries and exits, since it is founded in the reversibility of the drives; they turn round into their opposites, a turning which is echoed in the syntactic shifts.

Where is *our* desire in all this? At what place do we, the spectators, arrive, take up our positions? At second person, at third? As spectators, we are bound into the performance structure through a form of identification as well. In this elaborate structure of multiple and fragmented address, offering multiple points of identification, the instability of the text’s point of address is a means of insisting on performance *as* address. We can no longer establish our place as subjects outside the frame, subjects for whom the scene unfolds at a stable distance.

It is no accident that Freud is made to say “I’d like to hear from me,” since certain readings of the Dora case uncover a narcissistic impulse that could be characterized, somewhat playfully, as the analyst’s desire to hear from himself, to hear himself, across the analysand. The repercussions of such a disclosure are multiple. Freud’s own desire is very much at stake in this case, and returns to him across the other, as if from another, both in his text and in *Portrait*—like a long-distance call. In a peculiar literalization of metaphor, when Dora calls Frau K. on the telephone and gives her name as “Frau K.,” the latter receives a call from herself, hears from herself. Dora is a sort of switchboard across which sending and receiving become confused, and messages are re-routed. The stage is an hysterized body—a giant relay where identifications are acted out, but never consolidated in identities.

In this general slippage of pronouns and address, the notion of gender position as coincident with the body is disrupted. *Portrait of Dora* critically re-stages the bisexual pantomime of hysteria, which, for Freud, is related to an inability to separate desire and identification according to the proper Oedipal narrative scenario resolving itself in identification with the mother and desire for the father.

Most specifically, these issues arise around an *image* of a woman. Another sort of “portrait,” the image of the Madonna, central to both the case and the play,

becomes the site of intense contradiction here. Freud’s most startling interpretive *tours de force* occur upon Dora’s second dream, which is largely concerned with images: the Sistine Madonna she has recently seen and a landscape including a forest and nymphs. In Dora’s fascination with this portrait, Freud finds a series of unconscious wishes and identifications. First, he sees an identification with the Madonna that reveals a maternal longing. Retrospectively, long after the analysis has ended, he remarks in a footnote upon the possible homosexual desire for Frau K. (Freud, *Dora*, p. 122), a desire whose significance he feels he has overlooked. Juxtaposed with the landscape in the dream thought, this image, according to Freud, also reveals an identification with a male suitor, and a fantasy of defloration—from the male point of view, penetrating the woods to reach the *nymphae* in the background. “‘Nymphae,’ as is known to physicians . . . is the name given to the labia minora, which lie in the background of the ‘thick wood’ of the pubic hair” (Freud, *Dora*, p. 120). (This interpretation was the screen that had concealed Frau K.’s importance in Dora’s psychic drama.) The woman spectator, Dora, before a picture of a woman, occupies a position split between identification with the mother and with a desiring male subject.<sup>9</sup>

“A picture of a woman” is one of the critical moments in the play as well. When Freud asks Dora what it was that captured her in the painting, the following “scene” ensues.

Dora: “The . . . Her . . .”

Suddenly, the evidence, perhaps unnoticed by everyone: the infant Jesus held by the Madonna is none other than a baby Dora. Filmed sequence of three stills. The Sistine Madonna, substitution of the Madonna, and Frau K. Dora behind the Madonna, seen through a mirror.

(The audience does not know who is speaking, Mary or Frau K.)

[p. 11]

This remarkable sequence of substituting stills, which seems to enact the substitutability of women that underlies the social side of the Dora case, is also the only one where projected images are stills and not filmed. The motion of the pictures is then added on, a surplus—a cinematic effect that is produced right in the theatre. Such a technical decision marks out the segmentation; instead of a smooth flow of image into image, in effect, we *see* the frame, we see the cut. That is, we are aware of the operations of the enunciative apparatus.

But what is held in frame? First, the Madonna image of Freud’s account. This is a materialization of the referent on stage, the coincidence of our view with