

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**Can 'she' speak?
Spirituality in/through
psychology, feminisms, and feminist poststructuralism.**

A thesis
presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Masters of Arts in Psychology
at
Massey University

Leigh Coombes

1996

Abstract

In the context of women's exclusion from knowledge production and reproduction in psychology, this thesis is a reading of psychological, feminist and poststructuralist feminist texts for discursive resources that constitute spirituality. These readings informed my analysis of texts produced by 10 women. The analysis was focused on three questions: Do these texts reproduce the discourses identified in psychological, feminist or poststructuralist feminist accounts of spirituality? Are other discursive resources used, especially those which may be regarded as 'subjugated knowledges'? Do the subject positions constituted through the discourses realised in these texts, challenge the phallogentric positioning of women at this local site of accounting for 'spiritual experience'? The discursive strategies used in analysis were informed by Parker's (1992) criteria for identifying discourses. The analysis focused on whether the women reproduced the discourses identified as they articulated their experiences of spirituality. Other discourses were identified. The discursive resources identified in the texts and their possibilities of transforming phallogentricism are discussed.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the many people who have informed and shaped the writing of this thesis at different times and places through their discussions, teaching, and challenges to my own position.

My thanks must first go to the ten women who willingly shared their stories with me.

For the endless discussions, informed and directed, that shaped my thinking and providing the climate in which my work has been able to develop, I thank my supervisor, Dr Mandy Morgan. Her support and friendship was invaluable in the process.

To the occupants of the house at the foot of the hills, I thank you for the love and support over a very difficult year. Without you, I may not have finished.

My love to Kay O'Connor for her encouraging voice, and in the final stages, for her careful and precise editing work.

Thanks to Maria O'Connor for the arduous task of checking and rechecking my references.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to my friends and family for their support, especially my children Melony and Ryan, who have had to make adjustments to live with me as I wrote.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements		3
Table of Contents		4
Preface	Embodied Desires	5
Chapter 1	Introduction: Academic Exclusions	6
Chapter 2	'Legitimate' Texts	19
Chapter 3	Method	31
Chapter 4	Analysis: Constituting Objects	40
	Psychological Discourses	40
	Feminist Discourses	51
	Feminist Poststructuralist Discourses	56
	Subjugated Knowledges	61
Chapter 5	Analysis: Speaking Positions	68
Chapter 6	Discussion: Possibilities for Transformation?	79
References		84
Appendices	Appendix 1: Information Sheet	87
	Appendix 2: Consent Form	88