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## **Irigaray's Feminine Language in Joyce Johnson's *Minor Characters*: A Beat Memoir**

By Vida Rahiminezhad<sup>1</sup> & Mahdieh Sadat Faal Nazari<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

This is a critical reading of Joyce Johnson's memoir *Minor Characters* to investigate the ways women's language is generated using philosopher Luce Irigaray's feminist framework of language. This study is library-based research done by a close reading of the memoir. Joyce Johnson was part of the second generation of women Beat writers, and she had a love affair with the main male Beat figure, Jack Kerouac. In *Minor Characters*, she illustrates the history of the Beat Generation. Irigaray, a Belgian feminist theorist, discusses the concept of feminine language, gender roles, and women's position in society. Findings illustrate that Joyce Johnson generates feminine language through choice of subject matter deemed unacceptable for the time period, word play, feminine vocabulary, unusual syntax, and by using the female body as a source of meaning-making. Moreover, in some parts of the memoir, women's silence also implies a subversive feminist response to language.

*Keywords:* Feminine language, Women's bodies, Luce Irigaray, Joyce Johnson, Beat Generation, French feminist theory

### **Introduction: Irigaray's Feminine Language**

The concept of feminine language is a continuously debated aspect within feminist theory. Numerous thinkers and philosophers have discussed various aspects of this term and tried to define it. Among those theorists is Luce Irigaray, a Belgian-French feminist concerned with language and psychology; she discusses feminine language in-depth. As a student of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, Irigaray's definition of feminine language has its roots in Lacan and Sigmund Freud's explanation of subject formation; however, she shows her disagreement with both of them since they attempted to define female subjectivity and sexuality based on a masculine model. Irigaray indicates that female subjectivity cannot be understood if it is seen through the lens of a one-sex, masculine model (Donovan, 2002).

Not only does she emphasize the fact that women are absent in a masculine model and defined by the male gaze, but she also points out that women's sexuality and their specific orientation to language has been ignored. Irigaray concludes that women have not been allocated any place in history throughout the whole Western cultural tradition. Furthermore it has been argued that women have been placed in a schizoid state of being, at the same time in history and not in history—"written out" of history by male power (Pollock, 1994, p. 2). Irigaray is deeply concerned with language and believes that women are not adequately demonstrated by existing

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symbolic systems. She follows Lacan in understanding sexual difference as a difference that is assigned in language, as his model shows that the subject is formed by language and is concerned with women's position within language (Donovan, 2002).

In her series consisting of *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, *Elemental Passions*, and *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, Irigaray turns to the pre-Socratic elements as a foundation for putting modern Western philosophy under question. These books lyrically enact a feminist critique of Western metaphysics expanded on most directly in Irigaray's writings that draw from fluid mechanics. Fluid mechanics is a subdivision of physics that emphasizes the study of fluids such as liquids, gasses, and plasmas; their properties, namely pressure and density; as well as the forces that interact with fluids. Solid mechanics studies matter with a defined resting shape and explores the ability of that resting shape to maintain or deform when exposed to force. While fluids morph continually and take the shape of whatever contains them, solids have a shape of their own that will change only under specific conditions. (Bardsley, 2018, p. 16). For Irigaray, the fluid is framed as female, in contrast to the solid and contained subject, who Irigaray argues is always male within the Western philosophical tradition, despite the guise of universality. Concerning the solid and contained subject, Irigaray suggests that the female manifests as fluid, a processual excess that must be solidified or repressed:

*Fluid* must remain that secret, sacred, *remainder* of the one. Blood, but also milk, sperm, lymph, spittle, saliva, tears, humors, gasses, waves, airs, fire . . . light which threaten him with distortion, propagation, evaporation, burning up [consummation], flowering away, in another difficult to grasp. The "subject" identifies himself with/in an almost material consistency which is repelled by all fluence...All water must become a mirror, all seas, a glass...And so he is protected from that indecent contact...woman. From any possible assimilation to that undefined flow that dampens, wets, floods, conducts, electrifies the gap [écart], makes it glow in its blazing embrace. Without common measure with the one (of the subject) (Irigaray, 1991, p. 64).

Irigaray looks into men's and women's gendered speech patterns and notes the need for women to speak a feminine language. In her *Sexes and Genealogies* (1987), she explains the connection between language and bodily experience, as well as the way women's bodies and women's meaning-making through language work together. She contends that the female body forms a difference from male bodies, based on women's capacity for decentered sexuality and women's language (Pinggong, 2018, p. 251). She asserts phallocentrism has not permitted women to explore the true possibilities suggested by their bodies. Instead, phallocentrism has systematically endeavored to eradicate alterity by collapsing all differences and co-opting attention to a single male model. In Elizabeth Grosz's words, Irigaray depicts that instead of existing in their own right, women are relegated to acting as men's "subordinates, complements, or opposites" (Grosz, 2012, p. 112). The outcome of this alienation is that women are silenced not only in their everyday experiences of phallic oppression but also at a fundamental level (Godart, 2016, p. 11).

By reappraising the feminine body, Irigaray enables language to be a potential site of liberation. The female body is taken into account as a requisite reference point in masculine speech and context. Due to a constant separation from her own body, a woman does not have the position of a subject. Irigaray disputes that it is necessary to think up the reason for women's exclusion. This elision is preserved by the bodily matter which makes the female body. Access to linguistic space is reserved for the masculine body. If women stray beyond the borders of expectation for

acceptable feminine language use, they may be subject to negative evaluation and regarded as deviant or aberrant for breaking gendered norms and expectations (Mullany, 2010, p. 182). The premise that Irigaray introduces is a combination of the material and the conceptual. She attempts to detach the material from its linguistic moorings by considering both aspects of human experience (Pollock et al., 2012).

In her book *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution* (1989) and other works, she considers language as social relationships, from the interpersonal to the political. In *Democracy Begins between Two*, she argues that language must create the opportunity to speak and to occupy the subject position of the “I” for both sexes, rejecting the preference for the masculine as a signifier for all humans (Irigaray, 2000, p. xv, xvi). She uses the Lacanian imaginary body in her investigation of Western culture and its bias against women. Irigaray states that in Western culture, a male body is an imaginary body that prevails on a cultural level. Further, Western culture attaches privileges to identity, unity, and sight—all of which Irigaray believes are associated with male anatomy (Donovan, 2002). She claims that this developmental stage is concentrated on the fact that the little girl has been castrated, and now she is without, a symbol of lack:

The nonsymbolization of her desire for origin, of her relationship with her mother, and her libido acts as a constant appeal to polymorphic repressions (be they melancholic, maniacal, schizophrenic, paranoiac...). She functions as a hole – that is where we would place it at its point of greatest efficiency, even in its implications of phobia for man too – in the elaboration of imaginary and symbolic processes. But this fault, this deficiency, this ‘hole,’ inevitably affords woman too few figurations, images, or representations by which to represent herself... she borrows signifiers but cannot make her mark, or re-mark upon them. (Irigaray, *Speculum*, 1985, p. 71)

Based on her theory, women's identity can be autonomous only within a thoroughly separatist women's movement. Irigaray believes the claim of sexual difference is the site of a different kind of feminine voice. She describes this special voice as “*parler femme*” (“woman speaking”). She does not completely accept the distinction between man and woman and questions the binary logic which supports the male/female duality. Since this binary logic is mostly concerned with language, it can only be undermined by a distinct kind of language. This different, revolutionary language is for her a female or woman-identified language: a language celebrating women's identity. She describes the figure of the sexual lips (related to the female sex organ) which are always “in touch” with the specific sensuality of the female body as both symbolic and tactical (Irigaray, 1981, p. 26). It aims at producing differences attributed to women and the right of voicing their difference. In her words, what women want is a language of their own, “a currency of exchange” or a “non-market of economy” (Irigaray, 1981, p. 99). For Irigaray, this language can only emerge from women's sexual differences. She contends that language is not only a system of signifiers, but also is constructed of heterogeneous elements—semiotic drive forces and symbols. Therefore, the Other is built of these heterogeneous elements and is not a mere signifier.

The Other as a system of language into which we are born is not the metonymic space in which one signifier is associated with or displaces another in the same way that Lacan imagines. Based on Irigaray's idea, the Other is the space of subjectivity and human life (Pinggong, 2018, p. 252). The semiotic, as Hugh J Silverman says, provides an alternative to the male affirmative demands of the symbolic:

Symbolic language makes claims about reality, affirms by positing what is, and asserts truths about the natural, social, and cultural worlds in which we live. By contrast, the semiotic provides an alternative to the male affirmative postulates of the symbolic. The semiotic is described as a chora—the Platonic receptacle, but also the origin of the idea of the chorus—a field of nondeterminate flow and flux. Here semiosis is given its fullest sense of activity and motility. The semiotic is the space of emotion, feeling, drives, waves of energy, bodily rhythms, poetic language. (Silverman, 1998, p. 255)

This style of language can be described as women's body language or feminist vocabulary which can further be defined as the difference of women's semantic usages (Pinggong, 2018, p. 252).

Thus, Irigaray offers a specifically feminine writing practice based on the assumption that a different order of meaning is necessary to build a positive representation of the feminine. If the woman wants to speak, she must speak like a man, or she must break away from the social/symbolic. If women want to have their own identity, they must have their own language, and writing is a way into a world of woman's self-representation. She offers a different type of meaning and attempts to pull down phallogocentric language by adopting the strategy of mimetic, grammatical alteration and a method of excess. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray suggests that since women can only have access to subject positions defined by phallogocentrism, they could offer caricatured versions of these roles to expose their artificiality (Irigaray, 1985, p. 134). She further explains that “there is the mimesis that would be already caught up in a process of imitation, specularization, adequation, and reproduction” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 131). This is an imitation of an imitation, which only increases the distance from the true nature of things. The other repressed form of mimesis is associated with production, rather than reproduction; “[c]onstituted as an enclave within a ‘dominant’ discourse” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 131), this productive form of mimesis is envisaged as a source of female creativity. She associates productive mimesis with the domain of music, explaining mimicry as a deliberate assumption of prescribed and cliché female roles, which involves a playful attitude to “mimesis imposed”—in other words, to the programmed repetition of socially sanctioned patterns (Irigaray, 1985, p. 76).

One form of mimicry takes place when women use language. They are often estranged from language, because masculine language is based on excluding them. The language which is used by women is a play or an attempt, as Irigaray mentions in her book *This Sex Which Is Not One*, “to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 76). For Irigaray, mimicry is double-sided; on one side, it is extremely restrictive and limiting to women because of being the imperfect expression of their desire, on the other hand, it is just a tool that women have, and discourse may be used to liberate them. All acts of mimicry are not acts of language, but all use of language by women is an act of mimicry. When women use mimesis, stereotypical views are not repeated faithfully. One example is that if women are viewed as illogical creatures, they should speak logically about this opinion. Based on Irigaray's point of view, the juxtaposition of illogical and logical subverts the claim that women are illogical (Donovan, 2002). However, her use of this kind of language is still a denial of her own existence. Therefore, women have a doubly layered experience with language (Lieberman, 2012, p. 13).

Irigaray also discusses that gendered morphology and the embodiment of form are always in process—a far cry from ascribing essence to women as a group or arguing that sex difference manifests particular meaning and form (Stephens, 2014, p. 20). Irigaray says: “Indefinite, unfinished/in-finite *form is never complete in her*. She is not infinite but nor is she *one* unit... This

incompleteness of her form, of her morphology, allows her to become something else at any moment, which is not to say that she is (n)ever unambiguously anything” (Irigaray, 1981, p. 55). Irigaray also expresses, “Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with a fully elaborated code in hand. For in what she says, too, at least when she dares, a woman is constantly touching herself” (Irigaray, 1981, p. 29). Moreover, she adds “for if ‘she’ says something, it is not, it is already no longer identical with what she means. What she says is never identical to anything, moreover; rather, it is contiguous” (Irigaray, 1981, p. 29).

Carolyn Burke states that “Like Derrida, Irigaray underscores the functions of spaces, pauses, and the white of the page in the act of reading by stressing their roles as ‘figures’ in signifying practice” (Grosz, 2012, p. 96). As a result, Irigaray chooses this kind of writing herself. Some figures such as puns, wordplay, homonyms, syntactic experiments, unusual syntax, and fragmentation come to be the modes of feminine writing that break the suppressing influence of masculine, rule-bound language. Feminine writing is aligned with images and metaphors of fluidity, dynamism, polysemy, and plurality, rather than those of unity, monologism, stability, and fixity that are aligned with masculinity. A person who uses feminine writing is seen as a kind of freedom fighter in the communicative environment (Eagleton & Selden, 1986). According to Irigaray’s viewpoint, such language derives from women’s sexual differences (Pinggong, 2018, p. 252). Irigaray explains that, “I am trying, as I have already indicated, to go back through the masculine imaginary, to interpret the way it has reduced us to silence, to muteness or mimicry, and I am attempting, from that starting point and at the same time, to (re)discover a possible space for the feminine imaginary” (as cited in McMullan, 2021, p. 128). Besides mimicry, Irigaray offers two other methods to move beyond phallocentrism: self-exploration and embracing sexual difference, both of which have silence at their core (Godart, 2016, p. 6).

In this article, the researchers aimed to investigate the concept of feminine language in a memoir, *Minor Characters: A Beat Memoir*, written by Joyce Johnson (1999), using Irigaray’s theory. This text is an autobiography in which the historical background of the Beat generation is depicted. The Beat Generation is considered a counter-cultural literary movement that emphasizes the equality of all people. However, not only were the women of the Beat Generation restricted by male expectations, hampered by domestic obligation, and later neglected by literary historians, but also their roles were written by their male counterparts (Holliday, 2004, p. 5). According to Irigaray, language itself must change if women are to have their own subjectivity that is recognized at a cultural level. Therefore, the researcher’s intention is to investigate Irigaray’s claim by applying it to *Minor Characters* by Joyce Johnson.

### **Tracing Feminine Language in *Minor Characters***

The traces of feminine language based on Irigaray’s definition can be found in various parts of this book. To begin with, Irigaray says that women will be able to have their own language by writing. In other words, women’s act of writing would be a way of generating feminine language. *Minor Characters* is a memoir written by a woman writer, so at first glance, it could be considered feminine writing, and its subsequent publication aided Johnson in achieving subjecthood. Johnson writes, “Only the publication of my novel would transform my existence into what I wanted it to be” (Johnson, 1999, p. 112). Based on Irigaray’s idea, if a woman wants to have her own identity, she must have her own language; thus, writing is a method for women’s self-representation (Pollock et al., 2012).

Irigaray enjoins women to cultivate autonomy and singularity regardless of anyone's opinion. She considers language to be a social link, from the interpersonal to the political. It means that language must create the possibility of speaking and assuming the subject position of 'I' for both sexes and rejecting the preference for male neutrality (Irigaray, 2000, p. xv, xvi). In relation to this point, Johnson generates feminine language in her own text by narrating her memoir in the first-person point of view, which is an act of gaining subjectivity:

I might have loved Joan if I'd known her, so I make that guess. She's as familiar to me as another woman very like her whom I once knew and loved, and as alien as the person who still lives on in the most dangerous depths of myself. I look in the index of the book with the snapshot of Jack and Allen and the others, and there I find *Joyce Glassman*. And half a dozen page references, having to do with approximately one-twentieth of my life, 1957-59, when I used to have that name. (Johnson, 1999, p. 33)

Using the pronoun 'I' gives this female writer the possibility of speaking and considering herself as a subject rather than an object, as Irigaray's theory suggests.

In the preface of Johnson's novel, Ann Douglas noted that by following masculine language a woman would not be able to make meaning: "For a woman to idealize the male as the symbol and carrier of freedom can be to leave unquestioned the masculine prerogative to define and bestow meaning" (Douglas, 1999, p. 14). Hence, Johnson generates her own language by deconstructing the common and popular style of writing of her own time. Her extensive use of hyphens and capital letters are other techniques used in this memoir to break the norm of masculine language. For example, Johnson writes, "NINETEEN FORTY-FIVE WAS the year we moved into the city, not far from Joan Vollmer's apartment" (p. 33). Similarly, "BY ANY STANDARDS, the Waldorf Cafeteria, to which Billy first took Maria and me, and which I later began to visit a great deal by myself on weekday afternoons as well as Sundays, was a dreary-looking place (p. 56). She employs both nonstandard capitalization and hyphens in the following sentence: "I'M HOLED UP IN my room at my Royal portable typewriter that my aunts gave me when I graduated from grammar school, writing Maria—still exiled in Glen Cove — an account of the momentous two-week vacation I've just spent with my parents" (p. 59).

Furthermore, Irigaray contends that feminine writing is based on a different order of meaning-making through puns, word play, and silence which helps women to illustrate a positive depiction of themselves. Applying this notion to *Minor Characters*, Johnson attempts to create a new meaning that brought about a positive and different picture of women. She states:

As a writer, I would live life to the hilt as my unacceptable self, just as Jack and Allen had done. I would make it my business to write about young women quite different from the one portrayed weekly in the pages of *The New Yorker*. I would write about furnished rooms and sex. Sex had to be approached critically, I thought. (p. 135)

In the above quotation, Johnson explicitly expresses that she intends to represent women in a way that contrasts representations of women made by male writers of the time. In addition, by talking about forbidden notions such as sex, she acts as a freedom-fighter staking out a position in a masculine-dominated sphere, in order to celebrate women's identity. Johnson speaks frankly of her sexual relationship with Aaron, "a twenty-year-old college student" (p. 59). Observing this relationship through an Irigarayan perspective reveals a connection between meaning-making and

Johnson's description of sexual relationships or the female body (Pinggong, 2018, p. 252). Moreover, Johnson said, "real life was sexual" and, "Sex was like a forbidden castle whose name could not even be spoken around the house" (p. 50). Irigaray suggests that feminine writing should represent multiple or plural styles of female sexuality. When Johnson mentions, "real life [is] sexual," she is attempting to express and establish her own identity since there is a connection between the female body and creating meaning through feminine language.

Moreover, Irigaray's vision of feminine language could involve women using puns, word play, syntactic experiments, or fragmentation (Eagleton & Selden, 1986, p. 25), which are the techniques Johnson uses. To illustrate, when Johnson wrote a letter to her friend, Maria, telling her romance story, she mentions that she is "allowing [her]self plenty of sentence fragments" (Johnson, 1999, p. 60). Fragments, a supposed violation of grammar rules, can be interpreted as a feminine way of writing. In another part, she included an unusual ellipsis of six dots in the middle of her sentence instead of words when she wanted to describe what happened between herself and Aaron. This usage can be seen as a form of fragmentation that Irigaray describes. She writes:

He's pulling me after him, and we go over a fence and across a dark field full of cow flops and into a patch of woods that are darker still—and all that happened, in reality, was that we came out onto the road on the other side. But this is not what I say. "And so Aaron took me into the woods," I write, and I type an ellipsis six dots long. I'm astonished, as I stop and look at the page in the typewriter, by the power of these dots. How much more you can say without saying everything! (p. 60)

Johnson attempts to make meaning in language by those "dots" instead of explicitly talking about her sexual relationship which diverges from traditional explicit descriptions of the time. As Johnson writes, "How much more you can say without saying everything," she believes that through those "dots" she would be able to speak more through silence than would be permitted for a woman in the actual use of words.

When Johnson describes her classroom where Miss Kirschenbaum was reading *The Odyssey*, her teacher's effort to produce feminine language can be seen. Johnson said:

But in matters of grammar, Miss Kirschenbaum is no iconoclast at all. She has particular scorn, for example, for sentence fragments, which she says "can *only* be used for effect." So as not to confuse us, no writers who break such rules are ever named. For all we know, Joyce, Stein, Woolf have never been born. SF! she writes in red in the margins of compositions—SF!! SF!!!—routing them out like cockroaches. The effect is something we girls have no right to. Only after years of laboriously equipping each sentence with subject and predicate, as with boots and umbrella, can we hope to earn it. Perhaps not even then. (p. 54)

Even though the teacher seems to be upholding traditional rules of grammar, she also has her own style, using abbreviations to refer to "sentence fragments" which is again an attempt to make feminine language following Irigaray's perspective. Johnson also uses an uncommon syntax where the pronoun "we" and the noun "girls" sit together in the sentence, "we girls have no right to." Linguist Acuña Fariña (1997) has called unusual structures like "we girls" and "us boys" a correct but "idiosyncratic syntax, a sort of mysterious island in an otherwise well-codified system of grammar" (1997, p. 14). More significantly, ending the sentence with a preposition is another way



of violating the masculine norms of grammar. Johnson as the author was aware of the fact that using symbolic masculine language with its systems and rules cannot fulfill women's need of asserting themselves and achieving an identity.

Johnson herself was in search of feminine language to achieve subjectivity and express herself, which can be seen when she writes about Thomas Wolfe's language, "I cherished the Wolfeian word *inchoate* which suggested a chalky obscurity, and hoped there'd be a passage in my own writing where it would be apropos" (p. 65). Investigating this part through Irigaray's framework reveals word play and feminized vocabulary. In the symbolic language system defined by men, "inchoate" literally means just begun or not fully formed, but here it is used to refer to things that cannot be fully coherent and expressed. In this way, a female character generates a feminine language which differs from that of its standard definition. This example connects to Irigaray's notion of feminine language as a different order of meaning-making.

Pervasive in Irigaray's work, silence is conceptualized as one of the disguises of the system of sexual difference, a tactic through which the world might be transfigured to subvert phallogentrism (Godart, 2016, p. 6). Irigaray points out that "the masculine imaginary [...] has reduced us to silence, to muteness or mimicry" (as cited in McMullan, 2021, p. 26) which suggests that silent women are generating a kind of feminine language. In Johnson's memoir, *Minor Characters*, some women have their own way of speaking or language as a way of expressing themselves and achieving their subjectivity, but some are silent. To clarify the point, in the preface of the memoir, writer Ann Douglas notes that in that time period, "for women to work had become almost 'an act of conformity.' Traditional forms of feminine self-assertion had been effortlessly co-opted into the mainstream" (Douglas, 1999, p. 14). Since traditional ideals emphasized the fact that women had to stay at home, working outside of the home eventually transformed into a new gender role for women (Septa, 2016). In other words, an act that was once forbidden for women then changed into their duty. But women did not talk about it and kept silent. Their silence was an act of making feminine language. They decided to be silent to show that they were unhappy with their condition. In another part of the preface, Douglas notes that "While Johnson laments the silence imposed on Beat women, never for a moment does she suggest that any other cultural site could have offered her as much stimulation, or that silence precluded a different form of participation" (Douglas, 1999, p. 21). The importance of being silent and its power in the memoir is emphasized by Douglas.

Elise Cowen, Johnson's friend, also forces herself to be silent. She chooses to be silent as a way of producing her own language in protest of her condition. Maybe this is a reaction to her loneliness which is the consequence of her resistance or the reflection of her middle name, Nada, which means nothing. Her silence is shown here:

For Elise in her own dread of lovelessness, her fear that she will never be found acceptable, never fit, be outcast even among outcasts; for Elise who feels herself to be a shadow, Nada, voiceless—coming upon this passage as she turns a page in some midnight solitude is like having a window open up inside her, the illumination of hope. (p. 85)

However, keeping silent is not the only way for her to produce feminine language. She writes some poems that she had never shown to anyone. As Irigaray says, writing is a way of self-representation for women. Furthermore, she makes some new expressions of her own in her poetry such as "in Black Park of bed" (p. 213) which is capitalized and turned into a proper noun as if the bed is a

place called Black Park, a place for possible adventure and pleasure. Consequently, she creates feminine meaning according to Irigaray's viewpoint through this figurative language.

Some women in this memoir keep silent, but they make meaning through the beauty of their bodies. Returning to Irigaray's perspective, there is a connection between women's bodies and meaning-making in language. In the memoir, an example of this can be seen when Johnson and her friend, Elise Cowen, saw some women in a bar and Johnson commented on these women: "The women here, Elise notices, are all beautiful and have such remarkable cool that they never, never say a word; they are presences merely. But she herself is tormented by speechlessness" (p. 82). Those women just keep silent and in doing so they generate feminine language through their bodies.

## Conclusion

Feminine language as a term has been long described by feminist thinkers such as Luce Irigaray. Being Lacan's student, she tries to explain feminine language by borrowing some concepts from Lacan and Freud; however, she detaches from them since their theory is based on a one-sex model. She claims that women need their own language if they want to gain their subjectivity. She mentions that women can generate feminine language through their attempts to write puns, word play, syntactic experiments, fragmentation and even through silence. In this article, the researchers apply Irigaray's concepts to the Beat memoir *Minor Characters*, written by Joyce Johnson. By applying these points, it is concluded that Johnson as a female writer produces female language in her writing through wordplay, fragmentation, keeping silent, and the unusual use of dots and puns. It is remarkable to note that Irigaray's utopian view (Thiessen, 2010, p. 163) refers to the construction of rethinking the subject-object relationship as a subject-subject relationship. That is why the role of language in such a utopia is crucial. Generating feminine language could be considered a special treatment of language to direct society to such an intersubjective utopian paradigm.

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