



**EMOTIONS AND THE PRELINGUISTIC MATERNAL:
THEIR PLACE IN THEORIES OF SUBJECTIVITY**

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THESIS ABSTRACT

What is the place of emotions in theoretical understandings of subjectivity? Western philosophy has relegated the emotions/the body to woman/the feminine. Does this mean that feminism should eschew emotional-woman as a phallogentric construct?

This thesis begins by putting forwards a psychoanalytic account of emotional subjectivity. This account is developed from a reading of Freud's theory of infant development which both resists the theory's libidinal emphasis, and emphasises the centrality of the prelinguistic maternal to the beginnings of emotional subjectivity. While the centrality of the prelinguistic maternal to the development of subjectivity is assumed by many schools of psychoanalytic thought and practice, another body of thought extremely influential in therapeutic practice appears to offer no place for the prelinguistic in its assumptions about the self. How should feminist theorists respond to this bifurcation, given especially Irigaray's observation that in the West woman/mother has been and continues to be 'the silent substratum of the social order'?

To understand the conundrum of these two divergent corpora, the second-non psychoanalytic corpus is placed within the context of the broader current poststructural trend in the academy. The key thinkers in this trend: Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Irigaray, and Kristeva are subjected to a thorough analysis, particularly in regard to the treatment of the prelinguistic in their thinking. The bifurcation is found to occur along gendered lines, with male theorists ultimately eliding the prelinguistic maternal. This thesis then unravels Freud's theory of repression in order to provide an explanation for this gendered treatment of the prelinguistic maternal.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis was prompted by the question of how psychological therapy might be practiced from a feminist perspective; how feminist concerns might be brought to bear in the therapeutic process.¹ Even more specifically it was prompted by my own experience during a training workshop in a currently popular therapeutic technique, of a persistent discomfort accompanied by the thoughts: 'This doesn't fit for me. There is something missing here'. When on later and similar occasions this discomfort recurred, I began to wonder if it could have something to do with my being a woman and the proponent of this model being a man. Of course to use my own experience as the basis of research is more complicated these days than in the early days of feminism, because the recent postmodern and poststructural trend both contests the category 'woman' and renders 'experience' a questionable basis for more generalised knowledge claims.² Yet this problematisation of women's experience has been neither unanimous nor heterogenous across feminism. At one end of a continuum are those such as Modleski who regard 'the phrase 'women's experience' [as] shorthand for 'woman's experience of political oppression'', and claim it is around such experience that 'a sense of solidarity, commonality, and community' is 'organized' (Modleski in Brodribb: 1992, p.xxiv). At the other end of the continuum are the likes of Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1988) who dismiss female experience and indeed sexual difference as *products* of oppressive masculine structures.³ At a similar point on the same end of the continuum Gunew and Yeatman (1993) challenge the category 'woman' from the post-colonial concern that a 'preoccupation with binary oppositions' – including masculine-feminine – obscures the differences within such categories (p.xiii). They argue that while identity politics

may be an inevitable characteristic of a contemporary politics of difference ... it is critical that we foster what Denise Riley (1988) calls a spirit of deconstructive irony in relation to this politics. (1993, p.xiv)

For Gunew and Yeatman it is necessary that feminism deconstruct the category 'woman'.

At another point on the continuum somewhere between uncritical acceptance and complete dismissal of the category 'woman', Kirby (1991) presents an analysis which challenges while it also retains this category. Kirby, like Hare-Mustin and Marecek,

¹ I resist defining feminism at this point beyond its concern with women's rights: this I do in recognition that feminism takes many forms ranging from liberal feminism to difference feminism. In the introduction I tease out some of the debates that relate to the category of 'women'. This thesis represents one expression/version of feminism.

² Gunew and Yeatman (1993) and Linda Nicholson (1990) are among those who discuss the problematisation of 'woman' and the issue of 'experience' in relation to the postmodernism-feminism intersection.

conceives 'woman' as a phallogocentric construct, but unlike Hare-Mustin and Marecek sees a subversive potential within this construct. Drawing on poststructural deconstruction in a different way to Gunew and Yeatman, Kirby claims that within phallogocentrism's 'logic of the same' (a logic both masculine-centric and binary) "'Woman' is held in place, indeed becomes the place, that must inherit the burden of a difference that is no difference'. She argues that "'Woman' is ceaselessly re-figured as an absence ... such that Man can be rendered present' (Kirby: 1991, pp.98-99). According to Kirby this constant reckoning of woman as absence means, paradoxically, that Woman actually 'exceeds the 'logic of the same'' (1991, p.99). Within the logic of deconstruction Woman is subversive because she never entirely coincides with the identity she is granted. The notion of Woman as subversive is pivotal to this thesis. However I consider Kirby's deconstructive understanding of Woman to be problematic in that it assumes a decontextualised position which gives no consideration to women's experience as situated materiality. Also her notion of woman as subversive emerges from a philosophy which, as I will reveal in this thesis, has an ambivalent relationship to feminism.

Also situated somewhere between an uncritical acceptance of the category 'woman' on the one hand, and its total refusal on the other; avoiding the pitfalls of a universalising and oppressive feminism on the one hand, and a position which eschews the possibilities of feminine difference on the other, lies yet another perspective on the issue of 'women's experience'. Haraway posits a feminist 'standpoint' as both, the 'necessary fruit of the *practice* of oppositional and differential consciousness', and, 'a cognitive, psychological, and political tool for more adequate knowledge' (Haraway in Hartsock: 1998, p.236). According to Haraway this feminist standpoint does not have 'an abstract philosophical foundation' (as does Kirby's) but rather is grounded in the *materiality* of life: a 'practical technology rooted in yearning' (Haraway in Hartsock: 1998, p.236). Haraway's use of the term 'yearning' – defined in the dictionary as 'strong emotional longing' – seems to suggest that *emotion* as a mode of material experience may be pivotal to this feminist standpoint. Probyn more directly identifies emotionality as holding the potential for producing 'more adequate knowledge'. She writes: 'While experience is not necessarily emotions and emotions cannot take the place of theory, what I want to argue is that emotions can point us in certain critical directions' (Probyn: 1997, p.126). Indeed Probyn continues: 'emotions point to where feminist criticism has to go' (1997, p.126). Replicating the modesty of Haraway's non-

³ In a later paper entitled 'Feminism and Postmodernism: Dilemmas and Points of Resistance' (1994) Hare-Mustin and Marecek revise their position somewhat.

universalising approach to the question of woman, Probyn summarises the value of women's (emotional) experience as a starting point for theoretical explorations:

Speaking the self does not necessarily imply any triumphant move; rather as a theoretical level, the self may simply and quietly enable yet more questions, yet more theoretical work (1997, p.134).

It is precisely in the vein provided by Haraway and Probyn that I have chosen to position both my own experience in the therapeutic workshops (described above) and my own theorising. I have chosen to consider my own *emotional* discomfort, as both an instance of my own situated materiality and an opportunity to ponder 'certain unasked questions' relating to this materiality. I have chosen to view my own experience as a chance to raise the question of what it is that might be at play when I *feel* uncomfortable in the face of a particular mode of therapeutic practice. Taking one step further back, I have chosen to view my own discomfort as a chance to ask questions about feeling/emotionality itself, about its place in meaning, in subjectivity; and in thinking about subjectivity.

Genevieve Lloyd (1984) offers some observations about the place of emotionality in the history of western thought. She observes that 'woman' has been constantly aligned with the body and the emotions (passions) – among other things – while male philosophers have constantly aligned their subjectivity (on the other side of a dichotomy) with a transcendent, bodiless and emotionless self. She writes:

We owe to Descartes an influential and pervasive theory of mind.... Women have been assigned responsibility for that realm of the sensuous which the Cartesian Man of Reason must transcend, if he is to have true knowledge of things. (1984, p.50)

The aim of Lloyd's book is to highlight two things: that the 'self' central to western thought has been this transcendental masculine self; and, that what has been valued within the history of western thought – 'whether... 'aggressive' as against 'nurturing' skills and capacities, or Reason as against emotion – has been readily identified with maleness' (1984, p.104).

Extending this argument into the current state of society Gatens observes that 'the male body and masculinity are covertly taken to be the norm' within the public arena of western society (1991b, p.57). Within the concluding pages of her book Lloyd warns against a reactionary elevation of the dichotomous 'feminine' because it too (like the masculine) 'will occur in a space already prepared for it by the (masculine) intellectual tradition it seeks to reject' (1984, p.105). In a position similar to Hare-Mustin and Marecek Lloyd argues that feminism cannot simply revalue the feminine side of the dichotomy because it too is a product of phallogocentric thinking.

In light of Lloyd's warning feminists may be tempted to discard the mantle of emotionality as part of a phallogcentrically constructed feminine. Such a discarding can only be fuelled by the negativity that often attaches to women as emotional beings.⁴ Yet this negative evaluation must itself be seen in the context of a phallogcentrism that eschews emotionality. In *this* context a feminist discarding of emotionality may serve to reinforce this phallogcentrism. Indeed, when deciding whether to slough off affectivity as a phallogcentric imposition – prompted by Lloyd – or whether to embrace it as something critical to the development of feminist thinking – prompted by Probyn – there are a number of things that feminism needs to consider. First, with the exception of a few areas of anthropology the issue of affectivity/emotionality historically has been unaddressed within the academic arena.⁵ Moreover this omission has not been confined to the more distant history of thought. Writing within the discipline of psychology in the 1960's Sylvan Tomkins observes that

the role of affect [in consciousness] has... been grossly underestimated. Indeed, we might speculate that the phenomenon of consciousness might possibly never have been so neglected had the problem been restricted to determining what another human being thinks. It is rather knowing how he *feels* that has been most strikingly avoided (1962, p.5)

Second, although there is evidence that emotionality has begun to receive *some* attention in the academic arena,⁶ if Probyn's experience is anything to go by the issue of affectivity/emotionality remains a prickly issue for those who inhabit the halls of academia. Probyn describes how, when she addressed her feminist academic colleagues about 'the category of experience within feminist cultural studies', the ensuing discussion 'revolv[ed] around the emotionality of [her] remarks'. The fact that she, Probyn, was left feeling 'as if [she] had gone where no woman had gone before' (1997, p.125) lead her to the conclusion that 'current feminism, as a body of theories flees emotionality' (1997, p.126). Tomkins theorises the avoidance of affectivity within his own section of the academy as 'a consequence of the widespread taboos on affect which are learned in childhood' (1962, p.5). Whatever explanation is offered, the avoidance of emotionality observed by both Tomkins and Probyn points clearly to emotionality as something in need of exploration and theorisation.

⁴ In the recent example of 'The Clarence Thomas Hearings' in which Anita Hill made allegations of sexual harassment against a prospective high court judge, Flax (1998) observes that the enquiry committee's characterization of Hill as 'driven by her emotions and unable to think for herself' effectively 'transformed Hill into a hysterical woman who did not deserve to be in a public place' (p.66).

⁵ In *The Power of Feelings* (1999) Chodorow notes that a group of 'anthropologists of self and feelings' (Geertz, Rosaldo, and Lutz) have made emotionality a central focus of their study.

⁶ In 1997 the Australian National University hosted a conference entitled 'Emotion in Social Life and Social Theory'. Walkerdine, Lucy and Melody (2001) in their book *Growing Up Girl: Psychosocial Exploration of Gender and Class* make emotions central to their analysis. Examples of recent articles on emotion include Fish (2004), Holmes (2004), Lively & Heise (2004), and Reger (2004).

An exploration and theorisation of emotionality is *one* of the central aims of this thesis. Another impetus for this thesis emerges from a puzzle arising within the theoretical corpus on which therapeutic practice draws. As a feminist interested in therapeutic practice I have observed the existence of two divergent threads within the theorizing that founds this practice. The first of these threads, psychoanalysis, has its origins in the therapeutic setting, first and foremost Freud's but also those of numerous others after him. The second thread has its origins primarily (although not entirely) within the academy. I will refer to this second thread as 'academic psychology'. This second thread has transmuted over time through a number of different forms. Up until its most recent postmodern turn it has been differentiated from psychoanalysis by a connection with the type of 'objectivity' with which science has come to be associated. Yet this objectivity has not been circumscribed by some sort of 'pure' observation, because each form that academic psychology has taken has been linked to the then predominant theory of human nature.

Burman (1994) demonstrates the inextricable link between academic psychology and 'grand theory' when she tracks the various forms taken by developmental psychology in particular. Burman observes how developmental psychology moved from a focus on the difference between human and animal behaviour, under the influence of Darwinism (mid-to late nineteenth century), through behaviourism, under the influence of Lockean empiricism (from the 1920's); to cognitivism, based in another version of individualism. According to Burman, the 1970's and 80's ushered in a division within developmental psychology which continues to this day; a division between an unabated cognitivism – which located everything in the child's head – and a more hermeneutically founded focus on the interface between child and environment/caregiver. Burman interprets the appearance of this second hermeneutic thread as an attempt to overcome the biology/environment split characteristic of much previous developmental psychology (1994, p.26 & p.36). It can be argued that this more recent focus on sociality and communication in particular is part of a more general trend *against* individualism, a trend that has culminated in the current postmodern and poststructural turn of academia. Paralleling this strand of developmental psychology, psychology more generally in the 80's and 90's developed its own brand of postmodernism/poststructuralism in the form of 'discursive' or 'social constructionist' psychology (Bruner: 1991; Gergen: 1985; Harré and Gillett: 1994; Hollway: 1989; Potter and Wetherell: 1987). Much like the trend within the broader academy, this strand brought a rethinking of 'the self' through its placement within a 'social' and more particularly 'linguistic/discursive' context. This 'discursive' strand of psychology has had a significant influence on therapeutic practice in South Australia.

It would be wrong to claim that there has been no influence between the psychoanalytic and academic strands of psychology.⁷ Burman herself observes that psychoanalysis has contributed to attachment theory as a significant thread within (academic) developmental psychology.⁸ However, psychoanalysis and academic psychology have very different theoretical origins. As a result they have produced very different understandings of 'the self' and very different models of therapeutic practice. To demonstrate the significance of some of these differences I will briefly outline some key ideas of the 'object relations' school of psychoanalysis and compare these to the current postmodern/poststructural trends of academic psychology. I acknowledge that object relations theory is only one school of psychoanalysis. However its central assumptions have had an important impact on the psychoanalytic understanding of 'the self'.⁹

Guntrip (1971) argues that Melanie Klein's work represents both an evolution of and a movement beyond Freud's thinking. He observes that her thinking:

display[s] the internal psychic life of small children not as a seething cauldron of instincts or id-drives but as a highly personal inner world of ego-object relationships, finding expression in the child's fantasy-life in ways that were *felt* even before they could be *pictured* or *thought*. (Guntrip: 1971, p.59)

Reinforcing this idea of an early prelinguistic and *feeling* psychic life and drawing on Stern and Bollas, Chodorow argues:

There are from the beginning nonverbal, preverbal, non linguistic or prelinguistic aspects of meaning – aspects of meaning that go unambiguously and emphatically beyond language. (1999, p.58)

This idea that psychological meaning exists prior to the advent of language is critical to a psychoanalytic perspective. Furthermore, for psychoanalytic practitioners and thinkers after Klein this early feeling/psychic life is inextricably linked to two things. It is linked to the beginnings of the self – hence Chodorow refers to the 'internal 'core of self' ... [that] derives from the infant's inner sensations and emotions', and elaborates on this core as the 'central, the crystallization point of the 'feeling of self' around which a 'sense of identity' will become established' (Chodorow, and Mahler in Chodorow: 1978, p.67). This early psychic life is also linked to the infant's early relationship to the mother. Accordingly Chodorow argues that 'personal meaning begins in the infant-caregiver relation' (1999, p.58). Making more explicit

⁷ However what influence there has been tends to be mainly in one direction.

⁸ However, Burman notes that this uptake of psychoanalysis by proponents of attachment theory such as Bowlby has been far from straightforward. For instance, she notes: 'Bowlby's... ideas were always the subject of controversy within the psychoanalytic establishment (Bowlby *et al.*, 1986)' (1994, p.85).

⁹ One psychoanalytic approach the assumptions of which diverge quite markedly from these is Lacanian psychoanalysis. While the therapeutic implications of Lacanian psychoanalysis are not dealt with in this thesis, Chapter 4 details Lacan's ideas.

the connection between the early seeds of self and the early infant-mother relationship, Guntrip writes:

psychoanalytic theory today centers... on the development of a stable core of selfhood – that is, the laying of the foundations of a strong personal ego in a good mother-infant relationship at the start of life (1971, p.12)

Given these two assumptions about the existence of a preverbal feeling psyche and the centrality of the mother to this aspect of the self, the psychoanalytically oriented therapist will generally understand his/her role as essentially one of 'being mother' for those whose 'stable core' is wanting. And, because the early mother-infant relationship is understood to be affective as much as it is physical, it is the provision of an appropriate *affective* environment that is considered critical to the psychoanalytically-oriented therapeutic process. Hence Guntrip speaks of 'care', and writing some 30 years later Kantrowitz (1999) refers to the importance of creating 'safety' in the therapeutic relationship.¹⁰ Chodorow might be less inclined to speak of the therapeutic relationship in such maternal terms (and not all people seeking therapy are lacking in their core self in some significant way). However, Chodorow's argument that the phenomenon of transference is central to the therapeutic relationship, and her claim that transference is 'found wherever feelings, fantasies and emotional meaning are given to people and situations' (1999, p.210) link the therapeutic relationship very clearly with prelinguistic modes of sociality.

By contrast, for the current 'discursive' or 'social constructionist' strand of the academic psychology it is the verbal or discursive rather than the preverbal and affective that holds central place both in ideas about 'the self' and in the therapeutic practices emerging from these ideas. Exemplifying this discursive theoretical stance, Forrester claims that: 'the sense(s) of self we acquire is (are) in large part determined by the models, metaphors and constructs of self made available in the discourse around us' (1999, pp.37-38). Likewise, Lax (1992) claims 'the sense of self' to be 'a narrative' (p.69) which 'arises not only through discourse with others, but is our discourse with others' (p.71). Similarly, Crossley (2000) is keen to 'emphasize the way in which experiences of self ... are linguistically and culturally structured' (p.527). Reiterating this emphasis on the relationship between language and subjectivity and translating this emphasis into therapeutic practice, Anderson and Goolishian refer to therapy as 'a linguistic event' (1992, p.27). While it is possible to have a social constructionist perspective with a preverbal orientation, it is the *linguistic* that is the constant

¹⁰ Kantrowitz reinforces the preverbal nature of this psychoanalytic focus in her reference to these critical therapeutic responses as 'pre-conscious'.

focus of these thinkers. For the proponents of discursive and social constructionist psychology 'the self' is understood as a product of culturally originated ideas and discourses.

In summary, one is confronted in the therapeutic corpus with two schools of thought on subjectivity which seem to have little common ground. On the one hand, psychoanalytic thinking and practice foregrounds the affective, the prelinguistic, and the matricentric aspects of self and modes of sociality. These factors along with the placement of transference centrally in the therapeutic relationship situate both the self and the therapeutic process primarily within the realm of *emotional* meaning. On the other hand, the more recently developed social constructionist or discursive branch of academic psychology foregrounds the contribution of discourse to the self. In so doing it situates the self and therapeutic practice within the field of *linguistic* meaning. This discursive and social constructionist corpus is also reflective of the turn to postmodernism within the broader academy. Kirby offers a way of conceptualising the divergence between these two bodies of thought. She observes that psychoanalysis considers the body to be 'something which *precedes* and then enters the field of language' (1991, p.98), while poststructuralism, and I would add discursive psychology, conceives the embodied subject as 'a field of language', to use Kirby's own phrase (1991, p.98). These very different understandings of the embodied subject produce a significant point of tension for feminist thinking. This is a tension Braidotti begins to grapple with in *Patterns of Dissonance* (1991)¹¹. This thesis, too, aims to address some of the tensions arising from these two divergent bodies of thought, and considers in particular the challenges these tensions pose for a feminist theorisation of subjectivity.

Within feminist psychology the tension between the psychoanalytic and the discursive approaches to 'the self' seems to have solidified into a battle between discursive psychology on one side, and a position that has become fixed around psychoanalytically influenced attachment theory, on the other. It seems that feminist psychologists are drawn to the discursive side of the battle because of the 'mother-blaming' inherent in the psychoanalytic attachment perspective. Burman (1994, 1999) identifies some of the issues at stake for feminism in the matricentric psychoanalytic approach. Directing her criticisms at Bowlby in particular she argues that:

commitment to a developmentalist account – via Bowlby and others' accounts of the formation of secure and predictable early relationships as the basis of coping with uncertainties in later life – ushers in familiar gender and cultural chauvinisms. (1999, p.278)

¹¹ Particularly in Chapter 2.

In *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* (1994) and in her review of a book on attachment theory (1999) Burman details these chauvinisms. She argues that attachment theory and developmental psychology more generally, with its almost exclusive focus on the mother-child dyad: first, serve to suppress the significance of the 'other relationships that surround and involve infants and young children' (1994, p.43); second, work to obscure the way in which the broader structural relations of power impinge on the mother-infant relationship (1994, p.44); and finally, essentialise maternity in a way that more firmly binds rather than liberates women from 'their domestic responsibilities' (1999, p.279). Hence, Burman adds:

Despite the proclamations of wonder and congratulation at maternal skills and responsivity ... mothers are continually depicted in the [attachment] literature as almost appendages, pieces of furniture constituting children's environments. (1994, p.43)

With a similar concern, this time about object relations thinking, Flax observes:

despite the claim of object relations theorists that the mother-child relation is a mutually constituting, reciprocal one, the mother appears within the theory primarily as the child's object. The mother disappears as a separate person. (1990, p.123)

Many of these quite justifiable concerns are also expressed in an edition of *Feminism and Psychology* which devotes a section to critiques of attachment theory.¹² All contributors are unanimous in their concern, that by 'make[ing] woman/mother single-handedly responsible for the human condition' (Franzblau: 1999, p.7) attachment theory is guilty of 'mother-blaming'.

I would like to acknowledge the potential for mother blaming in attachment and object relations theory. However there is a paradox that arises when this theory is considered within the context of western thought and its treatment of the feminine. On the one hand, as Lloyd (1984) has pointed out, there has been throughout the history of western thought a marginalisation of the 'feminine' as 'body' and 'emotionality'. Even Burman (1994) argues, despite her criticism of matricentric psychoanalytic attachment theory (and reinforcing both Probyn's and Tomkins' observations), that there has been a 'suppression of the emotional in developmental psychological investigation' (1994, p.45). On the other hand, the feminine as

¹² In *Feminism and Psychology* (1999: Vol 9, No.1) Birns is inclined to dismiss attachment theory as having little value to a feminist critique, and exhorts 'investigators to look at such critical issues as social class, temperament and father's role in childcare as determinants of behaviour' (p.19). Bliwise argues for a broadening-out of the notion of 'care' contained within attachment theory in the recognition that close and comforting relationships can produce 'personal change across the life course' (p.49). Franzblau claims that attachment theory suffers a lack of both 'ecological' and 'internal validity'. She also questions whether its 'view of the beginnings of affective relationships' 'with ... particular emphasis on the affective monotropic bond between mother and infant' is of any 'use to feminists interested in social change?' (p.6).

maternity has been elevated in attachment and object relations theory to the point, as Franzblau observes, of holding maternity 'single-handedly responsible for the human condition' (1999, p.7). In this instance 'woman' is not irrelevant but central. Yet this placement of the mother centrally within matricentric theory is not simple. As Flax points out the mother in these theories is not 'someone who has her own desires', but rather, someone whose being is presumed to be 'fully [and] accurately captured in the child's experience of her and their relations' (1990, p.123). Within these matricentric theories, in other words, the mother fails to exist in her own right: she is solely object, never subject.

This paradox that Woman is excluded as emotionality on the one hand, and elevated to a central position while also disempowered in her own right on the other, would seem to suggest a very complex dynamic in relation to the feminine in male conceived theory. Surely this complexity cries out for further and more particularly in-depth analysis. I argue that this complexity remains completely untouched by the simple feminist dismissal of matricentric psychoanalytic theories because they are mother-blaming. Indeed, one good reason why feminism should not simply reject these accounts is that maternity occupies an important place in the lives of a large number of the world's women. While the place of maternity within these accounts may be flawed from a feminist perspective, it has still to be shown what sort of consideration, if any, is given to maternity within discursive psychology and the postmodern/poststructural theoretical trend more broadly. Given the inextricable link between women and maternity – while not wishing to *reduce* women to maternity – any theoretical trend feminism is tempted to adopt should be thoroughly examined for its treatment of maternity. The need for such vigilance is rendered more urgent by Irigaray's observation that within much phallogentric western thought maternity has actually constituted the 'silent' unacknowledged 'substratum of the social order' (1991b). In light of Irigaray's warning, a central aim of this thesis is to apply a thorough-going feminist analysis to the current postmodern/poststructural and discursive trends, and to do so more specifically by foregrounding the issue of maternity.

Before launching into an investigation of the treatment of the maternal by some key postmodern and poststructural thinkers, in Chapter 1 I develop an account of maternity's contribution to subjectivity. For this I turn to psychoanalysis, and more particularly to Freud, with the addition of Brennan, Klein, Kristeva and Tomkins to overcome the limits of Freud's thinking. A more direct engagement with object relations theory may seem the more obvious path for constructing this account. However, the path through Freud has a number of advantages. First, it avoids some of the chauvinistic cul de sacs (already noted) in which

object relations thinking can find itself.¹³ Second, it offers an account of the maternal contribution to subjectivity *which is at the same time an account of affectivity*. In this it overcomes the marginalisation of emotionality that has been characteristic of much of western thought. Third, it is an opportunity to emphasise those moments when Freud seemed to understand instinctual life as an *interface* of biology and society. This emphasis offsets the more biologically reductionist moments of Freud's thinking. Fourth, the path through Freud offers the opportunity to begin to explore his notion of repression, a concept critical to the analyses in later chapters. Finally the path through Freud provides the opportunity to pay 'attention to the way the unconscious works in each philosophy' (Irigaray: 1985b, p176). This is achieved through an analysis of the inconsistencies in Freud's thinking on instinctual life and early infant development.

Having utilised psychoanalysis in Chapter 1 to establish a case for the contribution of the prelinguistic maternal to the development of the subject, in the second chapter I turn my attention to postmodernism and poststructuralism. This body of thought has had a significant influence on recent feminist thinking. It also constitutes the broader theoretical context within which the narrative account of the self and therapy has developed. In Chapter 2 I outline the ideas of de Saussure, Pierce, Benveniste, Derrida, and Foucault. While this group of thinkers draws on at least two knowledge traditions – Derrida and de Saussure on linguistics, and Foucault on Althusser's development of Marxism – I note that the common thread joining these theories is their assumptions about the 'nature' of 'materiality'. For these thinkers materiality and in turn the corporeal subject is inextricably tied to representation/signification. In the final part of this chapter I highlight the clash that exists between this poststructural/postmodern view of subject as signification and the psychoanalytic account that posits a prelinguistic, matricentric, affective subjectivity. I draw attention to the difficulties posed for a feminism wishing to hold a place for maternity when it aligns itself too closely with this postmodern/poststructural view of materiality/corporeality.

In Chapter 3 I pursue a more detailed analysis of the treatment of the prelinguistic by Foucault and Derrida. In the case of Derrida I argue that his thinking on the subject idealises the maternal as metaphor, and that this idealisation is made possible only by the *exclusion* of the contribution of real mothers. In the case of Foucault I consider both primary sources and the uptake of his ideas by others. I argue that Foucault's own writings on the subject have an ambivalent relationship to the prelinguistic, and that uses of Foucault in

¹³ Flax, at least back in 1990, is more dismissive of the potential of Freud in this area claiming that '(o)bject relations theory represents an advance over Freud's theories inasmuch as at least part of women's work and experience is presented as 'facilitating' to human development'. However, reiterating comments made earlier in this introduction, Flax also notes of Winnicott's concept of the 'good

explorations of subjectivity flounder on an inability to account for emotionality. I situate these problems within the context of the masculine bias of Foucault's thinking, a bias already noted by other feminist writers.

In Chapter 4 I submit Lacan's thinking on subjectivity to a similar interrogation, considering in some detail the place he grants to the prelinguistic maternal and its contribution to subjectivity. I note that the roots of Lacan's thinking in psychoanalysis lead him to assume a place for the maternal, but argue that via a number of clever devices Lacan's thinking on subjectivity ultimately undermines the place for maternity it originally grants. I consider the implications of this undermining of maternity for both the theory's integrity and for its assumed proximity to Freud's thinking. I speculate that Lacan's theory is ultimately far more poststructural than it is psychoanalytic.

Having exposed the relationship between the prelinguistic and each of the theories of Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan, as anything but straight forward, in Chapter 5 I turn my attention to the writings of Irigaray and Kristeva. It is here, I argue, that a less confounded treatment of the prelinguistic maternal and its contribution to subjectivity can be found. While acknowledging that this treatment is constrained by a deferral to Derrida on Irigaray's part and to Lacan on Kristeva's part, I argue that Kristeva's and Irigaray's engagement with the prelinguistic never-the-less extends the concept of *subjectivity* well beyond the bounds of poststructuralism. I speculate that this extension of the subject into the prelinguistic severely challenges the assumption, implied within poststructuralism and stated more overtly by Lacan, of the Symbolic realm as guarantor of subjectivity. The emotional core of the self originating in the mother-infant relationship begins to look as critical to subjectivity as representation/signification.

In Chapter 6 I move on to consider a possible explanation for the confounding of the prelinguistic in the thinking of Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan. To do this I turn to the Freudian notion of 'repression'. Given that Freud's writings on repression are full of their own contradictions and paradoxes, a large portion of Chapter 6 is devoted to a thorough-going unravelling of the concept. In the process of this unravelling I raise questions about the sexualised 'nature' of repression and the validity of a concept developed in the late nineteenth century. I argue, however, that Freud's concept of repression continues to have some relevance at this end of the century, and most importantly that this relevance relates directly to what I term 'normative masculinity.' Specifically I argue that the masculine subject is more likely to repress its connection to the prelinguistic maternal than the feminine subject. I argue

enough mother' that 'although meant to capture and validate women as child rearers, (the concept) also reflects deeply ingrained social fantasies about women' (1990, p.125).

that this difference can explain the differing treatment of the prelinguistic by the 3 male theorists, on the one hand, and the 2 female theorists on the other.

The end of Chapter 6 brings my argument into close proximity with Chodorow's. Yet there are some important differences in our understandings of sexual difference. Chapter 7 is devoted to detailing these differences. The final chapter is devoted to considering *just one* implication of all the foregoing analyses for feminism. Specifically Chapter 8 examines therapeutic practice in light of the masculine repression of the prelinguistic maternal.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PRELINGUISTIC MATERNAL AND EMOTIONAL SUBJECTIVITY: A PSYCHOANALYTIC ACCOUNT

PART A: PRESYMBOLIC EXPERIENCE AND THE FIRST MARKINGS OF SUBJECTIVITY

In this first chapter I construct an account of the prelinguistic stage of subject development. Given that the mother features significantly in this stage I refer to it as the 'prelinguistic maternal' stage. This I do not from an essentialist viewpoint that women are biologically predestined to provide this early care, but because it has been by and large women who *have* done so. In the post-Lacanian literature from which this account is partially constructed this prelinguistic stage of subject development is also referred to as the 'presymbolic'. For post-Lacans the term presymbolic refers to a stage which falls prior to the onset of what Freud termed 'castration anxiety' (and which Lacan later conceptualised as the point of entry into the Symbolic). It is because the notion of castration anxiety and its relationship to the s/Symbolic are pivotal to analyses within this thesis that I use the term presymbolic interchangeably with the term prelinguistic. While Freud's writings¹ provide the kernel of the account of the presymbolic stage developed in this chapter, Freud's resistance to discussing what he himself terms 'prehistory' (Flax: 1990, p.87) necessitates a turning to additional sources for a more thorough elaboration of this early developmental stage. What follows is an understanding of the presymbolic which combines aspects of Freud's work with the ideas of Brennan (1992), Klein (1926, 1935, 1955) Kristeva (1982, 1984), and Tomkins (1962). As I noted in the introduction, this path through Freud has been chosen for a number of reasons. It is an opportunity to read Freud's writings on the instincts and infantile sexual development through a social rather than a biological lens. It provides an opportunity to introduce Freud's notion of 'repression', a notion central to my analyses in later chapters. And finally, it is a means of exposing what Irigaray refers to as 'the way in which the unconscious works' in phallogocentric texts (1985b, p.76). This exposition is also pivotal to the central analyses of this thesis.

Before proceeding with this account of the presymbolic it is necessary to position myself in terms of the way I have chosen to gather, read, and understand this material. At the

¹ In my references to Freud I use the original dates of his essays in the text in order to make the chronological relationship between them easily accessible.

forefront of and guiding my research has been a *chronological* perspective which assumes subjectivity to be a cumulative product of various, reasonably predictable, sequential experiences. This chronological perspective assumes that experiences form the markings of subjectivity from the moment of birth.² It is therefore a perspective which is likely to be unpalatable to theorists of a Lacanian persuasion for whom experience can only mark retrospectively from a position of castrated subjectivity. Such theorists are likely to regard my chronological account as an idealisation of maternity, or even ‘a convenient myth’ (Silverman: 1983, p.60).³ I aim to demonstrate in this thesis that theorising from the position of Symbolic subjectivity brings as great a risk of eliding the prelinguistic maternal as it does its idealisation.

One aspect of Freud’s work I draw on to construct this account of presymbolic development is his writing in ‘Project for a Scientific Psychology’ (1895[1950]). My particular reading of ‘The Project’ is prompted by Grosz’s use of the same material (1994, Ch.2). Where Grosz uses this material to conceptualise ‘identity’ – a combination of self-consciousness and libido – as a ‘corporeal mapping’ ensuing from cultural meanings via the mother’s handling of the infant, my reading of the same material conceptualises some of the markings produced by the mother’s earliest attentions as exceeding that which Grosz understands as identity. Put another way, my reading extends the ontology of the subject back beyond Lacan’s mirror stage, beyond the point which Grosz takes to be the ‘matrix or ground for the development of human subjectivity’ (Grosz: 1994, p.39). Furthermore I argue, because the earliest mother-child interactions are mediated primarily through sensory (tactile, kinetic, acoustic, visual) and emotional means, that the resultant markings of these earliest experiences constitute within the infant what might be called an ‘emotional-corporeal’ subjectivity. In contradistinction to Grosz’s libidinal focus I claim that the earliest emotional-corporeal markings of subjectivity involve *emotional attachment* to and *identification* with the mother as much as they do a libidinalisation of the self.

In other words, this account of the contribution of the prelinguistic maternal is an account of the beginning of the subject’s social but even more specifically affective life. In this the account has a clear resonance with object relations thinking. However, this account elaborates some of what is assumed in the object relations account while it also avoids some of the chauvinistic cul-de-sacs of the latter. While the justification for conceptualising the early markings of subjectivity as affective and social comes primarily from Tomkins, this

² And some might argue even prenatally!

³ At a later date Silverman (1988) repositions herself slightly in relation to this myth, claiming that while retroactive productions these early infantile experiences are neither ‘fictive’ nor ‘simple illusion’ (p.73). For Silverman Kristeva’s theory of the maternal chora is also an example of the idealisation of maternity (1988, Ch.4).

chapter argues that the seeds of these ideas are present in Freud's writings, not only in his writings on instinctual life but also in his writings on infantile development.

The Matricentrism of the Instincts

Before beginning my review of Freud's writings on the instincts I note two things. First, because Freud's writings on early instinctual life lend themselves to biological readings the term 'instinct' has a tendency to carry biological overtones. For lack of a better option I have chosen to retain this term and place it in quotation marks as I unfold my particularly *social* reading of this material. Second, when referring to the earliest experiences of the infant's life one refers to an experiencing being for whom there is not yet any distinction between self and other, between inside and outside (Chodorow: 1978, p.61; Brennan: 1992, pp.156-157). For this undifferentiated being who experiences the mother's day to day handling as continuous with its own body I adopt Brennan's term 'nascent subject' (1992, p.156) instead of Freud's more biologically-toned term 'organism'. 'Nascent subject' is more appropriate to both a chronological perspective which assumes the markings of subjectivity to begin from the moment of birth and a social reading of Freud's writings on the instincts.

Freud argues that the nascent subject⁴ begins life under the control of instinctual impulses, which he variously refers to as 'needs' and 'drives'.⁵ Freud defines 'instincts' as stimuli arising from within (rather than from the external world) and having a constant impact on the nascent subject (1915a [1984], pp.114-115). According to Freud the aim of all instincts is satisfaction. This is achieved, he claims, through some 'object', either extraneous to or part of the nascent subject's own body, which is 'peculiarly fitted to make satisfaction possible' (1915a, pp.114-116, p.119). The earliest or most primitive 'instincts', Freud claims, involve a drive for self-preservation. Freud calls these 'survival instincts'. In the instance of the oral instinct for which the breast is the object of satisfaction the action of sucking leads to the intake of the nourishment necessary to survival (1915a, p.120-123; 1917 pp.327-328).⁶ In this particular instance Freud argues that the action of sucking produces within the nascent

⁴ As I have noted this is Brennan's term not Freud's.

⁵ The appropriate terminology for what Freud refers to as 'instincts' is, it seems, a contentious issue. In 'Instincts and Their Vicissitudes' (1915a) the term 'need' appears interchangeably with the term 'instinct' (p.115). Silverman (1983) is of the opinion that the German word 'Trieb' has been incorrectly translated in the *Standard Edition* as 'instinct' (p.67), and it is for this reason that she and a number of other feminists writing within psychoanalysis (eg Brennan: 1992; Grosz: 1994) prefer to use the term 'drive'. It is possible that those who prefer the term 'drive' regard it as more amenable to a social reading of this aspect of Freud's work. See also footnote 7.

⁶ At times Freud refers to these survival instincts as 'ego' instincts. This can be a little confusing given that Freud eventually encapsulates the early instinctual life in the term 'id', and elsewhere juxtaposes this to the ego (for instance in 'The Ego and The Id', 1923). I will demonstrate in the second part of this chapter that there is in fact considerable support for the use of the term ego in relation to early instinctual life. However, because Freud is commonly remembered for his distinction between id and ego, to avoid any confusion at this point I will avoid using the term ego in relation to the survival instincts.

subject a need to suck purely for the pleasure it produces. He differentiates such pleasure driven needs from survival needs by designating them sexual or 'libidinal instincts'.⁷

Freud applies the term 'erotogenic zone' to the areas of skin and mucous membrane central to the libidinal instincts (1905 [1962], pp.47-52), but claims that such zones are not limited to those pre-destined by their role in survival. He writes: 'any other part of the skin and mucous membrane can take over the functions of an erotogenic zone' (1905, p.49). Freud argues that this further eroticisation of the infant's body occurs through the mother's daily handling of the infant (1905, p.53). While Freud limits this discussion of the mother's handling to the infant's daily bathing and toilet routine (1905, p.53), this eroticisation of the nascent subject's body is arguably attributable to all the mother's physical interactions with the baby: including cradling, patting and stroking while the baby is being bathed, fed, and put to sleep. Indeed Kristeva argues that the nascent subject's experience of pleasure involves much more than the tactile sensory modality. To the list of experiences likely to induce pleasure in the nascent subject Kristeva adds motions such as rhythmic rocking and swinging (the kinetic sense), and the non-linguistic sound of the mother's voice (the acoustic-auditory sense) (Kristeva: 1982, p.51; 1984, pp.26-27). The visual image of the mother is arguably another, although slightly later developing, source of pleasure for the infant.⁸

The above précis of Freud's and Kristeva's thinking on the 'instincts' places sensory experience centrally within early 'instinctual' life. Without a doubt it also places the mother – as the breast which nourishes, as the voice, the hands, and the arms which give pleasure – in a central position within 'instinctual' life. However, it is Kristeva much more than Freud who emphasises the centrality of the mother when she claims that the instincts serve to 'connect and orient the (infant's) body to the mother' (Kristeva: 1984, p.27). Kristeva adds further significance to this infant-mother connection by assuming it to be the inaugural 'social' relationship. For Kristeva this relationship is social because maternity is itself a practice 'ordered' by 'socio-historical' constraints (Kristeva: 1984, p.27). I suggest that this earliest infant-mother connection is 'social' also because the nascent subject is totally dependent for the satisfaction of its survival and pleasure needs on the mother's care and attention. Surely there is no more 'social' an act than the assumption of responsibility for the survival and well being of another. There is no biological imperative on the side of the

⁷ Interestingly, in relation to this distinction between survival and libidinal instincts Lacan appears to save the term 'need' for the former and 'drive' for the latter. This points back to the question already raised in footnote 5 about the interchangeability of the terms need and drive.

⁸ Even then it is arguable that the image of the mother becomes pleasurable through its association with the other sensory pleasures the infant feels through contact with the mother. Indeed Freud himself claims that 'seeing' is 'an activity that is ultimately derived from touching' (1905, p.22).

mother to provide such care: her choice to do so is her gift of 'love' to the infant.⁹ The specific ways in which this relationship is social *from the viewpoint of the nascent subject* is developed in the following pages. To understand the ways in which the mother's earliest attentions to the infant may contribute to the first and distinctly non-linguistic markings of the self, and to elaborate more fully how these markings might constitute a non-linguistic facet of sociality, I turn initially to other aspects of Freud's writings.

The First Markings of Subjectivity: Mnemic Traces and Quantities.

In *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality*, Freud writes:

By an 'instinct' is provisionally to be understood the psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation.... lying on the frontier between the mental and the physical.... so far as mental life is concerned, [an instinct] is only to be regarded as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work. (1905, p.34)¹⁰

Freud would seem to be indicating here a particular property of 'instinctual' life that involves the body and impacts on the mind yet is reducible neither to soma (biological body) nor mind (thought). Indeed, when one observes that the terms 'mental' and 'mind' connote the type of language-based processes which have no relevance to the experiences of the nascent subject, one senses within the 'instinctual' life Freud theorises the hint of something that may bridge the body-mind, physical-mental distinction. Further hints of what Freud might be grasping at in the term 'psychical representative' are gained by reading his early writing in 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' (1895) in conjunction with 'The Interpretation of Dreams' (1900 [1965]). It is in these essays that Freud outlines his theory of the instinctual nervous system (1895, pp.295-305 & 1900, pp.603-607).

In 'The Project' Freud puts the case for a particular type of neuronal activity in relation to the 'instincts', claiming that 'after each [instinctual] excitation' the neurones involved are left 'in a different state' (1950, p.299). Freud argues that each experience of a need produces within the nervous system of the nascent subject an alteration effected by both instinctual excitation and satisfaction (1900, p.604). According to Freud it is this permanent alteration within the nervous system that 'afford[s] a possibility of representing memory' (1950, p.299). Freud proposes, in other words, the existence of an '*instinctual*' memory. He

⁹ It is worth drawing attention here to the relative dependence of the human newborn. Where the newborn animal is mobile enough to seek out both the mother's nipple (survival) and tactile proximity (pleasure), the human infant is totally dependent on the mother's perception and interpretation of and attention to its needs. In this sense it is even more incumbent on the human mother than the animal mother to assume the social responsibility involved in care-taking.

¹⁰ Freud writes very similarly in 'The Instincts and Their Vicissitudes' (1915a) that 'an 'instinct' appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body' (p.118).

assigns the term 'mnemonic system' to the network of the neuronal pathways involved in this 'instinctual' memory, and differentiates this network from the network of neuronal pathways *not* altered by the passage of excitation, the latter which he refers to as the 'perceptual system' (1900, pp.576-580). It is presumably the existence of this 'instinctual' memory that enables Freud to speculate in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, that as each instinctual 'need arises a psychological impulse will at once emerge which will seek to re-establish the situation of the original satisfaction' (1900, pp.604-605). In a claim which resonates with what he is later to refer to as 'the pleasure principle', Freud proposes that the memory traces of the earliest 'instinctual' experiences will produce within the nascent subject an inclination towards the repetition of experiences that are satisfying.¹¹

In addition to his proposition of 'instinctual' memory, in 'The Project' Freud is at pains to capture a particular character of these early memory traces. This is evident in his reference to such memory traces as 'quantities' (1950, pp.295-297), and his differentiation of these quantities from the later developing processes of consciousness he terms 'qualities' (1950, pp.307-310). This distinction between quantities and qualities pre-empted a distinction Freud later makes ('The Unconscious', 1915c) between 'thing-presentation' and 'word-presentation' (dealt with later in this chapter). At this point I want to consider the evidence that 'affectivity' may be a particular ingredient of the 'instinctual' memory that Freud refers to as quantities.

The First Markings of Subjectivity: Affects.

Freud's treatment of instinctual affectivity in 'The Project' is somewhat cursory, and limited to a reference to an 'energy discharge' involved in the satisfaction of a need (1895, pp.296-297). Nevertheless, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud places affectivity much more centrally within 'instinctual' quantities. He writes:

The excitations produced by internal needs seek discharge in movement, which may be described as an 'internal change' or an 'expression of emotion'. A hungry baby kicks and screams helplessly. (1900, p.604)

Then in 'The Unconscious' Freud uses the term 'affectivity' interchangeably with 'quantitative factor' (1915c, p.178), further evidence of his linking of affectivity to 'instinctual' life.¹² Yet, as Tomkins observes, Freud's attention to affectivity tends to diminish over time:

¹¹ In 'The Interpretation of Dreams'(1900) Freud adds that 'An impulse of this kind is what we might call a wish.' (p.605).

¹² It is also interesting to note that Freud is not alone in his linking of instincts and affect. William James also writing in the 1890's observes that 'Every object that excites an instinct excites an emotion as well' (in Damasio, 1994: p.130)

if we trace the development of Freud's theories chronologically, it becomes apparent that affects play a major role in his earlier papers and a successively smaller role as psychoanalysis evolved. (1962, pp.5-6)

Tomkins observes that Freud's decrease in attention to affectivity is reflected in therapeutic practice as well as theory:

[Freud's] early cathartic theory of psychotherapy might be said to assign affects a more primary role in pathology and therapy than he ever did again. After the development of ego psychology, the therapeutic significance of affect abreaction was considered a very minor one, whereas in the early 'Studies in Hysteria' the affects were the kernel of the theory ... (1962, p.41)

It is because this connection between affectivity and 'instinctual' life remains undeveloped in Freud's thinking that its development has fallen to others.¹³ The writings of Sylvania Tomkins (1962) have been pivotal in this development.¹⁴ Indeed, it is Tomkins' writings which prompt the speculation that it is affectivity Freud is hinting at when he speaks of the 'psychical representative' falling on the 'frontier' between mind and body (1915a, p.118). And, it is Tomkins who also offers an explanation for why Freud may have failed to grasp entirely that 'frontier' at which he hints,¹⁵ for why Freud may have failed to develop his thinking on affectivity.

According to Tomkins, Freud is 'the victim of the drive concept' (1962, p.126). Tomkins argues that Freud, in his theory of instincts, failed to differentiate sufficiently between what he terms the 'drive system' and the 'affect system'. By 'drive system' Tomkins means those aspects of 'instinctual' life that fall within Freud's category of survival instincts: these include needs relating to hunger, pain, temperature regulation, procreation etc. By 'affect system' Tomkins means that 'expression of emotion' which Freud briefly noted to be part of 'instinctual' life. Tomkins justifies the differentiation between 'affect' and 'drive' in the following way. The components of the drive system, he argues, have fixed stimuli and a fixed source of satisfaction: hunger is stimulated by hunger pains and satisfied by food. The components of the affect system, on the other hand, Tomkins claim, have numerous stimuli and numerous releasers:

The child may cry in distress if it is hungry or cold or wet or in pain or because of a high temperature.... Crying can be stopped by feeding, cuddling, making the

¹³ The suggestion of a connection between affectivity and instinctual life might seem speculative to some, but to others such as Panksepp it is a truism: 'is not the most obvious aspect of infantile behavior its high degree of emotionality' (1994b, p.20).

¹⁴ 30 years on Tomkins' writings are still regarded as seminal by those in academic psychology interested in affectivity: *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions* (1994) edited by Ekman and Davidson is dedicated to Silvan S. Tomkins 'who pioneered our understanding of the nature of emotion'.

¹⁵ Flax (1990) is of the opinion that Freud's attempts to overcome the mind-body split are never entirely satisfactory (p.63).

room warmer, making it colder, taking the diaper pin out of his skin and so on.

(1962, p.23)

According to Tomkins it is 'this differentiated coupling and uncoupling characteristic' of the affect system which makes it a less 'simple signal system' than the drive system (p.23). In addition, Tomkins observes: where all the triggers for the drive system are unlearned, some of the triggers for the affect system, for emotions such as 'interest, joy, distress, startle, disgust, aggression, fear, and shame', are learned (p.22). Tomkins argues that it is this relative 'flexibility' and 'ambiguity' of the affect system that justifies its conception as a system independent of the drive system (p.23).

In short, Tomkins develops the affect-instinct connection contained in Freud's writings into the idea of affectivity as both a central and a distinct component of 'instinctual' life. Furthermore, Tomkins notes within both the affect and drive systems a dynamic which would seem to relate to Freud's 'pleasure principle' (dealt with in more detail later in the chapter). In relation to this dynamic Tomkins writes:

The organism is so constructed that the pleasure of eating is more acceptable than the pain of hunger and the awareness of joy is more acceptable than the awareness of fear. These are the basic wants and don't wants of the human being. They are 'ends in themselves', positive and negative. (Tomkins: 1962, pp.20-21)

When this observation of Tomkins is taken into account, Freud's claim, noted earlier, about an 'instinctual' inclination towards satisfaction, can be re-read as the nascent subject's inclination towards positive affect as much as an inclination towards drive satisfaction.

Indeed in this very vein Tomkins argues that the affect system has a 'central position in the motivation of man' (1962, p.23), and goes so far as to suggest it as 'the primary provider of blueprints for cognition, decision and action' (1962, p.22).¹⁶ Another way in which Tomkins' attention to affectivity is useful to a re-reading of Freud will be dealt with in part B of this chapter.

At this point I will briefly summarise the implications of the addition of Tomkins' ideas to Freud's thinking about 'instinctual' life. First, because of the operation of a particular type of neuronal system, the mother's earliest attentions can be understood to constitute within the nascent subject an early 'instinctual' memory. Second, because early 'instinctual' experiences operate through the affects as much as the senses (taste, audition, and vision), this early memory can be understood as an *emotional-corporeal* prelinguistic memory. Finally,

¹⁶ Tomkins is not alone in his claim that emotions may have a pivotal role in cognitive decision making. In the last decade neurological research has produced evidence that the lower portions of the brain - those involving emotional processing, and the higher portions of the brain - those traditionally associated with reasoning, actually work together in concert in decision making (Damasio, 1994: p.128)

given that early emotional-corporeal experiences do constitute a memory it is possible to conceptualise this early prelinguistic memory as the first markings of subjectivity.

This synthesis of Freud and Tomkins into the proposition of an early matricentric, emotional-corporeal subjectivity could be dismissed by some as speculative. Yet this characterisation of the beginnings of the self is entirely congruent with both, what Stern termed the 'affective core of the self' (Stern in Chodorow: 1999, p.58), and with the broad assumption of object relations theory as summarised by Chodorow:

When we claim that personal meaning begins in the infant-caregiver relation, we are also saying that there are from the beginning non verbal, preverbal, non linguistic, or prelinguistic aspects of meaning – aspects of meaning that go unambiguously and emphatically beyond language. (1999, p.58)

Furthermore, the propositions: that affectivity is central to the earliest experiences; that there is an early memory relating to these experiences; and, that the early markings resulting from these experiences may be distinguishable from consciousness, all receive considerable support from recent research on emotions. Ledoux (1994), for instance, claims that emotional memory is a unique form of memory distinguishable from 'declarative memory', the latter which he defines as the 'ability to consciously reflect on past experience' (p.311). Ledoux cites evidence for different neuronal systems underlying the two types of memory. Declarative memory, he argues, involves the hippocampal area of the brain, while emotional memory involves the amygdala (1994, pp.311-312). Panksepp's claim that 'emotional systems [enable] organisms to respond adaptively with little need for cognitive activity' (1994a, pp.313-314) lends further support to the possibility that emotional responsiveness and memory precedes consciousness. And finally, Zajonc (1980) argues that there is considerable experimental and clinical evidence that 'affective judgements may be fairly independent of, and precede in time, the sorts of perceptual and cognitive operations commonly assumed to be the basis of these affective judgements' (p.151). All of these findings lend support to the notion of a prelinguistic memory and in turn to the notion of an early emotional-corporeal subjectivity.

There is undoubtedly a resonance between the first markings of subjectivity I am calling an 'emotional-corporeality' and the 'energy charges' and 'psychical marks' which Kristeva (1984) refers to as the 'semiotic chora'. It is also arguable that Kristeva's differentiation of this chora as 'psychosomatic' as opposed to 'symbolic' (1984, pp.25-28) has its roots in Freud's distinction between instinctual quantities, on the one hand, and the

qualities of consciousness, on the other. Where Kristeva moves beyond Freud¹⁷ – and in so doing aligns with the argument in this chapter – is that she regards the semiotic chora as ‘no more than the place where the subject is ... generated’ (Kristeva: 1984, p.28).¹⁸ That there may be some limits to Kristeva’s attempt to move beyond Freud in her writings on the semiotic chora will be part of the subject matter of Chapter 5.

I have demonstrated in the first part of this chapter that Freud’s neuro-psychical theory in ‘The Project’ points logically to the existence of the first markings of subjectivity Kristeva calls the ‘chora’ and I have termed ‘emotional-corporeality’. However, the potential of Freud’s own thinking to illuminate an understanding of early subjectivity is apparently lost on him.¹⁹ So much so that the early chronology he begins to elaborate in ‘The Project’ progressively drops out of the picture. Finally in the ‘The Ego and The Id’ Freud writes that ‘Very little is known about these sensations and feelings’ arising from ‘the deepest strata of the mental apparatus....’ which at that point he names ‘the id’ (1923, pp.21-22). Indeed, Freud’s earlier reference to this ‘deep strata’ as ‘man’s archaic heritage’ (1900, p.588) foreshadows early ‘instinctual’ life – which he begins to unpack in ‘The Project’ – as destined to the status of unfathomable primitive phenomenon. And this is so despite his ambition in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) that:

psychoanalysis ... claim a high place among the sciences which are concerned with the reconstruction of the earliest and most obscure periods of the beginning of the human race. (1900, p.588)

Although Freud failed to draw out the implications of his writings on the instincts to achieve an understanding of early subjectivity there are elements of his observations about early ‘instinctual’ life that remain critical to his more general theory of psychoanalysis. One such element, ‘the pleasure principle’, is critical to his notion of ‘repression’. I take a brief look at the pleasure principle at this point in preparation for my analysis of repression in Chapter 6, but also because Klein’s (1935) development of the pleasure principle reinforces the centrality of both affect and the mother in early ‘instinctual’ life.

The Pleasure Principle

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud claims that the nascent subject will ‘seek... to re-establish the situation of original satisfaction’ while it will also be ‘inclined ... to drop

¹⁷ I will note later that Freud considered the beginnings of the subject to be at the moment of ‘primary narcissism’.

¹⁸ Yet Kristeva’s reference to affectivity seems to be more implied than direct. In this her writing could be seen to reflect the underdevelopment of affect in Freud’s writings on the instincts.

¹⁹ Furthermore I suggest that Freud’s explorations of the effects of instinctual life in the mature (differentiated) psyche would have been much less confused if he had taken these early explorations further.

[any] distressing memory-picture[s] immediately' (1900, p.605, p.639).²⁰ This innate avoidance of what is experienced as unpleasant at this point Freud refers to as 'the unpleasure principle', and later the 'pleasure principle' (1900, p.639). While Tomkins makes no direct reference to the pleasure principle his suggestion that the same dynamic exists within the 'affect system' (1962, pp.20-23) makes it possible, as I have suggested earlier, to view an infant's crying behaviour as a 'wish' to reinstate positive affect as much as it is a 'wish' to reinstate drive satisfaction.²¹ A baby's unsettled behaviour is a more obvious manifestation of what Freud identified as an instinctual dislike of displeasure. However, he adds a more subtle psychological response to the nascent subject's repertoire of displeasure avoidance. Again in *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud claims that the very young infant will 're-cathect the mnemic image ... [associated with] the original satisfaction.' According to Freud, in what amounts to an hallucination, the nascent subject will produce a 'repetition of the perception that was linked with the satisfaction of the need' (1900, p.605).²² For instance, it might hallucinate the image of the mother or even the breast itself.²³ The suggestion that the nascent subject can psychologically respond in such a way to variations in the sustaining environment receives considerable support from Klein's theory of 'splitting', a theory she developed during her lengthy observations of young children.

In her essay entitled 'A Contribution to The Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States' (1935) Klein claims that the very young infant experiences its 'instinctual' 'objects' as primarily 'bad' (frustrating and persecuting) or primarily 'good' (gratifying and loving). 'The breast', she claims, is pivotal to this early 'instinctual' object world (1935, pp.140-142). In an elaboration of what she understands to be the infant's psychic or fantasy life, Klein argues that in this 'earliest phase the persecuting and the good objects (breasts) are kept wide apart in the child's mind': the infant 'splits' 'its imagos [images of its objects] into loved and hated, that is to say, into good and dangerous ones' (1935, p.143). Klein further claims that an anxiety she terms 'paranoid' or 'persecutory' accompanies the infant's experience of primarily 'bad' objects, and argues that this anxiety is split-off with the bad objects in the mind of the infant (1935, p.143; 1955, p.53). Of course, Klein's use of the word 'mind' in relation to early infantile experiences is as misleading as Freud's. Indeed, her description of early infantile experiences in terms of 'good', 'bad', 'hatred', 'dangerous', and 'imago' along with her

²⁰ As I have argued earlier this claim of Freud's seems to have its basis in his proposition of an early instinctual memory.

²¹ As I have noted in Footnote 11 'wish' is a term Freud is inclined to use in relation to this aspect of instinctual life, particularly in 'The Interpretation of Dreams' (1900, pp.632-634).

²² 'Cathexis' is a term Freud uses to refer to a process whereby psychological energy becomes channelled in a particular direction. Something is said to be 'cathected' when an amount of psychological energy becomes attached to it. The something may be a neurone (1895, p.298), an image (1900, p.605), an idea or a wish (1900, pp.632-634), or a particular psychological system such as the perceptual system (1900, p.58).

²³ While Freud does not say so it would seem that this process of cathexis by hallucination is more likely when real satisfaction is not readily available.

reference to 'persecutory anxiety' all suggests that the early infantile psyche is not 'mental' at all, but primarily 'affective' and 'sensory', much like the one I have proposed. Also, the process that Klein elaborates as 'splitting' is one that clearly falls within the ambit of Freud's pleasure principle. By splitting bad objects and affects off from good ones the nascent subject is able to avoid re-experiencing that which it finds unpleasant.²⁴

Klein does attribute some of the infant's experience of good and bad to a 'love' and 'hate' inherent within the infant itself. However, she also emphasises the significance of the mother's attentions to these formative experiences and markings when she writes:

The fact that a good relation to its mother and to the external world helps the baby to overcome its early paranoid anxieties throws a new light on the importance of its earliest experiences.... only since we know more about the nature and contents of its early anxieties, and the continuous interplay between its actual experiences and its phantasy life, are we able to understand fully *why* the external factor is so important. (1935, p.141)

For Klein, in other words, the mother's earliest attentions to the infant are *critical* to the development of early subjectivity. More particularly they are critical to the development of a subject devoid of major splits and paranoid anxieties.

In summary, Klein's theory of splitting is consistent with the proposition that the earliest experiences of the infant are in large part affective; that the mother's early attentions are critical in the formation of such experiences; and that subjectivity has its beginnings at this point. Klein's thinking also lends considerable support to Freud's notion of the 'pleasure principle', while it also indicates, in line with Freud, that this principle is pivotal to the earliest experiences. At this point I will return to Freud's discussion of the pleasure principle to demonstrate how it relates to his concept of 'repression', a concept pivotal to his broader psychoanalytic theory.

Freud argues that the pleasure principle, the tendency to avoid the unpleasant and 'wish' for the pleasant, has dominion within the earliest stage of development governed by the instincts. Both this stage of development and this pleasure-governed aspect of the psyche Freud came to the term 'the id'. Freud continues that the pleasure principle ceases its rule in the psyche with the development of 'voluntary movement' and 'exploratory thought activity', both which enable the child to engage more directly with the world in the process of need gratification. According to Freud this shift in the child's ability to be effective in the external world heralds the arrival of a second system or mode of being ruled by 'the reality principle'.

²⁴ One might venture to suggest that among other things 'splitting' enables the nascent subject to avoid the experience of hating the sustaining environment on which it is dependent.

The redirection of energy into purposeful movement that comes with the advent of this second system reduces the need for the type of defensive manoeuvres characteristic of the pleasure governed id (Freud: 1900, pp.637-640). However, this does not mean that the pleasure principle and its procedures of avoidance are entirely usurped with the arrival of the second system. According to Freud:

It is a familiar fact that much of this avoidance of what is distressing – this ostrich policy – is still to be seen in the normal mental life of adults. (1900, p.639)

Indeed Freud argues that the two systems, the pleasure system and the reality system, ‘are the germ of what, in the fully developed apparatus, we have described as the *Ucs* [Unconscious], and *Pcs* [Preconscious]’ (1900, p.638).²⁵

Freud’s inclination to focus on the id in terms of the avoidance of unpleasure combined with his inclination to overlook the id as the first markings of subjectivity both lead him to cast the id, and in turn the unconscious for which it provides the kernel, *not* as part of the developing ego but as something against which the ego must defend itself. While this tension between the id and the ego is the focus of ‘The Ego and The Id’ (1923) it is most clear in ‘Anxiety and Instinctual Life’ when Freud writes:

The ego notices that the satisfaction of an emerging instinctual demand would conjure up one of the well-remembered situations of danger. This instinctual cathexis must therefore be somehow suppressed, stopped, made powerless. We know that the ego succeeds in this task if it is strong and has drawn the instinctual impulse concerned into its organisation. (1933, p.89)

And indeed, according to Freud, the means whereby the ego comes to defend or strengthen itself against the id/unconscious is ‘psychical repression’, a process derived from the displeasure avoidance mechanisms of early ‘instinctual’ life:

This effortless and regular avoidance by the psychical process of the memory of anything that had once been distressing affords us the prototype and first example of *psychical repression*. (1900, p.639)

For Freud ‘psychical repression’ is the process in which an unconscious becomes delineated from consciousness and in which the ego is set up against the id. This is a process which Freud considers to be necessary and inevitable in the development of psychological adulthood. Chapter 6 will examine Freud’s notion of ‘repression’ in some detail while it will also challenge Freud’s claim about the necessity of repression to human development.

²⁵ Given that the pleasure governed experiences and markings of the id occur chronologically prior to consciousness it would seem more appropriate to use the term ‘preconscious’ in relation to the id than in relation to the reality system. However there is a logic in Freud’s use of the term ‘preconscious’ which relates to his own understanding of how the unconscious comes to be ‘unconscious’ as such, and to how the contents of the unconscious come to relate to consciousness.

In section A I have demonstrated, through a particular reading of Freud with the addition of the ideas of Tomkins, Kristeva, and Klein, that the earliest matricentric experiences of the nascent subject constitute an early emotional-corporeal subjectivity. In the next section I will continue to explore both affectivity and matricentrism as characteristics of this early psyche. More particularly, section B will demonstrate that early infant experience involves, as well the first markings of subjectivity, an 'affective' and 'identificatory' *attachment* to the mother as the source of the infant's first objects. Section B will argue that the infant-mother relationship as an affective and identificatory attachment can actually be read through and within Freud's primarily libidinal account of infantile development.

PART B: THE MOTHER AS FIRST OBJECT: LIBIDINAL OR EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT?

In part A I demonstrated that Tomkins' emphasis on instinctual affectivity facilitates a less biological reading of Freud's thinking on the instincts. In this section I will demonstrate how this emphasis on the affects reveals the 'sociality' of 'instinctual' life. More particularly I will argue that Tomkins' linking of affectivity and sociality enables a recasting in social rather than strictly biological (and thus inevitable) terms, this time of Freud's theory of infantile development.

Tomkins and the Affect-Sociality Link

As I noted in the previous section Kristeva maintains that 'instincts' orient the nascent subject to the mother, while they also situate the mother in a social relationship with the infant. I argued that this relationship is 'social' from the mother's viewpoint because it is she who assumes responsibility for the care and wellbeing of the infant. What Tomkins' focus on affectivity in instinctual life exposes is that the infant-mother relationship is also social from the viewpoint of the nascent subject.

I noted in the first section of this chapter that according to Tomkins some of the stimuli involved in the affect system are learned rather than fixed: in other words the affective component of 'instinctual' life is by its very nature *social*. More specifically, Tomkins argues that one of the 'innate affective responses' with which the 'human being is equipped' is the 'want to communicate, to be close to and in contact with others of his species' (1962, p.169). Yet, when Tomkins links instinctual affectivity with sociality his point is not only that affectivity inclines the nascent subject to an 'other' (affect as in-built motivator for sociality) – but that contact with this other actually stimulates affectivity *within* the infant (affect as product of sociality). For instance, Tomkins argues, it is the presence of another's face and smile in particular that 'fulfills the innate conditions for positive affect' in the infant (1962, p.169 & p.214). That the early social stimuli of significance to the infant are both motivated by and produce affectivity is continually reproduced in Tomkins' research. He observes that 'affect as it was revealed on the face [of a significant other] ... [is] critical in the contagious activation of similar interest in the [child].' 'On the negative side', he continues,

there are equally clear instances that the prime object of dread in childhood is not only the voice which later becomes the voice of conscience, but even more the face which frightens, shames, and distresses the child. (1962, p.220)

For Tomkins, in other words, it is emotion expressed via the means of another face that is most salient in producing positive and negative affect within the infant.

Tomkins' claim that affectivity is the primary impetus for and outcome of infant-other sociality lends support to my earlier claim about the centrality of affect to the earliest experiences and earliest markings of subjectivity. Furthermore, his claim that positive and negative affect expressed by others produces the same within the infant enables the speculation that these very early markings of subjectivity could be understood as a sense of 'self worth' or 'self value' as built up through the affective reflections of others. More specifically a poor sense of self worth could be understood as the product of affective interactions that are primarily negative and solid sense of self worth as a product of interactions that are primarily positive. Given also that the infant will feel positive in the company of others from whom it receives positive affect, it is predictable that at some later point this infant will express the pleasure it finds in this social-affective connection in verbal terms such as 'I love you'. It would therefore seem entirely justifiable to construe such a relationship from the viewpoint of the infant, without any risk of idealisation, in terms of an 'affective attachment' or 'love'. Freud uses the terms 'love' and 'affectionate preference' in relation to the infant's regard for the mother which blossoms with the infant's differentiation from its sustaining environment (1917, p.329 & p.325). Yet the love and affectionate preference to which Freud refers are almost always couched in libidinal terms.²⁶ While the Freudian term 'libido' could be argued to include aspects of affective experience such as touch, this term would seem to allow no place for other types of affective communications such as those involving the smile, the gaze, and the tone of voice etc. Just as his focus on drives seems to underplay affect, Freud's rather narrow focus on libido seems to militate against a reading of affectionate preference and love as one and the same as Tomkins' 'instinctual' affective-sociality. Yet, as I shall now demonstrate, an unravelling of Freud's theory of infantile libidinal development reveals the logic of the infant-mother bond as an *affective attachment* – in the fullest sense – beneath his narrowly libidinal argument.

²⁶ This is perhaps not surprising given his emphasis on drive over affect.

Freud's Theory of Infantile Libidinal Development.

The picture Freud constructs of infantile libidinal development is a now familiar one and has produced a range of responses from feminists.²⁷ My discussion of this aspect of Freud's thinking will be limited to the infant's relationship to what Freud terms its 'love object'.

Freud claims in 'The Development of The Libido' that the libidinal drives are from the beginning either auto-erotic, with objects of satisfaction being part of the nascent subject's own body, or satisfied by the mother's attentions, for instance through breast feeding (1917, pp. 328-329).²⁸ As object relations theorists observe, however, it is not until the infant begins to differentiate itself from its sustaining environment – somewhere between the ages of one and two – that the infant's objects become for the infant and just like the infant discrete entities in themselves.²⁹ It is at some point after this differentiation, somewhere in the third year of life,³⁰ according to Freud, that the infant develops 'an affectionate preference for particular people' which bears a 'sexual' or 'sensual' character (1917, p.325).³¹ With a detectable note of surprise Freud observes that the infant's first choice of libidinal object turns out to be its mother:

the object that has been found turns out to be almost identical with the first object of the oral pleasure-instinct, which was reached by attachment (to the nutritional instinct). Though it is not actually the mother's breast, at least it is the mother.

We call the mother the first *love-object*. (1917, p.329. Editor's brackets)

Describing what is recognisable as the Oedipal scenario Freud continues: when 'the little man' chooses his mother as love object he 'wants to have his mother all to himself ... feels the presence of his father as a nuisance ... [and is] resentful if his father indulges in any signs of affection towards his mother' (1917, p.332); the boy's resentment extending to 'hatred of the father, [and] death-wishes against him' (1917, p.332 & p.336). Fearing his father will retaliate by cutting off his penis the young boy, according to Freud, 'reconcil[es] himself with his father' in what amounts to an 'identification' with him (1917, p.337; 1924, p.176).³² This

²⁷ For instance, Irigaray (1985b) is primarily critical of the phallocentrism of Freud's theory of infantile libidinal development. In a more positive vein Grosz (1994) utilizes Freud's observations that 'Any part of the body is capable of sexualization' to support the proposition that sexuality is 'plastic' and indeterminate rather than biologically fixed (p.54).

²⁸ In 'Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality' (1905) Freud gives an instance of auto-erotic satisfaction: 'A portion of the lip itself, the tongue, or any other part of the skin within reach - even the big toe - may be taken as the object upon which this sucking is carried out' (p.46).

²⁹ Chodorow (1978) provides a brief account of this process of differentiation (p.67).

³⁰ In other words, sometime after the age of 2.

³¹ In 'Three Essays' (1905) Freud puts this point even later: 'the sexual life of children usually emerges in a form accessible to observation round about the third or fourth year of life' (pp.42-43).

³² Freud talks specifically about the boys fear of retaliation only in 'The Dissolution of The Oedipus Complex' (1924). In an earlier discussion in 'The Development of The Libido' (1917) he simply notes that 'very intense emotional processes come into play' (p.336).

identification, Freud claims, brings about the 'detaching [of the boy's] libidinal wishes from his mother' (1917, p.337).³³ Freud's description of this Oedipal resolution as 'a progressive process of suppression' which 'is organically determined and fixed by heredity' (1905, p.42, p.43) leaves the reader little choice but to assume this detaching of infantile libido from the mother to be an inevitable process.³⁴

There are three problems/puzzles within Freud's theory of infantile object choice to which I wish to draw attention. The first is his apparent surprise that the infant's mother should be the first choice of libidinal object: she is after all the infant's original sustaining environment. Tomkins' thinking also allows us to see that the mother is also the first likely source of positive affect for the infant.³⁵ The second puzzle is the gap in chronology between the point at which the infant differentiates from its environment – 12-18 months of age – and the moment Freud identifies as the point of first object choice – the 3rd-4th year of life. The third problem is Freud's tendency to present the boy's relationship to its first libidinal object as if it is the universal case. I will demonstrate that attending to the third problem by unravelling the specificity of the girl's libidinal development enables the solving of the first two puzzles. This same analysis exposes the logic of the infant-mother bond as a fully *affective* attachment underneath what Freud understands as a primarily *libidinal* bond.

The Problems of the Girl's Oedipus and Castration Anxiety.

Freud's presentation of the boy's libidinal scenario (1917) as if it is the universal case is just one instance of what Irigaray (1985b) identifies as the phallogentrism of Freud's thinking.³⁶ Yet Freud's recognition that he has 'only described the relation of a *boy* to his father and mother' is evidence at least of his intention to rectify this bias. It is debatable to what extent Freud manages to achieve this rectification through the simple addendum that:

Things happen in just the same way with little girls, with the necessary changes: an affectionate attachment to her father, a need to get rid of her mother as superfluous and to take her place... (1917, p.333)

This rather abrupt attention to the girl's situation leaves many things unexplained. Why does the girl choose her father as first object? Are we to assume it is because of an underlying and

³³ Freud claims that this process of detaching prepares the boy 'for the choice of a real outside love-object' (1917, p.337).

³⁴ The inevitability of this process of detachment is further emphasised when Freud adds that 'education' only serves to reinforce what is necessary for both 'the growth of a civilized and normal individual' and 'for every kind of cultural achievement' (pp.43-44).

³⁵ Freud's inability to see the significance of the mother to the infant as both guarantor of survival and source of affect is arguably due to his want to give primacy to libidinal matters. This is obvious again in 'The Development of The Libido' when, in response to the anticipated objection 'that the little boy's conduct arises from egoistic motives and gives no grounds for postulating an erotic complex', Freud writes that 'the egoistic interest is merely affording a point of support to which the erotic trend is attached' (1917, pp.332-333). For Freud, in other words, it is the 'erotic trend' which has primacy in the boy's attachment to his mother.

³⁶ Irigaray gives numerous other instances particularly in Chapter 3 of *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985b).

inevitable heterosexuality?³⁷ Does the girl eventually suppress her infantile libidinal connection too? Such questions remain unanswered for a number of years, and it is not until 'Female Sexuality' (1931), some 14 years after his initial writings on infantile libidinal development, that Freud makes definitive statements about some substantial differences in the girls' and boys' Oedipal scenarios.³⁸

Having recognised in the 'Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex' that castration anxiety does not provide the same motive in the girl for 'the breaking-off of the infantile genital organization' (1924, p.178), the next year Freud began to elaborate the girl's particular version of castration anxiety. In 'Some Psychological Consequences of The Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes' (1925) Freud claims the girl, on discovering she lacks the penis, suffers from 'penis envy'. He continues, that the girl eventually 'gives up her wish for a penis and puts in place of it a wish for a child: and *with that purpose in view* she takes her father as a love-object' (p.340). This elaboration of the girl's version of castration anxiety provides Freud's reason for the girl's choice of love object. However what this elaboration also reveals, and Freud states this himself in 'Female Sexuality', is that castration anxiety in the girl actually *facilitates* rather than destroys her Oedipus complex (1931, p.230). This important difference in the girl's situation together with Freud's almost afterthought observation that the 'the Oedipus complex is all too often not surmounted by the female at all' (1931, p.230), forces the conclusion that the two Oedipal scenarios, contrary to Freud's initial claim, are far from simple reversals of each other. Furthermore, Freud's claim about the potential indeterminacy of the girl's Oedipal connection to her father contradicts his other writing on two counts. It contradicts his earlier claim in 'Three Essays' that the suppression of infantile libido is 'organically determined and fixed by heredity' (1905, p.43). And, it stands in contradistinction to Freud's notion of the 'incest taboo', which he describes as 'mankind[']s] ... acquired sense of guilt' stemming from 'the beginning of its history, in connection with the Oedipus complex' (1917, p.332). The taboo on incest certainly supports Freud's explanation of the boy's detaching of his libidinal wishes from his mother, but this 'acquired sense of guilt' makes little sense when it comes to the girl's indeterminate attachment to her father. These inconsistencies raise questions about the assumed inevitability of the incest taboo, but they also raise a number of questions about castration anxiety itself. It is to a more thorough investigation of castration anxiety that I shall now turn.

³⁷ The inevitability of heterosexuality is suggested in Freud's claim, that while the pull of the parent's own sexual attraction is likely to awaken the Oedipal scenario, 'the spontaneous nature of the Oedipus complex in children cannot be seriously shaken even by this factor' (1917, p.333).

³⁸ In a footnote in 'The Development of The Libido' (1917) the editor also notes: 'It was not until many years later that Freud became fully aware of the lack of symmetry in the Oedipus relations of the two sexes'(p.333).

The plausibility of what Freud details as castration anxiety is contingent, I suggest, on a number of things, the first being an infantile fear of the loss of bodily parts. In relation to this contingency Freud notes that:

Psychoanalysis has recently attached importance to two experiences which all children go through and which, it is suggested, prepare them for the loss of highly valued parts of the body. These experiences are the withdrawal of the mother's breast – at first intermittently and later for good – and the daily demand on them to give up the contents of the bowel. (1924, p.175)³⁹

While Freud himself is doubtful that such early losses 'have any effect' '[once] the threat of castration takes place' (ibid), it is conceivable that these losses may set the scene for a fear of castration. Given however, that the girl is, to all intents and purposes, already 'castrated', that she has already 'lost' the body part in question, the girl's continued anxiety about something already lost *must* be contingent on something else. The most likely cause of the girl's lament is that the penis is in some way much more than a bodily organ.

That the penis is also a 'phallus' is a now common understanding in feminist psychoanalytic writing.⁴⁰ In this understanding the 'phallus' represents the penis in its expanded form: it symbolises the power, status, and privilege which attaches to male embodiment in patriarchal society.⁴¹ It is within the context of patriarchal society's unequal valuing of the sexes that the girl's 'attribution of superiority to the penis' and 'immediate ... and spontaneous ... read[ing of] her anatomical difference as a deficiency' must be understood (Silverman: 1983, p.142).⁴² The girl suffers penis envy, in other words, because those with female bodies are regarded by society as less valuable, as less important, than those with male bodies. According to this perspective castration anxiety is not pre-determined but largely socially induced. Indeed, this particularly social perspective on castration anxiety gains considerable complexity when the implication of Tomkins' affective-sociality argument is added to the picture.

³⁹ Freud notes that these ideas are those of his female colleagues.

⁴⁰ For example: Silverman, (1988, p.25-26).

⁴¹ The 'phallus' has an additional meaning for Lacan which will be dealt with in Ch 4.

⁴² It is also arguable that this association between the penis and perceived power lies behind what Freud observes as the child's initial belief that its mother has a penis (1924, p.178). It is because of her role as the infant's sustaining environment that the child is initially likely to perceive the mother as all powerful, that the child is likely to perceive the mother, in other words, as 'phallic'.

The Role of Affects in Both Castration Anxiety and Early Attachment.

As noted earlier, Tomkins' linking of instinctual affectivity with sociality suggests affective states within the developing subject to be a product of the affective interactions with significant others. This dynamic together with the dynamic contained within the pleasure principle – that the human subject will incline towards positive affective states – makes it likely that the human infant will gravitate towards those others who are able to reinforce positive affect, towards those who are able to induce within the developing subject what I have termed a positive sense of self worth. While the first such other is most likely to be the mother, as the child's social world expands its sources of affective reinforcement will broaden to include a multitude of others and a whole gamut of less particular or more generalised social evaluations. It is within the context of these broader affective-social relations, and particularly within the context of evaluations that relate to gender, that the two versions of castration anxiety can be further understood. The implications of Tomkins' theory of affectivity for an understanding of castration anxiety are as follows: the boy abandons his mother and identifies with his father because of the *positive affective gains*, the boost to self worth which will be part and parcel of identifying himself as the more valued sex. The girl, on the other hand, is likely to experience a diminished sense of self worth in the face of the lesser social value attached to female embodiment, and her gravitation to her father can be understood as an attempt to grab vicariously at the *positive affective reinforcement* that is likely to arise from being around one who matters. Put another way, although the girl cannot directly have the positive self worth that attaches to being a man, she may be able to gain indirectly some affective boost through association with (through receiving approval from?) someone who is socially valued. This proposition actually dovetails with Lacan's rationale for desire which will be dealt with in Chapter 4.⁴³

When the implications of Tomkins' theory of affectivity are taken into account in castration anxiety in this way it becomes possible to account for the gap in the Freudian chronology (noted above) between the nascent subject's differentiation from its sustaining environment and the moment of the infant's choice of love object. This gap in chronology is brought into focus because Tomkins' affective-social perspective raises the question of what it is that the girl is doing for affective-social reinforcement prior to her affectively and socially induced (by the phallus) gravitation to her father. Interestingly Freud provides his own answer to this question by eventually recognising 'the pre-history' of the 'Oedipal relation' (1925, p.251).

⁴³ Chapter 4 will also deal with the way in which Lacan's argument actually negates the prelinguistic aspects of subjectivity.

Effectively rescinding his original claim in 'The Development of The Libido' (1917) that the father is the girl's first love object, in 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes' Freud maintains that the mother is – as for the little boy – the girl's 'original object' (1925, p.251). It is the mother, Freud comes to realise who the little girl loves first. My contention is that both boy and girl love the mother first because she is a primary source of positive affective reinforcement. While Freud would probably be inclined to understand the girl's 'phase of exclusive attachment to her mother' in strictly libidinal terms, his brief description of it as 'intense and passionate' and 'very rich and many-sided ...' (1931, p.372) suggests that this mother-daughter connection could overflow the 'libidinal' frame he might force on it. Furthermore, Freud's additional observations: that the boy has an 'affectionate' relationship to his father during 'the pre-history of [his] Oedipus complex'; and that at times in this prehistory he 'wants to take his *mother's* place as the love-object of his *father*' in what Freud describes as 'the feminine attitude' (1925, p.250), both seem to warrant an 'affective' as much as a 'libidinal' explanation.⁴⁴ Indeed Silverman argues that the boy's feminine attitude amounts to an identification with the mother (1988, p.151). And, one plausible explanation for this identification is to be found in the mother's role as primary source of positive affective reflections for the boy. In turn, the boy's desire to take the mother's place in the father's affections can be understood as an attempt on the boy's part to receive positive affective responses from yet another significant social other.

In summary, both castration anxiety and what Freud eventually designates as the pre-Oedipus phase of attachment to the mother make sense for both sexes only when Tomkins' affective-social perspective is factored into Freud's theory of object choice. At the same time this affective-social perspective on the infant's choice of object fills some of the unsatisfactory gaps in Freud's theory of infantile development, while it also reinforces the argument that castration anxiety is largely socially induced. In this section I have demonstrated that the first choice of mother as love object in both sexes involves affective and identificatory attachment as much as it does libidinal attachment. In the next section I shall demonstrate that the infant's early identification with the mother has a number of other origins.

⁴⁴ Especially if one assumes heterosexuality as Freud appears to.

PART C: FURTHER IDENTIFICATIONS WITH THE MOTHER

In the last section I suggested that the infant's pre-Oedipal identification with the mother can be understood in terms of the mother's role as first social other, and more specifically as source of self worth. In this section, again utilising aspects of Freud but this time with the addition of Lacan, I will explore some other facets of the infant's early identification with the mother. This exploration revolves around the mother's role as both, executive ego for the child, and mirror for the child's imaginary ego. Through this exploration I expose the multifaceted character of the infant's early attachment to its mother. Also, with the help of Brennan's (1992) work I reveal how compelling is the argument of the first section of this chapter that the beginnings of subjectivity emerge out of the early mother-infant relationship. To begin this exploration I return to Freud's observations of the earliest stages of child development.

The Mother as Executive Ego.

Freud observes of the earliest stages of development that the 'first ... experiences which a child has in relation to its mother are naturally of a passive character' (1931, p.236). This is so, according to Freud, because the nascent subject's immaturity renders it incapable of attending to its own needs: the infant must be 'suckled, fed, cleaned and dressed' (ibid). It is in her capacity to act in the world *on the infant's behalf* that the mother can be understood at this point in the child's development as the 'executive' or 'active' ego for the 'passive self' (Brennan: 1992, p.31). Over time, Freud argues, the infant strives to turn some of its passive experiences into activity: it endeavours to become, in Brennan's terms, its own executive ego. In the first instance, 'being suckled at the breast gives place to active sucking' while at a later date the infant 'tries to do itself what has just been done for it' (Freud: 1931, p.236). It is in this context of movement from passivity to activity that Freud understands the child's play with dolls to be fulfilling 'active wishes in an indirect way' (1931, p.237). In Brennan's terms the child acts as executive ego for the doll in the same way that the mother has done for the child. According to Freud this increase in the active capacities of the child 'is part of the work imposed on it of mastering the external world' (1931, p.236), in other words, is part of the transition from the pleasure system to the reality system. While an increase in motility is pivotal to the development of this mastery (1900, p.638), so too, Freud claims, is the development of consciousness, to which I shall now turn.

For Freud, as noted earlier in this chapter, 'instinctual' life, or what he came to call the id, involves the avoidance of displeasure through such mechanisms as the

hallucination of the original object of satisfaction. What the development of the child's own active ego requires, according to Freud, is that psychical cathexis lead the infant not to an hallucinated object but to 'a real perception of the object of satisfaction' (1900, pp.637-638). This necessary diversion of cathexis from the pleasure-governed cycle to the reality cycle is possible, Freud argues, because consciousness, and with it language, comes into play. More specifically, writes Freud, consciousness is obtained when 'the pre-conscious processes' are 'linked' through 'associa[tion] ...with verbal memories' to 'linguistic symbols' (1900, p.613 & p.656). Freud's writing in relation to the development of consciousness and language is somewhat confused by his use of a terminology more appropriate to a description of a 'fully developed [psychical] apparatus', that is, one already split into a conscious and an unconscious (1900, p.638).⁴⁵ However, in 'The Unconscious' (1915c) we get some idea of what Freud understands as the redirection of psychical cathexis that occurs with development of consciousness. He writes:

What we have ... called the conscious presentation of the object can ... be split up into the presentation of the *word* and the presentation of the *thing*; the latter consists in the cathexis, if not of the direct memory-images of the thing, at least of remoter memory-traces derived from these.... The system *Ucs.* contains the thing-cathexes of the objects, the first and true object-cathexes; [and] the system *Pcs* comes about by this thing-presentation being hypercathected through being linked with the word-presentation corresponding to it. (1915c, pp.201-202)

Given that Freud considers the id to form the germ of the unconscious (1900, p.638), from the above it can be assumed that the 'remoter-memory traces' and 'thing-cathexis' are one and the same with the sensory and emotional experiences and memories that constitute early 'instinctual' life (the id). 'Word presentation', on the other hand, is a new type of psychical experience and imprint that occurs with the advent of language. And consciousness, according to Freud, occurs when 'thing' experience of the world and 'word' experience of the world are linked together. An example here would be that the child moves from experiencing the mother solely through the senses of touch, taste, smell, movement, image etc, to experiencing her as an entity to which he/she can also attach the term 'mum'.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ In a later chapter I will be considering the way in which Freud theorises the advent of this split between the conscious and the unconscious.

⁴⁶ In the *Ego and the Id* (1923) Freud elaborates on the relationship between the development of language and consciousness and a number of different senses. First, he writes that the 'verbal residues' on which language is built 'are derived primarily from auditory perceptions, so that the system *Pcs.* has, as it were, a special sensory source In essence a word is ... the mnemonic residue of a word that has been heard'. Of the relationship between language and the visual sense Freud writes that 'The visual component of word-presentations is secondary, acquired through reading, and may to begin with be left on one side'. In other words, Freud charts the development of consciousness through the visual sense, to the auditory sense and finally to the word (pp.21-22).

According to Freud, the linking of thing experience and word experience with consciousness takes place whether the stimuli perceived by the subject occur in the outside world as objects, events, etc, or internally, as ideas (1923, p.20). However Freud argues that there is one type of internal stimuli which, unlike the idea, does not conform to the pattern of coming to consciousness through a link with language. In 'The Ego and The Id' Freud writes: the 'sensations and feelings' 'arising ... in the deepest strata of the mental apparatus' and 'belonging to the pleasure-unpleasure series' come into consciousness as a very special case, as 'a quantitative and qualitative 'something' in the course of mental events' (1923, pp.21-22). Given that all 'thing' experiences originally belong to the deepest mental strata, to the id, this statement is a little confusing. Yet Freud's reference to 'feelings' and 'pleasure-unpleasure' seems to suggest that Freud is referring more specifically to early experiences that have an *affective* component. These sensations and feelings originating in the id are a special case, it seems, because, they come to consciousness, at least in part, in their original 'thing' (quantity) form.⁴⁷ Although Freud argues that feelings come to consciousness in this way, he does not argue that they *necessarily do* come into conscious awareness. As I shall explore in Ch. 6 feelings states, according to Freud, are often suppressed and have a critical place in what Freud refers to as 'primal repression'.

In conclusion, while Freud does not actually speak of a very early prelinguistic subjectivity his reference to 'thing presentation' and his connection of the same to 'feelings' tends to reinforce the argument that subjectivity has a very early, and in particular, 'affective' form. Freud's further argument that thing cathexis comes to participate in consciousness in its own peculiar way tends to suggest that this early affective form of subjectivity remains as an ongoing, and arguably distinct, aspect of subjectivity or subjective experience. That this may be the case stands in contradistinction to one of the central tenets of poststructural thinking. How this aspect of psychoanalysis presents a challenge to poststructural thinking will be dealt with in the following two chapters. At this point, however, I shall return to the matter of consciousness.

⁴⁷ That this is possible presumably relates to Freud's argument, noted earlier, that not all psychical cathexis is redirected away from the id (and the pleasure principle) with the advent of the reality principle.

Primary Narcissism: The Mother as Mirror for the Imaginary Ego

As I have noted above, an increase in the infant's own executive capacities along with a perception of objects as 'real' are two developments that go hand in hand with the development of consciousness. A further consequence of the development of objects as real discernable entities is that the infant begins to relate to itself as just such an object. The infant becomes, in other words, 'self-conscious', it begins to experience itself as 'me/I'. Yet, Freud's writings in 'On Narcissism' (1914a) suggest that this self-consciousness begins to dawn a bit before the acquisition of language, somewhere between the stage of the undifferentiated id – which I have termed 'emotional-corporeal' subjectivity – and linguistically coded consciousness. This intermediate phase receives the most detailed treatment in Lacan's writings on the 'mirror stage'.⁴⁸

Lacan argues that somewhere after the age of 6 months the child develops a fascination with both the visual image of its mother and its own image in the mirror. According to Lacan (1953, 1977, 1982) the infant is captivated by these images because: their integrity stands in contrast to the child's lived experience as a mass of disconnected pleasure zones (1953, p.93); the infant associates the comparative stature of the mother's image with the power that she holds to deprive the child of its objects of satisfaction (1982, p.80); and finally, because the image promises an autonomy which contrasts with the infant's current 'nursling dependence' (1977, p.2). Lacan continues that through a process of identification the infant assumes this 'specular' image as the basis of an 'imaginary I' (1977, pp.1-5). This investment by the nascent subject in its imaginary self is the same moment that Freud refers to as 'primary narcissism' (1914a). Freud defines primary narcissism as a binding of libido into what he calls 'ego libido' in a process which, he claims, desexualises libido (1914a, pp.67-69).

At the very beginning, all the libido is accumulated in the id, while the ego is still in process of formation or is still feeble. The id sends part of this libido out into erotic object-cathexis, whereupon the ego, now grown stronger, tries to get hold of this object-libido and to force itself on the id as love object. The narcissism of the ego is thus a secondary one, which has been withdrawn from objects. (The Ego and The Id, 1923, p.46)

While Freud's reference to a 'feeble' ego prior to narcissism seems to hint at the existence of some very early form of ego, his determination that ego libido is *borrowed* from object libido

⁴⁸ Lacan's writings on the mirror stage seem to have a strong resonance with Freud's reference to 'Thinking in pictures ... a very incomplete form of becoming conscious...[which] stands nearer to unconscious processes than does thinking in words, and ... is unquestionably older than the latter both ontogenetically and phylogenetically' ('The Ego and The Id', 1923, pp.20-21).

locates the beginning of the ego firmly at the point of narcissism.⁴⁹ Likewise Lacan refers to the 'imaginary I' as the 'starting point' of the ego (Lacan: 1953, p.93); as the 'primordial form' of the 'I', and forerunner of the 'I' of language based consciousness (1977, p.2).⁵⁰

Why The Imaginary Ego Assumes Even Earlier Markings of Subjectivity.

The role of the mother as both executive ego for the child and mirror through which the child establishes its own 'imaginary' ego have inherent within them the infant's identification with the mother. This dual identification in addition to the affective attachment to the mother outlined in the earlier parts of this chapter reveal the multifaceted character of the infant's early connection to the mother. Indeed these combined identifications and attachments lend considerable significance to a very early stage of subject development that Silverman refers to as 'feminine' (1988, p.151). The significance of the early infant-mother connection to the development of subjectivity becomes even more apparent as Brennan unravels a problem inherent in Lacan's and Freud's assumption that the ego begins with the mirror stage or the point of primary narcissism. Brennan asks: if it is the nascent subject seeing itself 'in narcissism [that] helps constitute the ego, or body image' then 'what is it that does the 'seeing' before the 'ego' comes into being?'⁵¹ According to Brennan:

Freud's theory of narcissism presupposes that initially there is something that is able to see, and therefore presupposes a pre-existing subjective property directed towards an end; although there is no account of how it could come to be directed towards that end. (1992, p.165)

In other words, Brennan argues, 'Freud consistently pre-supposes what he is in fact obliged to explain: the formation of the subject' (ibid). If it is the case that Freud's theory of narcissism presupposes the existence of a subjective 'something' drawn narcissistically towards itself or in Lacan's terms towards an imaginary I, the question arises how such an early subjective property can be conceptualized. Borch-Jacobson conceptualizes it as the 'womb-mother' (Brennan: 1992, p.165). Brennan conceptualises this early subjective property as the nascent subject believing 'that it is the breast'. Brennan elaborates: it is the 'imprint of the

⁴⁹ That the ego does not pre-exist the point of narcissism for Freud is further born out in his claim that 'In the first place, what is the relation of the narcissism of which we are now speaking to auto-erotism, which we have described as an early state of the libido?'. To which he replies 'we are bound to suppose that a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed. The auto-erotic instincts, however, are there from the very first; so there must be something added to auto-erotism - a new psychological action - in order to bring about narcissism' ('On Narcissism', 1914a, pp.68-69). Some of Freud's vacillation about whether there is a 'feeble ego' or indeed no ego at all prior to narcissism seems to depend on the degree to which he draws a distinct line between id and ego.

⁵⁰ In *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) Kristeva develops Lacan's idea of the imaginary ego further. She refers to the 'imaged ego' as the 'prototype' for the 'world of objects' in that it facilitates the 'constitution of objects detached from the semiotic chora' (p.46). She also argues that the child's first vocal utterances constitute a 'confrontation' between the 'motility of the semiotic chora' and the process of 'positing-separating-identifying' that constructs the world of objects as identities (p.47). In this latter respect Kristeva's thinking seems to relate to Freud's connection of auditory perception and linguistic consciousness (See Footnote 47).

⁵¹ Here Brennan is drawing on the insights of Borch-Jacobson.

'[m]other's attention' that forms 'the depository [on] which the subject draws ... in order to constitute itself' (1992, pp.165-166). It is this early imprint of maternal attention that Brennan understands as the 'passive ego' (1992, p.166).

Of course Brennan's claim that it is the mother's earliest attentions that constitute the embryo of subjectivity brings the argument a full circle to the propositions earlier in the chapter, to: the mnemonic traces of Freud's 'Project', Kristeva's semiotic chora, Klein's introjected breast, the object relations 'affective core of self', and the 'emotional-corporeality' I propose. Where Kristeva, Brennan, and I propose these markings to be the beginnings of the subject, for most of his writings and in line with his theory of narcissism Freud does not. However, in 'The Ego and The Id' Freud does venture that:

At the very beginning, in the individual's primitive oral phase, object cathexis and identification are no doubt indistinguishable from each other (1923, p.29).

And, as Brennan notes,

in a throwaway note in the last year of his life, [Freud] said exactly this: the first form of identification involves no differentiation; one *is* the breast. (1992, p.165)⁵²

While this very late claim of Freud's, that the ego must start prior to the point of primary narcissism, fully confirms the thrust of Kristeva's, Klein's, Brennan's and my own arguments, it also contradicts his earlier claim that narcissistic investment owes its existence to a borrowing of libidinal cathexis. If an identification and hence a subjective something does exist from the infant's first experiences of the breast, then the ego must have at least some of its own cathexis from that point. It has no need to borrow cathexis from the libido.⁵³ This notion that the ego exists at a very early stage is, as I have already suggested, in line with the assumptions of object relations thinking. This thinking is exemplified in Chodorow's claims, that the 'earliest internalizations are preverbal and experienced in a largely somatic manner' (1978, p.50), and, that these internalizations constitute 'the crystallization point of the "feeling of the self" around which a "sense of identity" will become established' (1978, p.67).⁵⁴ The ways in which my argument diverges from Chodorow's will be dealt with in Chapter 7.

⁵² Brennan (1992) also points out, however, that because the 'capacities for attending, testing, and acting' which form part of the early imprint of the mothers attentions actually 'come from the mother', the earliest 'identification' Freud finally recognises is not an identification in the true sense (p.31).

⁵³ The proposition that the ego has its own cathexis from the start also receives some support in 'The Ego and The Id' (1923) in the notion of Eros. Freud defines 'Eros' as a neutral, 'desexualized' 'store of libido'. Yet his further claim that Eros is 'active both in the ego and in the id' where it is 'employed in the service of the pleasure principle to obviate blockages and to facilitate discharge' (pp.44-45), would seem to suggest that Eros would be more appropriated conceptualised as something akin to the Kleinian good breast than desexualised libido. Such a conceptualisation also makes more sense of Freud's distinction between ego (survival) instincts and sexual (libidinal) instincts.

⁵⁴ Chodorow is drawing on Mahler here.

In this chapter I have constructed an account of the earliest *prelinguistic* markings of subjectivity. I have argued first, that these markings are derived primarily from the mother-infant connection and second, that these markings are largely affective in character. In the next chapter I will consider poststructuralism, as the body of thought that focuses on the contribution of *language* to subjectivity.

CHAPTER TWO

LANGUAGE AND SUBJECTIVITY: de SAUSSURE, PIERCE, DERRIDA, BENVENISTE, & FOUCAULT.

In the previous chapter, using Freud and number of other thinkers, I developed an account of the prelinguistic stage of subject development. More particularly I developed an account of the beginning of the subject's *affective* life, and linked this affective life to the early infant-mother relationship. In this chapter I turn from psychoanalysis to a body of thought more favoured by feminism in the recent years: poststructuralism. Poststructuralism focuses on the contribution of language to the development of subjectivity. This chapter offers a brief overview of this poststructural account of the subject. At the end of the chapter I consider some ways in which this poststructural account is incommensurable with the psychoanalytic account presented in Chapter 1. I consider how this incommensurability poses challenges to feminist thinking on subjectivity.

POSTMODERNISM

It may be argued that the terms 'postmodern' and 'poststructural' refer to different bodies of thought. This section will provide a brief review of the ways in which postmodernism contributes to recent understandings of subjectivity. The following section will consider poststructuralism and its connection to postmodernism.

In 'Mapping The Postmodern' (1990) Huyssen notes that postmodernism first developed in the late 50's and 60's as a critique of modernism, but more particularly as a negation of the avantguardism, the aestheticism, and the 'Truth' claims of the then institutionalized art and literature (pp.241-242). Over the next few decades, according to Huyssen, the impetus to upturn and move beyond the limits of modernism began to infiltrate all areas of cultural and intellectual life. Yet, Huyssen observes, postmodernism took variable forms depending on the particular modernist, cultural, and intellectual context in which it developed. For instance:

Modernity for the French is primarily – though by no means exclusively – an aesthetic question relating to the energies released by the deliberate destruction of language and other forms of representation. For Habermas, on the other hand, modernity goes back to the best traditions of the Enlightenment, which he tries to

salvage and to reinscribe into the present philosophical discourse in a new form.

(Huyssen: 1990, pp.254-255)

Huyssen also observes that postmodernism ranged from 'more politically intended projects' to projects she describes as 'politically weak' (p.259). It is these variations in postmodernism's cultural field, historical context, and political intent that make it difficult to speak of in general terms. However, I will highlight some of the central threads of postmodernism as they impact on recent thinking about subjectivity.

Postmodernism argues that modernism is foundationalist, that it assumes an absolute foundation or ground for thought or knowledge (Davies: 1994, p.221; Perusnikova: 1992, pp.23-24). According to postmodernism, modernism also assumes a very specific notion of the subject, Descartes's 'cogito', in which the self or subject is equated with a divinely bestowed capacity for reason (Braidotti: 1991, p.53; Davies: 1994, p.222). For modernism the subject *is* rationality or reason, and it is this capacity for reason that enables the subject to apprehend the foundational and universal Truths constituting what Bordo (1990) calls the 'God's eye-view'. These two modernist assumptions, of foundational Truth and subject as cogito, set in place two further dichotomous assumptions as cornerstones of modernist epistemology. The first is an individual/society split which assumes the subject to pre-date its worldly and social existence. The second, derived from the first, is a spirit/matter distinction which juxtaposes reason as 'intelligibility' to matter/body as 'dumb corporeality' (Braidotti: 1991, pp.51-52). This second split, Braidotti argues, contains the assumption that matter/body is the enemy of the divine path to Truth (1991, p.52).

Postmodernism challenges all the assumptions of modernist thought by making the case that knowledge is socially rather than divinely created; more specifically postmodernism claims that what comes to be accepted as 'Truth' has more to do with politics than with the existence of an irrefutable reality. Taking the example of science as 'the dominant paradigm of knowledge in modern capitalist societies' Lyotard exposes the social processes lying concealed within knowledge production as an ethics, a politics, a metanarrative, produced by a 'consensus among the community of scientists' (Davies: 1994, p.224 & p.226). For postmodernism, in other words, knowledge is understood as a choice rather than a submission to Truth. For Foucault, more specifically, this is a 'choice for reason', or put another way a choice *against* all that is considered 'other' to rationality (Braidotti: 1991, p.52). When 'grand narratives of legitimation' (Lyotard in Fraser and Nicholson: 1990, p.22) are taken as social in origin the knowing subject no longer has recourse to a divine path to universal Truth. Instead, the postmodern subject is reconceptualised as 'located at 'nodal points' of specific communication circuits' (Lyotard in

Davies: 1994, p.227); as one who encounters, thinks about, and knows reality only through descriptions that are locally bound (Lyotard in Perusnikova: 1992, p.23).

The postmodern challenge to modernism has resonated with feminism on a number of counts. First, feminist activists claimed that the official 'view from nowhere' was not impartial but indeed a located knowing (Bordo: 1990, pp.136-137). More latterly black feminists, in line with postmodern thought, criticised white feminists for their tendency to speak and theorise for women as a universal group, for their failure, in other words, to acknowledge their own located knowing (eg. Hooks: 1984). Finally, feminist philosophy exposed the historical subject of Western philosophy to be a masculine subject whose ability to present his 'self' as transcendent/disembodied depends on the relegation to the feminine of everything considered other to reason: the body, nature, the passions, the private etc (Lloyd: 1984). It is this feminist critique of masculine philosophy that provides one springboard for this thesis.

POSTSTRUCTURALISM

The relationship of poststructuralism to postmodernism is far from straight forward. As Huyssen (1990) notes, postmodernism initially emerged as a challenge to the aestheticism and truth claims of art and literature. At the same time, she observes, as a product of the French intellectual tradition poststructuralism has 'led to the privileging of the aesthetic and the linguistic which aestheticism has always promoted to justify its imperial claims'. Huyssen continues:

if we are to locate the postmodern in poststructuralism it will have to be found in the ways various forms of poststructuralism have opened up new problematics in modernism. (1990, p.259)

One particular problematic in modernism that poststructuralism confronts is the modernist conception of language. In this part of the chapter I will consider the ways in which a number of thinkers, both structural and poststructural, have contributed to a rethinking of language, in the first instance, and to a rethinking of subjectivity in the second.

According to the largely French tradition of poststructuralism, modernism assumes language to be a means of communicating 'through a process of naming' already existent meanings (Davies: 1994, p.230), whether these meanings involve material objects or concepts. It is within de Saussure's structuralism that the overturning of this referential thesis of language has its origins. A number of other theorists, some also within the French tradition, build on de Saussure's ideas to produce a new conceptualisation of subjectivity that

severely challenges the modernist notion of the subject. This section takes a path through these theorists to the ultimate poststructural claim that the subject is one produced through signification.

Ferdinand de Saussure

In *Course In General Linguistics* (1974) de Saussure identifies two properties of language: first, the 'synchronic' properties, the static structures and rules of language as understood by the collective who use it; and second, the 'diachronic' properties, the tendencies of language towards evolution and change. De Saussure concerns himself almost exclusively with the synchronic properties of language.

According to de Saussure, the basic unit of language is the 'sign' which is in turn made up of the 'the concept' (the idea) and 'sound image' (the spoken word). These de Saussure refers to as the 'signified' and the 'signifier' respectively (1974, pp.65-67). De Saussure further claims that both concepts (signifieds) and sound images (signifiers) are created simultaneously through the connection of a slice of 'jumbled ideas' with a slice from 'the equally vague plan of sounds' (p.112). De Saussure makes two central points in relation to the operations of the sign. First, that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is *arbitrary* (pp.67-69): there is no one sound image that is connected to a particular concept/signified. Second, that all signs have meaning only through the horizontal relationship between signifiers in the signifying chain (pp.114-117). More specifically, de Saussure argues that signs are

defined ... negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is in being what the others are not. (1974, p.117)

De Saussure's claim that meanings are created through the interplay of signifiers has become a central tenet of semiotics, a field of inquiry which explores the process of meaning-making through signification. It is within this broad field of semiotics that all the theorists examined in this chapter can be located.

Charles Sanders Peirce

While the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce are not part of the French intellectual tradition they do take one step beyond de Saussure in challenging the modernist referential thesis of language. Peirce's writings also provide a useful stepping stone between de Saussure's structuralism and the poststructuralism of Derrida, Benveniste, and others. Paradoxically also, as I will demonstrate at the end of the chapter, some of Peirce's ideas throw into relief some problems in the poststructural notion of the subject.

Pierce introduces the issue of materiality into the primarily linguistic agenda of semiotics through his attention to the 'referent' or object referred to (Silverman: 1983, p14). Pierce situates the 'referent' (material object) in a triad with the 'sign', equivalent to de Saussure's signifier (sound image), and the 'interpretant', equivalent to de Saussure's signified (concept). In a claim that bears some relationship to de Saussure's argument that meaning is produced through the interplay of signifiers, Pierce argues that the referent, the material object referred to, can only ever be encountered as an interconnecting series of interpretants (Silverman: 1983, pp.14-17). Put another way, and anticipating the thinking of Derrida, Pierce argues that 'representations provide us with our only access to reality' (Silverman: 1983, p.17). Again anticipating the thinking of Derrida and this time also Benveniste and Lacan, Pierce extends this claim about the material referent to subjectivity. He writes:

the word or sign which man uses *is* the man himself.... the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign.... the man and the ... sign are identical.... Thus my language is the sum total of myself; for the man is the thought. (Pierce in Silverman: 1983, p.18)

Pierce also pays attention to particular types of signs, including: personal pronouns and proper names, which he refers to as 'indexical' signs; and photographs, paintings, and cinematic images, which he refers to as 'iconic' signs (Silverman: 1983, pp.19-21). Pierce argues, where pronouns and proper names evoke meaning through a combination of mental image and word – they 'function ... like a pointing finger' 'mak[ing] a direct and individual reference' that 'elicits the mental image of a living person, or one specific to a particular historical period' – iconic signs on the other hand, evoke meaning through mental image alone (Silverman: 1983, p.21). I will return to this distinction shortly. At this point I note that Pierce's attention to pronouns dovetails with Benveniste's poststructuralism, yet his more general claim that the subject is a product of signification dovetails with the thinking of Derrida.

Derrida

Derrida's ideas refine the reconceptualisation of the relationship between language and the material referent that begins to take shape in Pierce's writing. Yet Derrida's thinking is situated in a different tradition as part of a movement which emerges from yet moves beyond de Saussure's structural linguistics. In 'Semiology and Grammatology' (1981) Derrida notes that his thinking moves beyond de Saussure's in a number of ways. First, it

replaces de Saussure's concept of language as sound (voice or phonetic sign) with language as writing. Second, it focuses on language as change rather than structure and convention. And finally, it rejects de Saussure's distinction between signifier and signified (pp.20-24). These developments in Derrida's thinking have had a significant impact on what has emerged as a poststructural understanding of subjectivity.

According to Derrida, western metaphysics, de Saussure's thinking included, is 'logocentric' in that it relies on the notion of a pivotal 'transcendental signified', and on transcendental signifieds more generally ('Semiology and Grammatology', 1981, pp. 17-19). Within the logic of western metaphysics, Derrida argues, 'The sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself', in place of a 'meaning or referent' which is assumed to be 'present' outside of its signification (1991, p.61). Derrida refutes this idea that 'things', either concepts or objects, have a 'positivity' or 'presence' outside of signification; he rejects, in other words, the notion of the transcendental signified. According to Derrida, because all elements within the signifying system are at one point or another signifiers which function only in reference to others signifiers, there can be no signifieds which transcend the signifying process ('Semiology and Grammatology', 1981, p.20 & p.26). In other words, for Derrida, not only conceptual meaning (de Saussure's claim) but the material 'things' themselves are produced through the signifying process.

Derrida's refusal of transcendental signifieds extends to the production of difference. Western metaphysics, Derrida argues, assumes that each term of binary pairs (such as hard/soft), is 'present in and of itself, [and] refer[s] only to itself', assumes, in other words, that the difference between the two terms exists prior to their representation in language ('Semiology and Grammatology', 1981, p.26). Refuting this claim Derrida argues that both the meaning of each term and the difference between them are constituted through the simultaneous construction of both parts of the pair in language. More specifically, he claims in an uptake of de Saussure, that 'soft' is defined according to what is not included in the definition of 'hard', and vice versa; such that each term necessarily contains a (hidden) reference to the 'other' that is simultaneously constituted. For Derrida the apparent self-presence and autonomy of each term is nothing more than a fraud concealing the reference to the 'other' that is the condition of its identity. For Derrida there are no presences, 'There are only, everywhere, differences' ('Semiology and Grammatology', 1981, p.26). It is through his rejection of transcendental signifieds in combination with his application of de Saussure's second principle that Derrida emphasises two dynamics of language. The first is the hidden but 'continual process of exclusion and setting up of differences' at work in the creation *and* the maintenance of meaning (Davies: 1994, p.257). The second, a corollary of the first, is the

inherent mutability and contestability of meaning. Derrida connects these two dynamics of language to a third dynamic, '*différance*', which he defines as the space of undefinable possibilities from which meanings and differences erupt ('Semiology and Grammatology', 1981, p.27). According to Derrida, as the space exceeding the rules of language which denote things as present and absent, *différance* is the space of 'irreducible alterity', of radical otherness ('Positions', 1981, p.81).

Derrida extends his analysis of the production of differences to the matter of subjectivity claiming the subject as referent, just like the object, to be 'an effect of *différance*, an effect inscribed in the system of *différance*' ('Semiology and Grammatology', 1981, p.28). According to this argument the subject just like the material object is never self-present but dependent for its meaning on the other subjects simultaneously created in the process of signification. Because the subjectivities of 'man' and 'woman' are each determined by the simultaneous creation of the other, the meaning of these too, just like any other differences, are infinitely contestable. It is in this context that Derrida writes: 'there is no truth in itself of the sexual difference in itself, of either man or woman in itself' (1979, p.103).

Benveniste

It is Derrida (and arguably also Pierce) who challenges the modernist referential thesis of language by rejecting transcendental signifieds, by situating the subject as referent *within* signification. However it is Benveniste who locates this production of the subject even more specifically in the operations of the personal pronoun. According to Benveniste the personal pronoun is a very particular type of signifier in that each 'I' and 'you' is identifiable only within specific concrete instances of discourse (1971, pp.224-226). He writes:

There is no concept 'I' that incorporates all the 'I's that are uttered at every moment in the mouths of all speakers, in the sense that there is a concept 'tree' to which all the individual uses of 'tree' refer... (1971, p.226)

Benveniste argues, because each personal pronoun has only a 'momentary reference', subjectivity 'falls into abeyance' between each discursive event (Silverman: 1983, p.45). For Benveniste, in other words, 'it is literally true that the basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language' (1971, p.226). While Benveniste's reference to language as 'discourse' is more general than Derrida's emphasis on language as writing, between them Benveniste and Derrida produce a distinctly poststructural position on subjectivity. This position Davies encapsulates in the following way:

The point is that I only come to know myself through contrast with other subjects, and therefore have an existence which is indissociable from the network of discursive relations in society. (1994, p.243)

This poststructural position that the subject is indissociable from the relations of signification within which it is situated has been interpreted by some as a position claiming that there is only language (or in Derrida's case text); that there is no material referent. This critique argues that the poststructural subject appears as yet another disembodied version of the subject: where the modernist subject is disembodied as cogito, the poststructural subject is disembodied as text (Bordo: 1990, pp.142-143). However Diprose (1991) argues that Derrida (and by implication Benveniste) 'does not forget the material referent', does not forget the materiality of the subject; she continues, it is just that for Derrida this materiality, this 'body cannot be separated from the discourses which inform it with meaning and value and which it comes to represent' (1991, pp.16). This proposition that materiality itself and even more specifically the materiality of subjectivity is inseparable from the field of signification in which it is situated is a proposition that is more explicitly developed in Foucault's notion of subjectivity. It is the explicit placement of the body centrally in Foucault's theory of the subject that makes it virtually impossible to direct the same charge of anti-materialism at Foucault that some have directed at Derrida. It is also the centrality of the body to Foucault's argument that appeals to feminists who wish to challenge the disembodied/transcendent subject of western philosophy.

Foucault

The Subject as Product of the Power-Knowledge Interaction.

Foucault, like Derrida, is interested in reconceptualising the subject as an effect of language, but not in a way that follows so directly from de Saussure's analysis. Foucault's (1972) interest is in language, not so much as relations between signs, but as relations between statements which become grouped together in 'discursive formations' and which revolve around particular 'objects'. Foucault refutes the 'naturalness' and 'universality' claims of discourses and their objects by analysing the historical conditions of their emergence (1972, Ch.s 1-3). In a manner reminiscent of Derrida's rejection of transcendental signifieds, Foucault writes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that:

What ... we wish to do is to dispense with 'things'. To 'depresentify' them.... To substitute for the enigmatic treasure of 'things' anterior to discourse, the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse. To define these *objects* without reference to the *ground*, the *foundation of things*, but by relating them to

the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance. (1972, pp.47-48, Foucault's italics)

For Foucault the subject too is as historically contingent as any other object or referent (1972, p.16; 1977, pp.27-28). While Foucault's conceptualisation of power, to which I shall now turn, is central to his understanding of subjectivity, Foucault states that 'it is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme of my research' (1982, p.209).

Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and 'Truth and Power' (1980) that power takes the form less and less of power possessed by individuals (monarchs) or groups (class), or that centralised in the law or the state, and more and more the form of 'strategy' 'exercised' at the 'grass roots level'. This peripheral operation of power Foucault describes as both 'material, physical, corporeal' – 'bio-power' ('Body/Power', 1980, p.57), and 'dispersed, heteromorphous, localised' – 'micro-power'. By the latter Foucault means that power is interwoven into the network of relations and institutions which form the social fabric: family, school, church, workplace, hospitals etc ('Power and Strategies', 1980, p.142). Foucault makes two important claims about bio/micro-power. The first is that 'metapower ... can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in [the] whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations' that operate at the periphery ('Truth and Power', 1980, p.122). The second is that micro or bio-power is 'productive' rather than 'repressive' (1977, p.194).

Foucault argues that micro/bio-power is productive in two important senses. First, it produces knowledge:

there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (1977, p.27)

And, according to Foucault, it is not only discreet institutional knowledge fields such as 'medicine' or 'psychiatry' that are the bearers of power. According to Foucault, any relationships of communication which transmit information by means of a language, a system of signs, or any other symbolic medium.... can have as their objective or as their consequence certain results in the realm of power...(1982, p.217)

Second, Foucault argues, through knowledge power is productive in that it 'invests' or produces human subjects. Foucault writes that subjects are

destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power. ('Two Lectures', 1980, p.94)

For Foucault, in other words, it is through discourses which purport to contain the truths about us and through the power inherent in these discourses that we become 'self' conscious. In Foucault's own words individuals are the 'field of application' or the 'real effects' of power ('Two Lectures', 1980, p.97). According to Foucault, however, it is not only through discourses or knowledges that power acts to constitute subjects. Power operates through a number of techniques and tactics which bear directly on bodily practices. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault argues that 'discipline' and related practices such as 'supervision', 'timetabling', 'surveillance', 'examination' and 'correction', 'invest', 'mark', and 'train' a subject/body which produces its own normalisation. And in many instances, it seems this production of 'docile bodies' occurs in the absence of the word (spoken or written). Nonetheless, Foucault's claim that 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge' (1977, p.27) suggests that all techniques and tactics of subjection, even those unspoken, are supported by a corresponding field of knowledge.¹

Foucault's understanding of subjectivity challenges the modernist conception of the subject on two fronts. His positing of the subject as a 'dynamic exteriority' challenges the modernist conception of the subject as a metaphysically bestowed 'self-referential' 'internality' (Braidotti: 1991, p.38). His conceptualisation of the subject as one produced by power at the material/corporeal level of everyday existence challenges the 'disembodied' character of the enlightenment subject noted by feminists such as Lloyd (1984). That the Foucauldian subject is *indeed* embodied is reinforced when Foucault writes in 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' of the body/subject as 'the inscribed surface of events (traced by language ...) a body totally imprinted by history' (1986, p.83); and again when he refers to the body/subject as one 'cut' by knowledge (p.88). For Foucault the concept of micro/bio-power means that the subject is shaped by knowledge at the most material/physical level of its being.

Resistance to Normalizing Discourses: Remaking the Self.

Following Foucault's claim that discourse/knowledge shapes the embodied subject is a subsequent claim that some knowledges become 'subjugated' or 'marginalised' by dominant and 'globalizing' knowledges, among which Foucault includes science ('Two Lectures', 1980, pp.82-85). According to Foucault the intellectual has a place in resisting such subjugating knowledges by speaking and operating (as Lyotard also implies) not from the level of collective or global consciousness, but from 'within specific sectors, at the precise

¹ For instance, a teacher standing out in front of a class of facing pupils engages in surveillance and discipline in the absence of the word. Yet according to Foucault's argument, the surveillance set-up of the classroom will be supported by a corresponding field of knowledge, in this instance probably 'child development'.

points where their own conditions of life and work situate them' ('Truth and Power', 1980, p.126). Indeed Foucault argues that any individual can resist subjugating knowledges because all individuals are the 'vehicles of power' as well as its 'effects' ('Two Lectures', 1980, p.98). Foucault regards resistance as the 'underside' of power, as the potential to act upon the actions of others ('Power and Strategies', 1980, p.138; 1982, p.220). According to Foucault because all relations of power contain this possibility of resistance, individuals are never trapped by power but always free to respond to power in a myriad ways (1982, p.221). Foucault continues, arguing that as individuals we are free to contest the truths and knowledges by which we have been made. Indeed, Foucault endorses such resistance to the normalizing effects of bio/micro-power. He writes:

We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. (1982, p.216)

Drawn to the relationship that the classical Greek individual has to himself, Foucault suggests in remaking ourselves that 'we have to create ourselves as a work of art.' ('On the Genealogy of Ethics', 1986, p.351). Such an aesthetic relationship to the self Foucault contrasts to 'the Californian cult of the self' in which 'one is supposed to discover one's true self' (1986, p.362). With this distinction in mind Foucault suggests that we recreate ourselves, not by 'reveal[ing] the hidden', but by 'reassembling' 'the already said', in other words, by rearranging the knowledges by which we know ourselves (1986, p.365). For Foucault the remaking of subjectivity, just like its creation, occurs via the means of the knowledge/power intersection.

POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND FEMINISM

Feminism has made productive use of poststructural thinking. As I have already indicated Foucault's thinking has been invaluable to feminism because it has provided a challenge to the *disembodied* subject of western thinking. Feminists have also taken up Derrida's claim of 'woman' as infinitely contestable as a positive challenge to the modernist conception of woman as given and immutable. Indeed there are some more sobering implications of Derrida's ideas for feminism thought. With the assistance of Jay (1981), Grosz observes that the fixing of paired terms in western logocentric thinking occurs through one term that holds 'the structurally dominant position' having 'the power of defining its opposite', at the same time that this dominant term is able to 'disavow its intimate dependence' on the other term (1989, p.27). Cixous (1981) observes that historically it has been 'man' or 'masculinity' that has been the structurally dominant term, while 'woman' or

'femininity' has suffered the double fate of being defined by the masculine and having its necessity to the same denied.² In a similar vein Irigaray (1985b) refers to the feminine as the silent sub-story supporting the masculine plot: for Irigaray the culture of the west is *phallogentric*. In that Derrida's thinking enables the exposure of this phallogentrism his thinking is in accord with Lloyd's observation that the subject of western thinking has always been a masculine subject.³ In this respect at least Derrida's thinking is valuable to feminism.

Some feminist writers regard the deconstruction of 'woman' – facilitated by Derrida's analysis – as 'an inevitable characteristic of the contemporary politics of difference'. This argument claims that such an undermining of the category 'woman' is the only way to acknowledge differences between women (Gunew & Yeatman: 1993, p.xxiv). While this move of deconstructing 'woman' seems inherently just, it is not clear that it is entirely helpful to feminism. If the category of 'woman' is lost then what is the basis of feminism? With a similar concern Fraser and Nicholson observe that Lyotard's claim of the necessarily local roots of knowing forecloses the possibility of any critical analysis of 'broad-based relations of dominance and subordination along lines like gender, race, and class' (1990, p.23). This thesis accepts the postmodern position that knowledge is located. However it takes the view that gender remains one of the key determinants of located knowing; it takes the view that gender continues to be a legitimate and indeed necessary focus for critical analysis.⁴ I shall now highlight a problem in the poststructural notion of the subject that should be of concern to feminism.

This problem in the poststructural notion of the subject that should be of concern to feminism emerges initially in what Silverman (1983) observes as the logocentrism of semiotics. 'Logocentrism' is a term Silverman uses differently to Derrida to describe the way in which the field of semiotics, despite its interest in the production of meaning through a variety of sign systems, tends to assume both, 'that language constitutes the signifying system *par excellence*, and, that it is only by means of linguistic signs that other signs become meaningful' (Silverman: 1983, p.5). In this section: I track the development of this logocentrism through the thinking of the theorists explored above; I demonstrate in the terms of some of the theories themselves that this logocentrism is unjustified; and, I consider how this logocentrism emerges as a problem that poststructuralism has with the extralinguistic.

First, I turn to the logocentrism of de Saussure's thinking. De Saussure does recognise and examine systems of signification other than language. However, as Silverman

² Cixous observes that the 'power of producing the other is a power that never returns to [the feminine construct]' (1981, p.47).

³ Lloyd (1984) observes that the feminine construct is constituted of all that privileged 'man' dissociates from his 'self'.

⁴ At the same time the author acknowledges that the particular gendered critique in the following chapters is a response to the western knowledge tradition and the more general western context in which it is located.

notes, de Saussure claims for language the status of ‘master-pattern for all branches of semiology’ while he also valorises language ‘as the most semiotically ‘ideal’ system of signification (de Saussure in Silverman & Silverman: 1983, p.8). Yet de Saussure himself undermines at least the first part of this claim – that languages is the ‘master-pattern’ for all sign systems – in his own observation that some sign systems, for instance symbol and gesture, do not conform to his first rule of language: the arbitrary connection of signifier and signified (pp.7-8). Silverman quotes de Saussure’s own example that ‘The symbol of justice, a pair of scales, could not be replaced by just any other symbol, such as a chariot’ (1983, p.8).

Like de Saussure’s, Pierce’s thinking contains its own logocentrism and its own inherent contradiction. When Pierce claims that ‘the ... sign which man uses *is* the man himself Thus my language is the sum total of myself’ (Pierce in Silverman: 1983, p.18) he engages in slippage from ‘sign’ to ‘language’: he reduces signification to language. However, at the same time in ‘icons’ Pierce observes a signifying system that is entirely non-linguistic. If it is the case, as Pierce claims, that iconic signs evoke meaning through mental image alone, then signification cannot be reduced to language. Indeed as Silverman observes

Pierce’s icon bears many affinities with what Freud calls the ‘thing-presentation’, the mental image of an object which joins with the ‘word-presentation’ to form a signifying unit ... (1983, p.21)⁵

Put another way, Pierce’s iconic signs bring to mind Freud’s reference to ‘thinking in pictures’ which he considers to be ontogenetically older than ‘thinking in words’ (‘The Ego and The Id’, 1923, p.21). Furthermore, Pierce’s claim ‘that linguistic syntagms are dependent’ on both iconic and indexical signs (Silverman: 1983, p.21) is congruent with Freud’s claim that linguistic meaning is created when ‘thing presentation’ combines with ‘word presentation’. Indeed Pierce’s claim backed by Freud’s argument suggests, contrary to the logocentrism of semiotics, that language as a system of signification relies at least in part on sign systems that are ontogenetically (and phylogenetically) older than itself. If this is the case then the claim that non-linguistic signs can only become meaningful through language becomes problematic.

While Pierce reduces signification to language on the one hand, and then observes on the other that language depends on systems of meaning making (and sensory systems) that pre-date the word, the thinking of Derrida and Benveniste has no such inconsistencies. This is because for both these thinkers meaning-making is situated entirely in the linguistic realm. Derrida and Benveniste have no need to claim language as the master-pattern of sign systems because for them meaning making is language; signification *is* language. Put another way, the

⁵ Silverman continues that ‘The icon also anticipates Lacan’s notion of the ‘imaginary’, a spectrum of visual images which precedes the acquisition of language in the experience of the child’ (1983, p.21).

thinking of Derrida and Benveniste is more thoroughly logocentric – in Silverman’s sense – than the thinking of either de Saussure or Pierce. Indeed, it could be argued that it is Derrida’s rejection of de Saussure’s phonic understanding of language – an understanding which seems to link language to sound as a sensory system which pre-dates the word – that actually disconnects language as a signifying system from other, non-linguistic, signifying systems. It is because for both Derrida and Benveniste signification is language, and in turn the subject a product of signification, that for these two thinkers the subject *is* language. With signification reduced to language there seems to be no place for extralinguistic aspects of subjectivity.

Foucault’s thinking appears to have a more complex relationship to the extra-linguistic than does the thinking of Derrida and Benveniste. This relationship and some questions that arise from it can be explored through some feminist responses to Foucault’s thought. Both Butler (1990 & 1993) and Grosz (1994) challenge what they interpret as a modernist ‘flaw’ in Foucault’s thinking.⁶ The essence of this challenge is encapsulated in Grosz’s observation, that when Foucault proposes ‘bodies and pleasures’ exceeding inscription as a potential source of a ‘counterattack against the deployment of sexuality’, he reveals, she claims, his ‘commit[ment]...to...something outside of or before the processes of inscription, a preinscriptive surface’ (1994, pp.155-156).⁷ While Grosz is critical of this flaw in Foucault’s thinking her response in *Volatile Bodies* (1994) does actually allow for extralinguistic modes of inscription.⁸ Engaging a more Derridean and according to the above analysis more reductive notion of the subject Butler responds to Foucault’s ‘flaw’ in a move of theoretical purification. She refuses Foucault’s notion of a pre-inscriptive and disruptive materiality (*Gender Trouble* 1990) and argues in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) that bodies are solely the material effects of signification. Engaging in the same type of theoretical purification as Butler, Kirby⁹ argues that:

the referent isn’t so much hidden, or out of reach behind the adumbration of an ‘*effet de réel*’. Rather the referent is an immanence, a semiological complicity... (1991, p.99)

For both Kirby and Butler there is no pre-inscriptive surface: the referent/the subject is wholly and solely ‘a field of language’, to use Kirby’s own words (1991, p.98).

Of course the problem of interpreting this feminist critique of Foucault depends entirely on how the terms ‘semiology’ and ‘inscription’ are understood. As I have indicated,

⁶ Kirby (1991) challenges a similar intrusion of the extra-linguistic into poststructuralism more generally.

⁷ Here ‘inscription’ can be understood as the process by which signification comes to mark subjectivity.

⁸ That Grosz (1994) is actually open to the extralinguistic is implied in her elucidation of a process of inscription that occurs through the mother’s physical handling of the infant.

⁹ However Kirby’s argument is with Psychoanalysis rather than with Foucault.

some branches of semiology do consider systems of meaning-making, or modes of signification that are non-linguistic. However, as I have also indicated, Derrida's semiology, with which at least Butler's and Kirby's critiques align, is thoroughly linguistic. And, given the type of prelinguistic subjectivity I have detailed in Chapter 1, I wonder at the wisdom of purifying Foucault's theory of the subject to align it with another which conceives of meaning-making and subjectivity solely in terms of language. Surely a wiser feminist move would be to explore what begins to appear as a problem that poststructuralism has with the extralinguistic.¹⁰ I will confront this problem by considering in more detail the analysis that I have begun in the previous few pages. I will elucidate the problem more specifically in terms of the comparative treatment of the 'thing', or materiality, in poststructuralism on the one hand and psychoanalysis on the other.

THE 'THING' AND ITS STATUS

I noted in Chapter 1 that Freud conceptualized 'thing' cathexis as the investment of psychic energy in 'the direct memory image of' and the 'remoter memory traces' of prelinguistic experiences. These early 'instinctual' experiences and their memory traces Freud came to term the 'id'. While Freud was inclined to emphasise the imaginal (visual sense) aspect of id experience, with the help of Kristeva and Tomkins and through a particular re-reading of Freud I argued for the centrality of both *the senses* and *affect* to the prelinguistic experiences and memory traces constituting the id. Building on Freud's notion of an early instinctual memory I proposed that these early sensory/affective markings (which I termed 'emotional-corporeality') constituted the first markings of subjectivity. In turn I argued these markings to be central to the 'thing presentation' which, according to Freud, meets with 'word presentation' at the dawning of consciousness. I argued in other words, via the means of psychoanalysis, for the existence of a materiality of subjectivity that pre-exists and confronts language in the process of subject development.

Where the above psychoanalytic perspective considers the 'thing' as a materiality of subjectivity that pre-dates language, for poststructuralism, on the other hand, the 'thing' stands for a materiality of subjectivity that is fully contained by language. Derrida (1981, 1991) argues that there are no 'things' outside language. Foucault too, despite his reference to a pre-inscriptive surface also wishes to 'dispense with 'things' ... anterior to discourse'; for Foucault 'things' 'emerge only in discourse' (1972, p.47). As I have also noted above, the

¹⁰ The need for such an exploration becomes even more pressing in light of Grosz' (1984) observation that the pre-inscriptive surface persists - by implication problematically - in the writings of Nietzsche and Lingus (p.156).

feminist abolition of the pre-inscriptive surface from Foucault's thinking tends to bring his notion of subjectivity more closely in line with the notion of the subject as one fully contained by language. While this incommensurability of the poststructural and psychoanalytic treatments of materiality/subjectivity is apparent at this point, this incommensurability does not necessarily persist in the broader field of semiotics. The broader field of semiotics seems to allow for an extralinguistic materiality that poststructuralism does not. Understandably, the degree to which semiotics manages to incorporate the extralinguistic aspects of materiality depends upon the degree to which it considers signification systems other than language.

To recap and also expand, although de Saussure proposed language to be the signifying system par excellence he does acknowledge the existence of systems of meaning-making that do not conform to the rules of language. Further, his understanding of language as 'phonic', as sound image, seems to forge a connection between language and the prelinguistic auditory sense; a connection reflected in Freud's claim that language is built on '[v]erbal residues ... derived primarily from auditory perceptions' (1923, p.20). While Pierce revealed his own logocentric tendencies by sliding from 'sign' to 'word', *his* attention to iconic signs enables meaning-making to be conceptualized as something that also takes place outside of language, through the visual sense in particular. Given that gesture relies heavily on the visual sense and that facial gesture, as Tomkins (1962) points out, is pivotal to affective communication, Pierce's understanding of the role of mental image in meaning-making seems to accommodate the affect-sociality aspect of the early infant-mother relationship (outlined in Chapter 1). In other words, signification as it is understood by de Saussure and Pierce seems to accommodate inscription as *both* extra-linguistic and linguistic processes.

It is only within the writings of Derrida, Benveniste, and arguably even Foucault, that signification or meaning-making and thence the inscription of materiality are reduced to language. Although for Foucault meaning-making and bodily inscription can and does take place in the absence of word, according to the logic of Foucault's argument there is always an accompanying discourse lurking in the background of that scene. Further, although some of the techniques and tactics of inscription to which Foucault refers – discipline and surveillance for instance – tend to implicate non-linguistic sign systems, because such systems are not elaborated, Foucault's thinking appears as logocentric, in Silverman's sense, as that of Derrida and Benveniste. Once signification is reduced to the word in the manner of Benveniste, Derrida and the more explicit Foucault, the process of inscription, the process of marking materiality/subjectivity, becomes solely linguistic.

To this point I have treated psychoanalysis and poststructuralism as two distinct bodies of thought. Yet such a distinction is not entirely founded: poststructural thinking can

be heavily influenced by psychoanalysis, Lacan's thinking being a case in point. However, excluding the case of Lacan which I address in Chapter 4, it is possible to argue at this point that the divergent treatment of the 'thing', of the materiality of the subject, by psychoanalysis on the one hand and poststructuralism on the other, has implications for feminist projects wishing to develop new understandings of subjectivity. For the feminist theorist choosing the psychoanalytic path the way may still be open to incorporate poststructural ideas about the contribution of language to subjectivity. Given the logocentrism of poststructuralism, the feminist theorist choosing the poststructural path is likely to overlook, albeit inadvertently, the extralinguistic aspects of meaning making and subjectivity. Given the centrality of maternity to prelinguistic materiality (outlined in Chapter 1), a feminism that overlooks the prelinguistic is a feminism that does an injustice to maternity. Given the centrality of maternity to the lives of the majority of the world's women, a feminism of subjectivity paying scant attention to the role of maternity in the production of subjectivity is a worrying prospect. This prospect is more worrying in the light of Irigaray's observation that women as mothers have and *continue* to be 'the silent substratum of the social order':

The culture, the language, the imaginary and the mythology in which we live at the moment.... the whole of our western culture is based upon the murder of the mother. The man-god-father killed the mother in order to take power. ('Women-Mothers, The Silent Substratum of The Social Order', 1991b, p.47).

If feminism is to ensure that women as mothers do not continue as 'the silent substratum of the social order', feminist theorising on subjectivity must ensure that the role of maternity remains at the forefront of its explorations. To this end the most useful theories of subjectivity for feminism will be those that pay attention to *both* signification/inscription in its broadest sense, and to sociality as something that extends beyond the realms of language. The next few chapters will be devoted to more in-depth considerations of how the major theories of subjectivity on which feminists draw, including Lacan's, are able to deal with prelinguistic realm of subjectivity.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RELATIONSHIP OF POSTSTRUCTURALISM TO THE PRELINGUISTIC MOMENT OF SUBJECTIVITY: FOUCAULT, HOLLWAY, BUTLER, & DERRIDA

I concluded the previous chapter by arguing that feminism risks perpetuating the silencing of maternity if it fails to consider the place of maternity in subject production. I suggested in light of the logocentrism of poststructuralism – its inability to consider systems of meaning making and signification other than language – a feminist over reliance on this body of theory could lead to the elision of maternity. Of course some may choose to argue that maternity, like all historical practices, is informed by the discourses of its time, and therefore that maternity *can* be incorporated into the poststructural notion of subjectivity. Such an argument fails to recognise that, while maternity as a practice may be informed by cultural discourse, the nascent subject's first experiences mediated by maternity are not themselves linguistic.

In chapter 1 I drew attention to the *prelinguistic* nature of the nascent subject's earliest matricentric experiences. In this chapter I explore in more detail the relationship between the poststructural notion of the subject and the extra/prelinguistic, an exploration begun in Chapter 2. I begin by responding to what may be perceived by some as a reductive emphasis on *discourse* in my treatment of Foucault. I do so by utilising the writings of Hunter (1991) to justify my reading. I make further use of Hunter, this time of his uptake of Wittgenstein, to demonstrate the way in which this discursive poststructural subject is unable to accommodate the emotional aspects of subjectivity, aspects that I have attributed to the prelinguistic mother-infant bond. In the case of Foucault I place this inability in the context of the theory's more general masculine bias. I show that two important feminist uses of Foucault's theory of the subject (Butler and Hollway) founder on the same issue of emotional subjectivity. In the instance of Derrida I observe that his theory gives a place to maternity, but does so, paradoxically, by fixing maternity as a transcendental signified. I argue that this fixing of maternity occurs only because the prelinguistic is elided in the first place.

HUNTER'S CRITIQUE OF POSTSTRUCTURALISM***The Ascendancy of Language.***

According to Hunter (1991) poststructuralism constitutes language as the 'privileged surface' or legitimate 'domain of analysis' through which subjectivity can be examined (1991, p.41). Hunter claims that even Foucault, despite his attempts to 'ward ... off the spirit of structuralism', is involved in the same deification of language/discourse as poststructuralism more generally (1991, p.43). Taking *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Madness and Civilization* as his objects, Hunter exposes how Foucault works, ultimately unconvincingly, to establish discourse as the organising principle of the historical emergence of psychiatry.

Hunter begins by drawing attention to one of Foucault's central claims: 'Discursive formations are the groups of historical relations that provide knowledges with their objects' (1991, p.43). He contrasts this exclusive focus on discourse with a less reductive claim made by Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* that:

the object of psychiatry appeared as the result of the contingent overlapping of certain transformations in the practices and institutions of confinement ... and in the discourse and practices of medicine. (1991, p.43)

Grappling with inconsistencies such as these Hunter concludes: 'Whichever gloss we choose ... this group of relations ... while containing linguistic notations *inter alia* ... is not in itself linguistic or discursive'; rather, the group of relations constituting psychiatry is made up of 'a whole motley of institutional regulations, architectures, economic imperatives, techniques of surveillance, norms of behaviour, practices of confinement, and so on' (1991, p.44, p.46). According to Hunter, Foucault sets out to establish psychiatric discourse as the 'synthetic medium' of the emergence of psychiatry but succeeds in doing so only by subsuming historical phenomenon of a non-discursive type 'into the single register of 'discursive formations'' (1991, p.44). In light of the dubious success of Foucault's endeavour Hunter suggests: 'It is perhaps no accident that ... Foucault did not in fact persist with the project for a general description of discursive formations', but instead turned his focus to 'techniques of living themselves – the open-ended ensembles of behaviours, forms of calculation, social relations, norms, architectures, trainings' to which Foucault applied the terms '*dispositif*' or 'apparatus' (Hunter: 1991, p.47).

Hunter's analysis highlights both, the extent to which the discursive agenda underpins much of Foucault's earlier work, *and* Foucault's shift away from this discursive project in light of its dubious success. Despite this shift, in my reading Foucault's writings on

subjectivity and the ethics of self remain imbued with the discursive agenda. His reference to the subject as 'the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas)' ('Neitzsche, Genealogy, History', 1986, p.83) and to the ethical self as one recreated by 'collect[ing] the already-said, [by] reassembl[ing] that which one could hear or read' ('On the Genealogy of Ethics', 1986, p.365), are evidence that Foucault never entirely abandoned his desire to grant ascendancy to discourse. It is this insistence of the discursive within Foucault's thinking that may explain Hunter's observation that 'Foucault's theorisation of discourse' has become one of the most utilised aspects of his work (1991, p.47).¹ It could be that this discursive uptake of Foucault has been critical in 'discourse analysis' becoming, arguably, *the* analytical tool of the 1990's.²

It is this persistence of discourse in Foucault's thinking that brings his theory of the subject in line with the poststructural subject as proposed by Derrida and Benveniste. And it is this more general poststructural position that the subject is one fully contained by language which Hunter subjects to further scrutiny. Hunter's analysis here is directed at Benveniste but can also be applied to Foucault and Derrida.

Poststructuralism's Reductive Treatment of Language and the Elision of Emotionality.

Hunter (1991) draws on Wittgenstein to highlight the limitations of the poststructural assumptions about language made explicit within Benveniste's thinking. Specifically, Hunter challenges Benveniste's claim that the personal pronoun 'I' always *refers to* an individual who 'becomes a subject' – who is constituted – through that process of referring (1991, p.40). Reiterating Wittgenstein, Hunter observes that 'To say, 'I have pain', is no more a statement about' one's becoming 'than moaning is' (Wittgenstein in Hunter; Hunter: 1991, p.40). Hunter's point, which he takes from Wittgenstein, is that the personal pronoun 'I' is a variable 'form of notation' reflecting a variety of 'kinds of human capacity and agency', and that the referential 'I' – in poststructural terms the constitutive 'I' – is *only one* variation reflecting only one type of human capacity. What distinguishes this particular variation of the 'I', according to Hunter, is that it is verifiable and refutable, or in poststructural terms contestable. For instance some may verify that 'Bill is a marvel' while others may refute/contest claiming that 'Bill is a failure'. Hunter argues that not all variations of the 'I' are contestable in the manner of the referential/constitutive 'I': statements such as 'I have pain', or 'I am sad' are incontestable, or put another way, such statements are verifiable

¹ Hunter claims that the 'attractiveness' of Foucault's discursive agenda is that it 're-animates the (post) Romantic conception of literary language ... a language capable of constituting the whole of human subjectivity and of a subjectivity seeking completeness through the synthesis of such a language' (1991, p.47).

² Also Kirby's (1991) reference to the subject as 'a field of language' is typical of the feminist discursive uptake of Foucault.

only by the individual concerned. To this second variation of the 'I' Hunter applies the term 'expressive' (1991, p.40).

In the expressive 'I' Hunter, after Wittgenstein, appears to be drawing attention to a type of human capacity/agency which reaches beyond words. The expressive 'I' appears to involve an embodied component of experience to which only the individual can be truly privy. In other words, the expressive use of the 'I' seems to refer more to subjective experiences of the self. Others may observe my tears but it is only I who can experience the feelings involved; and, it is only I who can give to these feelings names such as 'sadness', 'relief', or identify that the tears are due to a toothache. Some might refute this and argue that applying the term 'sadness' to the bodily perturbation of 'crying' brings sadness into being. Yet the fact that my interpretation of another's crying as 'sadness' may be met with 'No, my crying is about relief', reinforces the notion that it is only the person crying who is truly privy to its meaning. Indeed it is arguable that such embodied experiences do not require words: I do not have to name my feelings as 'sadness' or 'relief' in order to experience them. In the instance of the expressive 'I' the function words seem to serve is to *normalise* rather than *constitute* experience.

In suggesting that the human capacity encapsulated in the expressive 'I' does not require words I am not suggesting that words cannot themselves produce subjective emotional states. Quite clearly words can and do generate fear, anger, and all sorts of feelings. Rather, I am suggesting that the expressive 'I' gives voice to a human *capacity* and type of self experience that originates prior to language, prior to the experience of the self as constituted by words. Indeed, when the expressive 'I' is considered in this way what comes to mind is Freud's reference to a class of internal 'sensations and feelings' 'belonging to the pleasure-unpleasure series' (originally part of early instinctual life and ultimately forming the germ of the unconscious) which come to consciousness (although can remain unconscious) without being linked to words. The constitutive 'I', on the other hand, resonates with what Freud refers to as a mental event that comes to consciousness only through a linkage between perception/experience and word (Freud: 1923, pp.20-22). I have argued in Chapter 1, utilising Freud and others, that emotional-corporeal aspects of the self pre-exist and meet with consciousness at the moment of language development. The following analysis by Biddle is supportive of this argument while it also reveals the complexity of the relationship between emotions, language, and consciousness.

Drawing on the work of Lewis, Tomkins, and others, Biddle (1997) writes that 'infantile shame' has been shown to 'emerge' between the ages of 'three and seven months', 'in the primary state of narcissism before cognitive notions of prohibitions or indeed an

independent self emerges' (1997, p.231). By comparison, guilt, according to Biddle, does not appear until 'two or three years of age' and involves 'formalised rules and norms' (1997, p.230, p.231). It seems, because guilt requires consciousness and more particularly a consciousness that one has 'transgressed', that guilt develops much later than infantile shame. Infantile shame, according to Biddle, is not so much 'about what the self has done but what the self *is*' (1997, p.231, p.229). More specifically, Biddle writes, shame appears to arise from 'a failure to be recognised' 'by another': shame is a manifestation of an 'internalization of the other's abject rejection' (1997, p.231; p.227; p.229). As the mother is the first other responsible for the creation of the self, it is arguably the mother's failure to recognise that will be the first catalyst for infantile shame.

In summary, together, Hunter's and Biddle's analyses highlight the limitation of the poststructural understanding of subjectivity: the notion of the constitutive 'I' does not do justice to the human capacity for emotion or emotional agency. By relating Hunter's analysis to Freud I reveal the poststructural notion of the 'I' to be limited to 'conscious' or word based subjectivity. Indeed Hunter makes this same observation without reference to Freud:

Benveniste ... shares with solipsism the claim that the subjective use of *I* refers in a special and privileged sense to the subject of consciousness, even if he then differs by affirming that the subject is also an effect of the use of *I*. (Hunter: 1991, p.40)

In a more general critique of poststructuralism and its endeavours to move beyond modernist ideas of the subject, Braidotti (1991) makes a similar observation that 'even in its most disrespectful formulations, philosophy rests ... on the promotion of conscious thought' (p.44).

There are a number of analyses utilising the poststructural framework that ultimately founder on the framework's inability to accommodate the emotional-corporeal aspects of subjectivity. Before considering these instances I would like to place this inadequacy of the poststructural understanding of the subject within the context of the masculine bias of one of its thinkers.

THE MASCULINE BIAS OF FOUCAULT'S THINKING.

Foucault's thinking has received feminist endorsement in the following ways: by challenging the Cartesian mind-body split through making the body central to subjectivity Foucault interrupts the masculine tradition – detailed by Lloyd (1984) – of conceptualising subjectivity as disembodied; by conceptualising embodied subjectivity as a radically contingent entity rather than a 'fixed biological' 'essence' (McNay: 1991, pp.127-128) Foucault's theory of subjectivity allows women to contest the ways in which they have been constituted in so-called 'Truthful' discourses; and, Foucault's notion of 'micro power' as something that everybody exercises has enabled women to move beyond positioning as passive victims of power. However, as a number of feminist writers have noted, a key problem with Foucault's theory of subjectivity is its disregard for sexual difference (Braidotti: 1991; Flax: 1990; Hartsock: 1990; McNay: 1990). The bodies in Foucault's analysis remain largely abstract gender-neutral bodies. On this point it is possible to turn Foucault's argument back on itself. If the body is central to subjectivity, and if the intellectual or any individual can only speak from his/her 'real, material' specificity (Foucault: 'Truth and Power', 1980, p.126), the individual must know and speak not only as a member of a particular action group, local community, employment group, but as someone with a particular type of body. If the sex of one's body is an integral component of the concrete specificities which frame one's speaking and knowing, as the logic of Foucault's argument suggests, then Foucault's failure to locate himself as a male speaker contradicts the terms of his own theorising. Furthermore, Foucault's failure to acknowledge his masculine speaking position places his theorising within the disembodied masculine tradition of Western philosophy. This tradition is one in which the 'masculine' secures the position of 'universal' subject by subsuming and silencing the 'feminine'. As Braidotti writes: 'Foucault elaborates a new ethics that remains within the confines of sexual sameness' (1986, p.3).

Flax, too, is concerned about Foucault's failure to attend to gender, and most particularly about his inattention to feminist observations that 'women's bodies have always ... been 'colonized' by the intersection of knowledge and power' (1990, p.210). With a related concern, Gatens argues that theoretical analyses that 'prioritise 'class', 'discourse', [or] 'power'', have a tendency to lose sight of the fact that the 'crucial stake' in feminist struggles is 'the repression and control of women's bodies' (1991a, p.154). I shall now highlight the ways in which Foucault's thinking on the power/knowledge interaction acts to repress women's bodies, either by silencing the specificity of female experience, or by failing to acknowledge the ways in which the feminine has been, and continues to be, silenced. The

'repression' of the feminine within Foucault's thinking relates directly to his failure to acknowledge masculine domination as integral to the power/knowledge nexus.

Power/Knowledge is a Gendered Phenomenon

As noted earlier, Foucault's focus on the dynamics of micro power has been invaluable to feminism in enabling women to recognise themselves as holders of power rather than being its passive victims. However, Foucault's lack of attention to macro power and his suggestion of little more than an arbitrary connection between micro and macro power enables him to overlook the fact that those with male bodies have been, and continue to be, universally more powerful.³ Hartsock (1990) describes the universality of masculine domination as 'systematic', defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1976) as 'methodical, according to plan, not casual or sporadic or unintentional'. I suggest that masculine domination is 'systemic', that is, 'not confined to a particular part' of the social body but pervading 'the bodily system as a whole' (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1976). While this latter definition of power implies neither intentionality nor consistency, two characterisations of power that Foucault deliberately avoids, it does imply much more than the arbitrary connection between the micro and macro levels of power than Foucault's analysis suggests. Further, where the definition of power (and masculine domination) as systemic does not confine women to victim status,⁴ it does allow for masculine domination at the micro level of the social body to become institutionalised in enduring ways at the more centralised, macro, levels of social practice and discourse.

To the possible objection from within the Foucauldian framework, that the ability of *all* subjects to exercise power at the micro level invalidates the conceptualisation of masculine domination as systemic, I reply that not all bodies are *equally free* to resist and respond to power in the way Foucault describes. Indeed, a large number of micro-level relationships between men and women have not been relationships of power at all, but according to Foucault's own definition they have been relationships of violence, where Foucault defines 'violence' as that which

acts upon a body or upon things, it forces, it bends, it breaks ... it destroys, or it closes the doors on all possibilities. Its opposite pole can only be passivity (1982, p.220)

³ Hartsock (1990) expresses concern about Foucault's lack of attention to the universality of male privilege. This male privilege could be understood as one of the 'historical positivities' that Hunter (1991) argues become obscured in Foucault's granting ascendancy to language.

⁴ While it also allows for the fact that men do at times feel alienated by patriarchy.

Throughout history a considerable number of micro level relationships between men and women have permitted only passivity on the part of women. Given this, along with the historical tendency for the more macro level institutions to ignore relationships of violence at the micro level, the mere *possibility* of violence means that even women not involved in violent relationships will be less able than men to exercise their power. In short, from a feminist's perspective Foucault's theory of power is inadequate and over-simplified: it reflects a masculine experience ignorant of the systemic privilege it is accorded.

Indeed, I shall now argue that the bias of Foucault's theory of power is symptomatic of a masculine privilege that infiltrates the institutions which give rise to knowledges such as his. First, male bodies have and continue to a lesser extent to outnumber women in the institutions of knowledge production. Second, and more importantly, within these institutions male bodies hold the privileged positions that determine what *counts* as knowledge. The consequences of men holding such gatekeeping positions are: the knowledges produced within these institutions are likely to reflect masculine experience; and, perspectives based in female experience are likely to be disqualified or invalidated before they get a hearing. Because of these (*unacknowledged*) *masculine rules of knowledge production* women who find their way into the institutions of knowledge production will be offered the opportunity to participate in a *masculine* game, not an opportunity to participate in the production of knowledge 'as women'. In view of the systemic and unacknowledged nature of masculine domination/privilege, Foucault's idea of giving air to the subjugated and marginalised knowledges begins to look much less promising to feminism than it originally seemed. In reference to this inadequacy of Foucault's thinking Flax writes:

The absence of any systematic consideration of gender [in Foucault's writing] is especially puzzling because Foucault claims to be writing 'histories of the present' that will in some way be useful to marginalized groups. From a feminist perspective no compelling history of the present could ignore the centrality of relations of gender and the struggles about them that reemerged in full force in the late 1960s. (1990, p.212)

If one's theorising fails to acknowledge the systemic privilege afforded to one's own sex along with the way this privilege acts to silence women as a marginalised group, the value of that theorising to women, to the feminist agenda, will be limited.⁵ However, the problems for

⁵ Indeed, Davies' (1991) uptake of Foucault's notion of subjugated knowledge in her proposal for establishing discursive agency for women highlights the sorts of problems which arise when the reality of masculine gatekeeping in the arena of knowledge production is not addressed. Davies (1991) draws attention to Smith's (1987) metaphor of the ballgame to illustrate the way in which women 'as women' are discursively constituted as non-agents. Davies quotes Smith: 'It is like a game in which there are more presences than players. Some are engaged in tossing a ball between them; others are consigned to the role of audience and supporter, who pick up the ball if it is dropped and pass it back to the players. They support, facilitate, encourage but their action does not become part of the play' (Smith in Davies, p.45). Davies' suggestion supported by Smith's analogy, that women are absent from the discursive action, is

feminism of Foucault's masculine bias are not limited to these aspects of his thinking. I will address now the ways in which the masculinity of his ideas about 'remaking the self' work against a feminist agenda.

Foucault's Subject Negates the Feminine.

Foucault maintains we challenge normalising individualisation through a process of 'reassembling' the 'already-said' rather than pursuing the 'hidden' or 'non-said' ('On the Genealogy of Ethics', 1986, p.365). This appears to indicate a process of changing one's self through the *conscious* mind. Promotion of the conscious mind is at odds with Foucault's other writings on a number of counts. First, it contradicts his claim in 'The History of Sexuality' that:

power relations can materially penetrate the body in depth, without depending even on the mediation of the subject's own representations. If power takes hold of the body, this isn't through its having first to be interiorised in people's consciousnesses. (1980, p.186)

If power can take hold of the body in this way then surely such deep, non-conscious markings will provide resistance to conscious efforts to change the self. Second, this emphasis on mind/consciousness would seem to detract from Foucault's general emphasis on the subject as an *embodied* subject.

Diprose claims that the fading of 'body' in comparison to 'mind' at this particular moment in Foucault's thinking is founded in an historical tradition, beginning with Plato, which positions the body as hierarchically inferior to the mind (Diprose: 1987, pp.97-98). It is arguable also that Foucault's conceptualising of the recreated self as 'dependent on nothing' ('On the Genealogy of Ethics', 1986, p.368) is closely tied to the historical masculine subject position which lays claim to autonomy and self mastery. In this context Diprose suggests the aesthetic self/body to which Foucault aspires is not a neutral aesthetic, as Foucault would have us think, but an aesthetic 'already encoded with meaning and value' in a social milieu in which the masculine is valued and 'normative' (1987, p.101). Diprose begins to deconstruct Foucault's theory by claiming that the freedom of the transforming subject to master itself

consistent with my claim that there is something working against women's participation in the knowledge game. However, the opportunity for Davies to grasp the extent of this masculine bias slips away when she asks the following questions: 'Who defines this as *the game*? Inside which discourse is it constituted? Who is granted an authoritative position within that discourse? If this is a discourse that is fundamental to the male/female dualism then how can it be resisted?' (1991, pp.45-46). While the first of Davies' questions implies, in line with my above claims, that the game of knowledge production may itself be biased in favour of the masculine gatekeepers, the rest of Davies' questions subtly reduce the parameters of that game from knowledge production more generally to particular instances of discourse. Davies' analogy does make it possible to conceive of other matches/discourses in which women could be on the field rather than on the sidelines. However, what her analogy obscures is the fact that women are rendered discursive non-agents at *two* distinct levels: at the level of particular discourses (matches), and more fundamentally at the level at which what gets to count as the game is decided. If women have little voice 'as women' at this more fundamental level of the knowledge game their presence within particular discourses/matches will be no guarantee of their discursive agency.

through aesthetic recreation is dependent on the negation and exclusion of the 'feminine' other, 'the bodies of women and others who occupy the discursive space of the feminine' (1987, p.103). I would like to utilise but move beyond Diprose's deconstructive response to Foucault by arguing that the 'feminine' excluded and negated by Foucault's masculinism is not limited to the 'discursive' feminine, the feminine as product of the play of differences. I argue that Foucault's project for recreating the self and his more general ideas on subjectivity also exclude the feminine as prelinguistic, emotional-corporeal moment of subjectivity.⁶ Nowhere is the problem of this exclusion more apparent than in two feminist analyses which utilise Foucault's thinking. In the following section I will consider the ways in which the writings of Hollway and Butler remain plagued by the emotionality their Foucauldian framework fails to accommodate.

The Case of Hollway: The Emergence of an Unexplained Emotional Self.

In her book *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology* (1989) Hollway adds the notion of the 'unconscious' to a largely Foucauldian analysis of the subjectivities and intersubjective interactions of a group of heterosexual couples. The conceptualisation of the unconscious that Hollway uses, however, is a very specific one. In a Foucauldian move Hollway rejects as ahistorical the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious as an intrapsychic phenomenon that renders the subject fundamentally split. She chooses instead a notion of the unconscious as a *process* operating within the discourses in which the participating subjects are themselves constituted. Specifically, Hollway conceptualises the unconscious as the space into which slip aspects of subjectivity which do not align with the dominant discourses on gender. When male and female subjects are constituted this discursive shaping creates a category of exclusions which do not 'fit' the discursive productions/prescriptions of gender. It is these exclusions that Hollway refers to as the 'unconscious' or the unspoken of the heterosexual interactions she observes (1989, pp.54-66).

In the intersubjective interactions she observed Hollway found that which constantly fell to the level of the unconscious, to the level of the unspoken or denied, were *always emotions* of one sort or another. These emotions included 'want' (for commitment), (feelings of) 'need' and 'dependence', and 'fear' of 'loss'. In relation to this unconscious Hollway writes:

Over and over again in my material, I found that the positions that people took up in gender-differentiated discourses made sense in terms of their interest in gaining

⁶ This exclusion may also be able to explain Foucault's uncharacteristic appeal to the extra-linguistic as a source of subversive agency.

them enough power in relation to the other to protect *their vulnerable selves*.
(1989, p.60, italics added)

It seems not only that emotionality constantly became the unspoken of the interactions Hollway observed, but more particularly that the task of the discursively located self was to protect this 'unspoken', vulnerable self. Hollway's analysis witnessed the emergence of an aspect of the self that both exceeded and exerted considerable influence on the discursively located self. My contention is that the vulnerable self emerged consistently as the unspoken of the discursive interactions Hollway observed, not because this self/agency was produced by discourse – this would not explain the consistency of its being an emotional self – but because emotionality is actually 'the unconscious' of the Foucauldian understanding of subjectivity employed by Hollway. The emotional self/agency is essentially that which is denied by Foucault's conceptualisation of subjectivity. It is this same extra-linguistic emotional agency which plagues Butler's use of the Foucauldian framework.

The Case of Butler: A Project Requiring an Emotionality it Denies.

In *Gender Trouble* (1990) Butler challenges the notion that there is a 'stable and abiding' subject 'woman' who 'initiates feminist interests and goals'; she claims instead, that the identity, the subject 'woman', is itself produced by what she, after Foucault, terms 'juridical systems of power' (pp.1-2). When the female subject is reconceptualised in this way the feminist desire for women to be represented becomes an agenda of giving voice to a subjectivity constituted by the very forces it seeks to resist. *Gender Trouble* aims to reformulate the feminist agenda in view of this recognition that the female subject is one who stands *within* rather than outside power. Any doubts that this is a discursive uptake of Foucault are dismissed when Butler posits discourse as the synthetic moment of juridical and productive power:

the juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as 'the subject' of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. And the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation. (1990, p.2)

In looking for some solutions to the above dilemma Butler again posits subjectivity as discursively constituted. She writes:

The very complexity of the discursive map that constructs gender appears to hold out the promise of an inadvertent and generative convergence of these discursive and regulatory structures. (1990, p.32)⁷

When in her later book *Bodies that Matter* (1993) Butler elaborates gendered subjectivity as performance, she defines 'performative' as 'that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names' (p.13). Echoing Foucault, for whom the embodied subject is one 'traced by language', Butler claims language to be 'the very condition under which materiality may be said to appear' (1993, p.31). For Butler, in other words, there is no materiality of subjectivity that exceeds the bounds of language.

Some feminist writers have taken issue with the details of Butler's notion of gender as a performative (for example, Diprose: 1993). However the Foucauldian analysis Butler applies to the subject of 'woman' has prompted feminism to consider its own unquestioned assumptions. The conceptualisation of the subject as a discursive product of juridical law challenges the 'assumption of the ontological integrity of the subject before [prior to] the law', and in so doing it undermines the feminist assumption that women share a common identity (Butler: 1990, p.3). If 'woman' is conceptualised as discursively constituted within the law then both her subjectivity and her oppression become specific to her cultural and historical context. This makes it possible to conceptualise race, class, ethnicity and sexuality, etc. as vital ingredients of subjectivity/identity. It makes it possible to recognise the differences *among* women which hegemonic feminism has been wont to ignore. Butler herself writes:

Indeed, the fragmentation within feminism and the paradoxical opposition to feminism from 'women' whom feminism claims to represent suggest the necessary limits of identity politics. (1990, p.4)

However, the most original aspect of Butler's analysis is her extension of Foucauldian ideas as a means of developing an alternative feminist agenda in light of the collapse of the universal category 'woman'. Drawing on Foucault and Wittig, Butler claims that persons are signified in language with 'the mark of gender', that through a socially produced 'matrix of coherent gender norms' stabilised and coherent 'identities' – or what Foucault terms 'the truth of sex' – are produced (1990, p.17). Further, Butler claims this 'mark of gender' is a 'cultural designation' of 'desire' within the dominant heterosexual matrix: in order to establish oneself as a man or a woman one must go through a process of 'differentiat[ing] [one]self through the oppositional relation to that other gender it desires' (1990, p.22). According to Butler, it is because one desires, and, in turn, because desire is

⁷ This statement of Butler's seems to contain the same inconsistencies that Hunter highlights in Foucault's thinking.

constrained by a hegemonic and binary heterosexuality that in being sexed one's subjectivity/identity is constituted/marked as gendered. Butler therefore reformulates the feminist agenda as the necessary displacement of the heterosexual matrix through the 'refusal of gender', which has been unwittingly reified, she claims, within previous feminist agendas. The refusal of gender, Butler suggests, involves 'performing otherwise to normative gender'. Pastiche is an example of just such a refusal.

There are several comments I wish to make regarding what I perceive as inadequacies in Butler's position on subjectivity. The first relates to the question of its proximity to Foucault and the degree to which it is a linguistic constructionist position. Following much feminist debate about her view of the subject, in an interview with Meijer and Prins, Butler restates her position on the subject: '[t]here is no access to [the referent] outside the linguistic effect'. However, Butler argues, 'the referent is not fully built up in language, is not the same as the linguistic effect' - 'the 'there is' gestures toward a referent it cannot capture' (in Meijer and Prins: 1998, p.279). Butler continues: this view

that the ontological claim can never fully capture its object ... makes me somewhat different from Foucault and aligns me temporarily with the Kantian tradition as it has been taken up by Derrida. (Butler in Meijer & Prins: 1998, p. 279)

Webster (2000) elaborates on how this view of the subject translates to Butler's notion of performativity, and what it means for Butler's understanding of agency, both issues critical to feminist debates since *Gender Trouble* (Butler: 1990). Webster writes:

For Butler, the 'doer' is constituted in and through the 'deed'. Her theory of performativity is aimed precisely at capturing the sense in which signification and action are coincident. Yet, significantly, Butler wants to claim, contrary to Benhabib's criticism of her, that agency is not lost or disallowed here. 'To claim that the subject is constituted is not' she argues, 'to claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency' (1995b, 46) Insofar as the subject is the site of endless transformation and resignification and insofar as its constituted character is never fixed but always in process, Butler claims that resistance is always possible. 'Agency' is therefore located by Butler in the very instability of the subject. (Butler in Webster; Webster: 2000, p.8)

In an apparent aggregation of Foucault and Derrida, Butler argues that an excess *within* language (? *différance*) provides the (incompletely determined) subject with both the capacity for agency and the possibility of resistance.

Yet there are two problems with Butler's position here. The first is whether the notion of agency 'defined primarily in terms of resistance' is adequate to feminist politics. Drawing on Brown, Webster argues that 'resistance does not necessarily give rise to a particular (democratic or emancipatory) political direction' (2000, p.17). I argue that any political stance assumes a moral, and in turn a value-based position, from which things are regarded as 'good', 'bad', 'desirable', 'undesirable', and so on. In other words, political/moral positions entail the making of affective evaluations. In Chapter 1, drawing on the work of Freud, Tomkins (1962), Zajonc (1980), and others, I argued that the ability to respond affectively actually precedes, chronologically, the later developing cognitive functions that come with language and consciousness. This is not to suggest that language based consciousness does not influence affective evaluations and responses, but rather to argue that affective responses and evaluations *do not* require language. If the ability to make affective evaluations does not require language then the human capacity for affectivity, contrary to Butler's claim (that '[t]here is no access to [the referent] outside the linguistic effect'), *does* exceed language. Even if one considered affect to be part of an excess within language on which the subject can draw, this notion of excess relies heavily on Derrida's notion of *différance*. I will argue in the next section that Derrida's notion of *différance* is problematic because it relies on the simultaneous exclusion and metaphorisation of flesh-and-blood women.

My contention is that there is a logical flaw in the general terms of Butler's argument: the reformulation of the feminism she proposes actually relies on an aspect of subjectivity, an agentic capacity, for which there is no place in the Foucauldian, and (as I will shortly demonstrate) Derridean frameworks she utilises. To 'perform otherwise to normative gender' requires more than an opportunity for resistance provided by the incomplete determination of the subject within language. The subversion of gender through performativity entails a capacity for affective/emotional response which I argue takes the subject outside the bounds of language. Butler's failure to allow an affective excess is attributable in part to a propensity to overemphasise desire in explorations of subjectivity.⁸ Via the Foucauldian framework Butler emphasises desire by making desire, and more particularly normative heterosexual desire, the sole motivation of subjectivity. Butler's analysis fails to recognise – a recognition made possible only if one permits prelinguistic psychoanalytic theory – that the subject only desires at all (whether or not desire is understood as the 'compelling fait' described by Lacan) – because the subject once had an emotional-corporeal prelinguistic relationship with its mother. It is to this relationship that the

subject owes not only its earliest libido, but also the identificatory-emotional experiences which form the earliest markings of subjectivity. The subject tends towards merging or desire – whether it chooses the heterosexual or homosexual path – only because of the early libidinal, identificatory, and affective merging with the mother.

In summary, Butler's project of subverting gender relies on desire, and in turn on an emotionality and a prelinguistic relationship for which there is no place in her Foucauldian schema. Butler's analysis actively demonstrates that the inadequacy of Foucault's notion of subjectivity lies in the elision of emotional-corporeal aspects of subjectivity.

DERRIDA: WHERE MATERNITY IS IDEALISED BECAUSE DENIED

Derrida's theory of subjectivity is another that is problematic in its treatment of the prelinguistic feminine, not so much because it leaves it out, but because it incorporates it in an idealised form, and in a manner which contradicts the conscious logic of his theory.

In chapter 2 I outlined Derrida's concept of '*différance*' as the space of 'generative movement' from which differences in language are constituted; the space of undefinable possibilities that exceeds the logic of differences. Derrida aligns *différance* with the trope of 'woman': 'That which will not be pinned down by truth is, in truth – *feminine*' (1979, p.55). To avoid any suggestion he may be fixing the truth of feminine identity in making this alignment between *différance* and the feminine, Derrida is quick to point out that this feminine 'should not ... be hastily mistaken for a woman's femininity, for female sexuality, or for any other of those essentializing fetishes' (1979, p.55). Presumably, in light of his claim that 'there is no truth in itself of the sexual difference in itself, of either man or woman' (1979, p.103), Derrida's alignment of the feminine and *différance* is to be understood as purely metaphorical.

Feminist responses to Derrida's use of 'woman' as metaphor for *différance* have been mixed. Braidotti (1991) argues that Derrida, by making 'woman' synonymous with the 'unrepresentability' that is the precondition for logocentric thinking, instates 'woman' as the transcendental, desexualised/bodiless origin of logocentrism – 'the non-truth of truth'. In so doing, Braidotti continues, Derrida instates himself as *master* of that truth, while he both fixes the truth of 'woman' *and* denies her the right to speak of her 'relation to [this] truth' (1991, p.103). According to Braidotti, Derrida's thinking re-establishes *his* mastery and *her* silence in a continuance of the long-standing masculine philosophical tradition. Diprose has a more positive interpretation of Derrida's alignment of 'woman' with unrepresentability. In a move

⁸ This overemphasis is shared by Freud (Ch1) and also Lacan (ch4).

that seems to contradict Derrida she argues *for* a relationship between *différance* and flesh-and-blood women. Diprose claims: 'the bodies of women (real-life women) are constituted by social discourses and practices which position women as other to privileged identity', and therefore women's subjectivities have a special connection to *différance*. It is because of their decentred positioning, Diprose argues, that 'Women's bodies are also marked by an opening towards other possibilities' (1991, p.15).

Moving beyond Diprose's deconstructive analysis, I argue that Derrida's alignment of 'woman' and *différance* is made possible by something additional to women's decentred discursive positioning. I suggest that this alignment is made possible also by women's connection, through maternity, with a materiality that exceeds Derrida's understanding of language/subjectivity. I suggest that the connection between the feminine and 'that which will not be pinned down by [the] truth' of language is made possible because in Derrida's understanding of language/subjectivity there is no prelinguistic moment. In Derrida's scheme of things the prelinguistic moment and the maternity to which it is indebted is truly unrepresentable. It is this exclusion of the feminine as maternity from Derrida's thinking that forges the link between real-life women, and *différance*. I shall now turn to writings where Derrida links the excess of language with maternity more directly, and I shall reveal how in so doing he fixes maternity in a manner that contradicts his own argument.

In *The Ear of the Other* (1985) Derrida critiques 'academic freedom' and autobiography. He claims that both revolve around the fixing of the truth and the establishment of life as a 'living death'. Here Derrida details his understanding of what he terms the 'natural living mother tongue' and the 'dead paternal language'. In line with his other writings, and contrary to the assumptions of autobiography and philosophical writing, Derrida claims that it is only at the moment of writing, only at the moment of putting one's signature to a text, that the 'I' of this *recit* comes into existence. According to Derrida, with each instance of signature – whether autobiographical or philosophical – the 'I' of the *recit* is created anew'. Until that point, Derrida argues: 'that I am living may be a mere prejudice' (1985, p.13). This recurring moment in which the 'I' and text is created and recreated Derrida calls 'the eternal return'. To the whole process of repeated *regeneration* of both 'I' and text Derrida applies the metaphor of 'the living feminine' or 'the natural living mother tongue' (1985, pp.13-22 & p.26).

Derrida contrasts with 'the living feminine' as infinite variability of the meaning the academic tradition of 'listening', which he describes as controlling the text by 'forging links, referring back to prior premises or arguments, justifying one's own trajectory, method, system ... reestablishing/continuity, and so on' (1985, pp.3-4). Derrida argues, because this

academic process is 'a certain kind of reproduction that preserves whatever comes back, then its very logic must give rise to a magisterial institution' (1985, p.20). To academic text/listening, which he considers 'a life principle hostile to life' (1985, p.27), Derrida applies the metaphor of 'scientific, formal, dead, paternal language' (1985, p.26). Derrida goes on to consider the implication of this double metaphor for subjectivity. The subject is one suspended between the death of preservation and continuity, and the life giving moment of the eternal return:

In a word, my dead father, my living mother, my father the dead man or death, my mother the living feminine or life. As for me, I am between the two ... my double truth, takes after both of them. (1985, p.15)

One of Derrida's key concerns is to rescue the regenerative properties of the living mother tongue from the crime that the 'dead father has perpetuated against it':

There has to be a pact or alliance with the living language and language of the living feminine against death, against the dead.... The master must suppress the movement of this treatment inflicted on the body of the mother tongue, this letting go at any price. He must learn to treat the living feminine correctly. (1985, pp.21-22)

My contention is that Derrida is able to use the 'natural living mother tongue' as metaphor for the regeneration of the subject because maternity *is* associated with that period of subject development when experiences and meanings are not pinned to language. And, it is Derrida's own failure to make room for this prelinguistic moment that leads him to fix in metaphorical form the maternity so inextricably connected to that moment. Just like the father tongue Derrida treats the mother badly: he denies the mother a real place. It is true that the mother does have a presence in Derrida's thinking on subjectivity, but this is a place granted only after her original exclusion. This place is an idealised place, one that she may not choose for herself. In relation to this Secomb (1995) observes:

At many moments in the dominant philosophic traditions woman is not so much exploited or excluded but is central to, and entombed or imprisoned within, the philosophic story. (1995, p.187)

It is arguably because Derrida's thinking commits the crime of denying the mother her rightful place that she, the mother, returns to haunt his theory as 'transcendental signified'.

In 'Women-Mothers, the Silent substratum of the Social Order' Irigaray (1991b) observes that in 'the culture, the language, the imaginary and the mythology in which we live at the momentThe man-god-father [has] killed the mother in order to take power' (p.47).

The theories of Foucault and Derrida would seem to be no exception to this observation. Both theories involve an elision or denial of the prelinguistic moment of subjectivity and the maternity to which it is indebted. Foucault alludes to a pre-inscriptive surface but does not integrate this into his discursive understanding of subjectivity. As a consequence analyses utilising the Foucauldian framework flounder on the emotional aspects of subjectivity. Derrida on the other hand includes maternity in an idealised form but only on the basis that he has already excluded the prelinguistic moment of subjectivity. Derrida is able to utilise the notion of women/maternity as *différance* or eternal return only because he elides the place of real women in the production of subjects. In the following two chapters I consider 3 further theorists who have been influential in feminist thinking, analysing the treatment of the prelinguistic in the thinking of Lacan, Irigaray, and Kristeva.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RELATIONSHIP OF LACANIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS TO THE PRELINGUISTIC MOMENT OF SUBJECTIVITY

Lacan's theory of subjectivity incorporates some key aspects of poststructural thinking. However, Lacan's 'insist[ence] that everything he says has its origins in Freud's writings' (Silverman: 1983, p.150) suggests that he situates his thinking, first and foremost, in the psychoanalytic tradition. Silverman describes Lacan's blending of traditions as using poststructuralism to 'extend' and 'enrich' the 'Freudian model' (1983, p.150). Grosz interprets this blending in the following way: by 'Placing psychoanalysis within the register of language and signification, [Lacan] positions Freud's discovery of the unconscious in the explanatory context of language' (1990a, p.72). By combining language (the linchpin of poststructuralism) and the unconscious (the linchpin of psychoanalysis) Lacan produces a particularly *social* reading of Freud's work. This social psychoanalysis has been welcomed by feminism, yet Lacan's thinking has also been the subject of feminist critique. Grosz, for instance, writes that 'Lacan ... [like Freud] take[s] what are the prevailing norms of our culture and ontologize[s] them to enable them to function universally' (1990b, p.106). My interest lies in the fate of prelinguistic subjectivity and the prelinguistic maternal within Lacan's social psychoanalysis.

Lacan's elaboration of the 'mirror stage' (outlined in Chapter 1) is evidence of his theory's inclusion of the prelinguistic maternal, and also an instance of his use of poststructuralism to enrich Freud's thinking. Lacan's notion of the 'imaginary ego' can be read as an extension into the prelinguistic realm of the poststructural tenet, that subjectivity is produced through others. However, Lacan's excursion into the prelinguistic is truncated at the point of narcissism which, as noted in Chapter 1, both he and the earlier Freud considered to be the 'starting point' of the ego (Lacan: 1953, p.93). Freud's later reference to the very early internalization of the breast was never incorporated by Lacan who continued to date the beginnings of subjectivity at the mirror stage. The question remains whether Lacan's divergence from the later Freud is a meaningless oversight or indicative of a more fundamental problem in his treatment of prelinguistic subjectivity. The analysis in this chapter suggests it is the latter.

In the following analysis I reveal how the place Lacan grants to prelinguistic subjectivity and the prelinguistic maternal actually disappears in the course of his argument. I argue that Lacan effects this disappearance through: the assumption of some dubious

concepts; the construction of a teleological story which assumes Symbolic subjectivity as the endpoint and purpose of all earlier experiences; and, most significantly, through a very clever sleight of hand in which Lacan omits Freudian primal repression while also disguising this omission. Lacan undermines his own thinking on the mirror stage and produces a theory in which the prelinguistic maternal ultimately fades from the scene of subjectivity. This 'unconscious' elision of the prelinguistic and his omission of Freudian primal repression places Lacan's thinking, despite his own claims, at a reasonable distance from Freud's (and much closer to poststructuralism).¹

To justify the claims I make in this chapter it is necessary, first, to give an overview of Lacan's theory of subjectivity detailed enough to enable a critical rejoinder. As Silverman notes, this is not an easy task:

Lacan's prose is notoriously remote, and his presentation deliberately a-systematic. Many of the terms to which he most frequently returns constantly shift in meaning. These qualities make it almost impossible to offer definitive statements about the Lacanian argument; indeed, Lacan himself almost never agreed with his commentators. (1983, p.150)

Given the inherent obscurity of Lacan's writings the following overview of his work is acknowledged as one of a number of possible readings.

LACAN'S THEORY OF SUBJECTIVITY

The Lacanian Oedipus and the Internalisation of the 'Socially Elaborated' Ego.

Central to the psychoanalytic component of Lacan's theory of subjectivity is the Oedipal resolution. As outlined in Chapter 1, this resolution is characterised in the boy by a truncation of his Oedipal connection to his mother, and in the girl by the beginnings of an affective/libidinal attachment to her father.² For Freud the Oedipal resolution is also the point at which the 'super-ego' or the 'ego ideal' begins to be established through the child's internalization of critical and disapproving parent figures. In Freud's view it is because the boy and the father compete for the mother's attentions, and because the mother-son bond contravenes the incest taboo, that the disapproving figure most likely to be internalised is the father. According to Freud this internalisation brings about the repression of the boy's attachment to his mother:

¹ In a related point Silverman (1983) writes that Lacan's 'followers have been hard pressed to reconcile Lacan's pronouncements on certain key issues, such as the unconscious, with those made by Freud' (p.150).

The authority of the father or the parents is introjected into the ego, and there it forms the nucleus of the super-ego, which takes over the severity of the father and perpetuates his prohibition against incest, and so secures the ego from the return of the libidinal object-cathexis. ('The Dissolution of The Oedipus Complex', 1924, pp.176-177)³

Freud considers the development of the super-ego and the accompanying repression to be inevitable, and claims the ego ideal to be 'the answer to everything that is expected of the higher nature of man' ('The Ego and The Id', 1923, p.37).⁴ For Freud, the super-ego is the yardstick against which the subject will judge its own developing ego (1923, p.37).

While Lacan's writings make no direct reference to the super-ego,⁵ the type of internalisation that Freud describes as originating the super-ego is implicit within Lacan's understanding of the Oedipal resolution. Lacan, however, is interested in the internalisation of the father not so much as an intra-familial solution to an incest prohibition - although this too seems to be assumed by Lacan - but rather, as a *turning away from the mother towards the father* in a much more general sense. Lacan uses the term the 'Father's Law' to encapsulate both the pending centrality of individual fathers to their children, and the 'authority of the father', the dominance of masculinity, within the broader social world into which the child emerges at that point. To Lacan the Oedipal resolution is the moment when the child begins to internalize the whole spectrum of values underpinning the patricentric social realm into which it is launched simultaneously. Lacan implies the move from matricentric to patricentric sociality is as inevitable as it is in Freud's more limited 'incest' version of the Oedipal resolution.

There are three key points that Lacan makes in relation to the internalisation of the Father with the Oedipal resolution. First that the realm of the Father's Law is inextricably bound up with the symbolic function, with language:

² I have chosen the term 'resolution' over Freud's term 'dissolution' because the former is a more appropriate description of the girl's situation. This is the point at which the girl 'resolves' to direct her libidinal (and affective) impulses towards her father (rather than the point at which her connection to her father faces dissolution).

³ In 'The Ego and The Id' (1923) Freud writes similarly that 'the ego ideal had the task of repressing the Oedipus complex; indeed, it is to that revolutionary event that it owes its existence The child's parents, and especially his father, were perceived as the obstacle to a realization of his Oedipus wishes; so his infantile ego fortified itself for the carrying out of the repression by erecting this same obstacle within itself.... The super-ego retains the character of the father' (p.34).

⁴ Similarly in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Freud claims that the development of such 'mental forces which ... impede the course of the sexual instinct and, like dams, restrict its flow' are 'so important for the growth of a civilized normal individual' (p.43 & p.44).

⁵ Silverman notes that Lacan does use the term 'Ideal' to 'qualify the pronoun 'I'' on a few occasions, and that, interestingly, this usage occurs in his writings on the mirror stage. Silverman argues, 'Ideal' is a term which has meaning only within a system of values', and its appearance within Lacan's writings on the mirror stage suggests 'that the child's identity is from the very beginning culturally mediated' (1983, p.160).

It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law. (1977, p.67)

Hence Lacan's reference to this broader social realm as the 'Symbolic' realm. Second, it is in the context of the values of this broader patricentric realm that the ego or sense of self is shaped:

This moment in which the mirror-stage comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification with the *imago* of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jealousy ... that dialectic that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations. (1977, p.5)

Third, that the ego shaped within the realm of the Father's Law is necessarily a 'sexed' identity. Lacan writes:

the ways of what one must do as man or as woman are entirely abandoned to the drama, to the scenario ... which, strictly speaking, is the Oedipus complex. (1979, p.204)

Lacan's version of the Oedipal resolution, like Freud's, takes the boy's case as exemplary.⁶ However, Lacan's characterisation of this internalisation does, where Freud's does not, shed some light on how the girl's internalisation (or super-ego) comes about. While the girl may turn away from her mother towards her father in the way both Freud and Lacan describe, there are two things in the girl's turning that are different from the boy's. First, the girl's libidinal connection to her mother does not constitute a breach of the incest taboo (from Freud's apparently heterosexual perspective).⁷ Therefore her internalisation of her father/the Father cannot be accounted for in terms of a prohibition on incest. Second, and contrary to Lacan's contention, the girl's father is *not* her 'counterpart' in the Oedipal 'drama'. It is because her father is her *Oedipal object* rather than her Oedipal counterpart that the girl is unlikely to internalize her father/the Father as authority figure in the same way as the boy who experiences his father as a disapproving competitor. Yet Freud's claim that the girl too develops a super-ego (1924, pp.177-179) is warranted if the girl's internalisation is understood as Lacan interprets the Oedipus: if the Oedipal resolution is understood as the point at which the girl's sense of self as 'woman' begins to be shaped according to the values of the broader patricentric/masculine society.

The ability of Lacan's interpretation to make sense of the girl's Oedipal resolution suggests that he might be on track when he points to the significance of the father/Father as

⁶ For instance the idea that the father is the 'counterpart' in the oedipal drama makes sense only for the boy.

⁷ Indeed her libidinal connection to her father is more of a breach of the incest taboo.

something well beyond his (dubious) role as guardian of the incest taboo. Indeed, Lacan's interpretation of the Oedipal resolution makes sense in terms of the argument in Chapter 1: the girl's castration anxiety is plausible only if the penis is understood as a 'phallus', and the phallus as symbolic of the power, status and privilege that attaches to male bodies in patriarchal society. Lacan's thinking seems to identify the power of masculinity both within the broader society and upon developing subjectivity. Lacan's particular understanding of this effect revolves around his own peculiar conceptualisation of the phallus to which I shall turn later. At this point I shall continue on with Lacan's understanding of the Oedipus.

The Split Subject

Freud considers the repression of early maternal cathexis to be part and parcel of the internalisation that occurs with the Oedipal resolution. Indeed Freud maintains this repression leads to the development of a subjectivity split between a conscious and an unconscious. Lacan assumes the same split subjectivity, and he also claims his ideas to be based in Freud's. Thus it is necessary to give a brief overview of Freud's understanding of the development of this split.

In 'The Ego and The Id' Freud writes:

If the ego were merely a part of the id modified by the influence of the perceptual system, the representative in the mind of the real external world, we would have a simple state of things to deal with. But there is a further complication. (1923, p.28)

Freud seems to be referring here to two conditions of the ego. First, to the modification which occurs with the advent of consciousness, where consciousness is understood as a *facilitative* process enabling the infant to act in the world on its own behalf (outlined in Chapter 1). Second, to the development of the super-ego which involves more than an addition to the developing ego. The internalisation of the super-ego is 'a further complication' because this is the moment when consciousness also comes to involve an *inhibitory* function. This inhibitory function of consciousness is also emphasised by Freud when he writes in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that:

the second system [the reality based system of consciousness] can only cathect an idea if it is in a position to inhibit any development of unpleasure that may proceed from it. (1900, p.640)

The inhibitory dynamic of consciousness born with the internalisation of the super-ego could be understood as a 'defensive ego'.⁸

The super-ego and the inhibitory consciousness coordinate to produce 'repression' in the following way. The impulses and ideas relating to the child's Oedipal connection to the mother become unacceptable to the newly internalized super-ego (the disapproving father). The occurrence of these impulses and ideas begins to create feelings of unpleasure within the child. In accordance with the pleasure principle, which aims to avoid such unpleasure (outlined in Chapter 1), the child's consciousness develops an inhibitory function that bars these ideas and impulses from conscious awareness. From this point on the ideas and impulses relating to the Oedipal connection to the mother become stored as *unconscious* memories. This barring and storage brings into being a subjectivity split between a conscious and an unconscious (1900, pp.640-649; 1915b, pp.146-147; 1932, pp.91-92). While Freud's writings on repression do not specify the exact nature of the unpleasure that prompts the repression and split,⁹ castration anxiety is implied in both 'The Dissolution of The Oedipus' (1924) and 'Femininity' (1933). Indeed, in 'Anxiety and Instinctual Life' Freud states clearly that the 'danger' that the child fears 'as a result of being in love with his mother' is that of 'punishment' by 'castration'. It is the fear of this punishment, writes Freud, that is 'the anxiety that made the repression' (1932, p.86).

If the unpleasure prompting repression is the fear of castration, and the girl experiences herself as already castrated (noted in Chapter 1), the girl *may not* develop the split subjectivity that Freud identifies. Lacan, however, takes this split to be integral to the Oedipal resolution in *both* sexes. Lacan justifies this assumption in his particular conceptualisation of castration which, like his concept of internalisation, is much more complex than Freud's. For Lacan castration involves an interconnected series of losses incurred by the individual that culminate with the Oedipal resolution. I will now address this series of 'lacks' and 'alienations'.

The Pre-Symbolic Lack and 'objet a'.

In the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1979) Lacan claims the subject experiences at least two 'lacks' in the course of its development. One of these lacks, explored later, occurs at the point of the subject's positioning in language, and is a lack which Lacan relates directly to the operations of language (as proposed by Benveniste Chapter 2).

⁸ In 'The Interpretation of Dreams' Freud makes reference to 'a defensive struggle' (1900, p.644) which he later elaborates in 'Repression' as 'the second stage of repression' (1915b, p.148).

⁹ James Strachey, editor of *The Standard Edition*, notes that throughout his specific writings on 'repression' and 'the unconscious' Freud continually sidestepped the issue of repression's 'cause' (1915b, pp.144-145).

This lack of 'signification', according to Lacan, is preceded by a chronologically earlier lack attached to being born biologically sexed. Lacan writes:

Two lacks overlap here. The first emerges ... by the fact that the subject depends on the signifier and that the signifier is first of all in the field of the Other.¹⁰ This lack takes up the other lack, which is the real, earlier lack, to be situated at the advent of the living being, that is to say, at sexed reproduction. The real lack is what the living being loses ... in reproducing himself through the way of sex. This lack is real because it relates to something real, namely, that the living being, by being subject to sex, has fallen under the blow of individual death. (1979, pp.204-205)

Silverman interprets this 'earlier' 'real' lack as follows: being born sexed, the subject is 'a fragment of' an 'original androgynous whole', and as a consequence the subject's life 'is dominated by the desire to recover its missing complement' (1983, pp.152-153). To the 'wholeness' (which lures the subject in its lack for its entire life) Lacan gives the name '*objet a*'. To Lacan *objet a*, as promise of wholeness, lures the subject – for reasons which will be outlined later – both into the Symbolic order and into heterosexual relationship (1979, p.205).

In addition to primordial lack Lacan proffers a further explanation for the existence of *objet a* as elusive wholeness; this explanation is apparently prompted by Freud's differentiation of survival and libidinal needs:

On one side, Freud puts the partial drives and on the other love. He says – *They're not the same*. The drives necessitate us in the sexual order – they come from the heart.... love, on the other hand, comes from the belly, from the world of yum-yum.... Everything [Freud] says about love tends to emphasize the fact that, in order to conceive of love, we must necessarily refer to another sort of structure than that of the drive. (Lacan: 1979, pp.189-190)¹¹

According to Lacan, where a 'need' has a fixed and identifiable object through which it reaches its aim, a 'drive' does not. For instance, where hunger will be satisfied by breast milk or food, the oral drive has no fixed object. Lacan writes, the drive is 'simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object' (1979, p.180). Lacan continues, because it is 'the pleasure of the mouth' and 'not the food that satisfies' the drive, 'no object of any ... need, can satisfy the drive' (1979, p.167). Lacan concludes: just like the

¹⁰ A possible reason why Lacan refers to this chronologically later lack as the 'first' lack emerges in the course of this chapter.

¹¹ Interestingly, this distinction between 'the sexual order' and love, or 'yum-yum', supports my claim in Chapter 1 that the nascent subject's early connection to the mother cannot be conceptualised as a purely libidinal one.

original androgyny, the object of the drive eludes the subject. Therefore Lacan designates to 'the breast' the function of elusive *objet a*.¹²

Pre-Symbolic Alienation.

Parallel to his detailing of these two instances of pre-Oedipal lack Lacan outlines a twofold process of pre-Oedipal alienation. Like the early lacks these alienations prefigure the effects of signification within the subject. The first of these alienations involves the central dynamic of the mirror stage in which the infant's identification with an image gives birth to the 'imaginary ego' (Chapter 1). According to Lacan, because the *integrity* of this image contrasts with the infant's lived experience as a 'body in bits and pieces' this identification constitutes a misrecognition ('*méconnaissance*') of the self with an image (1977, pp.1-7):

The fact is that the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as *Gestalt* ... contrast[s] with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him. (1977, p.2)

Further, Lacan claims this image comes to the infant through the mother and thus this rudimentary 'ego is actually alienated from itself in the other person' (1953, p.16). This 'alienating identity', according to Lacan, remains part of the structure of the subject for its 'entire mental development' (1977, p.4). Lacan identifies the second pre-symbolic alienation as the advent of rudimentary speech which, he claims, is manifest in the moment when 'needs'¹³ are transformed into 'demands'. According to Lacan it is because linguistic demands fall short in their ability to express needs that needs return to the subject in an alienated form. Lacan argues that this inadequate translation of needs creates within the subject 'a residue which then presents in man as desire'. To this process of alienation which produces a residue with the dawning of language Lacan applies the term 'primal repression' ('*Urverdrängung*') (1982, p.80).¹⁴

Leaving aside for later analysis the apparent difference between Lacan's and Freud's uses of the term 'primal repression', it is worth noting at this point the negative tone of Lacan's characterisation of rudimentary language. Lacan's suggestion that the infant's first words serve to *alienate* it from its own experiences contrasts with Freud's characterisation (see Chapter 1) of the link between 'things' and 'words' as a process *facilitating* higher

¹² Lacan proposes yet a third early 'lack' which is summarised by Silverman in *The Subject of Semiotics*. According to Silverman Lacan claims that the subject also 'lacks' through the 'pre-Oedipal territorialization' of the libido, a process in which the mother's care of the infant leads to an innervation of the genital zones at the expense of other erotogenic zones. Lacan claims as a consequence of this focused handling that 'the subject loses unmediated contact with its own libidinal flows, and succumbs to the domination of its culture's genital economy' (Silverman: 1983, pp.155-156).

¹³ This is one instance in which Lacan does not seem to make the distinction between 'needs' and 'drives'.

¹⁴ Given that rudimentary speech occurs at some point well before the Oedipal resolution this alienation has to be pre-Symbolic. Lacan's failure to make reference to it as a specifically pre-Oedipal alienation turns out to be - as I shall highlight later - in the interests of the coherence and plausibility of his whole theory of subjectivity.

psychical organisation (and the beginnings of independent functioning in the world). This same contrast reappears in their differing interpretations of the 'fort-da' game.¹⁵ In this instance Freud interprets the infant's use of rudimentary language (and accompanying actions) as the means whereby the infant maintains a sense of its mother's presence (and hence an assurance of need satisfaction) in the face of the growing awareness of her separateness. Lacan, on the other hand, interprets the infant's word-action game as symptomatic of what he considers to be a hopeless chasm which forms within the self at the point of differentiation from the mother. This contrast between these two interpretations of rudimentary language could be understood in terms of a distinction between language as 'presence' in Freud's case, and language as 'absence', in Lacan's case.¹⁶

Lacan argues that the subject experiences a further and final alienation on entry to the Symbolic order when the imaginary ego is replaced by an ego given to the subject through the patricentric realm of the 'Other':

[The subject] speaks in the Other ... because it is there that the subject, according to a logic prior to any awakening of the signified, finds his signifying place. (1982, p.79)

For Lacan, the 'Other' includes not only the social others who inhabit the broader social realm, but also: the unconscious as the site of repressed infantile libidinal attachment, and, the dynamics of signification. According to Lacan the subject has incurred a primordial lack, along with numerous other lacks and alienations, and it is lured into the realm of the Other by the completeness, the certainty, which positioning within signification seems to offer. However Lacan considers this promise of wholeness to be illusory because signification effects an 'aphanisis' of the subject.

Symbolic Alienation: The Aphanisis of the Subject.

Lacan's understanding of the means by which the ego or identity is given to the subject through signification adheres closely to Benveniste's claim (Chapter 2) that language is the basis of subjectivity. Lacan writes:

it is not only man who speaks, but in man and through man that it (ça) speaks, that his nature is woven by effects in which we can find the structure of language,

¹⁵ In 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920) Freud outlines a game he observes being played by a young infant. In this game the infant holds a piece of string to which a cotton-wool ball is secured at one end. Freud observes, as the infant manipulates the string so that the ball goes out of sight the infant exclaims 'fort' (gone), while the return of the cotton ball into the infant's field of vision is met with the exclamation 'da' (there). Silverman writes: 'Whereas Freud describes the child's actions as an attempt to diminish the unpleasure caused by his mother's absences, Lacan stresses instead the self-alienation which those actions dramatize Lacan ... interprets the story more as a parable about the disappearance of the self than the disappearance of the mother' (1983, p.168).

¹⁶ This distinction between language as 'presence' and 'absence' first came to my attention in Sidonie Smith's (1987), *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography*, and is a distinction that may have some relationship to the distinction between consciousness as 'facilitative' and 'defensive', outlined above under *The Split Subject*.

whose material he becomes, and that consequently there resounds in him, ... the relation of speech. (1982, p.78)

Lacan's more specific claim that 'The subject himself is marked off by the single stroke' (1979, p.141) replicates Benveniste's claim that the personal pronoun is the particular basis of the subject of signification. For Lacan, like Benveniste, it is the 'I' of the sentence that brings the subject into being.

Lacan argues, however, 'the person who speaks, whether he appears in the sentence as the subject of the verb or as qualifying it, ... asserts himself as an object' (1953, p.11). As a consequence of objectification the subject becomes divided between its 'being' as the speaker and its 'meaning' as the object spoken about. And, through identification with its 'meaning', the subject effects the 'aphanisis' or disappearance of its 'being' (1977, p.86; 1979 pp.210-211). Lacan writes:

in so far as the first signifier...emerges in the field of the Other and represents the subject for another signifier....has as its effect the *aphanisis* of the subject. Hence the division of the subject – when the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere as 'fading', as disappearance. (1979, p.218)

Because this 'fading' in the face of meaning brings into being what Lacan terms 'another locality, another space, another scene ... between perception and consciousness' – an unconscious (1979, p.56), Lacan considers the subject's coming into signification as one and the same with the production of split subjectivity at the Freudian Oedipal resolution (outlined above). Indeed, for Lacan, it is the aphanisis of the subject through its objectification in language that constitutes the moment of the subject's castration. Because all subjects become subjects of signification, *all subjects*, according to Lacan, are effectively castrated.¹⁷

The Other and the Operation of Desire.

To Lacan, the point of transition into the Symbolic order, the moment of castration and split subjectivity, is the moment in which desire begins to operate. Lacan writes:

It is this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into mediatization through the desire of the other, constitutes its object in an abstract equivalence by the co-operation of others, and turns the I into that apparatus for which every instinctual thrust constitutes a danger. (1977, p.5)

¹⁷ Lacan also explains the 'fading' of the subject in terms of the operation of 'the gaze' (1979, Chapters 6-8). According to Lacan, the scopopic economy, like the linguistic economy, involves a dialectic function: on the one hand a 'looking' equivalent to a 'being', and on the other a 'seeing' or 'showing' equivalent to 'meaning'. Lacan claims that the subject sees itself, not from where it 'looks', but through what is shown of itself as the object of the other's gaze: 'What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside' (1979, p.106).

Lacan's reference to 'objects' as an 'abstract equivalence' relates to the notions of 'metaphor' and 'metonymy'. In the following explanation of Lacan's understanding of the production of desire I use an example extrapolated from, rather than explicitly stated within, Lacan's theorising.

According to Freud, repressed ideas (ideas barred from conscious awareness) come to be represented in distorted form, through the processes of condensation and displacement, as images in the individual's dream life (1900, pp.312-344). Equating the linguistic processes of metaphor and metonymy with Freud's notions of condensation and displacement Lacan claims that repressed signifiers (signifiers barred from consciousness) become replaced in the conscious chain of signification with other permissible signifiers (1977, p.156). Taking the example of the mother as the signifier/idea central to Freudian repression, the process of metaphor sees the signifier 'Woman' (her likeness to the mother being that she is also without a penis) replacing the repressed signifier 'mother' in the conscious chain of signification. Further, because the meaning of 'Woman' is defined by her not being a 'Man' (as outlined by De Saussure), any woman, according to Lacan's argument, can be the equivalent of Woman/mother in a process of horizontal substitution called metonymy. Lacan writes:

The creative spark of the metaphor does not spring from the presentation of two images, that is, of two signifiers equally actualized. It flashes between two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connexion with the rest of the chain. (1977, p.157)

According to Lacan it is through this metaphoric and metonymic replacement of the repressed 'mother' with 'woman' that heterosexual desire is created. To the reasonable objection that this accounts for male desire only – 'man' cannot be a metaphoric and metonymic substitute for 'mother' – Lacan has an answer in his own peculiar understanding of the phallus.

For Lacan, the phallus – presumably because of the inextricable link between language and the Father's Law – is the 'privileged' or 'primary signifier' (1982, p.82). By this Lacan means that:

it is to this signified [the phallus] that it is given to designate as a whole the effect of there being a signified, inasmuch as it conditions any such effect by its presence as signifier. (1982, p.80)

Lacan argues that it is in its function as primary signifier that the phallus, like the breast, takes on the function of *objet a* – as the promise of wholeness and completeness which lures the

subject into the Symbolic order. Lacan continues, because all subjects have incurred a primordial lack

[this] relation of the subject to the phallus is set up regardless of the anatomical difference between the sexes (1982, p.76)

However, the ways in which the phallus draws the subject into, and positions the subject within, the Symbolic order are not the same for both sexes. According to Lacan, on discovering his mother's lack of penis and assuming the penis to be the phallus the boy is propelled into the arena of the Symbolic/Father's Law by 'the threat' of 'lack-in-having': the boy is positioned in the Symbolic order as 'appearing' to 'have' the phallus. The girl, on the other hand, having made the same equation of penis with phallus, is propelled into the Symbolic order by a 'nostalgia of lack-in having', and becomes positioned in that order as 'lacking' the phallus (1982, p.83). But this is not all: because both sexes have incurred a 'real' lack – the boy's 'having' being only an 'appearing' which masks this lack (1982, p.84) – all subjects, according to Lacan, are drawn to see the phallus in the other sex. Through the metaphorical and metonymic substitution of 'woman' for the 'mother', 'woman' appears to man as 'the phallus'.¹⁸ In her apparent 'being' the phallus woman is desirous to man. The woman, in her lack, perceives man as 'having' the phallus: she finds in his body 'the signifier of her own desire' (1982, p.84).

Lacan clinches the relationship between the signifying economy and desire by drawing an analogy between the indeterminacy of the subject of language and the unsatisfactory nature of desire: just as the subject 'look[s] for his certainty' (1979, p.129) through identification with meaning in language, so too the subject strives for wholeness through heterosexual desire. Lacan argues, however, that in the same way the word 'is' (copula) creates an illusion of the linguistic subject's 'presence' and integrity, the penis/phallus (the genital as copula) joins the sexes through a misleading promise of completeness (1982, pp.82-25). For Lacan, the phallus deludes the subject of lack through both identity and desire.

¹⁸ Lacan's assumption that the mother has been the phallus for the child presumably relates to her relationship to the breast as *objet a*. However, in 'The Meaning of the Phallus' (1982, p.76) Lacan refers to the 'phallic mother' to describe the child's initial belief, described by Freud, that the mother has a phallus (penis).

LACAN AND FEMINISM

The ways in which Lacan's theory of subjectivity is valuable to feminism are summarised by Grosz in *Sexual Subversions* (1989), and 'Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity' (1990a). Grosz notes that Lacan conceptualises the subject as a product 'of its relations to the other and the Other, to other persons in its social world, and the law regulating the social'; in so doing Lacan "decenter[s]" the dominant ... concepts of the subject which presume a ready-made autonomous subject' (1989, p.24). While this decentring, particularly of the Cartesian subject's claim to self-knowledge and self-mastery, is indebted to the Freudian unconscious, Lacan's development of the unconscious, as Grosz writes, 'indicates the crucial role language plays in the construction of personal identity' (1990a, p.79). Lacan's attention to language and the social law lifts subjectivity out of the realm of the biological while at the same time his theory of subjectivity stresses sexuality as critical to identity: 'Masculine and feminine identities are not 'natural' but products of a *rift* in the natural order, a gap into which language insinuates itself' (Grosz: 1990a, p.79).

Grosz continues:

[Lacan's] reformulation of Freud's work has helped to make a number of psychoanalytic insights more palatable for and useful to feminists.... For example, penis envy can no longer be regarded as the literal envy of a biological organ.... Lacan's emphasis on language and the symbolic provides a map or grid of the requirements of a specifically patriarchal mode of social organisation. He pinpoints processes that are of strategic value for explaining the inculcation of patriarchal values, which may be capable of being undermined or subverted in feminist critiques. (1989, p.25)

Lacan may replace a biological psychoanalysis with a socio-cultural analysis of subjectivity but his model of subjectivity is no less deterministic than Freud's. As noted earlier, Grosz points out that Lacan universalises and renders inevitable norms specific to our culture. In so doing, she continues, Lacan 'provides a perfect justification for the necessary maintenance of patriarchal values of the two sexes in their present, oppressive forms' (1990a, p.106). The ability of feminism to utilise Lacanian theory to 'subvert' patriarchal values will depend on feminism's ability to counteract the 'ontologizing' moments which fix as inevitable the subjectivity it details.

In the next part of this chapter I reveal the way in which the determinism of Lacan's theory of the subject is a product of, among other things, its distinct teleological flow.

I argue this teleological flow disguises the dubious plausibility of some of the theory's essential ingredients. I undermine the determinism of Lacanian theory and begin to reveal the way his theory works against feminism. More specifically I consider the ways in which Lacan's theory, by means of its divergence from Freud's thinking, ultimately elides, while seeming to give place to, the prelinguistic maternal.

SOME PROBLEMS IN LACAN'S THEORY OF SUBJECTIVITY

The Teleological flow of The Chronological Story: What It Disguises.

As can be seen from the foregoing overview of Lacan's thinking, Lacan presents a theory of subjectivity that has a distinct teleological flow. Each experience in the developmental chronology either foreshadows another, or is lent credibility by being matched by another: the alienation of the imaginary ego foreshadows the alienation of the ego in the field of the Other; primordial 'lack' foreshadows both the drive's lack of object and the 'lack' of signification; the advent of *objet a* foreshadows the subject's relationship to the phallus; the aphanisis of signification matches the splitting caused by the repression of the early connection to the mother; and, the unbreachable gap between need and demand is matched by the aphanisis of 'being' in the face of 'meaning'. Foreshadowing and matching contributes to the theory's overall cohesion while it also creates the sense that each chronological event is moving towards and drawn by a pre-destined endpoint, Symbolic subjectivity. Both the theory's teleology and its apparent fitting together like a jigsaw seem to offer the reader little option but to accept the inevitability of all that it proffers: sex as a state of lack; the phallus as a structural given; desire as a compelling and ultimately disappointing experience, and so on. However, the cohesiveness and teleology of Lacan's theory disguises the dubious nature of a number of its key propositions.

Lacan's notions of 'primordial lack' and '*objet a*' are problematic on a number of counts. First, the notion of an original phylogenetic androgyny – which Lacan shares with Plato (Silverman: 1983, pp.151-152) – is based on the highly speculative assumption that there once existed a third sex. The 'longing' for androgyny which Lacan assumes as symptomatic of a *fundamental* lack of androgyny is more likely a product of cultural constraints on gendered subjectivity of the very type that Lacan himself recognises. To argue that desire of the opposite sex is based on a fundamental 'lack' of androgyny is justifiable only on the grounds that everyone is heterosexual. Longing for a lost phylogenetic androgyny makes no sense in the case of homosexual subjectivity. Furthermore, the suggestion that the subject lacks because it is born sexed appears as a biologically reductionist moment within an

otherwise socio-cultural argument about subjectivity. Equally unconvincing is Lacan's argument about the breast as *objet a*. In this instance of 'lack' Lacan slides from Freud's claim that the drive has no fixed object, to the claim that because the drive has no fixed object therefore satisfaction eludes the drive. Although the drive may have no *fixed* object there are undoubtedly objects of various sorts which do satisfy the drive. The variability of the drive's object is no justification for claiming that satisfaction eludes the drive. As if anticipating the objection that there is no justification for conceptualising the breast as *objet a*, Lacan's theory has a rejoinder in the form of a link between 'the breast' and the earlier primordial lack:

The breast – as equivocal, as an element characteristic of the mammiferous organization, the placenta for example – certainly represents that part of himself that the individual loses at birth, and which may serve to symbolize the most profound lost object. (1979, p.198)¹⁹

Lacan's move to connect the breast to the earlier lack founders on the inability to justify the earlier lack.

If there is anything at all that justifies consideration as a pre-Symbolic loss of some sort it is the 'primal separation' (Lacan: 1979, p.83) from the maternal environment effected at birth.²⁰ While this separation could explain the later tendency for the subject to merge with another, to assume this primal separation leaves the individual fundamentally bereft is an overstated claim. There would seem to be something *more* involved in Lacan's relentless insistence that the prelinguistic subject is fundamentally lacking.²¹ I shall return to this later.

The third flaw in Lacan's theory disguised by its cohesiveness and teleological flow is the dubious nature of the phallus as a structural given. As Grosz writes, the phallus is not 'a 'neutral' term functioning equally for both sexes....it is a term privileging masculinity, or rather, the penis' (1990b, p.122). It is surely this connection between the male body and the phallus, and in turn, the role of the phallus as symbol for the status, power, and privilege accorded to male bodies that *enables* the phallus to take up the role of *objet a*. Indeed, given the lack of justification for the concept of *objet a* (argued above) it is arguable that it is solely

¹⁹ This whole discussion on drives is confused by Lacan's interchangeable use of the terms 'drive' and 'partial drive'. However, Lacan does state that 'In the subject who, alternately, reveals himself and conceals himself by means of the pulsation of the unconscious, we apprehend only partial drives' (1979, p.188). According to this logic, in relation to the pre-Oedipal phase (the phase prior to unconscious formation) reference should be made to 'drives' rather than 'partial drives'.

²⁰ The quote above might seem to suggest that this separation is, for Lacan, the first lack. However, in Silverman's interpretation, the first loss is 'the moment of sexual differentiation within the womb'. It is just that this loss, as Silverman continues, is 'not realized until the separation of the child from the mother at birth' (1983, p.152). This interpretation is entirely in keeping with Lacan's claim about 'two lacks', the first 'being subject to sex'.

²¹ As I noted in footnote 12 (above) Lacan proposed yet another type of pre-Oedipal 'lack', that of pre-Oedipal 'territorialization' of the libido. My rejoinder to this lack is: to claim that such libidinal shaping (through the mother's handling) constitutes a fundamental lack in the subject rather than, more moderately, a constraint on the development of the subject's sexuality, is to presume that the pre-Oedipal markings of the subject are solely libidinal. I have argued in Chapter 1 that the conceptualisation of the pre-Oedipal subject as solely libidinal is an incomplete understanding prompted by the libidinal bias of Freud's own theory.

as a symbol of male privilege that the phallus acts as lure. Men will be lured into the Symbolic arena, into the realm of Father's Law, not because of a fundamental lack but in order to claim and protect the power, status, and privilege that is theirs apparently by birthright. Women, on the other hand, will be drawn into the Father's Law not because they also lack in some fundamental sense but in the *hope* of accessing some of the power, status, and privilege which, in not having the penis, they do *not* have. In other words, to counteract Lacan's 'ontologiz[ing]' of 'the prevailing norms of our culture' (Grosz: 1990a, p.106) the meaning of the phallus as lure must be placed within the context of a patriarchal society which values male and female bodies differently. The phallus is not a structural given; its role as lure is inevitable only as long as patriarchy exists.

The foregoing rejections of both the concept of *objet a* and the phallus as structural given undermine the cohesiveness and the teleological flow of Lacan's chronological story. However, they undermine neither Lacan's observations about 'socially elaborated' gendered identities nor at least some of his claims about heterosexual desire. Lacan's notion of 'socially elaborated' gender identities remains valid in view of the role of the phallus within patriarchy: subjects become gendered subjects in accordance with the meanings of 'man' and 'woman' within the broader social arena of the Other. Heterosexual desire remains justifiable in terms of the lure of the phallus in the case of women's desire, and in terms of 'women' as metaphoric and metonymy substitute for the repressed mother in the case of men's desire. What my critique does undermine is Lacan's claim that desire is both compelling and inevitably disappointing.²²

As it turns out, however, my critique is not necessary to undermine the jigsaw that Lacan constructs. Lacan's theory does its own share of undermining itself: having produced a very complex and convoluted developmental chronology as forerunner to Symbolic subjectivity, Lacan turns around and reconceptualises pre-Oedipal experiences as retrospective creations of Symbolic subjectivity. Lacan writes:

Language has, if you care to put it like that, a sort of retrospective effect in determining what is ultimately decided to be real. (1953, p.11)

Having made pre-Oedipal experiences the necessary preliminary for Symbolic subjectivity, in a declaration suggestive of him wanting a bit both ways, Lacan turns these preliminary experiences into the effects of Symbolic subjectivity. While in fairness to Lacan it is probably necessary to conceptualize pre-Oedipal experiences as *both* preliminary to and reconstructions from the position of Symbolic self consciousness, Lacan's writings in *The Four Fundamental*

Concepts of Psychoanalysis see him building a case solely for the retroactive effects of language. I argue that this approach undermines the chronological story which Lacan is at pains to develop elsewhere. Furthermore, my contention is that Lacan makes the retroactive story reign over the chronological story only by omitting Freudian primal repression from the latter. This omission moves Lacan's theory of subjectivity well away from its professed Freudian base.

The Retro-active Story and the Omission of Freudian Primal Repression.

From the summary of Lacan's theory of the subject it can be seen that Lacan conceptualises split subjectivity and the unconscious as products of the *combined* effect of the repression of the early attachment to the mother, as detailed by Freud, *and* the dynamics of signification, as detailed by Lacan. As Lacan himself puts it, his aim is to 'introduce into the domain of cause [of split, gap] the law of the signifier' (1979, p.23). Lacan makes it clear that in evoking these *additional* dynamics of unconscious formation his aim is to *expand* rather than supersede or replace the Freudian concept of the unconscious. He writes:

we must ... go back and trace the concept of the unconscious through the various stages of the process in which Freud elaborated it – since we can complete that process only by carrying it to its limits. (1979, pp.23-24)

On moving through Lacan's elaboration of the role of signification in the formation of the split subject, however, the reader finds Freud's concept of the unconscious slowly eroded, until the repression of the early connection to the mother fades from the scene of subjectivity. Lacan achieves this fading in a subtle step by step process over the course of *The Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis* (1979).

Lacan begins his elaboration of the role of signification in the creation of split subject by drawing attention to language systems as organizers of human relations. Lacan writes:

Before strictly human relations are established, certain relations have already been determined.... Nature provides – I must use the word – signifiers, and these signifiers organize human relations in a creative way, providing them with structures and shaping them. (1979, p.20)

He then slips from this claim that such 'structures' of 'signification' play a part in human relations to claiming that they are more fundamental to the creation of split subjectivity than Freudian primal repression:

²² This undermining of *objet a* as basis for desire does tend to undermine Lacan's claim that desire has an equal hold on both sexes. Because the woman is a direct substitute for the repressed mother, the pull of desire is likely to be stronger in the case of male subjects. However, this is a discussion worthy of another paper and not particularly relevant to this argument.

[In t]he signifier.... we find ... the basic structure that makes it possible, in an operatory way, for something to take on the function of barring, striking out another thing. *This is a more primordial level, structurally speaking, than repression ...* (1979, pp.26-27, italics added)²³

This reduction in the significance of Freudian primal repression continues until it has little place at all in unconscious formation: the unconscious becomes, for Lacan, largely an effect of signification, that is, an effect of the ‘aphanisis’ of ‘being’ in the face of ‘meaning’. Lacan writes:

The unconscious is the sum of the effects of speech on a subject, at the level at which the subject constitutes himself out of the effects of the signifier. (1979, p.126)

There is, of course, the potential objection that, because the point of entry into the Symbolic realm is the very point at which the child turns from its mother, ‘the sum of the effects of speech on [the] subject’ includes the repression of the pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother. Lacan, however, unambiguously counteracts such an interpretation when he writes:

the stroke of the opening makes absence emerge.... If you keep hold of this initial structure, you will avoid giving yourself up to some partial aspect of the question of the unconscious – as, for example, that it is the subject, *qua* alienated in his history, at the level at which the syncope of discourse is joined with his desire. You will see that, more radically, *it is in the dimension of synchrony that you must situate the unconscious* – at the level of being, but in the sense that it can be spread over everything, that is to say, *at the level of the subject of enunciation, in so far as, according to the sentences ... it loses itself as much as to find itself again ...* (1979, p.26, all italics except first are added)

Echoing this claim that unconscious formation is solely a product of the moment when the subject both finds and loses itself in the sentence, Lacan describes the subject as one who neither grieves, nor even leaves a pre-Oedipal existence on taking its place in the Symbolic order. He writes:

in the term *subject* ... I am not designating the living substratum needed by this phenomenon of the subject, nor any sort of substance, nor any being possessing knowledge in his *pathos*, his suffering, whether primal or secondary, nor even some incarnated logos, but the Cartesian subject, who appears at the moment when doubt is recognized as certainty... (1979, p.126)

²³ While at this point it is not clear whether Lacan is referring to Freudian primal repression or what Lacan himself terms primal repression - the non-translatability of needs into demands - it soon becomes clear that Lacan is referring to the former.

While Lacan's detailing of the mirror stage makes me hesitant to argue that the Lacanian subject is one entirely contained by language (in the manner of poststructuralism), Lacan's writings in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* feel like an eerie reverberation of Freudian primal repression. By making subjectivity and the unconscious a product of language alone, Lacan's thinking effects the disappearance of a prelinguistic corporeal subjectivity marked by maternity. The Freudian primal repression, which fades in the explicit content of Lacan's thinking, is, paradoxically, implied in this fading: Lacan's thinking contains its own act of primal repression. The fading of Freudian primal repression is also a fading of pre-Oedipal subjectivity, which means that Lacan's retroactive story has the effect of undermining the chronological story that he is at pains to detail elsewhere: where there once was a primordial lack, an imaginary ego, pre-Oedipal territorialisation etc, there is now an abyss. Indeed the fading of the pre-Oedipal within Lacan's thinking even undermines the retroactive story itself. If language has a 'retrospective effect in determining what is ultimately decided to be real' (1953, p.11) there has to be some 'thing' onto which this linguistic consciousness is superimposed. Consciousness cannot be superimposed onto a void.

It is arguable that Lacan's omission of the earliest markings of subjectivity (markings noted by Freud in his later works) along with his emphasis on the imaginary ego as *anticipating* the socially elaborated ego (rather than *developing* an earlier identificatory ego) assist in the ultimate dominance of the retroactive story in Lacan's thinking. Another major contributor to the power of the retroactive story is Lacan's problematic interpretation of certain aspects of Freud's thinking on repression.

The Omission of 'Affects' as Motivating Force for Repression

In *Some Reflections on the Ego* Lacan notes that repression, and hence the advent of the unconscious, can occur only at a point when events, memories, and experiences are able to be verbalized (1953, p.11). Here Lacan harks back to Freud's claim that the 'objects' of repression are ideations or mental events ('Repression', 1915b, p.148) themselves dependent on the capacity for language. What Lacan does however, is to slip from Freud's idea, that repression depends on language – 'The primal repressed is a signifier' (Lacan: 1979, p.176) – to the claim that language itself *is* repression, that language is the *cause* of the unconscious – 'Repressed and symptom are ... reducible to the functions of signifiers' (1979, p.176). What Lacan overlooks here is Freud's detailing of *affect* as repression's motivating force.

In both 'Repression' (1915b) and 'The Unconscious' (1915c) Freud claims that, with the coming of consciousness, instinctual impulses and memories are composed of both

ideas, or mental representations, and what he calls a 'quota of affect' or 'instinctual energy' (1915b, p.152). Freud argues that in the process of repression 'instinctual affect' 'undergoes vicissitudes ... quite different to those undergone by the idea' (1915b, p.152). Where instinctual *ideas* are repressed, instinctual *affect* – forming the core of instinctual impulses prior to consciousness – 'is transformed into a qualitatively different quota of affect'; most notably 'anxiety', Freud continues, 'it is suppressed ... or prevented from developing at all' (1915c, pp.177-178). Most importantly, to Freud, it is instinctual affect and *the need to be rid of it* that provides the motivating force for the repression. Freud writes:

to suppress the development of affect is the true aim of repression ... its work is incomplete if this aim is not achieved. (1915c, p.178)

More particularly, the affects involved in the early connection to the mother are the very reason for the advent of the unconscious.

In summary, where Freud claims repression to be a process which certainly *involves* signification, for him repression is motivated by aspects of human experience which are first and foremost non-linguistic. As such, the process of unconscious formation is neither contained by signification nor due to signification itself. While it is not said in so many words, Freud's notion of repression is based on the assumption of the body as bearer of prelinguistic experiences, a body that I have termed an 'emotional-corporeality'. It is this emotional-corporeality that finds no place in Lacan's subject, or in his concept of unconscious formation. To Lacan unconscious formation is an entirely 'aimless' process induced by and contained within signification. As Flax puts it, 'Lacan's psyche is radically severed from ... the soma; even the unconscious has nothing to do with the body' (1990, p.128).

The Elision of Maternity, the Deception, and the Inevitability of the Lacanian Subject.

The Lacanian unconscious is solely a product of signification; it has no place for affectivity motivating primal repression. It can be argued that Lacan's theory omits the prelinguistic moment of subjectivity. In that Lacan's theory omits the prelinguistic it also omits, despite Lacan's detailing of the mirror stage, the maternity to which this moment is indebted. All that is included in the conscious logic of Lacan's theory is elided at a more unconscious level. The elision of the prelinguistic and the maternity to which it is indebted indicates the theory's divergence from its professed Freudian base. Because the Lacanian subject is effectively one who has not *had* a prelinguistic existence, in Freudian terms it is subject without an id (and possibly without much of an ego). Indeed, Lacan's negative conceptualisation of language along with what can be implied from this conceptualisation,

that consciousness does not have the type of facilitative function Freud envisaged, both suggest that the Lacanian subject is one reduced to a super-ego plus a defensive ego.

Lacan, however, manages to disguise the divergence of his theory from its professed Freudian base. His use of the term 'primal repression' leads the reader to believe that the process which Freud understood as primal repression, the moment when the unconscious comes into being, is present within his theory. Yet when Lacan's theory is examined closely it becomes evident that the moment Lacan refers to as 'primal repression' is a very different moment in development from that moment with which Freud identifies primal repression. Lacan uses the term primal repression in reference to the advent of rudimentary language, that is, in relation to the non-translatability of needs into demands. In Lacan's scheme of things the subject suffers primal repression as soon as it utters its first linguistic demand. For Lacan primal repression occurs simply because the human subject speaks. For Freud, on the other hand, primal repression occurs when the infant turns from its early connection to its mother in the face of paternal disapproval. This moment occurs when the infant already has a reasonable grasp of language, and (in the terms used by Lacan) it coincides with the child's entry into the Father's Law. That the moment of entry into the Father's Law and the moment to which Lacan relates primal repression are two distinct moments in subject development becomes much more apparent, as I shall reveal in the next chapter, in Kristeva's elaboration of the 'thetic stage'.

Indeed, it is only that Lacan's thinking *does* diverge markedly from Freud's that enables Lacan to protest that the unconscious is 'neither primordial nor instinctual' (1977, p.17) nor an 'unconscious of the creative imagination' (1979, p.24). Here Lacan's cites Freud's repudiation of Jung as 'sufficient indication that psychoanalysis is introducing something other' (1979, p.24) than an instinctual unconscious. It is arguably Lacan's alignment with this repudiation that enables him to ignore large chunks of Freud's thinking that support the notion of an 'instinctual' unconscious. Freud's writings may indeed contain the seeds of Lacan's ideas about the role of signification in subjectivity. However, Lacan's claim that 'Everything emerges from the structure of the signifier' (1979, p.206) appears to be a defensive position which denies subjectivity's indebtedness to the prelinguistic maternal. In other words, Lacan's theory of subjectivity smacks of the very thing it is wont to omit: Freudian primal repression. While Lacan waxes lyrical about the compulsion to repeat under the influence of the unconscious, he fails to notice this tendency within his own theorising. The tone of wistful longing which permeates Lacan's relentless reference to the subject as lacking, and his negative characterisation of language as gap, absence, missed encounter, point all too clearly to something cast aside, or dare I suggest, repressed.

In 'Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious' Flax (1983) claims: 'the denial and repression of early infantile experience has had a deep and largely unexplored impact on philosophy' (p.245). Flax reveals the theories of Plato, Descartes, Hobbes, and Rousseau to be evidence of this impact. My own analyses in the last two chapters enable the thinking of Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan to be added to the list of knowledges impacted by primal repression. All three theories examined elide the prelinguistic maternal in one way or another. Maybe this is no surprise, if, as both Freud and Lacan claim, primal repression is an inevitable part of becoming a subject. In the next chapter I begin to consider this question of primal repression's inevitability by exploring further theoretical writings on subjectivity. This time I examine two *female* post-Lacanian. What begins to emerge is the possibility that primal repression may be a gendered rather than general phenomenon.

CHAPTER FIVE

IRIGARAY, KRISTEVA, AND THE PRELINGUISTIC MOMENT OF SUBJECTIVITY

In the previous chapter I examined the theories of Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan in terms of their treatment of the prelinguistic subject and the maternity to which it is indebted. In all instances I found the prelinguistic to be elided in one way or another. In the case of Lacan, the repression he takes as inevitable to developing subjectivity manifests in his own thinking: the place he initially grants to the prelinguistic maternal is ultimately taken away. Derrida's metaphorisation of the maternal can also be understood as an act of repression: his idealisation of the maternal is a product of his failure to acknowledge prelinguistic aspects of subjectivity. Even Foucault's apparent ambivalence towards the extra-linguistic brings to mind Irigaray's exhortation that we

pay attention to the way the unconscious works in each philosophy, and perhaps philosophy in general. We need to listen (psycho) analytically to its procedures of repression.... [to] its imaginary configurations, its metaphoric networks, and ... what it does not articulate at the level of utterance: *its silences*. (1985b, p.75)

In the search for theories that do not elide the prelinguistic I turn to Irigaray and Kristeva. I turn to these theorists for 3 reasons: like Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan, they have had a significant influence on feminist thinking; as post-Lacanian they take account of the role of the phallus in the constitution of gendered subjectivity;¹ and finally, they are women, where the three previous theorists examined are men.

The following analysis of the writings of both Irigaray and Kristeva reveals a conscious attempt to place the prelinguistic maternal within subject production. For Irigaray this takes the form of both, a protest that the 'women-mothers' have been the 'silent substratum of the social order' (1991b), and an exhortation to women to speak the 'corporeality' indebted to this maternity. Kristeva's giving place to the prelinguistic maternal involves the detailing of the matricentric semiotic chora as the inaugural markings of subjectivity. The major divergence in the thinking of these two writers rests with their differing assumptions about Freudian primal repression and their subsequent treatment of hysteria. Kristeva, after Freud and Lacan, assumes repression (of the early connection to the mother) to be inevitable to subjectivity. She argues that semiotic experiences are necessarily

¹ It is for this reason I have chosen these two theorists over feminist object relations theorists, such as Chodorow. Unlike other object relations theorists, Chodorow's thinking cannot be accused of 'lack(ing) a critical sustained account of gender formation and its costs to

subservient to the symbolic mode of being and hysteria a manifestation of a lack of this subservience. Irigaray, on the other hand, stands against the necessity of primal repression, and claims that (feminine) hysteria represents a resistance to this repression. In this way Irigaray could be said to have less allegiance to the Father's Law than Kristeva. Yet when Kristeva's writings on 'abjection' and 'rejection' are read against her allegiance to the Father's Law, there emerges the suggestion that the prelinguistic markings of subjectivity – in her terms, the 'semiotic chora' – may be as much the guarantor of subjectivity as the later developing patricentric, linguistic marking. Through such a reading Kristeva's thinking redeems itself for feminism.

IRIGARAY AND THE PRELINGUISTIC MOMENT OF SUBJECTIVITY.

Irigaray is clear on the need to give place to the prelinguistic matricentric 'reality'. On more than one occasion she protests loudly that the mother-infant relationship 'is the 'dark continent' par excellence ... [which] remains in the shadows of our culture'. More specifically, Irigaray argues that Lacan's erection of the phallus and 'the man-father' (the Father's Law) as 'the organizer of the world' is an act of 'matricide' which 'takes back from the mother the power to give birth, to nourish, to dwell, to centre' human subjectivity (1991a, pp.35-39). Irigaray, in the face of Lacan's claims that 'There is no pre-discursive reality' and that 'Every reality is based upon and defined by a discourse', protests loudly that 'this discourse is perhaps not all there is' (1985b, p.88). Margaret Whitford describes Irigaray's writings as an attempt to change the social imaginary of the west by

undoing the work of repression, splitting and disavowal, restoring the links and connections, and putting the 'subject of science' in touch with the unacknowledged mother. (1989, p.120)

However, when it comes to considerations of what the prelinguistic maternal actually 'nourishes' within the subject, Irigaray's observations tend to be obscured by a drift into the same transcendentalising traps that beset Derrida's references to maternity.

In *Speculum of The Other Woman* Irigaray takes to task some of the earlier philosophers in much the same way she does Lacan, claiming their expositions of 'being' ignore 'matter', and most particularly the 'first matter', 'the body of the mother' (1985a, p.161). With this omission of the 'first matter', Irigaray argues, 'Everybody in effect, is pulled up by the roots, deprived of the 'body's' first resources, [but also] of the endless

self and culture as a whole' (Flax: 1990, p.120). However, as Grosz observes, Chodorow 'leaves the question of the underlying meaning and value of sex roles unasked' (1990b, p.22)

possibilities of being in space' (1985a, p.164). Irigaray speculates that a fear of being 'seduced into returning to the womb of the mother-earth' – a fear presumably instilled by the omission of the mother – prompts masculine philosophers to develop 'at the very outset' an 'onto-theology', a God as creator (1985a, p.164). Irigaray continues the same protest in *This Sex Which is Not One*: she claims maternity as the silent ground 'nourishing speculation' (1985b, p.77). Here Irigaray conceptualises mother-matter as unacknowledged background for a particularly disembodied subjectivity *and* language, the latter which has some resonance with the 'scientific, formal, dead, paternal' language identified by Derrida. The difference is Derrida does not make the same connection Irigaray makes between the 'systematicity' and 'coherence' of the dead paternal language and the silencing of the first maternal home. In 'The Bodily Encounter with the Mother' Irigaray remakes these connections between the silencing of maternity, disembodied discourse, and masculinity, when she writes:

The exclusivity of [the Father's] law forecloses this first body, this first home, this first love. It sacrifices them so as to make them material for the rule of a language which privileges the masculine genre ... to such an extent as to confuse it with the human race. (1991a, p.39)

In 'Sexual Difference' (1987) Irigaray develops the discussion of mother-matter into the metaphor of the 'mother woman' as 'envelope' or 'place' for the masculine subject of speculation. She observes that the mother woman's 'status as envelope' is 'inseparable from the work or act of man, notably in so far as he defines her, and creates his own identity through her ... through this determination of her being' (1987, p.169). Here Irigaray argues that the mother's role as envelope for the masculine subject of speculation remains invisible and uninterpreted. In an apparent extension of the Lacanian argument, Irigaray also argues that woman, as a substitute for the masculine subject's repressed mother, is denied an identity created and defined in her own terms. Yet according to Irigaray, by refusing her 'a subject life of her own', the masculine subject is 'secretly a slave to the power of the mother woman, which he subdues and destroys' (1987, p.169). Irigaray's desire to interpret the role of the mother woman as envelope can be understood as an attempt to subvert this combined suppression/silencing of women and enslavement of men, by bringing the prelinguistic maternal out from obscurity.

Beyond this notion of mother woman as envelope, however, Irigaray's use of metaphor becomes less productive, even counter-productive: her writings become constrained by the same disembodied, abstract forms that she criticises as a 'mechanics of solids' (1985b, p.107). Indeed for Irigaray metaphor is a 'quasi solid', a linguistic form privileged by formalistic masculine language (1985b, p.110). Just as the reader begins to glimpse both, a

place for maternity within subject production, and a feminine subjectivity constituted in its own terms, he/she is confronted with vague abstractions such as 'third term', 'the interval' and 'the divine' (1987). These terms, combined with Irigaray's use of 'mucousity' as metaphor for a place of irreducible sexual difference (1987, p.175) – apparently an attempt to bring disavowed matter into subjectivity – leave the reader a little in awe, little wiser, and somewhat disappointed.

It is difficult as women to abandon the forms we have been given to speak. Arguably, as feminists we may only begin to be heard if we use such forms. However I question whether Irigaray's use of 'quasi solids' actually assists her attempts to subvert the masculine style of knowledge production she criticises. Indeed, it is in her less metaphorical moments that Irigaray gives clearer hints of what she considers to be maternity's contribution to subjectivity as well as its subversive potential. In line with her emphasis on maternity as the 'matter' sustaining speculation, Irigaray refers to the pre-Oedipal relationship to the mother as a 'bodily encounter' (1991a). Her understanding of this bodily encounter is gleaned from her prescription for a feminine subversion. Irigaray argues that a 'feminine' writing style 'does not privilege sight, [but] instead, ... takes each figure back to its source, which among other things is *tactile*' (1985b, p.79, italics added). Irigaray directs us as women to abandon our fear of speaking 'badly': to 'Begin with what [we] *feel*, right here, right now' (1985b, pp.212-213, italics added); to 'try ... to say, right here and now, how we are *moved*' (1985b, p.214, italics added); and to do so in order to counter the masculine genre of being and speculation that 'narrows' subjectivity through 'stretching upward, reaching higher' into disembodied space (1985b, p.213).

Any doubt that Irigaray is directing women to give voice to emotionality in this subversion of the masculine genre is put aside when Irigaray identifies the subject of philosophy as one who must not 'overflow his container, or make so much as a ripple. A motion or *emotion*' (1985a, p.164, italics added). And again in 'Women-Mothers the Silent Substratum of the Social Order' Irigaray asks women to 'reintroduce' into speaking, writing, and representation, 'the values of desire, pain, joy, the body' (1991b, p.51). This marrying of emotionality and the markings of the prelinguistic maternal is evidenced further in Irigaray's exhortation to women to

find anew, invent the words, the sentences that speak the most archaic and most contemporary relationship with the body of the mother, with our bodies ... words which do not bar the corporeal, but which speak corporeality. ('The Bodily Encounter with the Mother', 1991a, p.43)

Her words indicate the close proximity of her account of prelinguistic subjectivity to the account developed in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

KRISTEVA ON THE PRELINGUISTIC MOMENT OF SUBJECTIVITY

The idea of speaking a corporeality indebted to the bodily encounter with the mother brings to mind Kristeva's writings on the 'semiotic chora' and the semiotic moment in language. Kristeva elaborates (more directly than Irigaray) the prelinguistic matricentric phase of development treated somewhat inadequately by Freud. Yet Kristeva's elaborations of the semiotic chora have a strong resonance with Freud's writings in 'The Project', and, as Grosz notes, Kristeva's

conception of the semiotic and the symbolic functions operating in psychical, textual, and social life seems to be based on the distinction Freud developed between pre-oedipal and oedipal sexual drives. (1990b, p.150)

Kristeva's writings can also be understood as an attempt to fill out, extend, and move beyond Lacan's notion of subjectivity. Her adherence to particular aspects of Freud's thinking assists her in this aim. Most interestingly too, when Kristeva fills some of the gaps in the Lacanian chronology she exposes the implausibility of the reduction (in relation to primal repression) that his writings ultimately effect. I will begin with a brief review of Kristeva's notion of the semiotic chora which I touched on in Chapter 1.

According to Kristeva the world of the undifferentiated infant is constituted solely of tactile, kinaesthetic, acoustic, and visual *sensory* experiences (1982, p.51; 1984, p.26). She suggests these experiences constitute within the undifferentiated infant 'energy charges' and 'psychical marks' to which she applies the term 'chora' (1984, pp.25-26). The modality of these earliest experiences, energies, and markings is psychosomatic. Kristeva differentiates this semiotic chora from the developmentally later s/Symbolic realm where experience is marked, and marks by thought, word, or discourse. Kristeva, like Lacan, considers the s/Symbolic to be the realm of the Father's Law. The mother's body, on the other hand, she considers as 'the ordering principle of the Semiotic *chora*': the prelinguistic economy of drives serves to 'connect and orient the body to the mother' (1984, p.27).

By elaborating the stage of the semiotic chora, Kristeva moves immediately beyond Lacan in two ways: she extends the history of the subject back beyond Lacan's imaginary ego – she incorporates the later Freud in a way the Lacan does not; and, she recognises the chora as 'already social since it is a link with others' (1984, p.123). In so doing Kristeva extends the notion of sociality well beyond the Symbolic, to which it is most often

reduced in Lacanian psychoanalysis – despite Lacan’s elaboration of the mirror stage.² Grosz expresses Kristeva’s divergence from Lacan in the following way:

Unlike Lacan, Kristeva remains insistent on the historical and social specificity of signification and subjectivity. While there may be a conceptual space in Lacan’s account for the inclusion of concrete historical determinants, Lacan himself rarely includes them, preferring a more imperious, metaphysical, and universal style. (1990b, p.157)

Yet another way of understanding this divergence is that Kristeva is faithful to ‘the originality of Freudian semiology’: she believes Lacan is not. According to Kristeva’s understanding, Freudian semiology regards subjectivity as constituted of two irreducible moments: body/drives and thought/language (1982, pp.51-52); in Freud’s own terms ‘thing’ and ‘word’. Kristeva’s insistence on heterogeneity (after Freud) is a claim about language as much as it is about the subject. Kristeva’s particular understanding of the subject of language and how this differs from Lacan’s becomes much clearer in Kristeva’s explication of the thetic stage, the period of subject development immediately prior to entry into the Symbolic.

In Kristeva’s account of subjectivity, the thetic stage ‘marks a threshold between two heterogenous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic’, and between two economies, body and discourse (1984, p.48; 1982, pp.51-52). Kristeva divides the thetic stage into two sub-stages: Lacan’s mirror stage, and castration. Briefly, the mirror stage, detailed in Chapter 1, is the moment when the specular image of the mother or of the infant’s own reflection in a mirror becomes, through identification, the basis of the child’s imaginary ego. Like Lacan, Kristeva claims this specular image to be the prototype of ‘the world of objects’, but suggests further that this image creates within the infant a ‘spatial intuition’. Spatial intuition, according to Kristeva, enables both the differentiation of the infant from its environment and ‘the constitution of objects detached from the semiotic *chora*’ (1984, pp.46-4). The child’s first utterances, the attribution of ‘a signifier to an object’, are an integral part of this process of differentiation (1984, pp.43-44). According to Kristeva, this first part of the thetic stage represents a break of sorts, a gap or ‘confrontation’ between the ‘motility’ of the semiotic *chora*, on the one hand, and the ‘imaged ego’ and ‘posited-identified’ objects, on the other (1984, pp.47-48). This gap or confrontation is the same moment to which Lacan applies the term ‘primal repression’.³

² Even the term ‘socially elaborated’ ego for the identity constructed in the Symbolic seems to overlook the fact that the imaginary ego too is socially elaborated.

³ Kristeva herself writes: ‘The gap between the imaged ego and drive motility, between the mother and the demand made of her, is precisely the break that establishes what Lacan calls the place of the Other as the place of the ‘signifier’ (1984, p.48).

However, Kristeva notes that during this first part of the thetic phase the infant's mother is 'the addressee of every demand' (1984, p.47). Therefore this moment – that both she and Lacan identify as 'primal repression' – cannot possibly be the moment of Freudian primal repression. Freudian repression *is* the *repression* of the relationship to the mother. Indeed Kristeva identifies *Freudian* primal repression (castration) as the second part of the thetic phase. She writes:

Castration puts the finishing touches on the process of separation that posits the subject as signifiable, which is to say, separate, always confronted by an other The discovery of castration ... detaches the subject from his dependence on the mother, and the perception of this lack (*manque*) makes the phallic function a symbolic function – *the* symbolic function. This is a decisive moment fraught with consequences: the subject, finding his identity in the symbolic, *separates* from his fusion with the mother, *confines* his jouissance to the genital, and transfers semiotic motility onto the symbolic order. Thus ends the formation of the thetic phase which posits the gap between the signifier and the signified ... (1984, p.47)

By making this distinction between the moment of rudimentary language – Lacanian primal repression, and castration/repression of the relationship to the mother – Freudian primal repression, Kristeva's account of early development renders implausible the collapsing of the two moments disguised within Lacan's writings.

Although Kristeva distinguishes between these two moments, of Lacanian primal repression on the one hand and Freudian primal repression on the other, she does however, like Lacan, assume the inevitability of the repression of the relationship to the mother on entry into the Symbolic order. What is different in Kristeva's account is that her attention to and detailing of the semiotic chora gives this chora an ongoing presence in the background of Symbolic subjectivity. Grosz understands this difference between Kristeva's and Lacan's understanding of Symbolic subjectivity in the following way:

Where Lacan insists on a definitive break between the imaginary order and the symbolic, which are separated by the rupture caused by castration, the intervention of the third term, and the repression of oedipal/pre-oedipal desire, Kristeva posits more of a continuity. (1990b, p.158)

The continuity of the prelinguistic within the Symbolic relates to Kristeva's claim that a transformation of the semiotic occurs on entry into the Symbolic arena. According to Kristeva, at the onset of castration and on entry into the Symbolic realm, the motility of the semiotic chora is transformed from its original psychosomatic form into a transymbolic form.

From here on the semiotic comes under the sway of the symbolic processes. Yet, Kristeva continues, this 'symbolic control of various semiotic processes is ... at best, tenuous, and liable to breakdown or lapse at certain historically, linguistically, and psychically significant moments' (Grosz: 1990b, p.153). Kristeva includes among such moments in which the 'semiotic overflows its symbolic boundaries' madness, holiness, and poetry (Grosz: 1990b, p.153). For Kristeva, poetry and avant-garde writings in particular represent 'the return of the semiotic' in its transymbolic form (1982, pp.10-11 & pp.17-26; 1984, pp.49-50 & p.56). In these writings the semiotic appears as rhythm, a moment irreducible to the sign and incapable of intelligent translation. Furthermore, she argues, this semiotic moment within language 'negativizes all terms, all posited elements, and their syntax, threatening them with possible dissolution' (1984, P.56).

According to Kristeva, the critical difference between hers and Lacan's understanding of the subject of language is that Lacan conceptualises '*la langue* ...[as] *homogenous* with the realm of signification, even going as far as to assimilate what the dualism in Freudian thought regarded as strangely irreducible' (Kristeva quoted in Ziarek: 1992, footnote 4, p.105). Kristeva, on the other hand, conceptualises the subject as an 'in folding' of body and word (Ziarek: 1992, p.93) and in so doing 'opens up within the subject this other scene of pre-symbolic functions' (Kristeva: 1984, p.27). By conceptualising the subject of language as *exceeding* 'semantics, symbolization, and the bipolar structure of the sign' (Ziarek: 1992, p.93) – as exceeding understanding – Kristeva retains, where she claims Lacan does not, the dualism of drive and thought contained within Freud's thinking.

The issue of whether Kristeva's move beyond Lacan is entirely successful will be addressed in the following pages. At this point it can be argued that Kristeva's insistence on the heterogeneity of the subject of language, her refusal of Lacan's 'reduc[tion of] the subject to one of understanding' (1984, p.27), does act as a counterfoil to the elision of the prelinguistic moment of subjectivity which Lacan's thinking ultimately effects. Indeed, insistence by both Kristeva and Irigaray that the prelinguistic is the means by which the subject overflows its symbolic container can be understood as a conscious attempt on the part of both to give place to the prelinguistic within subjectivity. This is not to suggest Kristeva's and Irigaray's respective understandings of 'speaking corporeality' are equivalent. Unravelling some of the anomalies in Kristeva's thinking reveals its considerable divergence from Irigaray's thinking. This divergence revolves around Kristeva's treatment of Freudian repression and the question of its inevitability to subjectivity.

KRISTEVA AND IRIGARAY - CONVERGENCE OR DIVERGENCE?

I have argued above that Kristeva's positing of prelinguistic experiences as ingredient of 'the process of the subject' (1984, pp.40-41) represents a significant move beyond Lacan's understanding of the subject. However, there are numerous ways in which Kristeva's thinking undermines the significance of the prelinguistic experiences and markings she details. First, Kristeva's reference to the infant's 'drive investment in [an] image' (1984, p.46) falls in line with Freud's (initial) claim that the ego begins at the point of narcissism and is based on a *transfer* of libidinal cathexis.⁴ This uptake of the earlier Freud has the effect of undermining a reading of the semiotic chora as rudimentary ego, and it encourages a reading of the chora as no more than a preliminary process of language production. Such readings tend to be reinforced by both, Kristeva's reference to spatial intuition as 'found at the heart of the functioning of signification – in signs and in sentences' (1984, p.46), and her relative inattention to affect, at least in *Revolution in Poetic Language*.⁵ The combined effect is that the maternal semiotic chora can appear at times to have little *intrinsic* value; its 'place' in subject production being only what it contributes to the end-point of the hierarchically superior Symbolic.

Kristeva does move beyond Lacan by conceptualising the subject of language as heterogenous. However, her claim that it is necessary for semiotic motility to be transformed in the making of subjectivity has the effect of reinforcing semiotic experiences as servile to language, even to her heterogenous language. Furthermore the necessity of semiotic transformation seems to be based in an assumption of the inevitability of Freudian primal repression. Yet, Kristeva's distinction between the moment of Lacanian primal repression – the moment of rudimentary language – and Freudian primal repression – the moment of the repression of the early relationship to the mother – throws up the possibility that the latter moment is *not necessary* for speaking subjectivity. This possibility in turn places a question around Kristeva's assumption that semiotic motility must be transformed in the process of subject production.

One of the values of Kristeva's elaboration of the thetic stage is that it highlights the differentiation from the maternal environment effected by imaginary identification and rudimentary language as a process *distinct* from the separating from the mother effected by castration. While separation from the mother may be inevitable in the first process it is

⁴ Here I am assuming that Kristeva follows Lacan's differentiation between need and drive where 'drive' is understood to delineate libidinal or sexual instincts.

⁵ Kristeva focuses more on the connection between the semiotic chora and affect in *Powers of Horror (1982)* and *In the Beginning was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith (1987)*.

difficult to justify its inevitability in the second. Indeed Kristeva herself regards the process of castration as 'the first social censorship' (1984, p.48). If this latter separation from the mother, Freudian primal repression/castration, is the result of a social censorship, then it is a separation that is neither inevitable nor necessary. This would be so whether this censorship is understood in relation to the father's position as competitor for the mother's love (Freudian psychoanalysis) or in relation to the child's subsequent positioning in the realm of the Father's Law (Lacanian psychoanalysis). Further, given that this censorship relates directly to phallogentrism – either in terms of the individual father's power and status (Freud) or in terms of the superior status of men in a more general sense (Lacan) – it would seem unwise for feminism to accept without question this separation from the mother as a necessary and inevitable part of subject development. Yet despite her distinguishing between these two moments of separation from the mother Kristeva does exactly this. In so doing Kristeva reveals her own allegiance to the Father's Law, to patriarchy.⁶

If Freudian primal repression can be conceptualised as neither inevitable nor necessary to speaking subjectivity then the same can be argued about the transformation of semiotic motility: the transformation of this motility from its original psychosomatic form is neither necessary nor inevitable to self conscious or symbolic subjectivity. It is conceivable in the absence of primal repression that semiotic motility would continue in its original psychosomatic form *alongside the symbolic process*. Interestingly, it is exactly this psychosomatic expression of semiotic motility that Kristeva (and Freud too) denigrates as hysteria, at the same time that she elevates 'the return of the semiotic' in its transymbolic form in poetry and avant-garde writings. However, Kristeva does not manage this differential treatment of poetry and hysteria without tying herself in considerable knots around the issue of how much (socially induced) primal repression is necessary to produce normal, desirable subjectivity. First, Kristeva writes that the normal subject:

must be firmly positioned by castration so that drive attacks against the thetic will not give way to fantasy or psychosis but will instead lead to a 'second degree thetic'... (1984, p.50)

Having claimed the necessity of primal repression to normal subjectivity Kristeva adds a qualification implying that *too much* primal repression is problematic, and argues that the return of the semiotic in its transymbolic form – *vis a vis* poetry – represents *the* desirable modification of primal repression. In relation to this modification Kristeva makes a clear connection between semiotic motility and emotionality:

⁶ Grosz comments: 'Jane Gallop accuses Irigaray of playing the dutiful daughter to the Symbolic Father(s), Freud and Lacan. It may be more appropriate to see Kristeva in this role' (1990b, p.150).

The appearance of the symbol of negation in the signifier ... partially liberates repression and introduces into the signifier a part of what remains outside the symbolic order: what was repressed and what Freud calls 'affective'. These are instinctual, corporeal foundations stemming from the concrete history of the concrete (biological, familial, social) subject. (1984, p.162)⁷

However Kristeva fails to clarify how *exactly* the right amount of primal repression can be assured for the production of desirable/normal subjectivity.

While Kristeva may not be clear about how the necessary degree of primal repression comes into being she is clear that hysteria represents a *collapse* of primal repression, a 'refusal of the thetic phase' (1984, p.50).⁸ For Kristeva the neurotic/hysteric is an abnormal subject because he/she attempts to 'hypostasize semiotic motility as autonomous from the thetic' (1984, p.50). The neurotic/hysteric attempts 'a *direct semantization* of acoustic, tactile, motor, visual, etc, coenesthesia ... [which] finally resolves itself through the sudden irruption of affect' (1982, p.53). How this hysterical expression of the semiotic differs from poetry or the expression of the semiotic by someone with just the *right* amount of primal repression, Kristeva summarises in the following way:

In contrast to the hysteric, the subject in process ...does not suffer from reminiscences, but rather from obstacles that tend to transform the facilitation, the 'affective charge', and the 'excitation' [of semiotic motility] into reminiscences. Unlike hysteria, where the subject visualizes past experiences and represents those 'memories ... in vivid visual pictures', this process breaks up the totality of the envisioned object and invests it with fragments (colours, lines, forms). Such fragments are themselves linked to sounds, words, and significations, which the process rearranges in a new combination. (1984, p.102)

Where the poet expresses affective processes/semiotic markings 'with reference to a moment of stasis, a boundary, a symbolic barrier' (1984, p.102) in a process she calls 'intellectual sublimation' (1984, p.163), the hysteric, Kristeva maintains, expresses semiotic affect directly, without reference to the word.

Kristeva also regards the semiotic – the 'feminine and maternally structured space' (Grosz: 1990b, p.160) – as a space of revolution. Given that both poets and hysterics access this space – the poet indirectly and the hysteric directly – both poets and hysterics could be conceptualised, within the logic of Kristeva's argument, as revolutionaries. In Kristeva's opinion, however, and in line with her denigration of hysteria as abnormal, the

⁷ In this claim Kristeva recognises Freud's claim that affect is pivotal to the process of primary repression.

⁸ In *Powers of Horror* Kristeva also refers to this state of affairs as 'a collapse of the Oedipal triangulation' (1982, p.53).

member of the avant-garde is 'the best representative of the repressed, feminine semiotic order' (Grosz: 1990b, p.165). The poet/artist is the true revolutionary. Given that 'Kristeva seems to regard only men as writers or producers of the avant-garde' (Grosz: 1990b, p.165), and that hysterics are notoriously women – if Freud's clinical experience is anything to go by – then Kristeva's position would hardly seem to be a feminist one. I suggest that it is Kristeva's assumption of the necessity of primal repression (also understood as her allegiance to the Father's Law) that lies behind this 'anti-feminist' stance.

Irigaray's stance on the revolutionary subject is just the opposite of Kristeva's: it is not so much the poet but the hysteric who carries this potential. Irigaray maintains hysteria is revolutionary because it represents a *revolt* or a *refusal* on the part of the subject to succumb to the social censorship of the prelinguistic maternal. For Irigaray, in other words, hysteria holds the potential for liberating the prelinguistic maternal from its position as 'silent substratum of the social order'. Irigaray writes:

There is a revolutionary potential in hysteria. Even in her paralysis, the hysteric exhibits a potential for gestures and desires.... A movement of revolt and refusal, a desire for/of the living mother who would be more than a reproductive body in the pay of the polis, a living, loving woman. (1991b, pp.47-48)

Irigaray's position on hysteria seems to represent a stand *against* Freudian primal repression, and her thinking, in this case at least, could be interpreted as expressing much less of an allegiance to the Father's Law than Kristeva's.

Abjection and Rejection: the Prelinguistic as Guarantor of Subjectivity.

Kristeva's writings on the significance of the semiotic chora are undermined by her writings on the subject in process in which she assumes the necessity of the primal repression of the early connection to the mother. The notion of the semiotic chora does extend Kristeva's understanding of subjectivity beyond Lacan's, however, her assumption that the matricentric chora must ultimately submit to the rule of the patricentric Symbolic positions the symbolic as more important to subjectivity than the matricentric chora. Indeed Kristeva, like Lacan, considers the Symbolic to be the ultimate guarantor of subjectivity: the subject not firmly positioned by castration risks, not only hysteria, but also psychosis. Yet despite Kristeva's adherence to Lacan's assumption that the repression of the early relationship to the mother is inevitable in the production of subjectivity, within her writings on abjection and rejection lies the suggestion that the semiotic chora may be as much guarantor of subjectivity as the chronologically later patricentric realm of language. To extract these suggestions from

Kristeva's writings on abjection it is necessary to read them against primal repression, against her allegiance to the Father's Law.

Kristeva describes abjection as an attempt on the part of the subject to expel what it experiences as alien, loathsome, as 'opposed to the I'. Kristeva claims that abjection manifests in 'the violence of sobs, of vomit', and in the 'gagging' that accompanies food loathing or the experience of a dead corpse (1982, pp.1-3). According to Kristeva, 'the abject', the thing experienced as threatening, 'seems to emanate' from 'the place where meaning collapses' (1982, pp.1-2), from that stage in chronological development where, while there is not yet an unconscious there is 'nevertheless ... an intrinsically corporeal already signifying brand, symptom, and sign: repugnance, disgust, abjection' (1982, p.11). It is because the abject springs from the matricentric chora, the stage prior to the distinction between inside and outside, self and other, that Kristeva considers the abject to be 'something ... from which one does not part' (1982, p.4). Put another way, because the abject has never existed apart from the subject, it is something which, despite attempts to do so, can never be expelled.

Kristeva's attempts to identify the cause of abjection are confused. On the one hand she suggests abjection represents the return of 'a repression that one might call 'primal' ... effected prior to the springing forth of the ego, of its objects and representations' (1982, pp.10-11). Here she argues that 'Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be...' (1982, p.10) Whether the violence of separation Kristeva is referring to is the separation from the mother at birth or the later Lacanian primal repression, it is a separation that Kristeva regards as inevitable. On the other hand, Kristeva refers to abjection as a product of the failure of the matricentric semiotic chora. In relation to this failure Kristeva writes: the subject of abjection

has swallowed up instead of maternal love ... an emptiness, or rather a maternal hatred ... that is what he tries to cleanse himself of tirelessly. (1982, p.6)

Given that the failure of the maternal chora could hardly be considered inevitable, Kristeva's statements on abjection are confusing.

Indeed this confusion continues. In her understanding of abjection as a failure of the maternal chora Kristeva argues there are two consequences of the subject's experiencing an abyss where there should have been maternal love. The first is that the subject is left open to 'a land of oblivion that is constantly remembered' (1982, p.8). The second is that the father steps into the mother's role, not as agent of the Father's Law but as the concrete (as opposed

to Symbolic) type of 'other' the mother would normally be for the infant (for imaginary identification among other things):

A representative of the paternal function takes the place of the good maternal object that is wanting. There is language instead of breast. Discourse being substituted for the maternal care, and with it a fatherhood belonging more to the realm of the ideal than of the super-ego. (1982, p.45)

It seems that the father is not a direct replacement for the mother when the maternal chora fails because he brings something peculiar to this role. Assuming that abjection is not inevitable, if the mark left by the absence of the mother's love is an abyss for which the father's filling-in is an inadequate replacement, then the markings of the mother's love and attention *must* be a *unique* aspect of subject development. The inability of both the father and discourse to replace the mother and her attentions where maternity has failed suggests the markings of the semiotic chora to be indispensable to subjectivity; suggests, in other words, these prelinguistic markings to be something without which the subject founders. If this is the case, the semiotic chora would seem to be worthy of a status much greater than that which Kristeva grants it: secondary to and subservient to the Symbolic.

Indeed, when Kristeva's writings on abjection are put together with her writings on the Freudian notion of 'rejection' (1984, pp.118-125), the prelinguistic matricentric markings constituting the chora take on a greater significance than her thinking often allows. Kristeva refers to 'rejection' as a process falling into the category of 'concrete operations' (or 'internalized actions') which occur 'in a developmental and logical stage prior to the constitution of the symbolic function', and having an important role in producing the verbal function (1984, p.122). Kristeva defines rejection as a process of 'expenditure' that:

posits an object as separate from the body proper and, at the very moment of separation, fixes it in place as *absent*, as a *sign*. In this way, rejection establishes the object as real and, at the same time, as signifiable... (1984, p.132)

Rejection is a process through which the infant begins to experience the previously undifferentiated world as divisible into an outside and an inside, a 'me' and a 'not me', as a precondition for the 'locking of signifiante into *units* of meaning' (1984, p.125).⁹

Rejection would appear to have consequences that go well beyond its role within language production. Indeed, if rejection is a pre-verbal process which establishes a 'me' as opposed to 'not me', there must already exist some 'thing' onto which this sense of 'me' can hang. In much the same way Brennan claims the nascent subject's identification with an

⁹ The infant's increasing awareness of its expenditure of faeces could be understood as a means by which it begins to differentiate an inside and an outside.

image assumes a pre-existing subjective property drawn to that image (1992, pp165-166), the process Kristeva describes as rejection seems to assume a pre-existing subjective property. In the terms of Kristeva's argument this pre-existing subjective property to which the sense of 'me' attaches must be the semiotic chora, the markings of the mother's earliest attentions (which leave an abyss in their absence). If this is the case, then the semiotic chora begins to look very much like the early internalisation and identification with the mother that Freud finally identified. If the semiotic chora does represent an internalisation of and identification with the mother, and if the sense of 'me' is established through the process of rejection prior to the verbal function, then this matricentric prelinguistic aspect of subjectivity is arguably as much the guarantor of subjectivity as the later developing symbolic function.

Indeed, Kristeva's observations of psychosis suggest that the importance of the s/Symbolic to subjectivity may be overstated. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* Kristeva writes:

With the borderline patient there is a collapse of the nexus constituted by the verbal signifier effecting the simultaneous *Aufhebung* [dissolution] of both *signified* and *affect*.... it is by the means of the signifier alone that the unconscious meaning of the borderline patient is delivered. Only seldom is metaphor included in his speech.... with the borderline patient, sense does not emerge out of non-sense.... On the contrary, non-sense runs through signs and sense, and the resulting manipulation of words is not an intellectual play but, without any laughter, a desperate attempt to hold on to the ultimate obstacles of a pure signifier that has been abandoned by the paternal metaphor. (1982, pp.50-51)

According to Kristeva the lack of metaphor in the speech of the psychotic patient indicates a collapse of the Symbolic function. However, she clearly states that the borderline patient also exhibits a collapse at the level of affect. Furthermore, because Kristeva reasons that the heterogeneity of language is due first and foremost to semiotic motility (affect) and only second to the transformation of this motility via the imposition of the Father's Law, then a breakdown of language heterogeneity – a lack of metaphor – must indicate first and foremost the collapse of the semiotic chora. Put another way, the borderline patient holds on to the pure (homogenous) signifier because that is *all* there is to hold onto. The affective basis of language is lost to this subject. Indeed this is born out by Kristeva's further claim that the suffering of psychotic patients (and therefore the best interventions for psychosis) occurs in a corporeal space beyond words. She writes:

we must point to a necessity within psychosis....This necessity ... consists in not reducing analytic attention to language to that of philosophical idealism, and, in its

wake, to linguistics; the point is, quite to the contrary, to posit a *heterogeneity of signifiante*. It stands to reason that one can say nothing of such (effective or semiotic) heterogeneity without making it homologous with the linguistic signifier. But it is precisely that *powerlessness* that the 'empty' signifier, the dissociation of discourse, and the fully physical suffering of these patients within the faults of the Word come to indicate. (1982, p.51)

According to Kristeva, words are inadequate for the treatment of psychosis because the suffering of psychosis occurs primarily in a region beyond words.

In short, Kristeva's writings on abjection, rejection and psychosis constantly suggest that prelinguistic markings are as much the guarantor of subjectivity as is the word. Yet Kristeva's more conscious stance, like Lacan's, is that the Symbolic realm, the realm of the word, provides the ultimate guarantee of subjectivity. This state of affairs in which Kristeva gives a place to the prelinguistic within subjectivity (and thence to the maternity to which it is indebted) at the same time that she tends to understate its significance, is arguably reflective of her own ambivalence towards this prelinguistic realm. Put another way, it is reflective of her own tendency to align herself with the Father's Law. Nowhere is this ambivalence more apparent than when Kristeva writes in *Revolution in Poetic Language* that:

Although it is true that the 'affective' can be grasped only through discursive structuration, it would be semantic empiricism to believe that it does not in some fashion exist outside it. (1984, pp.162-163)

Kristeva's ambivalence towards the prelinguistic/affective is also in evidence when she writes, despite her own detailing of the semiotic chora:

For to imagine the autonomy of the 'trace' ... with respect to language's own thetic position, or to envisage some logical or chronological precedence to its impact, would be to give a helping – that is, a theoretical – hand to the maintenance of the notion of the maternal phallus.... Thus this semiotic mode has no primacy, no point of origin. (In Ziarek: 1992, p.88)

What Kristeva overlooks here is that the mother is experienced as phallic *because* the Symbolic subject under the rule of the Father's Law (vis a vis Lacan's subject) elides the early connection to the mother. It is the mother's *resurrection* from her position as 'silent substratum' not than her dismissal as Symbolic fantasy that is likely to bring the end of the 'phallic' mother. This resurrection does not involve conceptualising the mother as 'a more authentic origin' (Ziarek: 1992, p.98) but it does involve giving her a rightful place alongside language in the production of subjectivity. Indeed it may be that abjection exists *at all* only

because the prelinguistic maternal is not given her rightful place. Put another way and as I will now go on to argue, abjection itself may be a product of the Father's Law.

In *Powers of Horror* Kristeva writes that abjection is caused, on the one hand, by 'The lapse of the Other', and on the other, by 'Too much strictness on the part of the Other', where the Other is understood as the Symbolic realm of the Father's Law/the super-ego (1982, p.15). In the latter instance Kristeva writes that

'I experience abjection only if an Other [super-ego] has settled in place and stead of what will be 'me'. Not at all an other with whom I identify and incorporate [normally the mother], but an Other who precedes and possesses me, and through such possession causes me to be. A possession previous to my advent: a being there of the symbolic that a father might or might not embody. (1982, p.10)

Abjection as 'the lapse of the Other' can be understood in terms of the process already described above in which the father's role shifts from a Symbolic to an imaginary function (in absence of the mother's love). Abjection as 'Too much strictness on the part of the Other' seems to require a different, if not contrary, explanation. Yet these two conceptualisations of abjection are not antithetical if the failure of the prelinguistic maternal is understood in the context of patriarchal society's devaluing of the woman mother. In this context the settling of the Other in the place of 'me' could be understood in two ways: the subject may attempt to abject the markings of the early relationship to the mother because of patriarchal society's devaluing and contempt of her; or, an Other may settle in place of the 'me' because of the inadequate mothering that arises from the social devaluing of women mothers.¹⁰ When viewed in this way abjection emerges as a socially induced process, induced by the Father's Law. It is in this sense abjection could be said to mimic primal repression.

In summary, the foregoing analyses of the writings of Irigaray and Kristeva reveal an apparently conscious attempt to give place to the prelinguistic moment within subject production. For Irigaray this takes the form of a protest about the silencing of the maternity to which this moment is indebted, plus an exhortation to women to speak the emotional-corporeality indebted to this prelinguistic maternal. For Kristeva it takes the form of a detailing of the semiotic chora. Also, when Kristeva's writings on abjection, rejection, and psychosis are read against the necessity of Freudian primal repression, against the necessity of turning away from the early connection to the mother (and against Kristeva's allegiance to the Father's Law), the matricentric, prelinguistic markings of subjectivity emerge as being *as*

¹⁰ In that the matricentric relationship which constructs the 'me' is a specific and concrete relationship, this devaluing and contempt for the woman mother is likely to be specific to the individual infant's family circumstances while also reflective of broader social values.

critical to subjectivity as the later developing patricentric markings of the word. Kristeva's and Irigaray's attention to and emphasis on the prelinguistic contrasts with the theories of Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan, all of which elide the prelinguistic maternal. That this contrast emerges along gender lines requires some further analysis. In the next chapter, through a closer inspection of the Freudian notion of 'primal repression' I will consider the possibility that the repression of the mother is a gendered phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION TO PART THREE

In Part One I presented a psychoanalytic account of the contribution of maternity to the production of subjectivity. I concluded the section by suggesting that the inextricable connection between women and maternity means feminist understandings of subjectivity must give place to the prelinguistic. In Part Two I considered a number of writers influential in feminist theory in terms of their treatment of the prelinguistic moment of subjectivity. In the instances of Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan I exposed an elision of the prelinguistic. Following Flax's lead I suggested, from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, that this elision could be explained by the Freudian concept of primal repression. I noted that the writings of Irigaray and Kristeva, in contrast to the writings of Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan, give place to the prelinguistic. I argued that Irigaray and Kristeva not only attend to the prelinguistic but also that Irigaray's thinking directly challenges Lacan's assumption that the primal repression of the early connection to the mother is a necessary condition of subjectivity. Moreover I asserted that Kristeva's thinking suggests the prelinguistic to be an equal contender with the symbolic for guarantor of subjectivity. It is the emphasis on the prelinguistic in the writings of Kristeva and Irigaray that distinguishes them from their 3 male counterparts. Does this mean that the writings of these two female theorists have not been influenced by primal repression? If so could this mean that the primal repression of the early connection to the mother may be gendered? To explore this hypothesis in Part Three I turn to an examination of repression itself, to the theory Freud considered to be 'the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psycho-analysis rests' (1914b, p.16).

A number of feminist writers take the phenomenon of primal repression into account within their analyses. Some even assume it to be a gendered phenomenon (for example Flax: 1983, p.246; Grosz: 1989, p.20). However, there is an absence of rigorous analyses of this concept/phenomenon. There has been no systematic consideration of how Freud understands primal repression; what justification there is for it being the type of universal phenomenon (possibly) Freud and (definitely) Lacan assume; what relevance it has to the beginning of the 21st century; and what justification there may be for it being a gendered phenomenon. In the next chapter I argue that the notion of primal repression still has some relevance a century after Freud. I argue that there is considerable support for the suggestion that repression is a gendered phenomenon, and that this state of affairs has important implications for feminist understandings of knowledge production. In the following chapter I consider how my understanding of the relationship between gender and primal

repression differs from that of Chodorow. In the final chapter, returning to the starting point of the thesis, I consider how primal repression as a gendered phenomenon has implications for the practice of psychological therapy.

CHAPTER SIX

PRIMAL REPRESSION: IS IT A NECESSARY AND INEVITABLE ASPECT OF SUBJECTIVITY?

Attention to the prelinguistic moment of subjectivity in the writings of Irigaray and Kristeva raises the question of the necessity and inevitability of primal repression to subjectivity; it also points to the possibility that primal repression may be a gendered phenomenon. In this chapter I address these issues more directly by subjecting the theory of repression to a thorough-going analysis. I begin this analysis by considering the defining features of the phenomenon that Freud defined as primal repression. While much of this understanding of primal repression is gleaned from Freud, some aspects of this understanding emerge from modifications to Freud's thinking made in light of both his libidinal bias and his failure to analyse the role of the phallus in patriarchal society (both addressed in Chapter 1).

The Defining Features of Primal Repression.

In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) Freud describes 'primal repression' as a 'progressive process of suppression', an 'infantile amnesia', 'which turns everyone's childhood into something like a pre-historic epoch and conceals from him the beginnings of his own sexual life' (1905, p.42). From this we can assume (recognising that Freud at this point is referring only to the boys' situation) that the first defining feature of primal repression is the abolition from conscious awareness of the boy child's Oedipal (and pre-Oedipal) connection to his mother. I have argued throughout this thesis that the infant's early connection to the mother is identificatory and affective as much as it is libidinal. Hence it is the infant's identificatory and affective connection to the mother as much as its libidinal connection that is involved in the process of primal repression. This interpretation is supported by Freud's claim that the suppression of the *affective* aspects of instinctual impulses is the key aim of primal repression (1915c, p.178).

The second defining feature of primal repression is its apparent universality across the sexes. The 'progressive suppression' to which Freud refers draws undoubtedly on the case of the boy. Yet, while Freud later details some differences in the girl's situation, his reference to 'everyone's childhood' does present primal repression as a universal phenomenon. Indeed, Freud writes very clearly in 'A Child Is Being Beaten' that 'The theory of psychoanalysis (a theory based on observation) holds firmly to the view that the motive forces of repression must not be sexualised' (1919, p.203). It remains unclear in Freud's writings whether the

relationship the girl is supposed to repress is her Oedipal relationship to her father or her pre-Oedipal relationship to her mother.¹ The resolution of this question tends to be influenced by the unravelling of a further defining feature of repression.

The third defining feature of primal repression: although primal repression is a process of the conscious mind, its prototype is to be found in the pre-conscious processes of the id. According to Freud, under the sway of the pleasure principle the id employs a variety of mechanisms to keep unpleasant or distressing experiences at bay (1900, pp.639-640). With the advent of consciousness the avoidance of unpleasure comes under the control of the ego's defensive function which ensures that consciousness will only 'cathect an idea if it is in a position to inhibit any development of unpleasure that may proceed from it' (Freud, 1900, p.640). This defensive function of the ego could conceivably manifest at any point after the advent of consciousness, yet for Freud it comes into being with the super-ego at a very particular point of development (1923, pp.28-29). Specifically for Freud, primal repression occurs, and the defensive ego is born, when the infant 'is disturbed by the admonitions of others and by the awakening of his own critical judgement' (1914a, p.88). As a result of the child's fear of castration at the hands of the father who competes for the mother's affections, the 'instinctual' impulse, according to Freud, is 'not simply repressed, but destroyed in the id'. Freud continues: 'this is what happens when the Oedipus complex is dealt with normally' (1932, p.92). That Freud also considers primal repression to be the desirable as well as the normal resolution of the Oedipus is made evident in his linking of primal repression to a social taboo on incest. Freud positions the Father within the Oedipal resolution as the guardian of the incest taboo as well as competitor for the mother's affections (1924, pp. 176-177).

However, as I argued in Chapter 1, the notion that primal repression is the normal and desirable resolution of the Oedipus makes little sense in the girl's situation. If the infantile relationship the girl is supposed to repress is taken to be her Oedipal connection to her father, her father cannot be simultaneously her love object, her competitor, and the one admonishing her for that relationship. Additionally, Freud's observation that the girl often gives up her connection to her father *quite belatedly* and sometimes only incompletely (1933, p.129) – and even then only because she realises that she is not going to 'receive a baby from her father' – (1924, p.179) undermines the role of the incest taboo in *her* Oedipal resolution (and ultimately the boy's too).² Further, the young girl is already castrated (being without a penis), therefore castration as motivating force for the repression of *her* early connection to

¹ As I noted in Chapter 1 Freud only acknowledged the girl's early relationship to her mother in his later writings.

either sexed parent makes little sense. Freud himself acknowledges this on numerous occasions (1924, pp.178-179; 1932, p.87). If the infantile relationship the girl abandons is presumed instead to be her early relationship with her mother and if her turning from her mother is viewed in the social-affective terms developed in Chapter 1, then the girl's abandonment of the mother can begin to make some sense.

As noted in Chapter 1, the girl turns from the mother to the father because of the power, status, and privilege afforded to those with a penis in patriarchal society. The girl moves from an identificatory/affective/libidinal relationship with the mother to a similar relationship with the father in the hope of gaining what the penis offers. Although the girl cannot have directly the positive sense of self worth that attaches to being a man, she is likely to identify with the father (Father) in the hope that she can gain, indirectly, some affective boost through association with someone who is valued. This interpretation is entirely in accord with Freud's claim that in the girl 'far more than in the boy, these changes seem to be the result of upbringing and of intimidation from the outside which threatens her with loss of love' (1924, p.178). Although the boy may be prompted to abandon his relationship with his mother because of fear of castration (as a result of competition with his father), his tendency to identify with his father will be reinforced by the father's superior social status. The boy abandons his mother and identifies with his father in part because of the positive affective gains, the boost to self worth that will be part and parcel of his identification with the more valued sex.

The girl's and the boy's turning from the mother to the father are entirely consistent with what Lacan identifies as the child's movement into the Father's Law. The moot point, given the lesser relevance of the *fear* of castration in the girl's case, is whether the girl's turning from the mother constitutes a *primal repression* of this early relationship. It is arguable that Freud contradicts at times his own claim that primal repression is *not* sexualised. Lacan is unwavering in his assumption that *the* moment of the Oedipal resolution is universal across the sexes. He writes,

It is this moment [of the Oedipal resolution] that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into mediatisation through the desire of the other ... and turns the I into that apparatus for which every instinctual thrust constitutes a danger (1977, p.5)

Yet, when the taboo on incest is undermined, and the unequal valuing of male and female bodies in patriarchal society recognised as that which prompts the girl's turning from the

² Presumably a social *taboo* on incest is just that, and not a prohibition that applies half the time.

mother, the assumption that turning from the mother is a necessary and inevitable aspect of subjectivity seems to rest on shaky ground. I shall now demonstrate that Freud's more detailed writings on the dynamics of repression themselves throw considerable doubt on the assumption that primal repression is a necessary and inevitable aspect of subjectivity.

The Dynamics of Repression

In his essay entitled 'Repression' (1915b), Freud describes repression as the moment in psychical development when an unconscious mind becomes established and delineated from a conscious mind. According to Freud, from this moment of primal repression, infantile 'instinctual' impulses and related factors form the materials of the unconscious which and are kept 'at a distance from the conscious' (1915b, p47). Freud further divides the dynamic of repression into what he terms 'primal repression', and 'after pressure'.³ He argues that 'primal repression' consists of the splitting of a previously undivided psyche, through

the psychical (ideational) representative of the instinct being denied entrance into the conscious. With this a *fixation* is established, the representative in question persists unaltered from then onwards and the instinct remains attached to it. (1915b, p.148)

In other words, in the presence of the father's disapproval, the 'idea' of the mother or the 'idea' of the breast become split-off and denied access to the conscious mind. According to Freud, after-pressure is a second process that occurs in an already split psyche under the control of the conscious mind, or more particularly under the control of the now internalised super-ego (and what I have termed the defensive ego). In this second process Freud argues that other mental representatives originally associated with the primarily repressed representative or 'originating elsewhere, (but having) come into associative connection with it', are rendered unavailable to the conscious mind (1915b, p.148). Freud notes in the context of the interaction between primal repression and after pressure that:

it is a mistake to emphasise only the repulsion which operates from the direction of the conscious upon what is to be repressed; quite as important is the attraction

³ Freud also uses the term 'repression proper' for 'after-pressure'. However, the former is somewhat misleading given that (as Freud himself observes) 'after-pressure' can only occur once 'primal repression' has occurred. Indeed Freud's editor observes that 'on alluding to the point more than twenty years later ... [Freud] uses the word '*Nachverdrängung*' ('after-repression')' (Footnote 2, 1915b, p.148).

exercised by what was primally repressed upon everything with which it can establish a connection. (1915b, p.148)⁴

The process of repression is even more than that described above. Reiterating his distinction between 'thing' and 'word' presentation, in both 'The Unconscious' and 'Repression' Freud claims 'instinctual' impulses are composed of an instinctual energy as well as ideational representatives. He refers to instinctual energy as the 'quantitative factor' (1915c, pp.177-178) or the 'quota of affect' (1915b, p.152). As already mentioned in Chapter 4, Freud argues that by definition only mental phenomena can be 'repressed'. 'Instinctual' affect, he claims, undergoes 'vicissitudes ... quite different to those undergone by the idea' (1915b, p.152):

either the affect remains wholly or in part, as it is; or it is transformed into a qualitatively different quota of affect, above all into anxiety; or it is suppressed, i.e. it is prevented from developing at all. (1915c, p178)⁵

While Freud considers instinctual affects are not 'repressed', he does consider them to be critical to the process of repression: 'to suppress the development of affect is the true aim of repression' ... its work [being] incomplete if this aim is not achieved' (1915c, p.178). Freud's related claim, that 'as long as the system Cs [conscious] controls affectivity and motility the mental condition of the person in question is spoken of as normal' 1915c, p 179), reinforces my previous argument that Freud considers primal repression to be the normal and desirable path of subjectivity. Yet, in much the same way as Kristeva, Freud 'ties himself in knots' over these interconnected issues of 'normal subjectivity', and repression's 'desirability'. To unravel these knots it is necessary to understand the term 'cathexis'.

Freud employs the term 'cathexis' to describe the investment or channelling of mental energy into particular ideas. 'Instinctual' cathexis is understood as the channelling of mental energy into an instinctual object or impulse. Freud delineates 'anticathexis' as the process whereby mental energy is used to expel and maintain the expulsion of unacceptable 'instinctual' ideas from consciousness (1915c, pp.180-181). Anticathexis is the mental means by which primal repression is effected and maintained: the degree of mental energy channelled into anticathexis being inversely proportional to the degree of mental energy channelled into cathexis of the 'instinctual' objects.

⁴ The two-stage character of repression is noted again by Freud in 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex' where he gives 'the name of 'repression' to the ego's turning away from the Oedipus complex'. Freud continues: 'later repressions come about for the most part with the participation of the super-ego, which in [the first instance of repression] is only just being formed' (1924, p.177).

⁵ Freud later revised his claim that anxiety must always be understood as a *product* of repression when he recognised that a particular anxiety which 'the boy felt ... in the face of ... being in love with his mother' is actually present prior to primal repression (1932, p.86).

In 'The Unconscious' (1915c) Freud details a number of clinical scenarios in terms of both the cathexis/anticathexis involved and the presence or absence of the 'quota of affect'. In the instance of anxiety hysteria, Freud claims, cathexis is withdrawn from the forbidden object and redirected towards a substitute object. In the case of a little boy's dog phobia cathexis is withdrawn from the boy's love impulse towards his father and redirected into a fear of the dog, which through a chain of events, according to Freud, has become associated with the father. The presence of affect in this instance reveals repression to be incomplete (1915c, pp.182-183):

A repression such as occurs in animal phobia must be described as radically unsuccessful. All that it has done is to remove and replace the idea; it has failed altogether in sparing unpleasure. (1915b, p.155)

In the case of conversion hysteria, on the other hand, Freud claims that the mental energy associated with the forbidden idea is displaced and condensed onto a single body part to become a symptom. While he acknowledges the unanswered question of 'How far and in what circumstances the unconscious is drained empty by this discharge into innervation' (1915c, p.184), he takes the 'total disappearance of the quota of affect' (1915b, p.155) as evidence that the repression is more complete in this instance. Freud therefore states:

as regards dealing with the quota of affect ... which is the true task of repression, it generally signifies a total success [of repression]. (1915b, p.156)

Having compared both anxiety hysteria and conversion hysteria to obsessional neurosis Freud concludes,

We may venture the supposition that it is because of the predominance of anticathexis and the absence of discharge [quota of affect] that the work of repression seems far less successful in anxiety hysteria and in obsessional neurosis than in conversion hysteria. (1915c, p.185)

This conclusion, however, prompts the following question. If conversion hysteria represents a more successful repression than anxiety hysteria, and if complete repression is indicative of normal subjectivity, does conversion hysteria represent a movement towards normal subjectivity?

This confusing account is one of a number of similar contradictions apparent within Freud's writings on repression. Other examples, this time from his ideas about psychoanalytic practice, reveal some equally problematic material. In 'The Unconscious' (1915c), despite his commitment to repression as 'normality', Freud refers to the clinical process of analysis as a 'lifting' of repression. Here he claims that the analyst confronts the

patient with 'some ideas that the patient has at some time repressed' to assist the patient in forging connections between conscious ideas and 'the unconscious memory trace' (pp.175-176). He asserts that:

there is no lifting of the repression until the conscious idea, after the resistances have been overcome, has entered into connection with the unconscious memory-trace. It is only through the making conscious of the latter itself that success is achieved (1915c, pp.175-176).

The notion that the undoing of repression indicates a successful psychoanalytic intervention is repeated in Freud's references to the phenomenon of transference. In the same essay Freud claims that 'the capacity for transference', and in turn the effectiveness of the psychoanalytic cure, 'presupposes an unimpaired object cathexis' (1915c, p.1960). It seems that holding onto one's 'instinctual' object cathexis is a move towards healthy subjectivity. Yet only a few years later Freud states definitively that 'instinctual' cathexis is 'unserviceable' (1919, p.204) and 'bound to pass away according to programme' (1924, p.174). These contradictions reinforce the dubious character of the claim, made even more unwaveringly by Lacan, that primal repression is a necessary condition of subjectivity.

It could be argued that these clinical examples of conversion and anxiety hysteria do not relate to Freud's notion of primal repression in that they do not relate to the subject's repression of its early connection to its mother. Such an objection ignores Freud's argument that what comes to be associated with the primally repressed is also bound to be repressed/suppressed. When this point is considered in conjunction with my earlier argument (Chapter 1) regarding the inextricable connection between affectivity and the early relationship to the mother, the link between these clinical examples and primal repression becomes more evident. Indeed, it is this link between primal repression and the suppression of affectivity more generally that enables some speculation about the 'character' of primally repressed subjectivity. This speculation will be discussed shortly, but for the moment I will focus on the suggestion that primal repression is not a necessary and inevitable aspect of subjectivity. This will be pursued in terms initially raised in Chapter 5, through a discussion of its gendered affiliations.

Is Primal Repression Sexually Differentiated?

If primal repression is gendered, that is, more likely to manifest in one sex than the other, then it can hardly be argued to be inevitable to subjectivity. There are four factors supporting the suggestion that primal repression is more likely to be a masculine than a feminine phenomenon. The first of these factors relates to the likelihood that the mother-son

connection will carry more energy and attract more disapproval than the mother-daughter connection. The others relate to the greater likelihood of the boy's identification with the father.

Campioni and Gross (1978) suggest, since the penis is sexually privileged (thus becoming the phallus), that women under patriarchy are likely to make the equation of penis/phallus=baby in the way that Freud argues (p.114, p.116). Nevertheless, they continue, because in patriarchal society, power, status, and privilege belongs to the boy by birthright, 'it is only the male child who can truly satisfy the mother's ... wish for the phallus' (p.116). For this reason the boy child is the more likely object of the mother's desire, and she is likely therefore to invest more in her connection with her son than with her daughter.⁶ Second, because the boy child is the same sex as the father, and because the infant-mother relationship is likely to be sexualised by surrounding adults⁷, the boy child is more likely to be perceived by the father as his direct substitute in the mother's affections. The threat this poses for the father's own position in relation to the mother can be understood in two ways: *vis a vis* Lacan's argument – the father's need to relate to the boy's mother as the metaphoric and metonymic substitute for his own primally repressed mother, and in relation to the father's patriarchal 'ownership rights to the mother' (Campioni and Gross: 1988, p.114). The mother-son relation is more likely to attract the father's disapproval because it poses more of a threat to the father.

The greater likelihood of both the mother's investment in the son and the father's disapproval of the mother-son connection combine with yet another factor to make it more likely that the boy child will undergo primal repression. This third factor is the fear of castration – which as Campioni and Gross note 'can only result once the organ has been sexually privileged' (1978, p.114). Castration is perceived by the boy's childish imagination to be a *real* threat. In the face of the patriarchal devaluing of her sex the girl too is likely to become all too aware of what the penis represents. However, as I have argued in Chapter 1, the girl cannot *fear* the loss of this bodily organ in the way the boy can. As someone who has already lost the cherished organ it is more likely 'disappointment' than fear that pervades the moment of the girl's dawning awareness of her sexuality. As Freud himself puts it 'the girl regards her castration as an individual *misfortune* [which she] gradually extends ... to other females and finally to her mother as well' (1933, p.126). In short, castration cannot possibly

⁶ The author acknowledges that this holds only to the extent that the mother identifies with the phallus and masculinity. Women who have a strong identification with the feminine may have more desire for and a greater connection to a girl child.

⁷ Campioni and Gross refer to this as the penis being 'connected to Oedipal desire' (1978, p.114)

have the impact on girls that it is likely to have on boys in terms of motivating a disconnection from the mother.

The fourth and final factor making it more likely that primal repression will be a masculine phenomenon revolves around the issue of identification. By virtue of his having a penis and by virtue of the value attached to the penis, the boy will be strongly predisposed to identifying with his father as a way of resolving the Oedipal struggle. While the girl, too, is likely to be drawn to identify with her father by the value placed on male embodiment, at the same time she is likely to be drawn to an identification with her mother through whom, as Freud observes, she learns how to 'fulfil her role in the sexual function' (1933, p.134). The girl cannot simultaneously use her mother as feminine role model *and repress* her early connection to her. In summary, identification with the father is more likely in the boy's case, and the father a more potent figure of disapproval for the boy than the girl. Identification and disapproval are the ideal antecedents for primal repression and super-ego formation. Freud himself claims that girls are less likely than boys to develop a strong super-ego (1933, p.129). Yet he apparently failed to consider the implications of this observation for the development of primal repression in the former.⁸

When all the factors above are taken into consideration it would seem more likely that the male subject will develop a split subjectivity in which pre-Oedipal experiences are kept at bay in the unconscious. It would seem less likely that the female subject will develop the type of subjectivity split between a conscious and an unconscious which both Freud and Lacan regard as normal and desirable. Another way of understanding this is that the female sense of self is more likely to straddle both the prelinguistic/emotional-corporeal and the linguistic/symbolic worlds (Celemajer: 1987). Or, as Irigaray puts it, the female subject *is* the unconscious that man *has* (1985b, p.73): *her* subjectivity is imbued with that which *he* has relegated to his unconscious. This link between masculinity and primal repression is also supported by Gallop's argument that the notion of split subjectivity is one which emanates 'from a certain masculinist ideology' (1989, p.38). I will now argue, when aspects of Lacan's and Kristeva's writings are read against the inevitability of primal repression, that the lesser likelihood of primal repression in females is able to explain the differences both writers observe in female subjectivity.

Lacan argues that all subjects are equally subject to the phallus, that is, to the structures of signification and to the phallus as objet a. However, Lacan (1982) details two

⁸ Interestingly one feminist response to Freud's observation that women tend to have less strong superegos is to object strongly. This is perhaps not surprising given that Freud considers the process of 'sublimation' occurring with primal repression and superego formation to be the basis 'every kind of cultural achievement' (1905, p.44). Such positive evaluations of sublimation begin to look suspect when primal repression is exposed as socially induced, and indeed patriarchally founded.

possible subject positions in relation to the phallus: that of phallic subject, of presuming to have the phallus – Lacan regards this as the position of ‘all’ or ‘certainty’, and that of ‘lacking’ the phallus – the position of ‘not all’. However, Lacan continues, because nobody truly ‘has’ the phallus, both positions - of phallic subjectivity and lack - are available to all subjects. According to Lacan, from the position of phallic subject ‘the phallus’ is perceived as ‘the signifier for which there is no signified’ (1982, p.152), as the elusive *objet a*. The subject in this position experiences a ‘phallic *jouissance*’ wherein the non-signifiable *objet a* takes the form of idealised Other, God, or ‘soul’. Further, Lacan claims, the subject occupying the phallic position ‘only ever relates as a partner’ through the mediation of this idealised Other (1982, p.151).

In the position of ‘not all’/on the side of castration, on the other hand, the subject is already on the side of the idealised Other, of God, and cannot, therefore, experience a phallic *jouissance*. Rather, Lacan claims, the ‘not-all’ subject experiences a *jouissance* that is *radically* Other. Because women are more obviously castrated,⁹ more obviously on the side of ‘not all’, Lacan claims that on her side there is something more: ‘There is a *jouissance* ... a *jouissance* of the body which is, if the expression be allowed, beyond *the phallus*’ (1982, p.145). On this basis he goes on to argue, that ‘in so far as her *jouissance* is radically Other ... the woman has a relation to God greater than all that has been stated in ancient speculation’ (1982, p.153). Having suggested that women experience such a non-phallic *jouissance*, Lacan reveals his own phallic subject position (his own need for certainty) by asking:

whether this endpoint from which she comes, which she enjoys beyond the whole game which makes up her relationship with man, whether this point, which I call the Other signifying it with a capital O, itself knows anything. (1982, p.159)

To which Lacan promptly finds his own answer: because ‘she is herself subjected to the Other just as much as the man’ (1982, p.159), in other words because woman, like man, inhabits language (1982, p.150) and a language which encompasses the limits of knowing, while *she may experience a non-phallic jouissance she cannot possibly know it*.

In Chapter 4 I argued for the implausibility of Lacan’s notion of ‘*objet a*’. This leaves the way clear for another interpretation of the *jouissance* Lacan observes on the side of woman. If the *jouissance* Lacan perceives on the side of woman is read in the context of my critique of the inevitability of primal repression, it can be viewed rather differently. Rather than as an effect of women’s positioning in language as ‘not-all’, feminine *jouissance* can be read as a manifestation of the female subject’s ongoing connection to prelinguistic

⁹ Remembering that in Lacan’s terms everyone is castrated.

experiences; as a manifestation of *her* ongoing access to emotional-corporeal experiences beyond the word. In sum, feminine *jouissance* can be interpreted as a manifestation of the female subject's less straightforward relationship to primal repression. Further, Lacan's failure to interpret feminine *jouissance* as an ongoing connection to the prelinguistic can be understood in light of the repression attaching to the masculine subject position: to the degree that normative masculine subjectivity is generated out of repression of prelinguistic experiences, it becomes more difficult for that subject to conceive of the existence of such experiences, let alone grant them significance. In this setting it is not surprising that subject reality comes to be constructed as wholly and solely 'of language'. Put another way, Lacan's interpretation of feminine *jouissance* as an 'exclusion ... internal to an order from which nothing escapes' (Irigaray: 1985b, p.87) – much like Derrida's equation of feminine and *différance* – can be understood as the type of defensive thinking that the primally repressed subject might employ against the return of the repressed.¹⁰

The acknowledgment of a prelinguistic reality and the recognition that women might partake of and know this non-linguistic, emotional-corporeal realm challenges the (primally repressed) masculine subject position. *His* authority and *his* historical position as *the* knowing subject are challenged. Irigaray summarises how woman is positioned in relation to and threatens the masculine subject position:

Female sexualization is thus the effect of a logical requirement, of the existence of a language that is transcendent with respect to bodies, which would necessitate ... to become incarnate, 'so to speak', taking women one by one. Take that to mean that woman does not exist, but that language exists. That woman does not exist owing to the fact that language – a language – rules as master, and that she threatens - as a sort of 'prediscursive reality'? - to disrupt its order. (1985b, p.89)

However, it is not just because woman could challenge his authority that the masculine subject denies her the ability to know her *jouissance*. He refuses woman this also because he needs her to stay firmly in the place of the idealised Other who can complete his own (primally repressed) incomplete subjectivity. Ironically it is because of *his lack*, his lack of access to the prelinguistic, that *she* must 'serve as the objet a, that bodily remainder' (Irigaray, 1985b, p.90), and reminder.

In her notion of the semiotic chora Kristeva allows for a subjective something beyond the symbolic in a way that Lacan's thinking ultimately does not. Yet, even her positioning of the female subject in relation to this beyond remains ambiguous. On the one

¹⁰ Gallop too refers to the 'defensive position' of the masculine subject (1989, p.36).

hand Kristeva perceives women's subjectivity as participating in something beyond the structures of signification: 'On a deeper level ... a woman cannot 'be' ... does not even belong to the order of *being*' (1981, p.137). On the other hand, Kristeva is disparaging of women's writing style, considering it inferior to the 'beyond' that is present in masculine avant-garde writing:

In women's writing, language seems to be seen from a foreign land; it is seen from the point of view of an asymbolic spastic body. Virginia Woolf describes suspended states, subtle sensations and above all, colours – green, blue – but she does not dissect language as Joyce does. (Kristeva in Grosz: 1989, p.64)

Yet when Kristeva's observations about women's writing are situated within the context of the lesser likelihood that women will repress the prelinguistic moment of subjectivity, this 'feminine' perspective can be explained in terms of female subjectivity being more likely to partake of an 'extrasymbolic' dimension. Kristeva's use of the terms 'asymbolic' in relation to this feminine perspective positions it against the word. Grosz's substitution of 'extrasymbolic' (1989, p.64) enables both feminine subjectivity and writing to be conceptualised more positively as containing an extra or additional dimension. In Kristeva's terms this extra dimension can be understood as a more direct experience and expression of semiotic motility. Kristeva's wont to regard this direct expression of semiotic motility – hysteria – as inferior, springs from her assumption – following Freud and Lacan – that primal repression is the path of normal and desirable subjectivity.

In this section I have argued that primal repression is more likely to be a masculine than a feminine phenomenon. I have asserted that the male subject is more likely to repress the early affective, libidinal, and identificatory connection to the mother, and in so doing to suppress emotional-corporeality more generally. In suggesting that the female subject is more likely to access the prelinguistic as part of her sense of self, I am not, however, claiming that her on-going relationship with her mother, and indeed her relationship with herself, will be straightforward. Given the lesser value placed on those with female bodies in patriarchal society, it is likely that the girl will come to regard her mother, and ultimately herself, with some degree of contempt. It is interesting, therefore, that at one point in 'Femininity' Freud himself chooses to refer to the girl's turning from her mother as a 'repudiation' rather than a 'repression' (1933, p.126). I will return to this later. Meantime, the question remains as to whether the concept of 'primal repression' still has any relevance to subjectivities a century after Freud. Social circumstances and relations between men and

women in particular have changed considerably since Freud's time. It is conceivable that the conditions necessary for primal repression may no longer be present.

Is Primal Repression an Outdated Concept?

It may be justifiable to argue for a connection between primal repression and masculine subjectivity in Freud's time. However, the numerous social changes which have occurred since then may make this connection more questionable at the beginning of the 21st century. First, in Freud's time women's sense of status and power had to be acquired through men, and most particularly through sons and husbands. Today women can access some of what the phallus offers through greater participation in the public workforce and public life more generally.¹¹ As a result, the mother's need to access the phallus through her son is likely to be less, and in turn the connection between mother and son less intense. Second, for the increasing number of single parent families and families living in two households, it is likely that the Oedipal triangle is becoming less relevant. If the boy is not competing with his father for his mother's affections then the boy is less likely to experience the type of anxiety which will lead him to repress his connection to his mother and more fully identify with his father.

However, there are numerous ways in which these claims need qualification. We still live in a society that values men more highly than women; boys are still fathered by men whose lives are likely to have been touched by primal repression in one way or another; and, primal repression continues to play a significant role in the public sphere. In an argument bearing on all three of these points, Tacey (1997) claims that patriarchal society, a society based on the slaying of the mother, is fully alive.¹² Writing from a Jungian perspective he observes:

In patriarchal society, men have dealt with the dragon of the unconscious simply by slaying it with macho-heroics, rationality, or various other supremacist antics and strategies of the masculine spirit. The hero kills the dragon which symbolises unconscious instinct, the mother-bond, and the 'regressive' attachment to the matrix. (1997, p.70)

According to Tacey '*we cannot claim to be a post-patriarchal world*' until men learn to individuate without destroying the mother (p72, italics added).

Another qualification to the argument that primal repression is less relevant a century after Freud is as follows. To the extent that the father's own subjectivity is primarily

¹¹ Brenner and Ramas (1990) give one account of this change in women's occupation over the last century.

¹² Tacey's argument has a strong resonance with Irigaray's argument in 'Women-Mother's, the Silent Substratum of the Social Order' (1991b).

repressed, or his identity modelled on a masculinity devoid of emotional-corporeality, the father is still likely to compete with his son for the mother's affections out of a sense of his own incompleteness. For the sons of such fathers the Oedipal triangle will continue to have relevance in the formation of their subjectivities. The son's experience of his father as competitor (when this occurs) in conjunction with the social value placed on male embodiment make it likely that these boys will still turn from the mother to an identification with the father. Because such fathers offer a model of masculinity constructed around primal repression – a subjectivity devoid of emotional-corporeality – the boy is likely to develop a similar masculine identity. Furthermore, the influence of a primally repressed masculinity will not stop with the internalisation of the model offered by his father. In the public sphere the boy will be schooled within the masculine philosophical tradition which founds current social thought. Lloyd (1984) has demonstrated this tradition to be one built on the exclusion of the body and emotions (among other things); Flax (1983) has argued this to be a tradition marked by primal repression; and I have elaborated the continuation of this tradition of primal repression in more recent masculine philosophical writings.

Finally, women's participation in public life may give them access to the power, status and privilege that historically has only been accorded to men. Yet because public life has been and continues to be structured according to masculine priorities and values (Lloyd, 1984; Gatens, 1991) women will generally be expected to participate in public life on 'masculine' terms. Women will find it difficult to participate in this public sphere 'as women' (Gatens: 1991b, p.57). Most particularly, because the masculinity which dominates this sphere has been shaped by primal repression, women who participate in the public sphere are likely to experience considerable difficulty maintaining an ongoing connection with their emotional-corporeal selves. For instance women may feel pressured to explain intuitive thinking in rational terms. To the extent that women find this frustrating and disempowering they may still attempt to live through their sons. On the other hand, to the degree that they submit to this 'masculinisation' by repudiating their own emotional-corporeality, women's presence in the public sphere may actually reinforce the effects of primal repression within that sphere.

Indeed, it could be argued that women's succumbing to 'masculinisation' in the public sphere makes it likely that now they too will experience primal repression. However, for the reasons outlined earlier in this chapter I argue that primal repression remains less likely in the instance of feminine subjectivity. The girl is less likely to experience herself as the father's competitor in the mother's affections, and therefore less likely to be the target of the

father's disapproval. The girl is also less likely than the boy to fully identify with the father (while she may still do so in part because of his status). This is not to suggest that the influence of primal repression in the public arena will not have some important effects on female subjectivity as women participate more in the public arena. As I have already indicated, the pressure on women to masculinise may mean that they put aside their emotional-corporeality in the public arena.¹³ Indeed it is exactly this disavowal of the feminine in the public sphere that Celemajer (1987) considers to underlie anorexia. In a summary which merges the useful in Lacan's thinking (that women are constructed as lacking the phallus) with that which his thinking ultimately elides (the prelinguistic moment and its connection to feminine subjectivity) Celemajer explains anorexia in the following way:

the girl 'lives' two bodies. According to the phallic Symbolic order, she experiences her body as a castrated, passive, inert object. However, pre-Oedipally she lived a body inscribed by (incomparable) non-phallic significations and pleasures.... Her 'legitimised' bodily experience (reduced to a dependent, devalued position) marks the suffocation of other unrepresented experiences.... the body inscribed as castrated stifles all possible positive representations of her pre-Oedipal body-ego. It is a deadened corporeality through which her experiences and maternal prehistory are muffled and which is unable to represent or reinvest pre-Oedipal impulses. Hence in as much as these continue to operate, the feminine Oedipalised body is an obstacle and must be removed. Hysteria is a strategy to resolve this precarious situation.... In the present social context, the emphasis on the body and thinness provide a medium for expression, and thus anorexia has become a dominant strategic form. (1987, pp.63-64)

In a closely related but less complex argument, Robertson writes in *Starving in the Silences* (1992):

The woman who self-starves attempts to find meaning and understand her behaviour as it is reflected back to her – from a masculine mirror of meaning. For the self starver to see herself in a mirror which is not fashioned by male subjectivity, to speak in a language which codes female ways of knowing, would require a fundamental challenge to the dominant gender order, which privileges one type and shape of body over another. (p.70)

¹³ This tendency may relate to Kristeva's notion of abjection.

In this chapter I have argued that the Freudian notion of primal repression remains relevant at the beginning of the 21st century. I have argued that primal repression is a phenomenon more strongly associated with normative masculinity and considerably less with normative femininity. Therefore, given the association between the prelinguistic maternal and emotional-corporeality – argued in Chapter 1 – I have argued that the normative masculine subject is likely to be one devoid of emotional-corporeality. I have argued that such prelinguistic modes of experience are likely to remain unsuppressed in normative femininity. At this point I offer these differences as a retrospective explanation for the omission of the prelinguistic from the work of three significant male theorists, and the inclusion of the prelinguistic in the work of the two female theorists of subjectivity examined in the earlier chapter. The implications of these gender differences in the arena and practice of psychological therapy will be discussed in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHODOROW AND THE PRELINGUISTIC

In the last chapter I challenged the assumption within Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis that the primal repression of the early connection to the mother is essential to, and universal in, the production of subjectivities. I challenged this assumption by arguing for a connection between primal repression and normative masculinity, and for the lesser place of primal repression in normative femininity. I also argued, given the connection between affective aspects of subjectivity and the early relationship to the mother (explored in Chapter 1), that the primally repressed masculine subject is more likely to have suppressed emotional corporeality while the normative female subject is likely to retain emotional corporeality as part of her sense of self. I offered this account of the interaction of primal repression and gender as an explanation for both the omission of the prelinguistic maternal from the three male conceived theories examined in Chapters 3 and 4, and the attention given to the prelinguistic subjectivity in the two female conceived theories examined in Chapter 5. Having made these connections between masculinity and primal repression, and femininity and emotional corporeality, I do not wish to align these differences too rigidly with male and female subjectivities. I recognise the possibility that some male subjects may exhibit a certain 'femininity' and some female subjects a certain 'masculinity'.¹ However, as Gatens so convincingly points out, because the connections between male embodiment and 'masculinity', and female embodiment and 'femininity' can never be completely severed (1991a), a sexual difference *is* implicated in these alignments. Given, as Gatens also notes, that in the public arena of Western society 'the masculine body and masculinity are covertly taken to be the norm' (1991b, p.57), it is not surprising that 'women are far from being at home with themselves or with the public body' (Diprose: 1994, p.31).

In the previous chapter I began to argue that women are not 'at home with themselves or with the public body' because emotional-corporeality does not sit easily in a public arena shaped by primal repression. Emotional-corporeality reminds *all* subjectivities, male and female, of the inaugural social relationship cast aside/denied by normative and hegemonic masculinity. Feminine emotional-corporeality has arguably played a vital, if

¹ That a group of male writers in the object relations tradition (for example, Winnicott, 1960,) *do* focus on the role of the prelinguistic maternal could be taken as evidence that their thinking is not conditioned by normative masculinity/primal repression. Indeed Flax (1990) argues: 'By focusing on the mother-child dyad, object relations theorists make possible a reconsideration of the mother's power in the ... lives of men and women.' She continues: 'This is an important step in the process of ... undoing the repression of experiences of ourselves ... as persons who have been mothered.' Yet, object relations thinking is influenced by normative masculinity in other ways.

denigrated, role in the private sphere of western society. Yet the effects of primal repression on normative masculinity and the public sphere have contributed to a public/private split in which emotional-corporeality is pivotal.² A consequence of this split is that women entering the public arena are under pressure from the public 'fraternity' to 'repudiate' aspects of 'the female body and femininity' (Gatens: 1991b, p.57). The requirement that women repudiate the very thing connecting them to their early maternal roots makes the 'coming out' of emotional-corporeality a critical feminist move. It is a move, I argue, that is fundamental to the type of disruption Irigaray envisaged if women are to speak 'as women' (1985b).

Nancy Chodorow (1978, 1989, & 1999) is a feminist writer who is concerned with the production of *gendered subjectivity*. Most importantly for this argument she is a feminist thinker who incorporates prelinguistic and emotional-corporeal aspects in her understanding of subjectivity. In this sense her thinking supports a feminist agenda of putting emotional-corporeality on the map.³ However, Chodorow's analysis of subjectivity is often dismissed by other feminist thinkers because it allegedly fails to address the full means by which sexual difference is generated, or because it replicates sexual stereotypes in an unproductive way. The first of these criticisms most often comes from feminists influenced by poststructuralism who find Chodorow's use of sex roles as explanation for sexual difference simplistic. According to such critics Chodorow ignores the role of phallus in both the valuation of sex roles and the production of gender. The second more general criticism argues that in evoking sexual stereotypes Chodorow's analysis undermines rather than enhances efforts to enact a particularly 'feminine' agency.⁴

I agree that it is necessary to heed warnings about the potentially negative effects of sexual stereotypes when elaborating a particularly 'feminine' subjectivity and agency. I also agree that it is necessary to consider the role of the phallus in the production of sexed subjectivities. Yet it seems that poststructural feminism is not an entirely satisfactory framework for explorations of feminine agency and subversion. Poststructural feminism relies heavily on Derridean deconstruction and Foucault's ideas on subjectivity. As noted in Chapter 3 the former has a dubious relationship to the prelinguistic maternal and the latter alludes to an extra-linguistic materiality that it ultimately fails to elaborate. In other words both branches of poststructuralism pay no attention to emotional-corporeal aspects of

Flax observes that despite attention to 'the mother-child relation' the mother only ever appears as 'the child's object' not as a subject in her own right (p.123).

² This split is observed by Lloyd (1984).

³ Indeed this is one of the central aims of her book *The Power of Feelings* (1999).

⁴ The first of these criticisms is exemplified by Grosz (1990b) who argues that Chodorow's 'focus on the unequal relations between the sexes means that ... she leaves the structures of patriarchal, and particularly phallogocentric, oppression intact and unexplained [she]

subjectivity. While feminist poststructuralists themselves may stop short of claiming that prelinguistic markings and emotional-corporeality are invalid, the inability of the poststructural framework to deal with the prelinguistic signals its limitation for feminism and discussions of feminine subjectivity.

It is because Chodorow *does* pay attention to the prelinguistic aspects of subjectivity that her work is worthy of attention. In this chapter I explore Chodorow's analysis of the production of sexual difference, and I consider the ways in which this differs from my analysis of the same. Like my account, Chodorow's account of sexual difference situates the mother-infant relationship centrally in the development of subjectivity. However, my analysis places mothering within the context of two further factors: the unequal valuing of male and female bodies within Western patriarchal societies, and primal repression as a condition of normative masculinity. By placing the mother-infant relationship within these contexts my analysis counteracts some of the limitations of Chodorow's analysis, while it also bridges the psyche-social gap which Derrida and Lacan bridge only at the expense of maternity. My concern is to create an understanding of sexed subjectivity in which the contribution of both mother and father, and the contexts within which each is situated are taken into consideration. To elaborate on how my argument diverges from Chodorow's I first need to summarise her perspective on the production sexed subjectivity.

A large part of the first section of Chodorow's book, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), explores the central tenets of object relations theory. Drawing in particular on the ideas of Margaret Mahler and Michael Bailint, Chodorow claims, that because the human newborn does not 'have any of those adaptive ego capacities which enable older humans to act instrumentally', the caring parent – conventionally the mother – acts as the infant's 'external ego' 'serving to both mediate and provide its total environment' (Chodorow: 1978, p.58).⁵ Drawing on Mahler, Chodorow claims that these 'early relational experiences' constitute in turn,

a more internal 'core of self'. This core derives from the infant's inner sensations and emotions, and remains the 'central, the crystallization point of the 'feeling of self,' around which a 'sense of identity' will become established.' (Chodorow; & Mahler in Chodorow: 1978, p.67)⁶

Chodorow elaborates on this process of early self development through primary relationship in the following terms:

leaves the question of the underlying meaning and value of the sex roles unasked' (p.22). The second of these criticisms is exemplified by Meyers (1992).

⁵ Chodorow takes the term 'external ego' from Mahler.

A very young child, for instance, may feel invulnerable and all-powerful because it has introjected, or taken as an internal object, a nourishing and protecting maternal image, which is now experienced continuously whether or not its mother is actually there. Alternately, it may feel rejected and alone whether or not its mother is actually there, because it has taken as internal object an image of her as rejecting and denying gratification. (1978, pp.42-43)

In object relations theory the first stage of self development occurs within a state of non-differentiation from the supportive environment, while the second stage occurs through the demarcation of this 'feeling of self' from the environment which sustains it. At the second stage, according to Chodorow,

The reality principle ... intrudes on an emotional level as well as on the cognitive level. The child comes to recognize that its mother is a separate being with separate interests and activities. (1978, p.69)

In her account this demarcation generates psychic and embodied boundaries:

Both ego boundaries (a sense of personal psychological division from the rest of the world) and a bounded body ego (a sense of the permanence of physical separateness and the predictable boundedness of the body) emerge through this process. (1978, p.68)

To this point, the object relations perspective assumed by Chodorow seems entirely compatible with the account of the earliest stages of subjectivity constructed in my first chapter. Yet, as I shall now show, there are some subtle differences in our analyses that produce more divergent consequences for our respective understandings of sexed identities. These differences revolve most particularly around our respective interpretations of Freud on the matter of the 'instinctual economy', and in turn around our differing treatments of the pleasure principle.

In the early part of *The Reproduction of Mothering* Chodorow draws attention to the ways in which object relations thinking differs from other schools of psychoanalysis, most particularly how it diverges from Freud's thinking. Chodorow characterises this divergence as an attempt on the part of object relations theory to 'free analytic theory from its libidinal determinism' (1978, p.66). While this freeing involves a manoeuvre much like mine, to make attachment more central and libido or sexuality less central in the development of subjectivity, the delibidinisation pursued by object relations theory is also characterised by a rejection of

⁶ In Chapter 1 I used this idea of Chodorow's to reinforce the notion of prelinguistic emotional corporeality.

what it perceives as biological reductionism within Freud's thinking. To this end, Chodorow after Fairbairn protests that:

innate drives do not naturally determine behavior and development. People do not operate according to the 'pleasure principle' in its psychophysiological sense. People have innate erotic and aggressive energies. Infants ... are sexual. But people do not naturally seek release of tension from physiological drives and use their object-relations in search for this release. Rather, they manipulate and transform drives in the course of attaining and retaining relationships. (1978, p.48)

Object relations theory rejects Freud's implication that '[t]he child comes to cathect the mother only because she nourishes and cares for it' (Chodorow: 1978, pp.63-64). In contrast to the apparent self-centredness of the Freudian neonate Bailint and Bowlby argue 'for a primary and fundamental sociality of the infant' (Chodorow: 1978, p.63). Chodorow does not commit herself on the issue of whether or not the neonate comes into the world possessing a fundamental and pre-existent sociality. However, in keeping with object relations theory Chodorow constructs 'a view of the place of both drives and social relations in development' (1978, p.47), and on this basis rejects the 'pleasure principle' in favour of the idea that infant behaviour is more socially motivated.

I too, interpret the infant's behaviour as *both* socially and libidinally motivated, but unlike Chodorow I do not consider it necessary to reject the pleasure principle to do so. I argue that Freud's regarding infant behaviour as internally driven can be reinterpreted in light of Tomkins' (1962) affect theory, and through this reinterpretation that the notion of the pleasure principle can be retained. The expansion of 'instinctual' life to include affect serves to make 'instinctual' life at least in part socially motivated. It means that the self-seeking or pleasure-seeking neonate does not have to be construed as unsocial. According to Tomkins, as noted in Chapter 1, one of the innate or instinctive responses with which the infant is born is a 'want to communicate, to be close to and in contact with others of his species' (1962, p.169). Tomkins argues that this desire for social communication and contact is satisfied in the very early stages of life *affectively*, through the means of the mother's facial expressions and tone of voice in particular. Tomkins argues further, that the caring parent's affective responses to the infant have affective effects within the infant. I interpreted this to mean that the affective responses of caring adults provide the basis of self esteem. This position accords with Chodorow's argument that an 'affective core of self' develops through the child's earliest interactions with the mother. When the 'instinctual' life of the infant is viewed as having an

affective component it cannot be construed as unsocial: the infant is instinctually drawn towards an *affective* interaction with another from which it derives affective pleasure (or displeasure). Put another way, in seeking pleasure, or more specifically in pursuing positive affect, the nascent subject is acting socially.

Once affective-sociality is recognised as a key ingredient of early 'instinctual' life it becomes unnecessary to dispense with the pleasure principle as an individualistic and biologically deterministic concept. As Tomkins' points out, the infant seeks to avoid unpleasant affective states (such as fear) as much as it seeks to avoid hunger and pain. Conversely, just as it seeks the satisfaction of hunger so too the infant seeks out positive affective experiences. It is to significant others that the infant is 'instinctively' drawn in search of positive affect. In summary, while the very young infant may be motivated by pleasure, sociality is inherent within this pleasure seeking.

Not only is it unnecessary to dismiss the pleasure principle as biologically reductionist, but indeed there are a number of reasons for retaining the pleasure principle in our understanding of the human psyche. First, it is able to explain the phenomenon of splitting to which Klein draws attention; indeed the phenomenon of splitting cannot be explained without the pleasure principle. Second, the pleasure principle explains why the young girl may turn from the mother to the father in the absence of the threat of castration: the girl turns to the father because of the positive affective gains to be had from identifying with someone who matters (Chapter 1). Third, as I have also argued in Chapter 1, the 'instinctual' tendency to avoid the unpleasant forms the basis of the later developing phenomenon of primal repression. I have argued in the previous chapter that primal repression is critical to an understanding of sexed subjectivity. Chodorow also refers to repression in her understanding of sexed identities. Yet her understanding of this phenomenon is different to mine. In order to consider how Chodorow and I diverge on the issue of repression I need to outline in more general terms her understanding of the development of sexed subjectivity.

Chodorow begins her analysis of the production of sexed subjectivities in a sociological vein, noting that in Western capitalist societies parenting of children has become a role increasingly isolated from the range of other activities and human relations while at the same time the family has become the 'quintessentially' 'personal sphere of society'. In this context, according to Chodorow, mothering and 'taking care of men' has 'come increasingly to define women's lives' (1978, pp.4-5). Chodorow goes on to argue that it is *women's* mothering, but more particularly women's mothering in this isolated context that produces masculine and feminine subjectivities. Chodorow argues that 'a mother, of a different gender

from her son and deprived of adult emotional, social and physical contact with men' will tend to 'push her son out of his preoedipal relationship to her into an oedipally toned relationship defined by its sexuality and gender distinction' (1978, p.107). According to Chodorow, through this positioning of her son as sexualised 'other' the mother draws her son 'into triangular conflicts', and in so doing renders significant his difference from her (1978, p.110). Through this process of differentiation, Chodorow argues, the 'nurturant capacities and needs' that the boy associates with the mother become 'systematically curtailed and repressed' (1978, p.7). Of the production of 'feminine' subjectivities through women's mothering, on the other hand, Chodorow writes:

The content of the girl's attachment to her mother differs from a boy's precisely in that it is not... oedipal (sexualized, focused on possession, which means focused on someone clearly different and opposite). The preoedipal attachment of daughter to mother continues to be concerned with early mother-infant relational issues. It sustains the mother-infant exclusivity and the intensity, ambivalence, and boundary confusion of the child still pre-occupied with issues of dependence and individuation. (1978, p.97)

According to Chodorow, because

girls do not define themselves in terms of the denial of preoedipal modes to the same extent as do boys ... regression to these modes tends not to feel as much a basic threat to their ego. (1978, p.167)

A further consequence of the ongoing connection with the preoedipal, according to Chodorow, is that 'Girls emerge ... with a basis for 'empathy' built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not' (1978, p.167).

In summary, according to Chodorow,

Women's mothering... produces... [a] feminine personality based... less on repression of inner objects, and fixed and firm splits in the ego, and more on retention and continuity of external relationships.... [The girls] experience of self contains more flexible and permeable ego boundaries. Boys come to define themselves as more separate and distinct, with a greater sense of rigid ego boundaries and differentiation. The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate. (1978, p.169)

Chodorow not only claims that women's mothering produces a masculine sense of self that is separate, but in her later book, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (1989) she argues

emphatically that women's mothering is responsible for 'a defensive masculine identity in men and a compensatory psychology and ideology of masculine superiority' which in turn 'sustain[s] male dominance' (p.6 & p.1). The logical antidote that Chodorow (1978) prescribes for such 'problems' of sexed identity is that men become more involved in early parenting.

It is difficult to dispute the picture Chodorow paints here: she seems to capture certain features of modern male and female subjectivities, while her observations of the effects of mothering on these subjectivities also appear to have merit. In fact Chodorow's observations about sexual difference add considerably to my argument that female subjects retain access to emotional-corporeal experiences by filling out some detail of these experiences as primary identification, unboundedness, and a capacity for empathy. Similarly, Chodorow's analysis of the boy's 'repression' of these capacities fleshes out the consequences for masculine subjectivity as rigid ego boundaries, separateness, fear of regression etc. Indeed, my argument is neither with the validity of Chodorow's observations of sexual difference, nor with her claims about the effects of mothering on these subjectivities, but rather with the *singularity* of causal explanation Chodorow offers for sexual difference. According to Chodorow masculine and feminine subjectivities are *solely* a product of women's mothering. In *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* Chodorow responds to this very criticism, acknowledging that women's mothering is only 'one extremely important, and previously largely unexamined, aspect of the relations of gender and the psychology of gender' (1989, p.7). Yet Chodorow remains convinced 'that men resent and fear women because they experience them as powerful mothers' (1989, p7). I accept Chodorow's assessment that men often fear and resent of women *and* experience them as powerful mothers and that this relates to men's 'repression' of their early connection to their mothers. However, I differ from Chodorow in my understanding of how and why this repression occurs. I think this repression is connected to a number of things in addition to women's mothering. These include the unequal valuing of men and women in our society, the role of the phallus as lure, and primal repression as a condition of normative masculinity. The young child is subject to all of these influences regardless of whether parenting is done by the mother or the father.

Indeed, Chodorow herself observes that even though mothers tend to push their son's differentiation, they 'retain, in some cases, a kind of intrusive controlling power over their sons' (1978, p.110). One possible explanation for this, apparently not considered by Chodorow, goes as follows. A mother is likely to retain control over her son even while

pushing his differentiation because her son is the primary means through which she accesses the phallus: the power, status, and privilege which attaches to male bodies in patriarchal society.⁷ Even if the mother does participate in the public sphere, I have argued that she is still unlikely to feel her power 'as woman' in this sphere. While mothering in isolation from males may push the boy child into a sexualised relationship with his mother and (thence) into a triangulation with his parents, the likelihood of this triangulation in the case of the boy child is greater anyway because he *is able* to represent the phallus for his mother in a way that the girl cannot. Not only is the boy child sexualised for the mother in the father's absence, but the boy child also stands for something of greater value than the girl child. As long as women remain devalued as women there will always be the possibility of women living *through* the men/boys to whom they are closely connected.

Second, while it would be unfair to claim that fathering has no place in Chodorow's analysis of sexed subjectivity, the father's place in her analysis is limited to that of an absent figure. According to Chodorow's argument the father's absence contributes to the oedipalisation of the mother-son connection, and positions the father as a 'separate' being for his children in a way that the mother, once experienced by the infant as continuous with its own experiences, can never be. Further, the father's separateness as product of his absence reinforces the son's development as a subject with rigid ego boundaries: the father's absence serves to reinforce masculinity as separate. There is merit in Chodorow's claim that the father's absence reinforces a masculinity characterised by separateness. However, her argument that the father's presence will somehow turn masculine subjectivity around overlooks the further impact that fathering could bring to the scene. As I have argued in Chapter 6, the father's subjectivity is more likely to be modelled on primal repression through both his experience of his own father and the impact of primal repression in the public (masculine) sphere: the father is more likely to model a masculinity which suppresses its emotional-corporeality (and thence its connectedness). Given this modelling and given also, as I have argued in the previous chapter, that boys are more likely to identify with the father because of the greater value placed on men (among other reasons), in modelling himself on the father the boy is more likely to develop an identity based on separateness and 'repression'. This is likely to be the case even if the father is more present. Further, as I also argued in Chapter 6, to compensate for the gap left by the father's own 'denial of the pre-Oedipal mode', the father is likely to look *to his female partner* whose subjectivity is less likely to be built on this denial. To the extent that this occurs and the boy is experienced by the father as

⁷ I have already argued this with the help of Campioni and Gross in Chapter 6.

competitor for the mother's attentions, the mother-son connection will be the potential object of the father's disapproval. This disapproval is likely to reinforce the identification that the boy is already more likely to make with the father.

What Chodorow's analysis of sexed subjectivity also overlooks is the mother's own role as agent for normative (repressed) masculinity. Even if the father's presence reduces the extent to which the boy becomes the sexualised other for the mother, unless the mother is conscious of the way primal repression has shaped normative masculinity she is likely to reinforce the suppression of emotional-corporeality in her own son. The mother may unwittingly push her son to be less emotional, not just because she regards him as sexualised 'other', but because normative masculinity and the public sphere value such behaviour.

In summary, I argue that it not just because women mother that boys are likely to repress pre-Oedipal modes and become subjects with rigid ego boundaries. Normative masculinity develops this way *also*: because of the threat boys pose to their fathers in their own lack; because of the model of primal repression that father's offer; because of the power, status, and privilege which adheres to male embodiment in patriarchal society; and, because normative masculinity and primal repression hold sway in the public sphere. As long as society values men and women unequally, as long as fathers model a masculinity developed within an historical and public context of primal repression, then it is unlikely that a father's participation in early parenting will be enough to counteract the type of male subjectivity that Chodorow observes. This is not to suggest that the antidote Chodorow offers (father's participating more in parenting) will not be useful, but that it will not be enough. In the last section of this chapter I will demonstrate the inadequacy of Chodorow's analysis by reflecting on a further analysis that emerges from Chodorow's.

In her analysis of male domination Benjamin (1980) builds on Chodorow but also adds Hegel and Winnicott to the equation. Benjamin begins her analysis with Hegel's master-slave analysis, arguing that:

Autonomous selfhood develops, and is later confirmed chiefly by the sense of being able to affect others by one's acts. Such confirmation ... allows us to develop an appreciation of others' subjectivity. The effect we have on something or someone is a way of confirming our reality. If our acts have no effect on the other, or if he/she refuses to recognize our act, we feel ourselves to be powerless. But if we act in such a way that the other person is completely negated, there is no one there to recognize us. Therefore it is necessary that, when we affect an other, she/he not simply dissolve under the impact of our

actions. The other must simultaneously maintain her/his integrity, as well as be affected. (Benjamin: 1980, pp.47-48)

Benjamin draws on Winnicott to connect this master-slave dialectic to the mother-infant relationship. Making this connection between Hegel and Winnicott Benjamin argues, that in the young infant:

Initially violence is an expression of the impulse to negate, to affect others, to be recognized.... The failure of the mother to 'survive' the attack, that is, to absorb it without reacting, causes the baby to turn its aggression inward and to develop what we know as rage. Rage is a reaction to the other's retreat or retaliation. The original self assertion is then converted from innocent mastery to mastery over and against the other. Winnicott's account implies that violence begins simply as the differentiating impulse, as a way of placing the other outside the self's boundaries.... When the other does not set a limit, when she does not survive, the child must continue to destroy and attack, continue to seek a boundary for its reactive rage. (1980, pp.60-61)

Benjamin's analysis implies that the roots of male violence lie in the inability of the mother to survive as a bounded being in the face of the child's aggressive acts; that the basis of masculine domination is the unboundedness of mothers/women that Chodorow identifies. For Benjamin, the mother is situated much like the slave in the master-slave dialectic: the mother is not 'recognized as an independent person, another subject, but as something Other: as nature, as an instrument or object, as less-than human' (1980, p.44). By situating the two patterns noted by Chodorow side by side, of masculine differentiation and feminine unboundedness, Benjamin maps out a mutually reinforcing pattern of behaviour: of masochism on the side of femininity and sadism on the side of masculinity. Moreover, Benjamin is concerned with how this mutually reinforcing relationship between the sexes is played out at the macro-level in cultural and social forms of male domination. Benjamin argues that the repudiation/obliteration of the mother by masculinity is the basis of the 'destructive rationality' of the public sphere (1980, pp.63-66).

There is much of value in Benjamin's analysis: she like Chodorow seems to capture something crucial about gender and gender relations. Yet, what Benjamin's analysis fails to recognise is that the masculinity which both obliterates the mother and dominates women does not grow solely from the mother's unboundedness. Rather, it is a masculinity that it reinforced over and again by the social devaluing of women, and by the effects of primal repression both through fathering and within the public sphere more generally. Indeed,

the inadequacy of Benjamin's analysis becomes apparent in the solution she suggests to the problem of male dominance/violence: that the mother must 'survive as an independent subject for the child' (1980, p.61). This solution overlooks the fact that in patriarchal society the only legitimate subject, the only person who can truly have subject status, is the masculine subject; and that this masculine subject is one who is 'dependent on nothing' (Foucault: 1986, p.368). This subject is one who gains his subject status only by denying/obliterating maternity. For woman to 'survive as independent subject' means that she must become masculinised; means that she too must kill the mother. This killing of the mother means a repudiation within herself of all that her subjectivity owes to the mother: emotional-corporeality, connectedness, the capacity to nurture, to empathise. All these things are arguably the glue that holds society together.

It may be that women might benefit from being more bounded, particularly around masculine neediness, but women's striving for subjecthood by mimicking men amounts to shooting themselves in the foot. Women need to strive for subjecthood by insisting on a place in the public sphere 'as women'; by insisting that the capacity to nurture, the ability to empathise, the ability to connect with and remain connected to people are all commodities that must be publicly recognised and valued, *not surreptitiously stolen* by a primally repressed masculine culture. It is only when women achieve this that mothers will be able to survive as subjects of integrity for their sons. In the next chapter I will look at one way in which women can 'come out' as emotional-corporeal subjects – in the practice of therapy.

CHAPTER 8

THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE

In the last chapter I critically examined Chodorow's analysis of the production of gendered subjectivities, arguing that women's mothering alone is an insufficient explanation for the production of a masculinity characterised by the repression of the prelinguistic on the one hand, and a femininity characterised by continuity with prelinguistic modes on the other. I argued for the contribution to the production of sexed subjectivities, of both the unequal valuing of the sexes in patriarchal society, and primal repression through both fathering and the public sphere. I concluded that as long as these conditions exist no amount of men's involvement in early parenting (Chodorow's argument) will alone be adequate to the task of reshaping gender.

Indeed, when one considers in combination: the effect on sexed subjectivities of women mothering in a confined domestic sphere (Chodorow's (1978) analysis); the effect of the primal repression of the prelinguistic/emotional-corporeal aspects of subjectivity in normative masculinity (this current analysis); and, the assumption of masculinity as baseline for thought and action within the public arena (Gaten's (1991b) analysis), it is not surprising that throughout the history of western thought 'man' or 'masculinity' has become aligned with the public sphere – with an autonomous, rational and transcendent self, and 'woman' or 'femininity' with the body, the emotions and the private sphere (Lloyd's (1984) analysis). A feminist unsettling of these dichotomous alignments is certainly necessary if sexed subjectivities are to be opened to other possibilities. However, such an unsettling must take into account the complex interweaving of forces, some noted in this thesis, through which these alignments have been forged as psychic entities. If the masculine/feminine dichotomy is understood solely as an effect of representation or language – as it is in some versions of feminist poststructuralism, then the prelinguistic aspects of subjectivity remain elided. Furthermore, the subsequent assumption that one can unsettle the dichotomy by simply thinking or performing against gender (Butler: 1990, 1993) contains its own normative masculine assumption that the self is somehow autonomous in its remaking. This assumption not only denies the subjects indebtedness to others,¹ but more fundamentally and in relation to this argument, it denies the subject's indebtedness to the very first other, the mother. Put another way, this assumption of an atomistic self repeats the primal repression of the

prelinguistic maternal at the same time that it obscures the contribution of primal repression to normative masculinity from which it emerges.

One strategy for unsettling the masculine/feminine dichotomy which counteracts the devaluing of the feminine and refuses complicity with primal repression would be recognition of the prelinguistic maternal through acknowledgment and valuing of the emotional-corporeal aspects of subjectivity. The practice of psychological therapy offers one opportunity for the acknowledgment and valuing of such aspects of self. As I have already noted, it is in the public arena most particularly that normative masculinity/primal repression has held sway. Therefore an acknowledgment of the emotional-corporeal aspects of subjectivity must occur in public discussions about therapy as well as in the private confines of the therapeutic relationship. In this chapter I turn to some of the current public discussions about therapeutic practice. Most particularly I focus on the question of what place, if any, is given to emotional-corporeal aspects of subjectivity within these discussions.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

It is impossible in just one chapter (and indeed in just one thesis) to consider all the discussions that take place around therapeutic practice. The currently available modes of therapy are many and varied and born of many different theoretical contexts, and, as Stam observes the discipline of psychology has become 'increasingly fractionated' (2000, p.7). I have therefore chosen to examine just one theoretical strand within psychology – 'social constructionist' or 'narrative psychology', along with the therapeutic practice to which it gives rise. I have chosen this particular trend of psychological thinking and therapy for two reasons: it has become increasingly popular in Australia in the two last decades, particularly in the South Australian context where the author has her own psychology practice; and it is a branch of psychological theory and practice that has been and continues to be strongly influenced by the postmodern and poststructural trend in the broader academy. My critique of this strand of psychology is therefore intertwined with my foregoing critique of poststructuralism and postmodernism.

Commenting on recent trends in the psychological literature, Crossley (2000) observes that:

Over the past 15 years or so, social constructionist approaches have begun to infiltrate psychology, emphasising the way in which experiences of self, identity

¹ This is the point made by Diprose in her response to Butler (1993, p.13).

and relationships with others are linguistically and culturally structured. (2000, p.527)

Although 'social constructionism', as Crossley observes, exists under a number of different names – discourse analysis, discursive psychology, feminist psychological approaches, and poststructural/postmodernist approaches – nevertheless, she continues, all these variations are commonly united in their critique of the 'realist' assumptions ... [that] 'the self' exists as an entity that can be discovered and described in much the same way as can any object in the natural or physical world. (p.529)

Contrary to this realist assumption about the self, social constructionist psychology considers the self to be

inextricably dependent on the language and linguistic practices that we use in our everyday lives to make sense of ourselves and other people. (Crossley: 2000, p.529)

From this brief summary it is clear that the social constructionist trend within psychology is closely tied to the postmodern and poststructural trend within the broader academy. As I elaborate on particular social constructionist thinkers in the following pages I reveal how the elision of the prelinguistic that occurs in the broader trend is repeated both within social constructionist psychology and within the therapy to which it gives rise.

Gergen (1985) is one social constructionist who has been influential in the Australian context. Drawing on philosophers such as Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Rorty, Feyerabend, and Spinoza, Gergen outlines a theory of social constructionism which parallels the general thrust of postmodernism. In line with other social constructionists, Gergen challenges earlier claims that knowledge is representational, and suggests instead that 'What we take to be experience of the world' is indeed a social artefact, the product of 'historically contingent' 'communal interchanges' (1985, p.266 & p.267). According to Gergen, in terms of understandings of 'the self', this means that 'the self-concept ... is removed from the head and placed within the sphere of social discourse' (1985, p.271): selves are not given essences but are the product of shared and historically specific understandings. Also, like Foucault, for whom selves are in perpetual disintegration, for Gergen, the concept and presumably the experience of the self is 'subject to deterioration and decay as social history unfolds' (1985, 271). Again, much like Foucault, Gergen seizes this recognition of the social origins of the self as an opportunity to rethink and thus remake 'selves'. For Gergen the experiences of gender can be 'remade' through the process of creating new understandings:

By examining the variations in the way differing cultures and subcultural groups understand gender, the referents for the terms *man* and *woman* are obscured.

Possibilities are opened for alternative means of understanding gender differences or of abandoning such distinctions altogether. (1985, p.267)

This statement by Gergen I consider problematic for two reasons which relate to social constructionism's reduction, much like Foucault, of 'social interchange' to discourse. While highlighting the *productive* role of discourse is, I think, extremely useful, reducing what is 'communal' or 'social' to language or common understandings is to obscure the 'social' nature of the prelinguistic mother-infant bond (argued in Chapter 1). Second, for Gergen to suggest that the problems of gender can be resolved simply by changing our shared understandings of gender is to ignore both the historical gender-power connection – addressed in Chapter 3, and the complex means by which gender is formed – addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.

In case it may be felt that my charging Gergen's social constructionism with reducing the social to language is somewhat unfair, a quick perusal of Gergen's paper gives ample evidence that this claim is justified. At least initially, Gergen claims that the 'social interchange' which shapes reality and selves is inclusive of non-linguistic emotionally founded modes of interaction. He writes: 'facial expressions, bodily postures, and movement', are all an 'integral part' of these 'negotiated understandings' (1985: p.268). However, progressing through Gergen's paper, these non-linguistic modes of social interaction seem to disappear. For instance, in the following excerpt social interchange as 'knowledge' is reduced to 'language':

knowledge is not something people possess somewhere in their heads, but rather, something people do together. Languages are essentially shared activities. Indeed, until the sounds or markings come to be shared within a community, it is inappropriate to speak of language at all. (1985, p.270)

On the following page the social interchanges which become the focus of Gergen's analysis are solely the 'various linguistic figures or tropes [which] serve to organize or guide the attempt to 'describe' reality' (1985, p.271). And again on the final page the only system of social interchange to which Gergen refers is language: 'The functions of language, both as a system of reference and as a form of social participation must be elaborated' (1985, p.273).

I acknowledge that Gergen's reference to language as 'describing reality' and 'a system of reference' does leave open the possibility that the reality being described could be an emotional reality. However, because for Gergen (and here he draws on the works of Averill) emotion is conceptualized as an expression of an historically contingent social role rather than an internal/private state (p.267 & p.271), emotion is always dependent on shared meanings and therefore always secondary to discourse. This claim is indeed the thrust of a

collection of social constructionist essays edited by Harré (1986). It may be arguable that a number of emotions are culturally specific. However, to claim that emotions are solely derivative of shared discursive understandings is to ignore the universality of both, the capacity for emotionality, and certain 'instinctual' emotions such as fear, loss, anger, want, joy. As I have argued in Chapter 1, it is because the capacity for emotionality is developed prior to the capacity for language, through the prelinguistic connection to the mother, that *emotionality cannot be subsumed within the instance of shared meanings as discursive interchanges*.

What I think we are confronted with in Gergen's social constructionist argument is an attempt to overcome 'the bifurcation between reason and emotion' (Gergen: 1985, p.267) clearly evidence in Lloyd's (1984) overview of the history of western thought. However, in the attempt to overcome this dualism Gergen's social constructionism manages to subsume the emotional *within* the rational. That is, in creating a more inclusive rationalism social constructionism preserves the hierarchical relationship between the two terms. Indeed, Gergen refers to this new social constructionist way of conceptualizing reality as 'sociorationalist' (1985, p.272). Given that rationality is historically linked to masculine forms of thinking (Lloyd: 1984), it is worth considering the collective masculine viewpoint reinforced by this new hierarchical connection between the rational and the emotional.

Bruner's writing, like Gergen's, has been influential in the arena of therapeutic practice, and like Gergen's writing suffers from the same tendency to reduce the social to the linguistic. In so doing it too obscures the emotional-corporeal aspects of subjectivity. However, Bruner's more conflicted and inconsistent reasoning gives hints of this other prelinguistic social realm at risk of being silenced by the social constructionist focus on language. According to Bruner, meaning 'is public and communal rather than private or autistic' (1990, p.33). More specifically, it is 'the symbolic systems of culture' through which our 'experiences', 'acts' and 'intentional states' are 'realized', such that 'what does *not* get structured narratively suffers loss in memory' (1990, p.33 & p.56). Where Gergen's social constructionism implies that experience is public before it is experienced privately, Bruner's conceptualisation is more suggestive that some experiences may be first and foremost private but that such experiences will fade and become meaningless if not put into language.

In other words, Bruner's writing seems to suggest a 'something' outside of or exceeding the world of shared (language based) understandings. Yet Bruner himself remains ambivalent about such an outside. On the one hand, in line with Gergen, he claims that the self is 'a concept constructed much as we construct other concepts' through 'reflection', in other words, through language-based thought (1990, p.100). He reinforces this notion of the

'self' as linguistic in origin by opposing ideas that claim the self to be 'a substance or an essence that pre-exist[s] our effort to describe it' (1990: 99). Yet, in the next breath, Bruner insists that the infant, prior to the achievement of linguistic expression, exhibits a 'pre-linguistic context sensitivity', a 'mastery', which he also refers to as a 'praxis' of social interaction (1990, pp.72-77). If it *is* the case that the infant lives, experiences, and masters an interactive reality prior to its capacity for language, and if in this 'praxis' the infant exhibits a 'context sensitivity', then, counter to Bruner's claim, there *must* be an aspect of 'self experience' which does 'pre-exist our effort to describe it' (Bruner: 1990, p.99). Yet, the sense that Bruner makes of this prelinguistic 'praxis' or 'context sensitivity' is to conceptualise it in strictly linguistic terms as 'protolinguistic' (p.72), a sort of linguistic readiness.²

Harré and Gillett (1994) consider Bruner to be the founder of the first cognitive revolution in psychology and move beyond him to Wittgenstein, whom they consider to head the second cognitive revolution (p.19). They argue that Bruner assumes 'the existence of inner mental states and processes', (p.11) where Wittgenstein, in his later writing at least:

came to see that mental activity is not essentially a Cartesian or inner set of processes but a range of moves or techniques defined against a background of human activity and governed by informal rules. (1994, p.19)

In the same anti-Cartesian move Gergen and Kaye (1992) turn to Wittgenstein because he 'compellingly argues ... [that] words gain their meaning not through their capacity to picture reality but through their use in *social interchange*' (p.177, italics added). Yet, Gergen and Kaye continue:

the forms of [social] interchange in which words are embedded, and which give them their value, are not limited to the linguistic realm alone.... to count oneself as angry not only requires the use of certain words within the language games, but certain bodily actions (grinding or gritting the teeth, for example, rather than grinning) that constitute the forms of life in which the language game is embedded. (1992, p.177)

However, having given space to the extra-linguistic aspects of human interchange Gergen and Kaye then repeat the ultimate reduction of Gergen's 1985 article. Extra-linguistic 'forms of life' become reduced to chance adjuncts to the 'word stories' which form the core of the interactional game: 'Stories about oneself – one's failures and successes, one's limits and

² Yet, that Bruner remains ambivalent about the connection between this praxis and language is revealed again a few pages later when he writes: 'It is, I think, impossible in principle to establish any *formal* continuity between an earlier 'pre-verbal' and a later functionally 'equivalent' linguistic form' (pp.75-76).

potentials, and so on – are essentially arrangements of words (often conveyed with associated movements of the body)' (1992, p.177).

Despite this reduction of social interchange to language, Gergen and Kaye do attempt to resurrect something beyond language. Indeed they do so to counteract what they perceive as the 'individualism' within social constructionism. According to Gergen and Kaye this individualism assumes that 'the final resting place of the narrative construction is within the mind of the single individual'³ (1992, pp.178-179), and that commitment to a particular narrative constitutes a singular 'truth of self' (p.180). In contrast Gergen and Kaye espouse a 'postmodern vantage point' that 'selves are only realised as a by-product of relatedness' (1992, p.180.). To retain a place for relationship in the constitution of the self Gergen and Kaye argue that we look to 'the infinite game beyond narrative', while at the same time reconceptualising identity. They write:

If there is identity at this level, it cannot be articulated, laid out for public view in a given description or explanation. It lies in the boundless and inarticulable capacity for relatedness itself. (1992, p.181)

Gergen and Kaye may wish to retain relatedness as central to identity/subjectivity and conceptualise this capacity as lying somewhere beyond the realm of articulation. However, their failure to ground this capacity for relationship in anything other than language means that it ultimately remains unexplained. Indeed, when it comes to the issue of relationship Gergen's and Kaye's argument drifts inexorably into an unknowable, mysterious, 'God-space'. Far from being postmodern this move is 'quintessentially modern', to use their own phrase (1992, p.180). Yet, as I see it, the problem with their argument lies not so much in this drift into modernism, but in the *absence of the prelinguistic social realm from yet another masculine viewpoint*. As I see it, it is the elision of the early maternal from their conceptualisation of subjectivity that causes 'the capacity for relatedness' to become resolvable only through metaphysics.⁴

In the recent years a number of women writers in psychology have critiqued social constructionist and discursive thinking. Augustinous and Walker (1995) express a concern that within discursive psychology 'subjective experience ... is made so context dependent, so fluid and flexible, that there seems to be little beyond a personal psychology which is a moment-to-moment situated experience' (p.276). In response to this concern, and in a move which seems to gesture both, backwards towards a feminist politics grounded in experience, and possibly towards the more recent corporeal/difference feminism, both Crossley (2000)

³ Although presumably Wittgenstein doesn't see this as the narratives point of origin.

⁴ Indeed it is this ultimate need to appeal to the metaphysical that is a point of commonality between postmodernism and modernism.

and Cosgrove (2000) argue that phenomenology could provide a useful antidote to some of the problems of social constructionism. For Crossley the addition of phenomenology allows for the conceptualisation of 'a sense of the essentially personal, coherent and 'real' nature of individual subjectivity' (p530). For Cosgrove '[t]he strength of a phenomenological approach is that it emphasizes the richness and complexity of an individual's lived experience and privileges agency' (p.247). However, it is not clear, at least in the writings of Cosgrove and Crossley, that the addition of phenomenology to social constructionist thinking actually achieves what is hoped. Although subjective experience is emphasised in this merging of phenomenology and social constructionism, in both cases experience and agency are ultimately contained by language/discourse. For instance, Cosgrove begins with Husserl's and Gorgi's emphasis on the experiential, but then circles back to Butler:

Butler's (1990, 1993) discussion of how to theorize agency is insightful and highly relevant here. She states that 'the subject' may be differentiated from 'the self' in that the subject refers to a category within language ... while the concept of the self retains some unhelpful vestiges of essentialism. This distinction helps us to appreciate the discursive grounding of identity. At the same time Butler is careful to stress that 'we are neither fully determined by language nor radically free to instrumentalize language as an external medium'.... By pointing out that we are not fully determined, Butler opens up a space for discourse as the 'horizon of agency'. (Cosgrove: 2000, p.259)

As I have argued in Chapter 3, Butler's argument founders on its inability to account for preference or choice as components of agency. As an evaluative process choice relies on the capacity for emotionality, a capacity not contained by the confines of language. By bringing her argument back to Butler, Cosgrove brings both 'the self' and its agency back to discourse/language and repeats the elision of the prelinguistic moment of subjectivity.

In the foregoing pages I have revealed that social constructionist thinking repeats the elision of the extra-linguistic aspects of subjectivity that poststructuralism also incurs. I now turn my attention to the therapy arising from social constructionist thinking, and consider how this elision of the extra-linguistic manifests in therapeutic practice.

NARRATIVE THERAPY

The social constructionist notion that the self is constituted through discourse or language has given rise to a therapy which understands the self as 'narrative'. Not surprisingly this therapy is most commonly referred to as 'narrative therapy'. There is nothing inherent in the notion of self as narrative that necessarily precludes extra-linguistic aspects of subjectivity: the subject could be understood as constituted of *both* linguistic and prelinguistic moments. However, the reduction of self to language exhibited within social constructionism (and also within the broader poststructural/postmodern movement) is repeated within narrative therapy. Some have already expressed concern about this reduction. Fish (1993), for example, writes of proponents of narrative therapy, that by

Splitting off a separate world of language, divorced from any notion of a relevant social and material realm, they enforce a conceptual blackout which begins at the edges of the family's story, or conversation. There is nothing for the therapist who operates solely within these models to mentally see, hear, or touch but the content and arrangement of the words the family uses in the therapist's office. (1993, p.228)

In perusing accounts of narrative or social constructionist therapy I too observed a failure to attend to extra-linguistic aspects of subjectivity. Indeed Held (1993) refers to an 'emerging linguistic paradigm' that includes thinkers and practitioners such as Berg, Frank, Hare-Mustin & Marecek, Howard, McNamee, Neimeyer, Omer & Strenger, Parry, Polkinghorne, and White. Nowhere is the elision of the prelinguistic emotional-corporeal aspects of subjectivity more obvious than in the following excerpts from a collection of essays entitled *Therapy as Social Construction* (McNamee & Gergen: 1992).

- * 'Communication and discourse define social organization All human systems are linguistic systems.... *The therapeutic system is such a linguistic system*' (Anderson and Goolishian: 1992, p.27).
- * 'We live in and through the narrative identities that we develop in conversation with one another' (Ibid, p.28).
- * 'problems exist in language and problems are unique to the narrative context from which they derive their meaning' (Ibid).
- * 'the self is conceived not as a reified entity, but as a narrative' (Lax: 1992, p.69).

- * 'This narrative or sense of self arises not only through discourse with others, but *is* our discourse with others. There is no hidden self to be interpreted' (Ibid, p.71).
- * 'lives are situated in texts or stories lives are shaped through the storying of experience and through the performance of these stories' (Epston, White & Murray: 1992, pp.98-99).
- * 'Language and the Constitution of Being' (Tom Andersen: 1992, p.64).
- * 'therapy is a linguistic event' (Harlene Anderson & Goolishian: 1992, p.27).
- * 'the role of the therapist is that of a conversational artist' (Ibid).

I acknowledge that the above statements do vary in degree of reductionism, and these differences are worthy of further discussion. However, the main point I wish to draw attention to is that there is nothing in any of the above statements that would lead the therapist to pay attention to anything but the words being said. None of these statements would direct the therapist, for example, to notice and respond to a puzzled expression on a person's face, a glazed look in a person's eyes, a slumped body posture, or the holding back of tears. That is, none of these statements would suggest that the therapist might enquire about the person's feeling state. Facial expressions, body posture, etc., are all aspects of the experience of the 'self' and are all potential communications that could be attended to. Also, in my experience, what comes to be expressed in more bodily ways and what is ultimately 'said' when feelings are attended to can often be quite different from what is 'said' when the focus is solely on the content of the narrative.

Further, not one of these statements would encourage the therapist to consider the client's *emotional history* and the way this may impinge on the interactions in the therapy room. For instance, chronically abused individuals may give their power away as a matter of course, and may constantly doubt their own authority about what is real for them; a person who is emotionally trained in being a pleaser may not speak up readily about the discomforts he/she may experience in the therapeutic process; relatedly, a person who has a strong need for approval may be inclined to follow wherever the therapist leads, possibly even against his/her better interests. In my experience, all of these emotional givens form an unspoken agenda which influences therapeutic interactions often without the conscious awareness of either the client or the therapist. In order to be vigilant about and attentive to such unspoken factors it is necessary that the therapist pay attention to many things other than the contents of the narrative.

I am not attempting to suggest that therapists trained in social constructionist or poststructural thinking will never attend to emotional aspects of the self nor to the more bodily-emotional aspects of human interaction. Indeed, in *Therapy as Social Construction* there is evidence that at least some do. For instance, while the term is not explained, Epston, White, and Murray claim that ‘‘empathy’’ is a critical factor in the interpretation or understanding of the experiences of others’ (1992, p.96). Also, more explicitly, Tom Andersen says that we can ‘know when our contributions are too unusual’:

[By attending to] signs in the conversation that tell us that it is uncomfortable for the client to take part.... We are thereby challenged to be acquainted with and sensitive to those particular signs the various individuals send us. We must rely on our intuition in noticing these signs. (1992, p.59)

However, the point I wish to make is that this non-linguistic awareness on the part of the therapist and these interactions at the level of feeling or intuition would appear to occur, not *because* of the therapist’s training in social constructionism or poststructuralism, but rather *in spite* of the explicit agenda of that training. Further, given the relationship – argued earlier – between emotional-corporeality and normative femininity, and between primal repression and normative masculinity, it could be argued that therapeutic awarenesses and interventions at the emotional level represent ‘feminine’ anomalies in an otherwise ‘masculine’ framework. I suspect that as long as emotionality remains either untheorised, excluded from notions of ‘self’ (as in past theorizing), or subsumed within the case of ‘language’ (as in current poststructural and social constructionist theorizing), it will continue to exist as a *chance* component of therapeutic interaction, but also as one – given the pervasiveness of normative masculinity in the public sphere – that is difficult to justify.

Indeed, there is evidence in this same collection of papers that ‘attention to emotionality’ in therapy has tended to lack legitimacy. Hoffman notes that as she became increasingly concerned about the ‘technocratic coldness’ of a number of models of psychotherapy, prompted by the writings of Carol Gilligan she began to search for different ways of proceeding in therapy:

When unobserved, I would show a far more sympathetic side to clients than my training allowed. I would show my feelings, even weep. I called this practice ‘corny therapy’ and never told my supervisor about it.... I began to talk with other women and found that they too used to do secretly what I did and also had pet names for this practice (1992, pp.15-16).

Given the masculine history of western thinking, the dissociation of emotion from this historical masculine self, and the gate-keeping role of masculine ideas, there is no wonder, I

think, that Hoffman labels her emotional interactions with her clients 'corny'; that it is her women colleagues who also admit to the practice; and that it is something that is done secretly rather than openly.

Held (1995) is also critical of the linguistic/narrative paradigm emerging in therapeutic practice. However the focus of her critique is not the paradigm's reduction of the self to language, *per se*, but the fact that the paradigm contains truth claims that remain *unacknowledged*. Held's chief concern is with the ethical dilemma that the paradigm's denial of its authoritative acts, its expert stance, poses for its practitioners in particular. I will briefly address this concern as it dovetails with both a more general concern about postmodernism, and with my concern about the reduction of self to language in social constructionist thinking. I will enter this discussion via a point made by White (1991), a proponent of social constructionist ideas and a practitioner of narrative therapy in South Australia, but also increasingly influential internationally.⁵ Most interestingly, White clearly elaborates one aspect of the postmodern and social constructionist challenge to foundationalist/realist thinking, which can be used, paradoxically, against social constructionism itself. White's comments inadvertently highlight the same blind spot in social constructionist thinking and narrative practice which Held draws attention to.

White's central concern is about the ethics of therapeutic practice. In a very Foucaultian way he draws critical attention to the ways in which professional disciplines have practiced 'techniques [which] encourage persons in the belief that the members of these disciplines have access to an objective and unbiased account of reality, and of human nature'. Quoting Parker and Shotter, White elaborates further on this concern:

What this means is that certain speakers, those with training in certain special techniques... are privileged to speak with authority beyond the range of their personal experience (Parker and Shotter in White: 1991, pp.36-37).

White argues that this positioning of some as the 'impersonal expert' leads to the production of knowledges which gain 'global and unitary' status as 'authoritative accounts', and, that such accounts are able to 'mask ... their ascendancy ... [through] built-in injunctions against questions that might be raised about their socio/political/ historical contexts' (1991, p.37). White is concerned that the reader or receiver of such accounts is denied critical information about such contexts that enables them to challenge what is being said:

They do not have the information necessary to determine how they might 'take' the views that are expressed.... Respondent/readers can either subject themselves

⁵ Held, for instance, a psychologist practicing and teaching in America refers to White on numerous occasions in her book *Back To Reality*.

to the expert knowledge, or they can rail against it. Dialogue over different points of view is impossible. (1991, p.37)

The paradox is that White and other proponents of narrative and social constructionist thinking and therapy do two of the very things they criticise foundationalist thinking for. First they *do* make truth claims, and as such they construct authoritative accounts.⁶ For instance White states that ‘persons live their lives by stories ... [and] these stories provide the structure of life’ (1991, p.28). Drawing attention to the same type of authoritative statements in the literature Held summarises what she considers to be the two main ‘truths’ of narrative practice. First, that ‘the client’s story is the *cause* of the ‘problem’ (1995, p.110). Second, that:

interventions such as deconstructing/challenging/questioning old narratives cause the co-construction or reconstruction of new stories ... [which in turn] cause the experience and perception of new options and potential solutions ... (Held: 1995, pp.201-202)

Held continues, the fact that these are actually truth ‘claims have merely, perhaps by virtue of their *extreme* generality or their more implicit expression, managed to escape the attention of the members of that movement’ (1995, p.89).

The second way in which White’s narrative account repeats the ‘problems’ of foundationalist thinking is that it too fails to acknowledge the socio-political context in which it is developed. I have argued that this context consists at least in part of a normative masculinity characterised by the primal repression of prelinguistic modes of being. It is arguable, because the masculine context of the narrative account remains *unacknowledged*, that women such as myself are left, as White describes, in a state of suspense and disabled in relation to critical dialogue, or, as I described my own experience in the Introduction: ‘something feels wrong here, this doesn’t fit for me’. Put another way, the unacknowledged masculinism of the social constructionist/narrative account undermines the possibility of mounting a ‘feminine’ rejoinder. Even more specifically it disallows and therefore silences my ‘feminine’ emotional-corporeal response. By failing to acknowledge its own socio-political context and truth claims White’s model too acts to silence others.

This returning to the starting point of my thesis, to my own emotional-corporeal experience in the face of narrative practice, would seem to be an appropriate point to bring this thesis to a close. But before concluding this discussion it would be interesting to delve a little more deeply into the nature of the built-in injunctions which disguise the masculine

⁶ With this same observation Lowe (1991) argues that the trend in therapy ‘is in danger of becoming a new totalising metanarrative, of the very kind it [seeks] to repudiate’ (pp.48-49).

context of social constructionism. It would be interesting to explore how it is that this paradigm itself manages to stifle 'critical reflection' (White: 1991, p.37). While her critique focuses on the broader postmodern movement I think Liz Stanley's (1992) comments have some relevance here. Stanley writes: 'Michel Foucault (1977), and Roland Barthes (1977), and now derivatively many others, have written of 'the death of the author' because, the argument goes, that to claim authorship of writings, ideas, of theories is to return to essentialist notions of the self as a 'single unique mind'' (1992, p.16). Stanley continues, that while proclaiming the author dead may return ideas to their social foundation, this move also renders Foucault and Barthes absent from their own texts: 'in their texts, there is only 'referential discourse' spoken by no one, by everyone' (1992, p.16). The irony is, that in making the claim that 'the author is dead' Foucault and Barthes disguise, yet at the same time execute, their own authorial act (Stanley: 1992, p.17).

Does this postmodern declaration of the author's death actually enable normative masculinity, White included, to continue in the expert position but in a more disguised way? And, could it be that the failure of White and other narrative thinkers to recognise the expert position and truth claims of their own accounts is part and parcel of the convenience of the postmodern position (as it is typically understood in psychology)? If the author is dead he does not have to declare himself as context for his ideas; the masculinity of his propositions, including the primal repression contained therein, becomes unreachable and unchallengeable.

In this chapter I have demonstrated that the elision of extra-linguistic aspects of subjectivity evidenced in the thinking of Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan is repeated in the social constructionist thinking that has recently influenced the therapeutic arena. I have demonstrated that this elision has carried over to therapeutic practice in the form of an inattention to the affective/emotional aspects of the self. Some ways in which therapy could be practiced so as not to elide the affective have been alluded to: attention to the emotional positions people take in relation to the therapist (transference), and attention to non-verbal communications. An in depth exploration of therapeutic methods that acknowledge and attend to affective aspects of the self would constitute another project. My aim here has been simply to highlight the pervasiveness of the problematic elision of the affective and to indicate a potential direction for amelioration.

CONCLUSION

I began this thesis with questions about emotionality, about its place in subjectivity and in theories of subjectivity. I also drew attention to a puzzle in the corpus which informs psychological therapy. On the one hand one body of thought emphasises prelinguistic matricentric affective aspects of the self while another body of thought focuses solely on the self as a linguistic construct. I suggested, in light of Irigaray's observation that women-mothers are 'the silent substratum of the social order', that feminist theory should be cautious about dismissing matricentric theories because they are mother blaming. I argued, given the centrality of maternity to a large number of the world's women, that theories of subjectivity on which feminists draw should take account of the contribution of maternity to the development of subjectivity. With this in mind I proceeded with an in depth analyses of the major theories of subjectivity and their treatment of maternity.

Before doing this however, I constructed an account of early emotional-corporeal matricentric subjectivity. I did so by taking a path through Freud's thinking on the 'instincts' and infantile libidinal development, with the addition of Tomkins, Klein, Kristeva, and Brennan as a means of countering Freud's libidinal emphasis. In the next chapter I did a preliminary exploration of poststructural theories of subjectivity arguing that their sole focus on the self as linguistic was at odds with the idea of an early emotional-corporeal self. The following three Chapters were devoted to in depth explorations of the writings of Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Irigaray, and Kristeva. Specifically I examined the way in which each theory dealt with the extra or prelinguistic. What I found was that the three male conceived theories – surprisingly even Lacan's – exhibited an elision of the prelinguistic aspects of the self, while the two female conceived theories gave an important, if sometimes compromised, place to these affective aspects of self. In the case of Kristeva I suggested that this compromised treatment of the prelinguistic was due to some allegiance to the Father's Law, and more particularly to her assuming, after Lacan, that the Symbolic realm is the guarantor of subjectivity. I was able to use Kristeva's writings on the thetic stage to tease out an important distinction between Freudian and Lacanian repression, and her writings on abjection and rejection to argue that the prelinguistic emotional-corporeal realm is as much the guarantor of subjectivity as the Symbolic.

To find an explanation of this apparently gender-differentiated treatment of the prelinguistic, and also to further explore differences between Freud and Lacan that were beginning to emerge in the previous chapter, I turned to Freud's notion of 'primal repression'. In unravelling Freud's notion of primal repression – and indeed it was an unravelling because it is full of contradictions – I came to a number of conclusions. That the primal repression of

the early connection to the mother is not a necessary and inevitable aspect of subjectivity, and that by and large the phenomenon of primal repression is associated with masculine subjectivity and not feminine subjectivity. I used this observation as a retrospective explanation for why the elision of the prelinguistic maternal had occurred along gendered lines in the writings I had explored. In the last two chapters I considered how my thinking diverges from that of Chodorow, and I explored the elision of the affective aspects of self in the arena of psychological therapy.

In making a case for early matricentric emotional-corporeal aspects of self I am not claiming that this is the 'real' seat of the self, any more 'real' than the linguistically constructed self. Rather I am arguing that sociality must be extended back to include the matricentric realm prior to language, and that meaning must be understood as constituted of both linguistic and non-linguistic/affective-corporeal moments. I am arguing that this early non-linguistic affective-corporeal self and realm of meaning *exists and it matters*. For poststructuralism, and this is the problem poststructuralism poses for feminism, this early self and non-linguistic realm of meaning *does not matter*.

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