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Relational Theory and the Female Body: A Critical Analysis of Intersecting Themes in Feminist Studies in Religion and the Psychology of Women

by

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For my mother and father,

Mary and Wilfred

Whose love and support know no bounds

and

In memory of my aunt,

Helena

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Throughout my life, I have been blessed with exceptionally steadfast and precious relatives and friends. Each has contributed to this thesis in her and his unique way. I am so grateful for their love, generosity, and when needed, their challenge to persevere. In particular the emotional and technical support of Cate Walsh and Mike Hennessey during the final stages of writing ensured that this thesis came to fruition. Without them, I doubt it would have happened.

My parents, Mary and Wilfred Driscoll, are remarkable in their capacity not only to endure, but to celebrate the complexities of living and loving inherent in being mother and father to five daughters. They have taught me, and we have learned together, that the journey toward relational and bodily integrity, within ourselves and with each other, is wondrous and ordinary, filled with joy and suffering, and an ongoing testament to the mystery and messiness of life.

ABSTRACT

This thesis illustrates how various theorists in religious studies and in psychology are advancing feminist scholarship in similar directions with respect to relational theory and theories of the female body. This analysis explicates areas of theoretical convergence within and between these disciplines, including, their methodological commitments; their distinctive contributions to relational theory; their analysis of the historical legacy of mind/body dualism; their interrogation of the processes by which the female body is regulated and contained in religion and contemporary culture; and their understanding of the psychological and religious effects produced by current body/self disciplinary practices. The dissertation concludes by suggesting that each discipline can provide correctives to, and enhance the other if dialogue between them was encouraged.

PREFACE

While reflecting on my initial passion to do this work, I was reminded that since I was a child, I have been interested in how psychology and religion intersect. This curiosity has motivated my choice of study since my undergraduate years. Later, as a psychotherapist and as a friend, I have been privileged to hear the life stories of women - and men - of all ages. Yet, while trained as a pastoral counsellor, and later as a psychologist, I often felt bereft in responding to themes such as those articulated later in this thesis.[1] For example, how do I support the woman who has endured years of unspeakable incestuous invasions on her body and spirit in a way that acknowledges her tragedy and yet speaks to the possibility of healing? How do I respond to the young prostitute, working to support her children, who says that her most shameful experience is not receiving payment for her sexual services, nor using that money to buy the drugs her body craves, but when she feels absolutely compelled to put her head in the toilet bowl and regurgitate every bit of everything she has consumed that day? How is it that my aunt, in whose memory this thesis is dedicated, could suffer such intense feelings of inadequacy and 'badness' when her gentleness, humour,

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[1] Because of the study I undertook subsequent to my M.A. in Pastoral Studies, I was registered as a psychologist in P.E.I. in 1993.

and 'goodness' touched everyone who knew her? How can the tragedies and the epiphanies that I have witnessed, be accounted for in such a way that my response is both compassionate and pragmatic?

When I first encountered contemporary relational theory and feminist theo(a)logies of embodiment, I thought I had finally found, in each, the depth of analysis that addressed my concerns and provided a framework for my previously unanswered questions. Most importantly, I thought each provided an analysis that could be articulated to others in a way that made sense of their suffering, while offering hope that there *were* other possibilities for how they experienced their lives. However, I also believed that each of these disciplines would be enhanced by the other if a dialogue between them was encouraged. To that end, I began the investigation that has culminated in this thesis.

As I became more involved with these issues, I became even more convinced that, brought together, there was a richness and complexity in these various theories that could be fruitful for both our theorizing and our responses to actual lives. At the same time, I was becoming concerned about what seemed to me to be both an idealization of relationship and eros in contemporary feminist psychological and religious theory. With some exceptions, which will be noted later, it became questionable to

me whether these theories fully grasped the fact of evil, aggression, and suffering in our lives. For example, while I had been working within a relational psychology and theology based upon our 'passion to connect', I questioned whether the suffering caused by our passions and connections had been adequately addressed at the level of theory or practice. I am profoundly indebted to the analyses of the theorists discussed in this thesis; in the last few years, their vision has informed both my clinical work, and the courses I have developed as a university lecturer. Nonetheless, I propose that to the extent we do not acknowledge our responsibility for, and complicity in, relational connections that do generate violence - psychologically, physically, and spiritually - we fail to deal with deadly relationships, passions that are disruptive, the fact of tragedy, and the reality that not all suffering is redemptive.

Introduction

The primary focus of my dissertation is to examine the confluence of themes as I see them emerging in contemporary feminist thought in psychology and in religious studies. I intend to illustrate that there are convergences both within and between these disciplines with respect to two main thematic areas, that is, relational theories and theories of the female body. I propose that by creating spaces for dialogue between these disciplines, and by bringing together the discourses concerning relationality and the body, we can better situate the dilemmas that lie at the center of women's lives. For example, recent research in the psychology of girls and women has revealed how, at the edge of adolescence, young women experience a profound decline in self-esteem, often suffering eating disorders, incessant weight preoccupation, painful insecurities, and depression that too often is carried into adulthood. The relentless pursuit of the elusive ideal of femininity, reproduced in terms of the slender, firm, youthful body has become many women's central torment. My work extends contemporary psychological and cultural theories of relationality and the female body by evaluating the role of the Western Christian tradition in the denigration of women, and in particular, the disavowal of their flesh.

I will begin this analysis of converging themes in contemporary religious and psychological theory by examining the distinctive methodological features of feminist inquiry. I will show that scholars in philosophy, the natural sciences, and religious studies are raising similar methodological questions and concerns, and are moving toward similar methodological commitments.

I will then present an overview of traditional object relations theory so as to situate the discussion on later feminist relational theories in psychology and in religious studies. I will examine how traditional and contemporary theories can provide correctives to, and thus enhance each other. Moreover, I will explicate convergences within contemporary theory itself, and will argue that here too, encouraging a critical discourse between feminist scholars in religion and in psychology would add to the theoretical and practical richness of both, while calling attention to the omissions in each.

Next, I will illustrate how the historical legacy of mind/body dualism continues to be perpetuated in the ongoing religious and cultural associations of women with inferiority, and with body. Furthermore, I will argue that this legacy profoundly influences women's experience of self - body and soul. I will examine contemporary models of the regulation and containment of the female body so as to foreshadow my reading of

girls' and women's quest for relational and embodied wisdom.

I will then discuss how various feminist theorists in psychology, religious studies, and cultural studies are analyzing the fragmented body. Furthermore, I intend to elucidate the significance of shame for understanding issues of identity and embodied subjectivity in girls and women. In particular, I will examine whether there is a relationship between Western culture's valuing of the explicit, and the concomitant experience of exposure, both of which seem to be constitutive of the sense of shame, and of women's pervasive sense of personal inadequacy. I will explore the role of the narcissistic assumption of the body as spectacle in the context of women's enforced visibility within the ensemble of social relations. I will examine how this is organized around the reification of the cult of the body and will question whether the female body as spectacle is part of a more comprehensive interaction between shame and shamelessness in the psychological construction of the self and in culture.

While I explore various modes of cultural inscription of the body, I am most interested in disciplines of disembodiment, symbolized here in the fragmented body of the anorectic. I argue that girls and women are starving themselves to the point of death with a zeal once reserved for an aesthetics of the soul. I question whether there is an eschatological basis to this soul destroying self-surveillance that goes beyond current fashions of

slenderness and self-control. I will thus attempt to explicate the religious messages and meanings encoded in the sufferings of women's bodies and reflected in women's attempts to embody perfection, even while perpetually conscious of their deficiencies. Moreover, I will argue that this pursuit of a miraculous physical transformation reveals a more profound existential crisis. Finally, this project is predicated on the hope that in the acknowledgment of the fragmented body, new connections to the self and others may be permitted, a renewed metaphysic of the subject may be contemplated, and a more ensouled world may be created.

CHAPTER ONE

METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS IN FEMINIST ANALYSES

In this chapter I will outline my methodological commitments, and then discuss what I consider to be distinguishing features of feminist analyses, particularly as they are articulated by Sandra Harding. I will present Sheila Greeve Davaney's explication of the problems associated with appealing to women's experience as a theological, and I suggest, psychological norm. Finally, the work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Emily Culpepper, Evelyn Fox Keller, and Carol Christ will be examined in view of their contributions toward illuminating the distinctive power of feminist analyses.

As I will elaborate upon later, Carol Christ challenges us to construct scholarship that reflects embodied thinking, acknowledges its relative and perspectival character, and proceeds from a position of empathy. That I have taken up her challenge will be illustrated, I hope, throughout this thesis. At this point, I wish to outline how her analysis, and that of other scholars, has impacted upon my methodological choices and commitments.

My work may be best described as a phenomenology in the sense employed by Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Ostwald Jr. That is, it "invites participation by the cultural investigator and

seeks understanding through entering an "other" world empathetically."[2] Martin and Ostwalt Jr. are drawing from Julia Mitchell Corbett's depiction of a phenomenological approach that is descriptive, analytic and empathetic.[3] Such an approach assumes that "religion is a profoundly human activity" and that through "our shared humanity" we can begin to see and understand reality through the eyes and experiences of others "by lively use of the imagination."[4] My approach is also phenomenological in that my aim is not to find causes, for example, of self-starvation, but as Ellmann describes it, "to follow the adventure of its metaphors." She, with Corbett, argues for the use of the imagination: "To intuit what it means for the body to reject itself, for the order of life to be overpowered by the dream of disembodiment, the language of the imagination has more to offer than statistics."[5] It is thus a theoretical and descriptive project, based on qualitative research. It is also a meta-analysis in that through my review of the literature, I am

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[2] Conrad E. Ostwalt Jr., "Religion, Film, and Cultural Analysis," in *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film* ed. Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Ostwalt Jr. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 154.

[3] See Julia Mitchell Corbett, *Religion in America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990), 8-10.

[4] Ostwalt, 154 quoting Corbett, 8.

[5] Maud Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing, and Imprisonment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 15.

seeking within and across disciplines not only for answers or deeper understanding, but for ways of reframing the questions. I will be using a pragmatic approach to examine the confluence of Western Christian thought, relational theories, and theories of the body in that I am concerned about the *effects* produced by our theories. My data is primarily composed of theoretical texts from the disciplines of religious studies, psychology, philosophy, and cultural studies. The subjects of my pursuit are women, although I think the analysis I am developing has important implications for men as well. At this point, I will venture to say that all women in Western culture are subject to and effected by the processes and practices outlined in this research, albeit in varying degrees and nuances. I thus use "women" in a generic sense. However, I am aware of the difficulties inherent in such an approach, namely that the particularities of women's experiences can be easily glossed over. I hope not to be blind to the specificities of experience that race, class, sexual preferences, age, and religion, along with gender, generate. Nonetheless, it is from the vantage point of a white, middle class woman that this analysis is offered.

The feminist philosopher Sandra Harding has noted that commonly asked questions among feminist scholars include is there such an entity as a distinctive feminist methodology, and, how do feminist and traditional methodologies relate one to the other?

She argues against the notion of a distinctive feminist method of inquiry, and suggests we can not simply "add women" to existing analyses. She then posits three characteristics unique to feminist analyses that extend the additive approaches.[6]

With respect to the first question, Harding emphasizes how our confusion lies in the fact that the term 'method' is often used to refer to what are actually three aspects of research. Specifically, method, "techniques for gathering evidence", and methodology, "a theory and analysis of how research should proceed" are often conflated with each other and intertwined with epistemological issues, "issues about an adequate theory of knowledge or justificatory strategies".[7] The result is a lack of clarity as to what one is looking for in a distinctive feminist method, a factor that allows critics to avoid acknowledging what *is* unique about the best of feminist inquiry. She recognizes feminist researchers use the same research methods as do traditional scholars, but notes that *how* they carry out evidence gathering techniques is often very different. For example, as Harding says,"they listen carefully to how women informants think about their lives and men's lives, and critically to how traditional social scientists conceptualize women's and men's

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[6] Sandra Harding, "Is There a Feminist Method?," in *Feminism and Methodology*, ed. Sandra Harding (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1-14.

[7] Ibid., 2.

lives. They observe behaviours of women and men that traditional social scientists have not thought significant. They seek examples of newly recognized patterns in historical data."[8]

Feminist methodologies reveal, for example, women's involvement in cultural life that have been unexamined by traditional researchers; they highlight how men's activities have been understood as representing the universal "human". Yet feminist methodologies also must be questioned as to whether they can provide unbiased and full considerations of women's activities and of gender.

For Harding, feminist applications of theory also bring to the fore epistemological issues. Epistemologies are commonly understood to be strategies for justifying beliefs; she notes that recognized justificatory strategies include "appeals to the authority of God, of custom and tradition, of "common sense," of observation, of reason, and of masculine authority."[9] Feminists have claimed that traditional epistemologies "exclude the possibility that women can be "knowers" or *agents of knowledge;* they claim that the voice of science is a masculine one; that history is written only from ...the dominant class and race; that the subject ...is always assumed to be a man."[10] Harding

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 3.

[10] Ibid.

contends that when these issues are referred to as issues of method, the result is a lack of clarity as to the connections *and* the distinctions between research methods, methodologies, and epistemologies.

Harding also addresses some of the difficulties inherent in "adding women" on to traditional androcentric analyses, a strategy first employed by feminist researchers. She notes there were three types of women who were considered appropriate for this process: "women social scientists, women who contributed to the public life social scientists were already studying, and women who had been victims of the most egregious forms of male dominance."[11] Notwithstanding the importance of recovering the scholarship of women theorists and researchers, Harding advises that we should not expect such a process to eradicate androcentric bias from scientific inquiry. Historically, the constraining influence of expectations for women scholars to conform to dominant ideologies, even while resisted, effected the kind of analyses produced.

In addition, while feminist research that examined women's roles in cultural life has enhanced our understanding of the contributions women have made, it was done so in the context of androcentric standards that did not allow for an analysis of what

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[11] Ibid., 4.

the "*meanings*" of such contributions were "*for women.*"[12] Finally, a research focus that emphasizes women as victims of male dominance, including "crimes against women...institutionalized economic exploitation and political discrimination...the forms of white male domination which have particularly victimized women of color," obfuscates the limitations of "victimologies." While it has been essential for our collective consciousness to be made aware of these disturbing realities, it is imperative that we are not erroneously led to believe that "women have *only* been victims."[13] The research of feminist scholars reminds us that women have *always* been resisters of male violence and domination and that women *do* have the capacity to be agents of purposeful and effective social change.[14]

To summarize, while Harding admits the above approaches to the study of women initially appeared promising, more recent feminist scholarship extends these projects to encompass characteristics that provide more convincing criteria for assessing what distinguishes feminist analyses. These characteristics include: the use of women's experiences as empirical and theoretical resources, the design of research *for*

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[12] Ibid., 5.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

women, and identifying a "new subject matter of inquiry" which involves "locating the researcher in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter."[15]

Harding contends that the "logic of discovery" of traditional research suggests that only those questions deemed important are those posited by white, Western, bourgeois men. However, what is missing here, and what feminist methods of inquiry attempt to rectify, is the recognition that problems requiring explanation occur in a context. That is, "a problem is always a problem *for* someone or other."[16] She argues that the "logic of scientific inquiry" should be sought where hypotheses are tested, namely, in the "context of justification."[17] Feminist research, in her view, contests the primacy and the adequacy of the 'answers' of our scientific investigations by highlighting the importance of both the 'questions' that are asked, and, those that are not. For Harding, "one distinctive feature of feminist research is that it generates its problematics from the perspective of women's experiences. It also uses these experiences as a significant indicator of the "reality" against which hypotheses are tested."[18] She emphasizes

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[15] Ibid., 6-8.

[16] Ibid., 6.

[17] Ibid., 7.

[18] Ibid.

the importance of *women* naming their experiences, the plurality of those experiences across racial, class, and cultural categories *and* within each individual, along with their rootedness in political struggle.

Harding contends that a second distinctive feature of feminist analysis is that its goals and purposes are directly connected to its origins, namely, that research is designed *for* women.

A third feature of the best feminist analysis according to Harding is that "it insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research. That is, the class, race, culture and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint."[19] We shall see later how Carol Christ's writing splendidly exemplifies this feature. Perhaps more than any other scholar of religion, Christ attempts to, and I believe succeeds in, honestly situating her theological reflection within the exigencies of her own life, while respecting the perspectival character of her personal experiences, thus avoiding a false universalism. I believe Christ accomplishes the task outlined by Harding, namely, that

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[19] Ibid., 9.

"the researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests."[20]

In summary, it is Harding's argument that the methodological and epistemological features examined above, rather than a 'feminist method', produce the most promising feminist research and scholarship.

Before leaving this discussion however, I want to draw attention to the critique of other feminist scholars, in particular, feminist scholars of religion, as to the problematic status of the appeal to women's experiences as theological norm. In her oft-quoted article, "The Limits of the Appeal to Women's Experience," Sheila Greeve Davaney addresses the epistemological and ontological status given to women's experience as normative.[21] In particular, she exposes the usually unnamed presuppositions underlying the appeal to feminist consciousness and women's experience, and examines them within the context of the diversity of these experiences and the various theoretical concerns to which such an appeal gives rise. She does so by detailing the ontological commitments of Elisabeth Schüssler

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Sheila Greeve Davaney, "The Limits of the Appeal to Women's Experience," in *Shaping New Vision: Gender and Values in American Culture*, ed. Clarissa W. Atkinson, Constance H. Buchanan, and Margaret R. Miles (London: U.M.I. Research Press, 1987), 31-50.

Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Mary Daly, a summary of which I will now provide.

Davaney considers both Schüssler Fiorenza and Ruether's work prototypical of the position advanced by those feminist scholars of religion who value women's experience as both source and norm for theological reflection. Neither, in her view, consider women's experience *in general* as the location of a feminist norm. For Schüssler Fiorenza, women's experience is a resource and norm both "in relation to specification of a normative standpoint for analyzing the past and in terms of critical judgement of contemporary theological options...as it emerges in what she terms women-church, or ekklesia." Women-church, however, is not inclusive of all women. Rather, "it refers to the community of women who struggle for liberation, self-affirmation and empowerment."[22] Similarly, Ruether locates her feminist norm in women's experience as it "emerges from critical consciousness and the struggle for liberation that provides the criterion for analyzing the adequacy of theological visions, past and present."[23] According to Davaney then, both Ruether and Schüssler Fiorenza consider women's experience of liberation as both "source and norm of theological reflection."[24]

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[22] Ibid., 33.

[23] Ibid., 36.

[24] Ibid., 38.

Furthermore, for both Ruether and Schüssler Fiorenza, the struggle for liberation is grounded in the "encounter with the divine".[25] Women's critical experience is founded in and validated by the God or Goddess of liberation. Davaney contends that each "connects the criteria articulated within feminist theology to the experience of the divine which is the foundation for women's liberative experience, and, they imply, a source of validity and authority for the feminist norm."[26]

Finally, both Schüssler Fiorenza and Ruether emphasize the sociality of experience. Schüssler Fiorenza extends the "claim of the social character of theological norms by stressing that all reflection and discourse including that designated theological, is value-laden and embodies the social and political interests of the knower." These interests are "tied to one's position within the patriarchal power structure."[27] For Ruether, "No liberation movement can speak the universal critical word about injustice and hope for all time. It always does so within the limitations of its social location."[28] The social character

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[25] Ibid., 37.

[26] Ibid., 38.

[27] Ibid., 34.

[28] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation" in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 119, quoted in Davaney, 38.

of experience however, for both Ruether and Schüssler Fiorenza does not preclude the fact that, along with commonalities, women have diverse, and sometimes deeply dividing experiences. Nonetheless, "women's experience as struggle for liberation carries a normativity that patriarchally-defined experience does not. But this is not because women, by virtue of their nature or biology, have special access to reality or to God. Rather, it is because women, and other oppressed persons in their struggle against patriarchy, find themselves in the historical moment wherein the liberating God can be discerned. It is less that it is women's experience, in general, that is normative, than that it is the experience of women who struggle for liberation that is the locus of God's liberating and revelatory presence. In sum, the appeal is made to a historically derived normativity rather than to any ontological uniqueness of women."[29]

Mary Daly's contribution to feminist thought in religion is unique. From her initial text, *The Church and the Second Sex* to her most recent writings, Daly has moved from attempting to reconfigure women's place within Christianity to increasingly speaking for the need to radically repudiate all male world cultures, not just Christianity.[30] In her view, it is impossible

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[29] Ibid., 39.

[30] Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); *Gyn/ecology: The*

to reform such cultures for their central purpose is to entrap women and cannibalize female power. Ruether, writing on Daly, has noted how in her successive books, Daly has insisted that "Women must strip away the many layers of male delusionary myth, enshrined in the patterns of language itself, and leap into the liberating realm of female life power hidden and made invisible by the false appearances of male society and culture."[31] Along with Schüssler Fiorenza and Ruether, for Daly the journey is ultimately one of liberation. She also concurs with them in circumscribing the appeal to women's experience, locating it in "the experience of self-identified women who live out of what she terms "biophilic" or "metapatriarchal" consciousness."[32]

According to Davaney, Daly's metapatriarchal consciousness is informed by several significant assumptions. First, women-identified women discover that the unfolding of "biophilic consciousness" is a reflection of "female essence" rather than the result of historical developments or communal context.[33] Secondly, while recognizing the diversity of women's experience,

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Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978); *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1984).

[31] Ruether, *In Our Own Voices: Four Centuries of American Women's Religious Writing*, ed Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller (San Francisco: Harper-San Francisco, 1995), 436.

[32] Davaney, 39.

[33] Ibid., 40.

Daly contends that there is an "underlying commonality" which is exposed by radical feminism. Furthermore, this bond is deepened because *all* women are patriarchal victims. Women, however, are not responsible for the divisions wrought by racism and classism since these institutions are patriarchal creations, intended to divide women.

Daly also insists that patriarchal consciousness distorts reality, yielding falsehoods, while the form of consciousness of women-identified women is such that it participates in "cosmic reality or Be-ing". Because of this involvement, the knowledge generated by it is "true and adequate."[34] For Daly then, the accessibility of all reality to all women is based on their natural female essence.

In summary, Davaney highlights how the theologies of Schüssler Fiorenza, Ruether, and Daly are predicated on the assumption that while potentially available to all women, the critical norms for feminist theological reflection are based on the experiences of a cognitive minority. For these scholars, reality is rendered more accurate, and the nature of the Divine more knowable, because it is based on women-identified women's experiences and consciousness. In their view, they can thus claim "greater ontological validity."[35]

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[34] Ibid., 41.

[35] Ibid., 41-42.

I agree with Davaney's contention that the assumption that women have "privileged access to the realm of the ontologically real" carries within it certain problems.[36] First, as she points out, there is a certain disparity between this claim and the assumption of all three authors that interpretations of experience and knowledge are grounded in social location. According to Davaney, if we push these claims further, "we must confront the possibility that *no* perspective offers a privileged access to the "way things really are;" all we have are alternate ways of conceiving of reality."[37] In other words, if we acknowledge the social character of experience, we must also realize that there is no basis for claiming an ontological superiority of one view of reality over another. In this way, Schüssler Fiorenza and Ruether fail to "carry through the insights of historicism" by which their work is informed. Daly, too, in spite of her acknowledgement of the "historically-circumscribed character of experience", jumps from the claim of an "innate essence of female being" to "assertions about the ontological nature of reality," in which women uniquely participate.[38] Daly is not clear, however, about the bases for

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[36] Ibid., 42.

[37] Ibid., 43.

[38] Ibid.

such a claim.[39]

Secondly, Davaney argues that while all three scholars attend to the diversity of women's experience, their insistence on an underlying commonality of experience obscures the differences wrought by factors other than gender, a situation decried by women of color. This universalizing of localized experience is especially problematic when it is integrated with the assumption that women-identified women's experience and consciousness resonates with "ontological reality and divine purpose." I agree with Davaney that when the "weight of divine authority" is claimed as a basis for knowing what is 'true' and 'real', the experiences of those outside this 'cognitive minority' are necessarily devalued.[40] In spite of the claim for multiple, all apparently valid, critical norms, Schüssler Fiorenza and Ruether in particular, assume that it is in the struggle for liberation from oppression that God is revealed, and, as such, all "locations of struggle...correspond to ontological reality and divine purpose."[41] Within such a world view then, the depreciation of the experiences of those outside the cognitive minority are assured unless the differences between individuals and communities are unmasked. Until white women, for

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 44.

[41] Ibid.

example, deal with the separation among women brought about by racism and classism, this presumption of commonality is not acceptable.

Davaney offers an alternative way of understanding and interpreting women's experience which is grounded in an appreciation of the embeddedness of all human experience and consciousness within historical and social contexts. Her model also rejects the claim that "any human perspective has a privileged access to ontological reality."[42]

Davaney's position assumes there is no value-free reality or unmediated knowledge or experience. For her, "human beings, male and female alike, are culturally - and socially - defined beings who exist, act and know within a network of historically-constructed linguistic and symbolic meanings and values. How we know and what we know are dependent upon such axiological networks which provide the "perceptual lenses", the interpretive schemas by which we know reality." These interpretive schemas, however, are "socially defined and determined" and thus have significant implications for the construction of reality.[43]

First, the claim that interpretive schemas are "historically circumscribed and contextually defined" suggests that while knowledge and experience is neither individual nor universal, it

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., 45.

is communal. This does not mean however, that we can speak of "experiences in general". Rather than begin from the assumption of commonalities, it is the "particularities of experience" that should form the bases from which alliances of "commonality and solidarity among women" can be generated. Assessing where values and goals coincide is an historical project, "yet to be achieved," rather than the outcome of "unquestioned presuppositions."[44]

There is thus no "neutral Archimedean point located in reason or revelation" according to which 'reality as it really is' can be interpreted. Since our interpretations of reality are always infused by particular values and dynamics of power, "women's experience and knowledge... cannot claim, any more than can male's, an ontological grounding or an epistemological superiority. Our experience and knowledge, no less than that of males, is a social product and hence is relative, ambiguous, and challengeable."[45]

With Davaney I argue that, given the historicity of feminist visions of reality, we can only say that such visions provide "alternative but not ontologically truer interpretations of reality."[46] Furthermore, my own methodological commitment to

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[44] Ibid., 45-46.

[45] Ibid., 46.

[46] Ibid., 47.

pragmatism is supported by Davaney when she insists that we must attend to the contextual character and power-laden positions reflected in our pragmatic judgements. My project is deeply informed by the notion that it is only by "acknowledging the relative character of our norms rather than claiming cosmic or divine sanction for them", that we can reflect upon the issues discussed in the following chapters in the way "that really matters"; that is, at the level of "concrete and practical consequences."[47] Moreover, this thesis arises from the commitment to challenge oppressive religious, psychological, and cultural systems without reverting to the appeal to a universal female norm, nor reliance upon a "cosmic or divine perspective." With Davaney, I believe we can only speak for liberation from oppression "in the name of our particular location in history and with the recognition that our Gods and Goddesses are the articulation of our values and hopes, not the foundation of certitude nor the promise of victory."[48]

In the section that follows, I will review the methodological perspectives of scholars whose work, I believe, is illustrative of the distinctive power of feminist analyses as it has been described above.

In my view, theorists like Evelyn Fox Keller, Carol Christ,

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 48.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Emily Culpepper have illuminated how various feminist analyses can contribute to a model of scholarship that is methodologically sound and pragmatically useful. In what follows, I will briefly refer to the elements Schüssler Fiorenza considers to be essential to an action or research oriented methodology and relate them to Emily Culpepper's construction of "philosophia" - a feminist approach to the search for meaning. Their methodological positions have guided me in the choices I have made in this thesis. I will focus, however, on Keller's idea of dynamic objectivity and relate it to Christ's notion of constructing an ethos of eros and empathy as a model for scholarship. Their work is particularly relevant to my project in that their respective themes not only correspond one to the other, they also parallel those of other theorists in psychology and in religion examined in this thesis.

For Schüssler Fiorenza, the shift from an androcentric to a feminist paradigm in religious studies and theology may be facilitated by following the steps elaborated by Mies.[49] They are:

> The notion of objective and disinterested research must be replaced by conscious partiality.
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> Conscious partiality requires that we replace the 'view from above' with a 'view from below' that has both scientific and ethical/political dimensions.

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[49] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "On Feminist Methodology," in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 1, 2 (Fall 1985), 74.

> Contemplative 'spectator knowledge' must be replaced by participation in actions, movements, and struggles.
>
> The integration of research into the liberation struggle and process implies that changing the status quo becomes the starting point for a research project.
>
> The research process must become a process of 'conscientization' in which the scholar uses her research tools to assist her people who are women.
>
> The collective conscientization of women through a problem formulating method must be accompanied by the study of women's individual and social history.
>
> Feminist studies therefore must strive to overcome the individualism, obscurantism, and competitiveness of the male academy .... we should single out issues and questions that are crucial and central to the women's liberation movement in society and in religion.[50]

It is interesting to relate these steps, formulated by Mies and appropriated by Schüssler Fiorenza, to those discussed by Culpepper in her article, "Philosophia: Feminist Methodology for Constructing a Female Train of Thought."[51] For Culpepper, the constructive method she has named 'philosophia' is based on the following choices:

> Having a Positive Focus: A major intention of philosophia is to contribute to feminist scholarship, study with a primarily positive purpose and orientation. This method focuses more on actions of women for liberation than on dissection and critique of patriarchy.

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[50] Ibid., 75-76.

[51] Emily Culpepper, "Philosophia: Feminist Methodology for Constructing a Female Train of Thought," in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 3, no.2 (Fall, 1987), 7-16.

> Constructing Women's Intellectual Heritage: Philosophia seeks to construct a female train of thought, a heritage of women's thinking. This means daring the intellectual experiment of specifically choosing to work with primary and secondary scholarly sources by women *only* .... This is not to advocate absolute intellectual separatism. Rather ... a decision to work only with women's ideas must become one intentional methodological option - and not just an occasional unremarked, de facto occurrence.
>
> Recognizing Absent, Oral and Oppressed Sources: Philosophia alters the categories for sources, viewing them in a new light. This method recognizes a new category of sources (both primary and secondary) which I have named "Absent Sources." ... Women's primary tradition has been and still is oral, and in women's oral tradition the Absent ones are Present, the silent ones are heard, the mysteries shared.
>
> Committing Transdisciplinary Methodicide: Philosophia is constructed through a transdisciplinary approach ... which stresses ... the bases and biases of all prior disciplines. Philosophia seeks to ask questions left unasked by the disciplines as they are in traditional academia ... [this] is essential for finding the truths about women that have been excluded from academia.
>
> Being Critically Involved: Philosophia, therefore, means that feminists understand ourselves in a new relation to the scholarly work that we do ... we recognize that we are analyzing with a vested interest. Thus, philosophia does not adopt a falsely detached style of expression.
>
> Creating New Forms of Expression: All these aspects of constructing philosophia lead us to create and discover new forms of expression and presentation for our work ... and may lead us to develop major new structures for organizing our work.[52]

These elements not only constitute a framework for this project. They can be found, I suggest, in the research designs

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[52] Ibid., 8-16,

of an otherwise disparate group of scholars like Fox Keller and Christ, as well as in the work of Carol Gilligan and her colleagues in psychology, and Catherine Keller and Carter Heyward among others, in theology and religious studies. In my opinion, it is within such paradigms that the much needed "fabric of female thinking" can be brought into being.[53]

In my review of the literature on feminist analysis it became apparent that, as in other disciplines over the past decade, feminist scholars in the natural sciences have begun to question the gender neutrality of the very criteria defining 'scientific'. Some decided that perhaps, inevitably, science *is* a masculine project and, as such, ought to be rejected or replaced by a radically different science. Evelyn Fox Keller states that what is needed is a "reclamation, from within science, of science as a human instead of masculine project."[54] She suggests that we need to transcend the androcentric bias of current definitions of science and, in so doing, become more truly objective. She presents a vision of a gender-free science that is "premised on a transformation of the very categories of

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[53] Ibid., 16.

[54] Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 178. Although in many texts, Evelyn Fox Keller is referred to by Keller only, in this thesis I will address her as Fox Keller so as to distinguish her work from that of Catherine Keller, whose analysis I also employ.

male and female, and correspondingly of mind and nature."[55] For Fox Keller, what is to be sought is a science "named not by gender, or even by androgyny, but by different kinds of naming. A healthy science is one that allows for the productive survival of diverse conceptions of mind and nature, and of correspondingly diverse strategies."[56]

Fox Keller argues that not only is the dream of an objective science unrealizable, it is defective in that it carries within it that which it rejects. Specifically, it is characterized by an objective and autonomous self image; a vision of individuals uninfluenced by the outside world of other objects, arrogantly asserting their impersonality, and ultimately severed from their own subjectivity. Fox Keller explores the developments of concepts of self and other, subject and object, masculine and feminine, as they are played out within the societal and familial norms endorsed by the dominant Western culture. She sees it as inevitable that other norms would facilitate a different developmental course and thus a different subjectivity. The ultimate question for Fox Keller is how "such differences would effect our conceptions of science. The connections between our subjectivity and our science ... are mediated by the ideology

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

that denies their existence."[57] In the very act of articulating these connections, there is a loosening up of the grip that the ideology of an objective science maintains such that we can imagine how a less constrained science would appear. Fox Keller argues from a psychoanalytic base and relies particularly on object relations theory. She is critical, however, of it, and of any theory of psychological development that fails to incorporate the experiences of women. She points out that the name itself, *object* relations, "reflects the specific failure that this theory attempts to analyze: the failure to perceive the mother as subject."[58] Nonetheless, Fox Keller continues to utilize this framework because of its perceptive mode of analysis and its capacity for "self-correction".[59] She calls for a reformulation of its basic terms and concepts so as to render object relations theory more acceptable as a framework for feminist analysis: "objects need to be redefined as other subjects, and autonomy reconceived as a dynamic condition *enhanced* rather than threatened by connectedness to others."[60] It is this very re-conceptualization that theorists like Jean Baker Miller, Carol Gilligan, and their respective colleagues are working towards, as

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[57] Ibid., 71.

[58] Ibid., 72.

[59] Ibid., 73.

[60] Ibid.

I will indicate later in this thesis.

The acquisition of the ability to distinguish self from not self is linked to the capacity for objectivity and is indicative of a major accomplishment of childhood development. The recognition of the interdependent reality of both self and other is required as a precondition for both science and love. (It also marks a significant moment in the development of the capacity for shame, a point to which we will later turn.) However, Fox Keller suggests that the awareness of one's separateness may not be enough for science *or* love; in fact, emotional maturity may only begin there. Transcending one's aloneness so as to truly meet the other, and confronting the ambiguity inherent in this act is, for her, necessary for the survival of science and love. Fox Keller believes that our attachment to the dualistic conception of objectivity inherited from classical science is "a defence against anxiety about autonomy" of the same order that hampers our ability for love and creativity.[61] We thus need a 'dynamic' rather than 'static' interpretation of reality. Such an interpretation would be free of need and anxiety, and would be continually refined as we seek to develop more sophisticated epistemologies to support it.

Fox Keller believes it is the opposition between love and knowledge, central both to the development of modern science and

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[61] Ibid., 85.

western 'man', that forces a choice between love and power. It is an opposition that allows for the contamination of objectivity by domination. She argues for the interrelatedness of objectivity and autonomy and suggests that both may be conceived of in dynamic and static terms. The roles assumed in the practice of science by these two types of objectivity are analogous to the roles played in psychological development by dynamic and static autonomy.

Objectivity is defined by Fox Keller as "the pursuit of a maximally authentic, and hence, maximally reliable, understanding of the world around oneself."[62] It is a dynamic pursuit in that one's resources for understanding are drawn from the active exchange between mind and nature. Static objectivity, on the other hand, is premised on the severance of subject from object. The goal of dynamic objectivity is a form of knowledge that recognizes the independence and integrity of the world while relying on one's own connection to that world. In this way, dynamic objectivity is reminiscent of empathy, the act of explicitly drawing upon the commonality of experience between self and other, while allowing for the otherness of the other. As is true of empathy, dynamic objectivity implies that subjective experience is utilized in the pursuit of a more effective objectivity. This is not to say that such an

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[62] Ibid., 16.

experience is symbiotic. Rather it is *in* the disentanglement of self from other and world that the potential for insight into the nature of both self and other exists. For Fox Keller, the attention that the scholar accords to the object being studied is, in this way, a form of love.

An important consideration in this other-centered attentiveness is whether the object being perceived is limited by the desires and preconceptions of the scientist or subject. When the "full and pure being" of the object is sacrificed for its usefulness to the scholar, perception can become an act of aggressive violence.[63] The perceiver "cuts off those aspects of the object which she or he cannot use for her or his purposes."[64] Fox Keller is concerned that this kind of aggression reflects a basic adversarial relation to the object of study and that it is part of the "common rhetoric of science".[65] She believes that the aggression communicated in scientific discourse (as in to *master* nature, or, to *attack* problems) reflects more than a mere lack of connection to objects of study. For her, "the need to dominate nature is a projection of the need to dominate other human beings: it arises not so much out of empowerment as out of anxiety about impotence ... such dreams are by their very nature

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[63] Ibid., 123.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

self limiting ... and obstruct the scientist's efforts to know the 'real' nature."[66]

Fox Keller is optimistic that, in the practice of science, there is a multiplicity of styles and approaches that both belie the dominant ideology and serve to ensure that the endeavour of science remains vigorous. However, although there are some scientists who see their enterprise as a primarily erotic activity, their work is but a minor theme, barely heard through the din of the dominant rhetoric of aggression, coercion, and mastery. When this rhetoric is internalized by the scientific community, it, in turn, "selects for compatible scientific styles of work, methodologies, and even theories, which become then legitimated as 'good' science."[67]

In developing a scientific discourse that is based upon an ideal of dynamic objectivity, it behooves us then to pay close attention to those traditions found within science that approach the object, or world, in erotic, rather than adversarial terms.

It is to this end that I turn to the work of Carol Christ. Particularly in her essays, "Toward a Paradigm Shift in the Academy and in Religious Studies"; "Embodied Thinking: Reflections on Feminist Theological Method,"; her unpublished manuscript, "The Power of Eros: A Goddess Thealogy" and later in

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[66] Ibid., 124-125.

[67] Ibid., 126.

her text, *Rebirth of the Goddess: Finding Meaning in Feminist Spirituality*, Christ argues for the deconstruction of the ethos of objectivity and suggests that it be replaced by an ethos of eros and empathy as a new model of scholarship.[68] She points to two factors that render this task difficult. First, scholars risk being discredited if they refer to their work as being personal or political. Some understandably choose to obfuscate the meaning of their work within the rhetoric of dispassionate objectivity. In so doing, the very real capacity of their endeavours to provide meaning to lives and to transform the world is ignored or denied. Secondly, rooted in the very structures of our thought and language are distortions of subjectivity/objectivity, rationality/irrationality, dispassion/passion, analysis/chaos. Christ reminds us that such false dualisms and the kind of objectivity they foster are being challenged by people like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary Daly.[69] Daly, for example, says that feminist scholarship asks

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[68] Carol P. Christ, "Embodied Thinking: Reflections on Feminist Theological Method," in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 4, 1 (Spring 1989), 7-15; "Toward a Paradigm Shift in the Academy and in Religious Studies," in *The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy*, ed. Christie Farnham (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); "The Power of Eros: A Goddess Theology," 1991, TMs [photocopy]; *The Rebirth of the Goddess: Finding Meaning in Feminist Spirituality*, (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1997).

[69] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad 1989); Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, 1973.

"non-questions" about "non-data" using what Christ would call a "non-method".[70] I suggest Fox Keller and Christ concur in their opinion that it is generally accepted within the practice of science that no thought can be severed from its physicality and historicity. Within the ideology of patriarchal scholarship, however, the prevalent ethos is one of (static) objectivity. "The failure to be clear about and to name the fear", which Fox Keller describes as the defence against anxiety about impotence, results in a serious reticence about deconstructing the emotional basis of the ethos of objectivity.[71] Again, I suggest Fox Keller and Christ agree that such an ethos is rooted in a psychology that promotes the separation of subject and object rather than their connection. For Christ, separation and distance would be well-replaced by connectivity and caring as the basis for a new model of scholarship. In this respect, Christ echoes the language of relational theorists like Carol Gilligan. As will be discussed below, Gilligan is demonstrating in her work how the themes of connectivity and caring permeate female moral development. In other words, the fundamental choices that women make in their lives are structured according to an ethic of connection and care. If this is so, one could ask whether what

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[70] Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, 12; Christ, "The Power of Eros," 40.

[71] Christ, "Toward a Paradigm Shift," 57.

Christ is calling for is a distinctively 'female' mode of doing scholarship. I expect that Christ, Keller, Harding, and the other theorists examined here would argue that a masculine bias should not be replaced by a feminine one, for truth is not to be privileged along gendered lines.

Christ's model also incorporates an ethos of eros and empathy. She defines eros as "the deep feeling, both physical and spiritual, that connects us to other people and all beings in the web of life."[72] For her, there is a "passion to connect" which guides us in our understanding of the world from an 'other' standpoint.[73] Christ also suggests that the capacity to tolerate difference is a necessary concomitant of empathy. Within this ethos, the scholar, cognizant of the limitations and finitude of her or his standpoint, "speaks from her or his own body, life experiences, history, values, judgements, and interests".[74]

Christ identifies three moments of scholarship as they unfold within this paradigm. In the first moment, the scholar 'names the passion' that inspires and shapes her or his research. In the second moment, she or he enlarges her or his perspective by using the tools of disciplined research to engage in an

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[72] Christ, "The Power of Eros," 16.

[73] Christ, "Toward a Paradigm Shift," 58.

[74] Christ, "Toward a Paradigm Shift," 59; "The Power of Eros," 44.

empathic and imaginative manner with the object of study. The aim of such rigorous analysis is to get as close as possible to the intrinsic meaning of the object of study and then to verify it communally. There is, then, a requirement for a community of discourse so that the third moment, that of judgement, may occur. It is at this point that the researcher, having incorporated the insights of her or his enlarged perspective, offers judgements that are acknowledged to be limited by the author's standpoint, and responsibly avails her or himself of the criticism of the community of scholars. It is in this way, Christ argues, that the scholar avoids solipsism and polemic: rather than attempting to be 'objective', (as in static objectivity), she or he continuously expands the range of her or his empathy, engaged in the pursuit of what Fox Keller would call dynamic objectivity, while grounded in an ever-expanding community of knowledge. For Christ: "The ethos of eros provides a model for embodied thinking that acknowledges the passions and the finite perspectives that shape scholarship and thealogy."[75]

It seems that Christ is calling for a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' with regards to claims to universal truth, and to methods that foster intellectual detachment rather than commitment. She argues that a viable theological method is one in which we present ourselves as "theological subjects" who

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[75] Christ, "The Power of Eros," 16.

acknowledge the perspectival and relative character of truth claims without being "thoroughgoing relativists."[76] She also urges us to be suspicious of feminist programs that claim universality, and that require a "detached abstractionism".[77] I think Christ clarifies what is an often muddied dilemma in post-modern feminist scholarship, namely how to present one's embodied and perspectival commitments without reverting to a "premodern universalism" that expresses the "will to power" of those privileged to speak.[78] She suggests:

> It is not by pretending to an intellectual neutrality which in any case is only a pose, but rather by acknowledging and affirming the conditions of time and space, which limit our perspectives as well as giving them their distinctive perspectival power. This does not mean reducing feminist or theological claims to autobiography, though frank acknowledgement of the autobiographical bases of our thinking is one of the ways we can positively affirm the relativity of our thought. But we can also scrutinize and argue for our positions, ... both in terms of their pragmatic value and their ability to explain a broad range of experience beyond our own. We should be sensitive to the "will to power" of class, race, culture, or religious privilege which may be expressed in our work. We should expect our views to be challenged by those who hold other perspectives, and remain open to changing or modifying our views as our understanding grows. We should not hold our views so tightly that we cannot appreciate the perspectival truths embodied in the lives and works of others. We should think of "truth claims" as the product of embodied *thinking* not

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[76] Christ, "Embodied Thinking," 13.

[77] Ibid., 15.

[78] Ibid.

as eternally or universally valid *thought*.[79]

To summarize, it seems to me that scholarship based on an ethos of eros and empathy is challenging and hopeful, especially in its validation of the experience of the subject as an essential feature of inquiry. In particular, when women's experiences are included in the subject matter of our research, the traditional assumptions about our ways of knowing are questioned. In this way, we stretch the boundaries of our vision, delve deeper into the depths of our own minds, recover "subjugated knowledges," [80] and perhaps even transform the ways in which we participate in our worlds. It is in the spirit of this kind of scholarly endeavour that I examine relational theories, and theories of the female body in the chapters that follow.

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 81.

CHAPTER TWO

RELATIONAL THEORY

Traditional psychoanalytic and object relations theory have contributed major concepts and models to our understanding of the issues introduced in this thesis. After reviewing the theory advanced by Melanie Klein, I will discuss the work of D.W. Winnicott and Heinz Kohut, and will speak to the significance of all three authors for religion. I will then examine contemporary relational theory as it is articulated by the scholars of the Stone Center, and by Carol Gilligan and her colleagues at Harvard. Omissions of, and correctives to relational theory, particularly as it is espoused by Gilligan, will be addressed. The contribution of various theories of feminist scholars in religion toward the development of a relational theo/thealogy and a theology of embodiment and the erotic will be discussed. Finally, omissions of, and correctives to these theories will be proposed.

I begin with Klein because she has influenced contemporary psychoanalysis more than anyone since Sigmund Freud. More particularly, she was the first psychoanalytic writer to conceptualize relationships, rather than instinct, as the basis for the organization of experience. I also appreciate her focus

on the mother-infant relationship, displacing the hegemony of the father in the Freudian account of psychological development. Furthermore, her insistence on the innate tendency toward anger and aggression has, I believe, important implications for our understanding of the human condition.

Klein always maintained that she was validating and extending Freud's hypotheses. She demonstrated this in her accounts of her observation of her three children and in her clinical work with disturbed children. However, the differences between her and Anna Freud, first regarding the analysis of children, and later around a broader range of issues related to theory and technique, culminated in the early 1940's with the splitting of the British Psychoanalytic Society into two distinct groups, distancing Klein from the Freudian group. A third was later formed around the theories of W.R.D. Fairbairn and D.W. Winnicott.

Freudian ego psychology, heavily influenced by the work of Anna Freud, dominated American psychoanalytic inquiry until the 1980's. Previous to that time, little attention was paid to Kleinian theory by psychoanalysts in North America. Since then, however, her unique contributions to psychoanalytic theory have been increasingly appreciated, and her departures from Sigmund Freud in her understanding of mind and experience have been more clearly delineated.

Freud believed that the core of the neurotic conflict is formed during the oedipal phase, which for him, was the period in which the development of infantile sexuality culminated, and from which the superego emerged. Klein proposed that oedipal issues were evident in the mind of the two to three year old child, indeed even in that of the infant, based on an already primitively developed persecuting superego.[81] Her depiction of oedipal conflicts was not merely an extension backward in time from Freud's however, for she also elaborated a very different notion of psyche. For Freud, "the psyche is shaped through the oedipal conflict into stable and coherent structures, with hidden recesses and illicit designs." Klein, on the other hand portrayed the mind as a constantly changing "kaleidoscopic stream of primitive, phantasmagoric images, fantasies and terrors."[82] Intimating what was to become a 'postmodern' account of the self, Klein believed the psyche of both child and adult was always fluctuating and flexible, continuously warding off the anxieties of annihilation and abandonment.

In 1933, Klein published *The Early Development of Conscience*

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[81] Melanie Klein, "The Oedipus Complex in Light of Early Anxieties," in *Contributions to Psychoanalysis, 1921-1945* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964); "Envy and Gratitude," [1957] in *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1975).

[82] Stephen A. Mitchell and Margaret J. Black, *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*, (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 87.

in the Child in which she suggested that the child's central anxiety "arises out of a persecutory fear based on the child's projection of its own aggressiveness onto the mother."[83] For Freud, it was the child's libidinal energies that propelled the child toward attachment to satisfying objects. Klein made a decisive, and I think important shift, by arguing that the basis of the child's attachment is psychological rather than libidinal. Specifically, it is the anxiety aroused by the child's aggressive impulses that causes the child to establish relationships to objects.

In *Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms*, Klein summarized her work and described the three elements that have proved to be her most important contribution to psychoanalytic thought: the paranoid-schizoid position, the depressive position, and projective identification.[84] Before elaborating upon these terms, I wish to point out that Klein and her collaborators were cognizant of the difficulties in attempting to describe the experiences of preverbal infants in adult terms. Given the inchoate nature of the infant's experiences, our adult reflection

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[83] Melanie Klein, cited in Patricia H. Davis, "Melanie Klein and Motherhood," in *Religion, Society, and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Janet Liebman Jacobs and Donald Capps (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 92.

[84] Melanie Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," in [1946] *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. J. Mitchell (New York: Free Press, 1986), 176-200.

upon it is necessarily incomplete. We can thus assume there are inevitable obstacles to our understanding that remain beyond our comprehension. Also of note is Klein's reference to "positions" rather than "stages". She preferred the former term because she wanted to emphasize an organization of experience and a stance vis a vis the world, rather than a chronological progression. While the paranoid-schizoid position precedes the depressive position in the infant's life, these positions oscillate over the course of one's life.[85]

According to Klein, the infant's experience may be depicted as involving two distinct states, the images of which relate to the infant at the breast. The image of the "good breast" refers to the infant's experience of being loved, and in turn, her love and gratitude toward the "good breast", the provider of protection and comfort. The experience of persecution and abandonment attending to the "bad breast" leaves the infant with destructive fantasies of retaliation toward that which has caused her so much pain.

The paranoid-schizoid position emerges from the ability and the effort of the child to keep the good breast and the bad breast apart and distinct from one another. It is imperative that the good breast remain uncontaminated by the malevolence of the bad breast. The child experiences his rage against the bad

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[85] Davis, 105; and Mitchell and Black, 93.

breast as causing real damage and thus the force of the child's retaliatory fantasies must be contained to this breast alone. Otherwise, he could destroy the good breast as well, thereby leaving him bereft of any protection from the viciousness of the bad breast.

Paranoid, in Kleinian terms, refers to the "central persecutory anxiety, the fear of invasive malevolence," external to the infant. Schizoid has to do with the core defence against this anxiety, namely, splitting. In this process, the "vigilant separation of the loved and loving good breast from the hating and hated bad breast" is assured.[86] The persecutory anxieties defended against are generated by the death instinct, which for Klein, unlike other psychoanalytic theorists, was not only a "biological, quasi-mythological speculation," but constitutive of her theory of mind.[87] Informed by her clinical work with disturbed children and adults, Klein believed that the most compelling problem of life is to escape from the damaging force of one's own aggression, thereby assuaging one's terror of annihilation.[88]

The bad breast then, results from the primitive ego's need to project its malevolence outside itself where it is less

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[86] Mitchell and Black, 93.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," 179.

threatening than if contained within the boundaries of the self. "... a relationship to the original bad object has been created from the destructive force of the death instinct for the purpose of containing the threats posed by that instinct."[89] In other words, the aggressiveness directed toward the bad breast protects the infant from the primary anxiety arising from the death instinct.

Because it is unbearable to withstand a totally malevolent world, the infant creates the good breast by projecting loving, protective impulses, or the 'loved parts' of the self, onto the external world. The child both introjects goodness from the good breast and projects goodness onto it. In this way, "a relationship to the original good object has been created from the loving force of the libidinal instinct to serve as a counterpart and refuge from the threat of the bad object."[90] However, because the infant's ego lacks cohesion, a "tendency toward integration alternates with a tendency toward disintegration."[91] As the infant splits objects into good and bad, the ego is also split. In Klein's view, "the disintegration of the ego at this point - its "falling to pieces" - underlies

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[89] Mitchell and Black, 93.

[90] Mitchell and Black, 94.

[91] Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," 179.

states of disintegration in schizoid processes."[92]

Klein's depiction of what she termed the more developmentally advanced "depressive position" emerged from her belief in the inherent need to integrate the good breast and the bad breast into a whole object. The ambivalent relationship to this sometimes loving, sometimes hating whole brings with it a new set of terrors. "The whole mother who disappoints or fails the infant...is destroyed in the infant's hateful fantasies, not just the purely evil bad breast...The whole object (both the external mother and the corresponding internal whole object) now destroyed in the infant's rageful fantasies is the singular provider of goodness as well as frustration."[93] The depressive position thus emerges because the "aggressive impulses are felt to be directed against the loved object."[94] The child responds with terror and guilt to the force of her inherent destructiveness which has been visited upon her loved object, to whom she feels grateful and by whom she is protected. In desperation, she attempts to repair the damage she has wrought by making the mother whole once more.

Sustaining the depressive position depends upon the child's confidence in her reparative capacities. "To be able to keep her

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[92] Davis, 94.

[93] Mitchell and Black, 95.

[94] Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," 189.

objects whole, the child has to believe that her love is stronger than her hate, that she can undo the ravages of her destructiveness... In the best of circumstances, the cycles of loving, frustration, hateful destruction, and reparation deepen the child's ability to remain related to whole objects, to feel that her reparative capacity can balance and compensate for her destructiveness."[95]

If a child successfully works through the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions in the first two years of life, then the primary anxiety will lose its strength (along with the other anxieties attached to the introjections and projections), object idealization will become less powerful, and bad objects will become less threatening. During all of this working through, the ego develops strength and unity. Inability to work through the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions can result in the "violent splitting off and destroying of one part of the personality under the pressure of anxiety and guilt."[96]

This never-ending destructiveness towards loved others who have disappointed us and caused us pain is, in Klein's opinion, a source of anxiety for all humankind, perpetuating our ongoing need for reparation. It is only in the conviction that our love can withstand and survive our destructiveness that the

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[95] Mitchell and Black, 95.

[96] Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," 195.

"integration of love and hate into richer and more complex relatedness " is made possible.[97]

Klein's notion of projective identification has become a familiar concept within psychoanalysis, and in psychology generally.[98] For Klein, what is projected is not simply unwanted impulses, as suggested by Freud, but a part of the self, now located in another. Through an unconscious identification, a connection to, and attempts to control, that expelled part of the self is preserved.[99] As I will discuss later, many feminist theorists argue that this very dynamic is at work when the unwanted, noxious characteristics associated with femaleness are projected onto women by dominant males in patriarchal religion and culture. Psychoanalytic theory has particularly benefited from Klein's elaboration of the concept of envy. She proposed that envy, the most destructive, and perhaps paradoxical, of primitive mental processes, was a response to pleasure and gratification, rather than frustration, and was therefore directed towards the good breast. Because the infant, in Klein's view, is unable to tolerate that something so critical to his existence is beyond his control, he is determined to spoil it.

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[97] Mitchell and Black, 97.

[98] Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," 1946 and "Envy and Gratitude," 1957.

[99] Mitchell and Black, 101.

This abject dependence upon the good arouses such envy that her only recourse is to destroy that which she is so powerfully dependent upon. Envy, then, is such a forceful dynamic because the uncontrollable other is *so* significant that love and gratitude become unbearably painful. Attributed to an extraordinarily strong inherent aggressive drive, envy can also be considered as the child's response to strikingly inconsistent parenting. In such a situation, envious spoiling is the child's reaction to the adult's failure to follow through with the promise of responsiveness and love.[100]

Critiques of Klein's theory have often centered around her handling of the child's relationship to the larger social world, an issue for which she provided few answers. For example, she does not account for how the child's fantasies may distort the mother and the social world even as they (fantasies) are also constructing it. Patricia Davis queries, "What is the "real world" that the infant seems to try to approximate in his or her own representations?"[101] In Anthony Elliot's view, fantasy, in Kleinian theory, "is correctly seen as the crucial psychic underpinning of all social activity, [but] it is not recognized as being inseparably bound up with the material conditions of its

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[100] Stephen A. Mitchell, *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis: An Integration*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[101] Davis, 95.

making... Klein's privileging of the internal realm of fantasy leads to a crucial neglect of the role of social and cultural factors in the structuring of human relationships."[102] I question the ambivalences that extend beyond that of the infant toward the mother; what about the mother herself? Might not she experience similar ambivalences toward her child? What about the cultural and familial biases of the analyst/observer? I agree with those who propose that a significant omission in Klein's theory is her neglect to explore the infant's relationships with the mother - as a real person - as well as the influences of others in the infant's social realm, and in the larger cultural context. As I will pursue later, it is precisely in their careful interrogation of these very dynamics and issues that contemporary theorists like Carol Gilligan have provided a corrective to this rather glaring gap in Kleinian theory.

Like the Stone Center theorists later, Klein gradually developed her theories from insights gained in her observations of and clinical work with children and adults. Apparently, she had little curiosity about the intellectual trends of her time, yet she facilitated a way of thinking about self and mind that we would today describe as 'postmodern'. Mitchell and Black point out that Kleinian theory anticipated some of our current

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[102] Anthony Elliot, *Psychoanalytic Theory*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 85.

intellectual preoccupations, namely, "the decentering of the singular self, the dispersal of subjectivity, and the emphasis on the contextualization of experience."[103]

In my opinion, Klein's thought has provocative and profound implications for our analyses of the means by which cultures and religious communities construct important and religiously foundational ideas like gender, motherhood, and evil. Particularly, her theories of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, and of envy, elucidate the powerful cultural and religious anxieties surrounding issues regarding, for example, whose rights are paramount with respect to women's bodies and the attendant conflicts about abortion. Additionally, as I will discuss later in this chapter, Klein's account is especially useful in examining the somewhat elusive and seemingly inconsistent cultural responses to our human capacity for aggression and hate, as well as for empathy and love.

In her essay "*Anger in the Body: The Impact of Idealization on Human Development and Religion*," Naomi Goldenberg analyzes the significance of Klein's theory of aggression for religion. In particular, Goldenberg argues that "the suppression of the body in religious traditions is linked to the displacement of

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[103] Mitchell and Black, 111.

aggression in those traditions."[104] As was discussed above, Klein believes aggression is an innate instinct, a "source of vitality" and is thus necessary to life. If we are unable to assimilate aggression, we and the world are split into "idealized all-good parts and despised all-bad parts". It is in this way that aggression becomes particularly treacherous.[105]

In Klein's view, the correct frame of reference for aggression is love. Hate and love, then, "both inspire and mediate each other" with the result that human beings "lead more balanced...and caring lives." Goldenberg argues that because aggression has been denied in many of our basic religious ideas and images, a "hostility to life" has been encouraged.[106] She states, "the body...is where much religious thought consigns anger. While the soul is seen as pure, valuable, loving, and eternally alive, the body is viewed as tainted, expendable, and the vehicle of death."[107] Goldenberg argues that philosophies - and I would add, psychologies - which are based on a body-soul split are, in reality, "separating anger and love."[108] Assuming

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[104] Naomi Goldenberg, *Returning Words to Flesh: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Resurrection of the Body*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 156.

[105] Ibid., 163.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid., 164.

[108] Ibid., 165.

Klein is correct, it is this "splitting off of human anger from human love that promotes a deadened world and causes hate to search out a scapegoat."[109]

The main scapegoats of aggression within the Christian tradition are, in mythology, the devil, and in reality, women. The two are connected. Both the devil and women are seen as lusty and voraciously sensual. If, as Klein contests, sensuality generates anger, then an "all-good God" can be neither angry nor sensual. Both aspects are projected onto the devil, and it is "women who are the flesh and blood repositories" of the sensuality and anger the devil represents.[110] Goldenberg suggests that "Perhaps women become the 'devil's gateway' because everyone who is nurtured by a woman then connects early desire and early rage to the female sex....It is this rage which threatens the image of a perfect God."[111]

Goldenberg argues that bodies in general, and women's bodies in particular are denigrated in Christianity because the anger residing in the body "poses a threat to images of an all-perfect God." For Klein, such "perfect love requires that someone be hated." Women, in all their physicality, become the scapegoats

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

of that hatred.[112] Because women symbolize the body in culture Goldenberg suggests, "We cannot learn to stop hating women without learning to stop hating human flesh."[113]

When read at the cultural level, Klein's theory of aggression provides a means of explaining the denigration of the body, in particular women's bodies, in many religious and cultural contexts. As will be explored in more detail later, when read at the individual level, I believe her theory of aggression illuminates how some girls and women internalize this disdain, and take it yet further in their unremitting disgust with their own bodies. Later in this, and in subsequent chapters, I will address how various feminist scholars are grappling with similar concerns. In doing so, many are connecting themes of power and aggression. For example, Carter Heyward argues that "omnipotent power, far from epitomizing goodness, is the very paradigm of evil in the world".[114]

I will argue later that Klein's contribution regarding our inherent tendency towards envy and anger - as well as love and gratitude - is not adequately addressed in the work of

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[112] Ibid., 166.

[113] Ibid., 170.

[114] Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation*, (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1982) referred to in Kathleen M. Sands, *Escape From Paradise: Evil and Tragedy in Feminist Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 44.

contemporary feminists theorists of psychology and of religion. I will examine the ways in which theorists in these disciplines have both named and obscured fundamental realities of the human condition.

Klein is not the only contributor to our understanding of the issues surrounding relationality and the 'problem of the passions'. As noted above, the British Psychoanalytic Society divided into three groups in the early 1940's: the followers of Melanie Klein; those loyal to Anna Freud's adherence to more traditional Freudian thought which was later extended into Freudian ego psychology; and a middle group who developed what came to be known as object relations theories.[115] Two of the significant people in the latter group were W.R.D. Fairbairn and D.W. Winnicott, both of whom have been described as the forefathers of the shift from drive theory to relational theory.[116] Both built upon Klein's notion of an infant constitutionally "wired" for interaction with others. However, they departed from Klein's belief that constitutional aggression was driven by the death instinct. Instead, they posited that inadequate parenting interfered with the infant's being "wired" for positive human interaction and development. I have been most impressed by Winnicott's innovative contributions to

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[115] Mitchell and Black, 113.

[116] Mitchell, 1988.

psychoanalytic thought, a summary of which I will provide in this section.

As a paediatrician and psychoanalyst, Donald Woods Winnicott was in a unique position to view the interaction between mothers and infants. Over the course of his career, he developed original theories about how development was either facilitated or frustrated by the quality of mothering.

Since Winnicott was supervised by Melanie Klein, it is not surprising that his earlier writings evoked a Kleinian mode. In fact, as Phillips suggests, Winnicott's work is a "continuous and sometimes inexplicit, commentary on and critique of her work."[117] However, over time, it became apparent that his originality and independence could not be constrained by an orthodox Kleinian perspective. Winnicott's later work is striking for the freshness he brought to psychoanalytic thought, and in particular, his belief that the infant sought relatedness, not simply relief from tension. He wrote: "It is not instinctual satisfaction that makes a baby begin to be, to feel that he is real, to find life worth living."[118]

Winnicott stated that his task was to provide a balance to the Freudian emphasis on internal dynamics by concentrating on

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[117] Adam Phillips, *Winnicott*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 9.

[118] D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, (New York: Routledge, 1971), 116.

the "environmental factor", by which he meant that provided by the mother, and later the psychoanalyst. For Winnicott, psychopathology, which he called "an environmental deficiency disease" was caused by inadequate maternal care.[119]

Winnicott's focus, then, was not on a traditional notion of mental illness. Rather, he was interested in the nuances of subjective experience: "the sense of inner reality, the infusion of life with a feeling of personal meaning, the image of oneself as a distinct and creative center of one's own experience".[120]

In Winnicott's view, the first phase of infancy is characterized by "absolute dependence"; thus, his well known epigram "there is no such thing as a baby" but only "the nursing couple."[121] The mother's attunement to her infant, her "management" of the baby's needs constituted a state called by Winnicott "primary maternal preoccupation." Love and responsiveness to the infant's experiences are crucial. According to Winnicott, " a baby can be fed without love but lovelessness as impersonal management cannot succeed in producing

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[119] D.W. Winnicott, *The Maturational Process and the Facilitating Environment*, (London: Hogarth, 1965), 251, 256. Quoted in James W. Jones, "Playing and Believing: The Uses of D.W. Winnocott in the Psychology of Religion," in *Religion, Society, and Psychoanalysis: Readings in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Janet Liebman Jacobs and Donald Capps (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977), 110.

[120] Mitchell and Black, 124.

[121] Jones, "Playing and Believing," 111.

a new autonomous child."[122] Through her intuitive attunement and consistent responsiveness to the infant's needs, the mother protects her from the experience of separateness, thereby sustaining her sense of omnipotent control over her environment. Jones notes that "this was the most radical of Winnicott's theoretical innovations: he shifted psychoanalytic attention away from the vicissitudes of drives to the quality of early interpersonal relationships...Early object relations are crucial not because they are internalized, but because they facilitate or distort development."[123] The connection Winnicott made between the nuances of the mother-infant interaction and the quality of adult subjectivity was one of Winnicott's most profound contributions toward understanding both the development of the self and the process of psychoanalysis.[124]

Winnicott employed the concept "unintegration" to describe the child's earliest experience of mind, that is, "discrete wishes and needs emerge spontaneously and, as they are met, melt back into the drift, which he termed 'going-on-being.'"[125] For

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[122] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 127.

[123] Jones, 111.

[124] Mitchell and Black, 125.

[125] Ibid. Note the contrast between these moments of comfortable disconnection with Klein's description, discussed earlier, of a fragmented and terrifying subjective world. I find Klein's depiction most convincing.

Winnicott, the environment created by the mother, not the pressures of infantile instincts, allows the infant to emerge as a uniquely human person who senses himself to be real and the world meaningful.

Winnicott named the functions provided by the mother for the infant the "object mother" and the "environmental mother."[126] While the object mother provides for the biological needs of the infant, it is the 'holding' environment, within which the mother 'brings the world' to, and then recedes from, the infant that is most essential for her ego development. The most important function of this physical and psychical space is freedom from impingement: "the holding environment has as its main function the reduction to a minimum of impingements to which the infant must react with resultant annihilation of personal being."[127]

If the mother is inconsistent in her responsiveness to the infant, or fails to provide, this 'good-enough' environment, a 'false self' is created whereby the infant complies with the mother's demands and her own development is suspended. Thus, the infant, and later the adult, "lack something, and that something is the essential central element of creative originality.".[128] If

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[126] Winnicott, *The Maturational Process*, quoted in Jones, 111.

[127] Ibid., 47, quoted in Jones, 111.

[128] Ibid., 152, quoted in Jones, 112.

the infant is not held in a protective psychic space, but rather, has to deal prematurely with the external world, development of the infant's spontaneous and creative sense of self is impeded. The result is an inability to "feel real", which for Winnicott is "more than existing; it is finding a way to exist as oneself, and to relate to object as oneself."[129] Inhibited in his attempts to fully experience need and his ability to use his objects, the infant loses access to the "true self" and thus to feeling real.

The sources of the true self are two-fold: "one is the "spontaneous gesture" in which the infant acts freely, without any impingement. The other is "the aliveness of the body tissues and the working of body functions."[130]

Jones notes the importance of bodily sensations in Winnicott's theory.[131] For Winnicott, mind and body are originally united; psychopathology results if there is too great a separation between psyche and soma, which is the usual consequence of not-good-enough mothering. An erratic holding environment causes the infant to overdevelop intellectually, pitting mind against body: "mental functioning [becomes] a thing in itself...the psyche of the individual gets seduced away into

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[129] Winnicott, "Playing and Reality," 137.

[130] Winnicott, *The Maturational Process* 148, quoted in Jones, 112.

[131] Jones, 112-113.

this mind from the intimate relationship which the psyche originally had with the soma. The result is a mind-psyche which is pathological."[132] As Jones notes, " a breakdown of the relationship between the mother and infant gets transformed into a breakdown of the relationship between the mind and the body; the mother's being out of touch with her baby (and perhaps her own body?) results in a mind out of touch with its body."[133]

At approximately six months of age, the infant gradually begins to realize that his desires are not omnipotent, that his mother - and later, other objects - are separate from him, and that he is dependent upon others in his environment for the satisfaction of his needs. Winnicott described this as the experience of objective reality, which exists alongside that of subjective omnipotence. While the latter is preserved as a meaningful legacy and resource, it now exists in a dialectical relationship with the former. There is, however, a transition between the two modes of organizing experience: it is ambiguous and paradoxical because it is experienced as "neither subjectively created and controlled nor as discovered and separate, but as somewhere in between.".[134] Transitional objects

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[132] Winnicott, *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*, (New York: Brunner-Mazel, 1958) 246-247, quoted in Jones, 113.

[133] Jones, 1997, 113.

[134] Mitchell and Black, 127.

like the special blanket or teddy bear help the infant to deal with the movement from subjective omnipotence to objective reality. For the infant, the 'blankie' both exists in the external world and, given that it has been assigned special meaning by her, it is at the same time, an extension of her self.

This 'space between' external life and inner reality is also the space where children play; play, then, is interpersonal, reminiscent of the child's prior interaction with the mother. For Winnicott, the transitional space, which is the child's playground, is "an intermediate area of *experiencing* to which inner reality and outer life both contribute" and it exists as a "resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related."[135] It is then, the relational experience, rather than the transitional object as such, that is crucial for Winnicott.

In his later writings, Winnicott expanded this notion of a particular developmental trajectory to a vision of mental health and creativity, formulating no less than what Jones has called "a psychoanalytic theory of culture".[136] The transitional sphere became the realm within which the creative and spontaneous child could play and express herself. It is from this experience that art and culture emerge, for "cultural experience [is] an

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[135] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 2, quoted in Jones, 114.

[136] Jones, 114.

extension of the idea of transitional phenomena and play."[137] One of the important implications of Winnicott's insight, I believe, is that it bridges the individual world or reality, and the cultural world or context.

In examining the role of aggression in the transitional experience, Winnicott introduced the concept of object usage. In subjective omnipotence, the child ruthlessly uses the object in a fashion Winnicott called object relating. In the movement from object relating to object usage, the child gradually becomes aware that not only has she destroyed the object by her aggression, but that the object has survived her attack. In this way, a sense of externality is established for the child.[138] For Winnicott, "because of the survival of the object, the subject may now have started to live a life in a world of objects."[139] Since the object, who now exists in her own right, is capable of enduring the destructiveness of the infant, he can connect in a complete and intense manner with his own passion.

Unlike Freud's notion of the reality principle and Melanie Klein's belief in the innate character of the aggressive instinct, Winnicott traces the psychological source of the

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[137] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 99, quoted in Jones, 114.

[138] Mitchell and Black, 129.

[139] D.W. Winnicott, *Psychoanalytic Explorations*, ed. C. Winnocott, R. Shepherd, and M. Davis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 223, quoted in Jones, 115.

experience of objectivity to aggression and destructiveness. According to Jones, Winnicott thus "transforms aggression and destructiveness from intrinsically anti-social instincts or necessary evils to positive impulses that serve as the source of our sense of reality."[140]

As we examined in the last chapter, feminist scholars have emphasized the tendency to associate masculinity, rooted in aggression, with scientific and objective thought.[141] In his own way, Winnicott has pointed us in a similar direction. What is most compelling about Winnicott's notion of objectivity is not only that it originates in aggression, but that it (objectivity) is positive, generating the various forms of human knowledge, for example, art, philosophy, literature, music. Winnicott, according to Jones, " insists on the importance of creativity and intuition and that we cannot live by objective rationality alone...shorn of intuition and spontaneous creativity, bare objectivity may well prove dangerous and destructive, in part because of the aggression that lies at its heart."[142] (We hear in Evelyn Fox Keller's analysis, discussed in Chapter 1, echoes of Winnicott's view.)

The transitional experience, then, because it includes both

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[140] Jones, 115.

[141] Keller, 1985; Harding, 1987.

[142] Jones, 116.

inner and outer reality, transcends the radical dichotomy of subject and object. As Diane Jonte-Pace states: "Subject and object are inseparably interrelated as the human mind creates the object it finds. According to Winnicott, we create what exists, we create the objects of our environment, we create the other. And yet, paradoxically, the other also exists separately, apart from us....For Winnicott external and internal reality are integrated, mutually influenced. What is external is simultaneously created by the individual."[143]

According to Jones, the notion of transitional experience, *as experience*, is one of the most significant concepts for the psychology of religion. He says: "sacred moments are "transitional" because they allow entrance again and again into that transforming psychological space from which renewal and creativity emerge. Through rituals, words, stories, or introspective disciplines, religion evokes those transitional psychological spaces, which continually reverberate with the affects of past object relations and are pregnant with the possibility of future forms of intuition and transformation."[144] Jones refers to Victor Turner's use of the anthropological

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[143] Diane Jonte-Pace, "Religion: A Rorschachian Projection Theory." in *American Imago*,(1985), 42 and 230, quoted in Jones, *Religion and Psychology in Transition: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Theology*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 103.

[144] Jones, "Playing and Believing," 120.

concept of *liminality* in his theory of ritual, and notes its similarity to Winnicott's notion of transitional space. Liminality, for Turner, has to do with "that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both".[145] Turner highlights the significance of ritual in evoking a liminal state, and connects play and ritual in a manner similar to that of Winnicott. For Turner, ritual is a "transforming performance" in which the liminal experience is created: "through its liminal processes [ritual] holds the generating source of culture."[146] Play, too, evokes a liminal state for Turner in that in the experience of play, normal taxonomic categories are suspended, thus allowing for creative potentialities to emerge.

Both Turner and Winnicott then, propose that in the transformative liminal or transitional state, the typical dichotomies of self and other, inner and outer are collapsed, for the time being. It is then, in this potential space that culture, science, religion and art are generated.[147] Winnicott states: "I have tried to draw attention to the importance both in theory and in practice of a third area, that of play, which expands into creative living and into the whole cultural life of man. This third area has been contrasted with inner or personal

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[145] Turner, 1967, 99, quoted in Jones, Ibid.

[146] Turner, 1986, 158, quoted in Ibid.

[147] Jones, *Religion and Psychology*, 134.

psychic reality and with the actual world in which the individual lives, which can be objectively perceived. I have located this important area of *experience* in the potential space between the individual and the environment...it is here that the individual experiences creative living."[148] It is from the "spontaneous true-self creativity" of the child, and later the adult, that the symbolic process emerges.[149] According to Jones, "Winnicott presents...a strong argument for the integrity of the symbolic world, which appeals to those for whom the symbols of religion or art play an important role."[150]

Furthermore, the capacity to be immersed in this transitional realm of consciousness provides opportunities for "psychic...rejuvenation" and for the experience of life as abundant and full.[151] (We will see later how Carol Christ interprets these moments and how her thealogical vision is sourced in these moments of being.) Jones argues that Winnicott's significance for religion has to do with his proposal for an "independent developmental line for symbolic processes" and for his emphasis on how mental health depends on being able to access that transformative space in which the dichotomy of subjectivity

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[148] Winnicott, 1971, 102-103 quoted in Ibid., 135.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid.

and objectivity is transcended and the use of the imagination is facilitated. For, as Jones notes, "The rituals, words, and introspective methods of religion have traditionally been a major source of the disciplined imagination and of the evocation of those epistemically creative and psychologically restorative experiences."[152]

Along with Winnicott, Heinz Kohut developed a model of human experience that is profoundly relational in nature. His model, as we shall see, prefigures the theoretical and practical concerns illuminated by later feminist scholars in psychology and in religious studies.

Unlike Freud, who saw "human" nature in terms of the ongoing battle to civilize instinctual forces, Kohut's human experienced life, not as a series of battles, but as devoid of meaning and himself as alienated, "terrifyingly separated from a sense of his humanness".[153] In this existential vacuum, he sometimes oscillated between energetic eruptions of creativity and profound feelings of isolation and inadequacy. His relationships reflected his "tragic" nature: alternatively relentlessly pursued and ruthlessly abandoned, Kohut's man despaired of ever receiving

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[152] Ibid., 136.

[153] Mitchell and Black, 149. I am staying with the gendered pronouns as they are written in both Kohut's writings and by those authors whose analysis of Kohut the following is indebted.

what he needed from others.[154]

Kohut came to believe that certain kinds of environments facilitated, or thwarted, the child's *feeling* of being human and connected to the world around him. Kohut's early writings were based on his concerns about the relationship between self-love and love of others, and as such, constituted a reformulation of Freud's theory of narcissism.[155]

In a therapeutic approach he termed as "empathic immersion" and "vicarious introspection", Kohut attempted to enter into the patient's world, *as experienced by the patient*, thereby suspending any a priori frames of reference or predetermined categories. Kohut believed that empathy and introspection, on the part of the analyst, were "essential condition[s]" of psychoanalytic methodology. He notes how this approach "allowed me to perceive meanings, or the significance of meanings, I had formerly not consciously perceived."[156] As will be discussed below, empathic immersion and vicarious introspection, though not exactly named as such, are also defining features of the methodological and therapeutic approaches of many contemporary feminist scholars of religion and of feminist psychologists.

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[154] Heinz Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1977), 132, 133.

[155] Mitchell and Black, 150.

[156] Heinz Kohut, "The Two Analyses of Mr. Z.," in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 60, (1979), 3.

Kohut looked to the early developmental milieu to ascertain the features that contributed to the development of a healthy self-regard, infused with vitality, creativity, and ambition, and of a reliable self-esteem that could withstand disillusionment, and celebrate personal accomplishments. Such a milieu allows for the growth of three kinds of "selfobject" experiences. The term selfobject is central to Kohut's theory, designed by him to clarify the process by which psychological wholeness is developed and sustained. In the original narcissistic relationship with primary caregivers, the boundaries between self and others are totally permeable; objects are not felt as separate from the self. The infant takes in the functions, the "very beings" of the primary caregivers in the making of the self.[157] While there is a gradual awareness of our separateness, we continue, throughout our lives to turn to others to meet our deepest self needs. Selfobjects then, for Kohut, meant those relationships within which we "maintain the cohesion, vitality, strength, and harmony of the self."[158]

In the first necessary developmental experience, the selfobjects "respond to and confirm the child's innate sense of vigor, greatness and perfection." The second requires that the

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[157] Charles B. Strozier, "Heinz Kohut's Struggles with Religion, Ethnicity, and God," in Jacobs and Capps, 167.

[158] Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 197.

child be involved with powerful others, "to whom the child can look up and with whom he can merge as an image of calmness, infallibility, and omnipotence."[159] The third type of selfobject experience is one in which the child feels that others are similar to him. Jones notes that these three experiences, respectively, form the basis of "our ambitions, our goals, and our use of skills and talents."[160]

Kohut came to believe that through a process he termed *transmuting internalization*, the child may eventually develop a healthy narcissism. Through gradual exposure to reality, during which the child experiences the inevitable disappointments of everyday life, his inflated views of himself and others are tempered. Having survived these frustrations, the child internalizes, as self structures, those parental functions that initially were provided by his selfobjects. He learns, for example, to soothe and comfort himself, rather than succumbing to despair; in the face of to-be-expected defeats, he begins to experience his inner resourcefulness and strength.[161]

It is in this way, then, that internal, or "psychic structures" are built, facilitating the emergence of a "secure,

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[159] Heinz Kohut and E. Wolf, "The Disorders of the Self and Their Treatment: An Outline," in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 59, (1978), 414.

[160] Jones, *Religion and Psychology*, 36.

[161] Jones, Ibid.; Mitchell and Black, 160.

resilient self that retains a kernel of the excitement and vitality of the original, immature narcissistic states."[162] For Kohut, this developmental pathway ultimately means that "a self can never exist outside a matrix of selfobjects."[163]

Kohut transferred these three types of childhood selfobject experiences to the analytic context, locating there three kinds of selfobject transferences. In the first type of transference, named by Kohut as the *mirroring transference*, the analyst provides a nurturing environment, similar to Winnicott's "holding environment" in which the patient, through his attachment to the analyst, begins to feel "more seen, more real, and more internally substantial."[164] The second type, the *idealizing transference*, occurs when the patient begins to experience himself as significant and strong because of his connection to the idealized and powerful other, in the person of the analyst. In the *alter-ego* or *twinship transference*, the need of the patient to experience the analyst as similar to him is generated. This may be seen, for example, in the patient's feeling that a like-gendered analyst may share his sensibilities around

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[162] Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of Self*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1971), 49; Mitchell and Black, 160.

[163] Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?*, 61.

[164] Mitchell and Black, 161.

gender.[165] (It is interesting to note that the issue of the therapist's gender on the analytic process is not more fully developed by Kohut. However, as we shall see below, it is a distinctive feature of the contribution feminist relational theorists have made to object relational and self psychological theories.)

For Kohut, our selfobject needs for mirroring, idealization, and twinship are constant features of our relational experiences. In his account, increasing independence and autonomy are not markers of maturity. He writes, "a move from dependence (symbiosis) to independence (autonomy) is an impossibility and...the developmental moves of psychological life must be seen in the changing nature of the relationships between the self and its selfobjects - not as a replacement of selfobjects by love objects, not as a move from narcissism to object love".[166]

In this perspective then, we exist within a matrix of relatedness; it is the experience of interconnectedness that allows for the development of a cohesive and stable sense of self. Conversely, it is disruptions in interpersonal relationships, not "conflicted intrapsychic structures," that cause psychological problems.[167] Kohut emphatically states: "all

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[165] Ibid.

[166] Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?*, 52.

[167] Jones, *Psychology and Religion*, 38.

forms of psychopathology are based either on defects in the structure of the self, on distortions of the self, or on weakness of the self. [Self psychology]...is trying to show, furthermore, that all flaws in the self are due to disturbances in selfobject relationships in childhood."[168] We will examine below how contemporary relational theorists have extended this notion of psychological disturbance to encompass painful selfobject relationships throughout life.

To summarize, Kohut's relational theory is based on the assumption that dichotomies between individuation and interconnection, intersubjective and relational, self and other, are false. In object relational, self psychological, and as we will discuss next, in contemporary relational theories, "the dynamics of selfhood are the dynamics of interconnection. And all the self's activities - the goals it pursues or renounces, the intimacies it establishes or flees from, the gods it worships or denies and the patterns that echo and re-echo through these activities, all reflect the deep structure of the relational."[169]

In his article, "Heinz Kohut's Struggles with Religion, Ethnicity, and God", Charles B. Strozier articulates Kohut's significance for religion.[170] Idealization needs are central

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[168] Kohut, Ibid., 53.

[169] Jones, Ibid., 40.

[170] Strozier, in Jacobs and Capps, 165-180.

features of religion. Kohut acknowledges that religion provides relief and healing from the fragmentation and narcissistic injuries we all undergo. Such experiences of inspiration and comfort are reminiscent of the child's initial merger with the calm and uplifting mother. Spiritual reassurance is a key component of our understanding of religion's function in our lived experience. Strozier notes that "This sense we have of God's purpose evokes our earliest encounter with the maternal selfobject matrix."[171]

Kohut's concept of mirroring also provides clues to the significance of religion in our lives. We are all motivated by the need for "responsiveness to our own vitality" and for affirmation of our "innate greatness."[172] In a particularly compelling statement about how mirroring needs are met through what is commonly known as grace, Kohut refers to a line from "Great God Brown" by Eugene O'Neil. "Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue."[173]

It is the fall from grace, however, that occasions creativity and vital experiences of life. We are compelled by the "shortcomings of that early grace", for, "if life were perfect, man would never have created religion or art or

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[171] Strozier, 169.

[172] Kohut, Ibid., 116-117.

[173] Kohut, quoted in Strozier, 171. Original not noted.

science."[174]

Thirdly, Strozier finds in Kohut's concept of twinship another selfobject need that religion can provide. Our quest for others who are similar to us may be realized in the religious or spiritual communities to which we attach or commit ourselves. It is in the communal context that our twinship needs, our bonding with other human beings, are realized.[175]

In summary, I believe that, taken together, the theories of Klein, Winnicott, and Kohut have contributed enormously to our understanding of the deep structures of psychic life and our ways of being in our worlds. These theories provide a rich analysis of the foundations of human interaction - the "psychic drama of

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[174] Kohut, quoted in Strozier, 171. Original not noted.

[175] Kohut's principles, I suggest, can be readily applied to the philosophy and practices of Alcoholics Anonymous as a means of comprehending the experiential power of this, and other `12 Step' programs in peoples' lives the world over. For example, if we look to the 12 Steps of AA, we see it is in the acknowledgement of the fragmented and chaotic self and the consequent merging with a "Power greater than ourselves", that the individual experiences the first moment of healing and comfort. Also, the AA program illustrates how awareness of our shortcomings and being open to the mending provided by grace can be transformative. The mirroring of fellow group members of the individual's humanness provides for that "responsiveness to our own vitality" that Kohut identifies as an essential selfobject need. Furthermore, the intense sharing of like people within the AA community serves as a striking example of the importance of twinship needs being met. It seems to me then, that the deepest selfobject needs for idealization, mirroring, and twinship are exemplified in the transformative potential of AA and other 12 Step programs.

selves in relation."[176] In the next section, I will discuss how contemporary relational theorists are heirs to this tradition, both enhancing and diverging from the insights offered by it. One of the most significant points of divergence, which in my opinion, enhances traditional object relations theory, is the inclusion of gender as a critical category in the analysis of the processes of identity formation and relational connections. However, I will also argue that an often unintended result of theorizing about gender is that healthy, mature forms of connection have been based almost exclusively on the human capacity for positive and agreeable emotions, resulting in an avoidance of theorizing the messy and disagreeable passions. In my view, this outcome is both contradictory to object relations theories and is inconsistent with actual relational experience.

The question that frames my work in this section on feminist relational theory has been aptly phrased by Carol Gilligan: "What does it mean, in the context of the present moment in the late twentieth century in Western culture to risk, for ourselves as we risk for psyche, the innocence of inquiry, the pain of being born?"[177] Psyche, the soul embodied, the sense of an 'I',

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[176] Cynthia Burack, *The Problem of the Passions: Feminism, Psychoanalysis and Social Theory*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 1994), 110.

[177] Carol Gilligan, Lyn Mikel Brown, and Annie G. Rogers, *Psyche Embedded: A Place for Body, Relationships, and Culture in Personality Theory*, (Cambridge: Center for the Study of Gender,

lives in a relational world, "in time and in place, in culture, in memory, in history, in civilization".[178] What do we mean when we say that women's identities are embedded in body, in relationship, and socio- political contexts? Furthermore, what kinds of existence, what kinds of God-concepts and theologies support or degrade women? To ask such questions within psychology and religion requires a metaphysical shift, one that involves new linguistic categories and new metaphors. This means moving away from the language and metaphors of control, autonomy, and objectivity with their privileging of sight and vision. It means moving towards reception, connection, and understanding, and privileging instead metaphors of voice and hearing. It is "recovering subjugated knowledges" and creating new conversations.[179]

In this section I will examine the work of contemporary feminist scholars in psychology and in religion whose work reveals some of what has been 'subjugated' about women's self identity. The scholars of the Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies are psychiatrist Jean Baker Miller, and

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Education and Human Development, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1988), 6.

[178] Ibid., 1.

[179] Mary Grey, *Feminism, Redemption and the Christian Tradition*, (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty Third Publications, 1990), 211.

psychologists Judith Jordan, Alexandra Kaplan, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey.[180] These clinicians and theorists are proposing a major shift in our understanding of psychological development and psychological problems. Their model, derived from the study of women's lives, is based on the assumption that mutually growth-fostering relationships are the source of psychological development and form the optimal context for all life activities. The Stone Center theorists believe they are developing a relational approach to mental health that goes beyond object relations theory. For example, they suggest that ego development is organized around issues of relatedness, rather than libido. This means that basic conflicts are not about sexual fulfilment, but about the complexities of loving. The Stone Center is suggesting that the relation is important for the *existence* of the self, not just for our understanding of the self. The self can only exist within the relational matrix; selves in relation are co-subjects, rather than subject and object. In proposing that 'objects' be redefined as 'other subjects', the Stone Center is presenting a feminist reformulation of the terms of Object Relations theory. The primary developmental dynamic is *in the relation* itself as active agency; we literally become persons in

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[180] Judith V. Jordan, Alexander G. Kaplan, Jean Baker Miller, Irene P. Stiver, and Janet L. Surrey, *Women's Growth in Connection: Writings From the Stone Center*, (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1991).

and by relation. The goal of psychological development then, is not the development of the individual self, but the development of the increasing ability to participate in mutually enlarging connections. The Stone Center advocates that connectedness to others enhances rather than threatens autonomy. Our well-being is secured and sustained only through 'mutually empathic and empowering' relationships.

The work of Janet Surrey and Judith Jordan on empathy and empowerment is integral to the work of the Stone Center and noteworthy given the above discussion on these themes by Evelyn Fox Keller and Carol Christ. Mutual empathy and mutual empowerment are considered to be central processes in growth fostering relationships. Surrey defines empowerment as: "the motivation, freedom, and capacity to act purposefully, with the mobilization of energies, resources, strengths, or powers of each person through a mutual, relational process."[181] For Jordan, empathy is: "the inner experience of sharing in and comprehending the momentary psychological state of another person. Empathy .... is a complex process, relying on a high level of psychological development and ego strength. In order to empathize, one must have a well-differentiated sense of self in addition to an appreciation of and sensitivity to the

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[181] Janet Surrey, "Relationship and Empowerment," in *Work in Progress*, Wellesley College: Stone Center, 30, (1987), 3.

differentness and sameness of another person."[182]

Closely related to the notion of empathy and empowerment is that of our common 'response/ability' to live in mutual relation. Jean Baker Miller uses the term response/ability to describe how the ability to act comes from within relationship and that this ability grows as we respond to each other in relationship. The concept of response/ability also includes the notion that "we each have the responsibility to recognize and attend to the experience of others, to participate in ongoing mutual empathy."[183]

The Stone Center researchers propose that the very roots of abuse lie not only in active violence against us, but in the absence of mutually empowering and empathic relationships in our lives. That abuse is a problem of violation and breaking of boundaries is a commonly held assumption among feminist health care professionals. The Stone Center is expanding that assumption to include the perspective that violence is, perhaps fundamentally, a problem of disconnection. Feminist theologian Mary Grey also reflects this when she writes that "it is at the

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[182] Judith Jordan, "Empathy and the Mother-Daughter Relationship," in *Work in Progress*, Wellesley College: Stone Center, 82-02, (1983), 2.

[183] Jean Baker Miller, "What Do We Mean by Relationships?," in *Work in Progress*, Wellesley College: Stone Center, 22, (1986), 14.

level of broken mutuality that we long for redemption."[184] The Stone Center theorists would agree that in white western culture women, more than men, have learned to experience relationality. However, they would also suggest that neither women nor men know what it is to deeply experience the healing implications of living as selves-in-relation, different from, yet connected with, one another. Mary Grey echoes this when she states "I believe that the radical new consciousness, the radical revisioning of life on earth by the women's movement, far from being dead, has hardly even been tried."[185]

The Stone Center's proposal that coming more fully into a sense of relational power enhances a person's mental health is in contrast to the more traditional stance within psychiatry and psychology which states that maturity is acquired as one learns to be a separate, autonomous, or individuated self. It is not through differentiating ourselves from one another that our growth as persons in relation is facilitated, but rather through connection with one another. We recognize and value our differences through our connectedness. For the Stone Center, the locus of personal growth needs to shift from that of separation and individuation to mutual connectedness and growth-enhancing relationships. It is not just the absence of abuse, but rather

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[184] Grey, 12.

[185] Ibid., 194.

the presence of mutually empathic and empowering relationships, that is necessary for psychological health.

In this framework, psychological problems are sourced in experiences of sustained or repeated disconnections which occur when a child or adult is prevented from participating in mutually empathic and mutually empowering connections. These disconnections cause one to feel psychologically isolated and powerless so that a person is limited in her capacity for authentic engagement in the relationships available to her. In the pain of these disconnections, she attempts to find a way to make some connection, but can do so only by keeping important parts of herself outside of the relationship. Thus, she is faced with a paradox: in the attempt to find relationships, she develops "strategies" for keeping out of relationships, a phenomenon also observed, as will be noted below, by Gilligan and her colleagues.

Jordan emphasizes that we must address those intrapsychic, interpersonal and societal forces which threaten our capacity to connect.[186] She supports my own conviction that relational violation and trauma move people into shame, self blame and

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[186] Judith Jordan, "Challenges to Connection: The Traumatizing Society," paper presented to the *Learning From Women Conference*, Harvard Medical School, in Boston, April 30, 1993.

isolation.[187] Her belief that shame silences and disempowers people can also be related to Sandra Bartky's notion to which I will refer later, that women's experience of oppression in patriarchal society is itself shaming, and thus silencing and disempowering. I would argue that women's ontological experience as 'other' and as 'object' constitutes relational violation, and in its extreme form, trauma, and so is fundamental to women's experience of shame. With Jordan, I suggest that a traumatizing society and an abusing family share a destructive pattern. That is, both violate vulnerability and actively silence people into places of doubt and immobilization. Moving out of the shame which disconnection creates thus requires finding if and where the possibilities for empathic connection exist in one's relationships.

The Stone Center's proposal for a relational psychology may be criticized for proposing a 'feminization' of mental health. Catherine Keller, for example, raises concerns about women's too-soluble sense of self. Indeed, it is not difficult to see how separation/connection easily becomes a male/female polarity. There *is* a danger for women that by developing empathic skills they acquiesce in placing these skills in the service of male individuation and achievement. Jean Baker Miller pointed to the

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[187] In Chapter Four, I will describe in more detail my understanding of the concept of shame.

problems associated with fluid ego boundaries and a mediated sense of self for women. She highlighted how women were, in fact, "doing good and feeling bad."[188] Miller and her colleagues at the Stone Center would argue, however, that they are not advocating that the healthiest women are those who are primarily relational (living for others) as opposed to independent (living for self). It is not a matter of living *for* others or *for* self; rather, the fundamental stance is one of living *with* others. Helping one another to live well together does not imply dependency, but is based on and contributes to mutuality, a concept important to scholars in feminist studies in religion like Mary Grey and Carter Heyward.

While I agree with the Stone Center's theoretical premise, I do think they are more indebted to previous theorists like Klein, Winnicott and Kohut, than they acknowledge. As we saw in the previous section, all three of these major figures in object relations and self psychology theories begin with the assumption that relatedness, rather than instinctual gratification, is central to our understanding of human development. The Stone Center acknowledges that traditional object relations theory "came closer" than Freudian theory "to acknowledging the power of relationships." In their view however, object relations

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[188] Jean Baker Miller, *Toward A New Psychology of Women*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 48.

theorists like Klein and Winnicott were remiss in retaining "the language of drive (the other is an "object" of the drive)." For the Stone Center, early object relations theory privileged drive satisfaction over relationships. Furthermore, they are uneasy with Klein and Winnicott's belief that "guilt over destructive impulses... is at the core of concern and love." With respect to Kohut, the Stone Center appreciates that his focus on empathy in the analytic setting facilitated a renewed interest in the therapeutic relationship. They also applaud his notion that selfobjects are necessary throughout life because it "lessens the press for the independent, internally structured adult." However, in the Stone Center's view, Kohut's "description of the self, using the selfobject to maintain narcissistic equilibrium, suggests a need-determined relationship." Furthermore, his theory does not account for the "idea of mutuality, of fullness of contact, of connection."[189] In my opinion, even the brief review here of Klein, Winnicott, and Kohut, illustrates that their emphasis on relatedness and empathy is paramount. Suggesting otherwise reveals, I think, a rather shallow reading of their work. Moreover, as I will explore later, it is precisely their analysis of the roots of aggression, hate, and envy that contemporary relational theorists would do well to incorporate in their analyses.

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[189] Jordan, et.al, *Women's Growth in Connection*, 1 and 2.

However, the Stone Center, and others like Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein, have undeniably enhanced traditional theory by introducing gender as a key construct in relational theory. In teaching the Stone Center's theoretical perspective and their practical concerns to undergraduates, I have found their insights have a profound resonance for many women, as do the contributions of Carol Gilligan and her colleagues at Harvard, to whom we will now turn.

Carol Gilligan is a developmental psychologist whose work parallels that of the Stone Center researchers in illustrating how girls and women tend to define themselves in terms of their relationships and connections. Gilligan and her colleagues are building upon the work begun by Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) and by Jean Baker Miller in *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (1976). All have offered feminist theory new insight into the female predilection for connection. Chodorow had proposed that, because women in the patriarchal family are mothered by someone of the same sex, they form a pattern of relationships based on association with other selves. Boys, on the other hand, must separate from mother in their attempts to form a sense of gender identity. In her 1976 publication, *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, Miller's question is about differences: "What do people do to people who are

different from them and why?"[190] She notes that, although the encounter with difference can occasion cruelty and tyranny, engaging with difference is also essential to human growth. Miller sees that the psychological order is one of inequality (domination/subordination) and of connection (the crucible in which the human psyche is formed). Miller points out that, not only have women carried the activities of caring for both sexes, they have also carried in themselves the qualities of fragility and vulnerability which she believes to be a sign of psychological strength and an indication of their openness to the world.

In her influential 1982 study of moral development, Gilligan listened to girls and women resolve moral dilemmas in their lives.[191] On the basis of that data, Gilligan was convinced that a reformulation of what 'self' and 'morality' means was required. She, too, also set about to understand what it would mean to have a relational psychology. She articulated how the two moral voices of justice and of care that emerged are linked to the socially constructed genders of male and female. She traced the development of a morality that is organized around issues of

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[190] Jean Baker Miller, *Toward A New Psychology of Women*, 3.

[191] Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, (Cambridge, Mass, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1982).

responsibility and care, and contrasted it with Kohlberg's morality of justice based on the concept of rights. Within the latter paradigm, people rely on universal principles and abstract laws to resolve conflicts, evoking the metaphor of 'blind justice'. Problems are seen as resulting from a conflict of rights, and of inequality. Resolution is thought to lie in an attitude of fairness and in the balancing of truth claims. The moral ideal is one of reciprocity or equal respect. Within a morality of responsibility and care, the strategies of blindness and impartiality are rejected. In other words, the privileging of metaphors of sight and vision is replaced by the privileging of metaphors of voice and hearing. For those operating within a morality of responsibility and care the context for moral choice is considered important. Ethical dilemmas are perceived as conflicts of responsibility, and require a method of inclusion for successful resolution. Problems are seen as resulting from detachment, disconnection, abandonment, or indifference. For those seeking care, attention and response represent the moral ideal. Affiliation is sought and dialogue is encouraged. The particular experiences each participant brings to the situation are thought to have a bearing upon the moral choice that is made. Creative consensus about resolution is arrived at through mutual understanding. In sum, "the morality of rights differs from the morality of responsibility in its emphasis on separation rather

than connection, in its consideration of the individual rather than the relationship as primary."[192]

Subsequent research by Gilligan and others consistently found that people express concerns about both justice and care when describing moral conflicts and choice, and that they tend to focus on problems of unfairness or disconnection. For example, Gilligan's colleague, Nona Lyons, extended the study of gender-related differences in moral reasoning to include the area of identity development.[193] This study illustrates that those whose self identities are rooted in a sense of relatedness and connection are oriented towards responsibility. On the other hand, those whose self definition is framed in terms of separation and autonomy are rights-oriented.

The question of sexual difference that Gilligan's work highlighted received the most attention in and beyond the field of psychology. She demonstrated that there *are* gender

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[192] Ibid., 19. This summary is based on Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*; Gilligan, Brown, and Rogers, *Psyche Embedded*; Carol Gilligan, Janie Victoria Ward, and Jill McLean Taylor, *Mapping the Moral Domain: A Contribution of Women's Thinking to Psychological Theory and Education*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), vii-xx; Carol Gilligan, "Remapping the Moral Domain: New Images of the Self in Relationship," in *Essential Papers on the Psychology of Women*, ed. Claudia Zanardi (New York and London: New York University Press, 1990), 480-495.

[193] Nona Lyons, "Two Perspectives: On Self, Relationships and Morality," in *Harvard Educational Review*, 53, (2), (1983), 125-145.

differences with respect to whether ones' focus is in the direction of equality and rights, or of responsibility and care.[194] Gilligan would argue however that these differences are not rooted in a hopeless biological determinism, but rather reflect socio-cultural and environmental factors. Traditionally, women have been marked as lacking in moral reasoning abilities by virtue of their rejection of blind impartiality and the application of so-called universal abstract principles and rules. Gilligan's work showed that, rather than being deficient, women conceptualize and experience the world in a 'different voice'. Women's ways of speaking were found to be more emotionally connected and empathic, and thus less abstract than the male voice. Gilligan concluded that these two voices represent different internal models. Each has a particular way of imagining self, others and the relationship between them. "As we listen to people speaking and imagine different ways of speaking, which in turn implies different ways of seeing, feeling, and thinking, male and female development may be characterized in terms of a particular way of arranging themes that pertain to the experience of one's body and relationship with others, and to

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[194] Carol Gilligan and Jane Attanucci, "Two Moral Orientations," in *Mapping the Moral Domain*, 73-86; Lyons, 125-145; Lyn Mikel Brown, *A Guide to Reading Narratives of Conflict and Choice for Self and Moral Voice*, (Cambridge: Center for the Study of Gender, Education and Human Development, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1987).

living within a family and culture."[195] The dominant image for those seeking justice is hierarchical, and in it they are competing to be alone at the top; their identity is threatened by intimacy. Those who seek care and responsibility image their lives in terms of concerns about connectedness, and the web of relationships; for them, separation poses a threat to identity.

In recent research, Gilligan and her colleagues at the Harvard Project on the Psychology of Women and the Development of Girls are listening and responding to the narratives of adolescent women so as to track the 'voices' of justice and care as they weave throughout these young women's experience of relationship. Gilligan and her colleagues are listening for voice as a way of voicing relationship.[196] They are tracing how a moment of political resistance seen and heard in girls at the edge of adolescence becomes repressed and turns into psychological resistance. In other words, at adolescence, women's psychological development becomes unavoidably political. "The tendency for a healthy resistance to turn political and for a political resistance to turn into a psychological resistance becomes central to our understanding of the difficulties and

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[195] Gilligan, *Psyche Embedded*, 42.

[196] Carol Gilligan, "Resisting Silence - Women Listening to Girls," Symposium at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association, San Francisco, Ca., August 18, 1991.

psychological suffering that many...girls experience."[197] Gilligan describes political resistance as "an insistence on knowing what one knows and a willingness to be outspoken"; psychological resistance is marked by "a reluctance to know what one knows and a fear that such knowledge, if spoken, will endanger relationships and threaten survival."[198] Both are a problem of relationship. If a girl knows what she knows, she will be in conflict with the authorities of the world around her; the alternative is to bring herself in line and to forget what she knows. Paradoxically, then, she must disconnect herself from herself and others, both for her own protection and for the sake of the relationship. She leaves the relationship in order to hold onto it. Girls are dismissing what they know in their efforts to conform to the still-dominant tradition regarding adolescent development - namely, a psychological framework that emphasizes separation and either idealizes femininity or treats it as disturbing and suspect. They are beginning to make disconnections "between psyche and body, between voice and

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[197] Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), 16.

[198] Carol Gilligan, "Joining the Resistance: Psychology, Politics, Girls and Women," in *The Female Body: Figures, Styles, Speculations*, ed. Laurence Goldstein (Ann Arbour: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), 13.

desire" as a kind of ongoing initiation rite into womanhood.[199]

By mid-adolescence, girls are likely to be more sophisticated in their thinking, and at a more 'advanced' level of ego development than are twelve-year-old girls. At sixteen, girls have also lost their clear way of speaking and their knowledge about relationships. They have lost self-confidence, courage, and voice. Their speech is punctured with 'I don't know' and 'you know'. They are no longer willing to trust the authority of their own experiences. For, to speak with authority about one's life, means that girls must resist "the cultural story of female becoming."[200] Faced with the conflict of becoming at once an adult and a woman in a man's world, the sixteen-year-old girl must unravel the "deeply knotted dilemma" of listening to both herself and the tradition of father-rule, and of how to care for and about herself and others.[201] Rather than speaking her mind with all of her heart, she denies both difference - in the name of equality - and self - in the name of morality. She enters the 'human conversation' of the Western

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[199] Carol Gilligan, "Women, Politics, and Power - Part 2," Interviewed by Marilyn Powell, June 25, 1991, Tape recording, *Ideas*, (CBC).

[200] Lyn Mikel Brown, "Narratives of Relationship: The Development of a Care Voice in Girls Ages 7-16" (Ed.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1990), quoted in Annie Rogers, "The Development of Courage in Girls and Women," Paper presented at the Symposium, "Resisting Silence", 1991.

[201] Gilligan, *Psyche Embedded*, 62.

tradition, and then, in the words of a twelve-year-old girl, she "doesn't have to think."[202] Her belief in her own perception and experience becomes so confounded that she equivocates and contradicts what she knows. Catherine Keller eloquently speaks to this "labyrinth of self-loss" and suggests that women's self-transformation, "within the labyrinthine way of a connective ego", is that which will challenge the way of separation and control.[203]

In a conference address based on their publication, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, [204] Gilligan and her colleagues borrowed from the new English title of Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time* to suggest that, for girls, adolescence is a "lost time."[205] The ongoing thesis of their work, now known as the "Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development," is that there is a significant asymmetry between women and men's psychological development. Namely, the relational crisis, the need to separate

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[202] Gilligan, "Joining the Resistance," 20.

[203] Catherine Keller, *From A Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 140.

[204] Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads*, 1992.

[205] Carol Gilligan, Naomi Noel, and Annie G. Rogers, "Cartography of a Lost Time: Women, Girls and Relationship," paper presented to the *Learning From Women conference*, Harvard Medical School, in Boston, April 30, 1993.

'self' from relationships, faced in early childhood by many young boys in patriarchal society, is confronted by girls at adolescence. This 'lost time' for girls represents a period in women's development that is often overlooked or forgotten. Their work continues to suggest that disconnection, and certain forms of dissociation, are in fact 'normal' in women's psychological development within patriarchal societies and cultures. Along with other theorists and clinicians, Gilligan and her colleagues are arguing that the more serious or extreme manifestations of dissociation represent points on a continuum rather than a category that exists outside the experience of most women. This reformulation of women's experience within the context of socio-cultural and environmental factors challenges deeply entrenched notions about women's 'pathologies', and is echoed by other feminist researchers and clinicians in Canada and the U.S.[206]

Though working independently, the researchers at the Stone Center and the Harvard Project have witnessed and are writing about this relational impasse, this paradoxical tendency for girls and women to give up relationship 'for the sake of relationships' and both groups consider it to be at the core of girls' and women's psychological distress. Brown and Gilligan

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[206] For example, the work of Paula Caplan at OISE in Toronto has been influential in challenging what categories and groups of experiences are included as mental illnesses in the DSM 3-R, and the DSM 4, the most widely used diagnostic instrument in psychiatry and psychology.

refer to how the struggle to "authorize or take seriously"[207] one's own experience is part of the "dark continent"[208] of women's development and represents "a crisis of relationship that has been covered over by lies."[209] Psychologically speaking, it is a horrifying reality that girls "are not only enacting dissociation but also narrating the process of their disconnection-revealing its mechanism and also its intention."[210] Girls sometimes make, and at other times resist, those disconnections that seem simultaneously to be both "adaptive and psychologically wounding: between psyche and body, voice and desire, thoughts and feelings, self and relationships."[211] In moving from authentic to idealized relationships, girls lose their ability, developed in infancy,[212] to distinguish relational reality - to "know what is relationally true."[213]

Brown and Gilligan trace this developmental process and, in so doing, join the key problems in the psychology of women,

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[207] Brown and Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads*, 6.

[208] Ibid., 7.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid.

[212] See Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

[213] Brown and Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads*, 5.

namely, "the desire for authentic connection, the difficulties in speaking, the feeling of not being listened to or heard or responded to empathically, the feeling of not being able to convey or even believe in one's own experience " with the "relational impasse or crisis of connection" observed in adolescent girls' lives.[214] Gilligan and her colleagues are observing how women meeting girls at the crossroads between adolescence and womanhood may create opportunities for both to "reclaim lost voices and lost strengths, to strengthen girls' voices and girls' courage as they enter adolescence by offering girls resonant relationships, and in this way to move with girls toward creating a psychologically healthier world and a more caring and just society."[215] The work of the Harvard Project has given rise to the conviction that "resonant relationships" between girls and women are necessary not only for girls' development and women's psychological health, but also for the social construction of reality that is built by and resonant for both women and men.[216]

Of particular methodological interest is the commitment to new methodologies and research practices illustrated in the Harvard Project's conference presentations and in their recent

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[214] Ibid.

[215] Ibid., 6.

[216] Ibid., 7.

texts. I am struck by how the themes addressed by Fox Keller and Christ earlier are revealed once again in the work of the Harvard Project and the Stone Center; both projects illustrate the attempt to develop embodied and empathic research methods and practices. As a response to the problem of women's dissociation, Gilligan and her colleagues work together as women and with a group of girls. They use their 'voice centered approach' to discern how to maintain relationships in both the practice and the presentation of their psychological work.[217] Brown and Gilligan describe how their commitment to good psychological research, and consequently to objectivity, control, reliability, and viability, resulted in a decided unease on their part, and a definite response of suspicion on the part of the girls. The researchers had not included in their research design anything that would account for what they would call relationship - "between themselves and the girls, among the girls, or between the girls and their teachers and parents."[218] They consequently found themselves "losing voice and losing relationships" because of the constraints imposed by their own research design.[219] Given that they had been diligently attuned to the constraints of distance and disconnection for many years in their practice as

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[217] Ibid.

[218] Ibid., 9-10.

[219] Ibid., 10.

psychologists, to lose voice and relationship was deeply unsettling for the Harvard team. They witnessed how their voice centered method lost its 'psychological resonance' when they tried to align it with standard research practices and to create analytic categories that were mutually exclusive. I think their description of this process is itself a response to one of the criticisms of their work, namely, that they are reproducing the same old system of contrasts they say they are attempting to eliminate. In fact they too had been constrained by the traditional categories of analysis that had hitherto framed their work. As Brown and Gilligan recounted, "attempts to create either/or categorizations resulted in simplistic and ultimately untrue ways of describing both women's and men's experiences. To call women connected and men separate seemed to us profoundly misleading; to say that men wanted domination and power while women wanted love and relationship seemed to us to ignore the depths of men's desires for relationship and the anger women feel about not having power in the world. And yet we were consistently hearing differences in the ways in which women and men speak about themselves in relationship and also seeing differences in the positions of women and men in the world."[220]

Prior to and during the initial stages of what has become

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[220] Ibid., 11.

known as the Laurel study, the Harvard Project had struggled in their attempts to integrate their work on psychological theory and women's development with standard psychological methods and practices. They were committed to finding a method that was supportive of their own and others' voices - "to voice the relationship that was at the heart of our psychological work."[221] They also were exploring how to explicate the multivarient and complex nature of psychological experience, as well as the "relational logic of psychological processes."[222] Despite a way of working that was focused on voice and listening and so "was akin to clinical and literary methods", they found when beginning their work at Laurel that connection was broken in many "subtle and not so subtle" ways.[223] Gilligan and her team realized that despite their preoccupation with issues of "truth and power and interpretation" they nonetheless reverted to the "safety and predictability" of traditional methods.[224] Furthermore, although they emphasized the significance of context, and were attuned to the "particularities of a person's life or story," they found themselves appropriating that story into their own terms.[225]

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[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ibid., 12.

[225] Ibid.

Determined not to "collaborate in silencing girls' public voices," the Harvard Project team began to redesign their study so that they could listen and respond to the girls' frustration with the imposition of relationship limits.[226] They were creating, in fact, "a practice of psychology that was something more like a practice of relationship." Their desire for a collaborative and relational method led to the development of a "Listener's Guide" which became central to their research design and included "a space for a girl to speak in her own voice."[227] As stated by Brown and Gilligan, "by joining our understanding of these girls' development and its implications for the psychology of women with the creation of a psychology that is the practice of relationship, we are brought face to face with difficult questions of truthfulness and authenticity in relationships between girls and women and among women as well. Widening the conversation to include ourselves and our profession, we have found ourselves in the presence of what Adrienne Rich calls amnesia - the silence of the unconscious. Truth, Rich adds, is "not one thing, or even a system" but "an increasing complexity" and in this work we attempt to move to deeper understanding by staying with the complexity of what girls know from their experience and not abandon what we - in part through this work -

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[226] Ibid., 14.

[227] Ibid., 15.

have come to know ourselves."[228]

Gilligan, along with Jill McLean Taylor and Amy Sullivan, have continued their conversation with girls in the publication *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship*.[229] In this three year study, they bring issues of race and class to the forefront of their theorizing. The participants are twenty-six young women, who are considered "at risk" for dropping out of school or early pregnancy. Because of the small sample size, the researchers qualify their results should not be generalized to all poor girls or girls of color. Nonetheless, utilizing the method of mutual listening between women and girls, as discussed earlier, issues of race, class, ethnicity, and sexual preference were given more voice than in their previous studies. Listening to what is said - and not said - by poor and working - class black, latina, portuguese, and white girls, they were able to hear both the similarities between these girls, their more economically privileged sisters, and the differences wrought by the nuances of "race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, sexual orientation, religious background, personal history, character" all of which form the "scaffolding of

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[228] Ibid., 17.

[229] Jill McLean Taylor, Carol Gilligan, Amy M. Sullivan, *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995).

relationships between people."[230] They heard, as I have as a therapist, about how young women speak of both the hope and the despair of ever moving beyond the very real cultural circumstances that seemingly offer them a new world, while providing them little in their struggle with the legacies of the old.

With their openness to diverse strategies and their courage in reformulating conceptual categories, I believe Gilligan and the Harvard Project team have furthered the task of creating a more humane science. In my opinion, their successful struggle to incorporate an empathic and relational method in their research design exemplifies how science can be transformed in the ways envisioned earlier by Fox Keller, Christ, Schüssler Fiorenza and Culpepper.

However, it warrants acknowledgement that the theories discussed above have not been greeted with unanimous support by the feminist academic community. For example, concerns about the perpetuation of systems of contrasts, and the attribution of morality as a characteristic more inherent and exclusive to women, have caused substantial debate within women's studies and psychology. However, while I agree that the pseudo-valorization of the 'eternal feminine' is to be avoided, I think Gilligan's research is often misrepresented. She has always been clear that

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[230] Ibid., 14.

the 'different voices' of young women in America are socially constructed rather than biologically given. Gilligan began her work at a time in American psychology when the normative voice was the male. Her work was, and continues to be, a challenge to the silences within psychology: silences around how the developmental theory of contemporary psychology had been drawn exclusively from studies about men as in, for example, Erickson's stages of growth and Kohlberg's stages of moral development; silences about how the historical methods of research and practices of psychology have been seriously disconnected from the actual experiences of too many women's lives; silences about how keeping silent was causing psychological distress for women, illustrated in women's propensity to depression and eating disorders.

Nonetheless, in spite of my appreciation of Gilligan's work, I was often troubled by what seemed to be both an idealization of relationship, and, an avoidance of the messy passions in her account of women's lives. Cynthia Burack brings up similar concerns in her discussion of feminist theory and women's psychology.[231] Her thesis is that feminist psycho-social theories have not adequately accounted for what she calls, following Hume, the disagreeable passions. She analyzes and critiques the work of feminist object relations theorists Nancy Chodorow, Jessica

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[231] Burack, *The Problem of the Passions*, 1994.

Benjamin and Dorothy Dinnerstein, as well as the relational psychology of Carol Gilligan. It is her reading of the latter's work that I will take up here, as well as her proposal that we attend more carefully to Melanie Klein's notions of envy, hate, and aggression in our theorizing.

Burack points out how theorists have been ambivalent about the passions, and women's passions in particular. She attributes this tension to the possibility that we are suspicious of focusing on the passions and their place in social life, for to do so may illuminate "much of what is active and creative - and therefore anarchic and disruptive - about the self."[232] Burack acknowledges that the mobilization of passions denied to women has empowered feminism's 'second wave'; the resulting political action, societal changes, and consciousness raising is a testimony to the power of such mobilization. Yet, there continues to be a significant analytic gap in feminist theory because of our reluctance to consider the place of disagreeable passions in our investigations of the origins of "gender identity, community, and power."[233]

With Burack, I think feminist psycho-social and relational theories have much to offer by exploring the role of the passions. As has been examined in this thesis, "they probe the

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[232] Ibid., 1.

[233] Ibid., 3.

ontology of forms of human connection" that have been unacknowledged in the public sphere and in political and psychological theory. They "analyze the defensive nature and functions" of the rationality of modern Western metaphysics. Furthermore, they identify and critique the "gendered nature and attribution" of various styles of connection. Most particularly, feminist object relations theory interrogates both the character of social relations and the "deep psychological structure of gender identity."[234] However, in selectively appropriating aspects of traditional object relations theory, feminist scholars have omitted consideration of other aspects that would better enable us to conceptualize passions such as hatred, rage and aggression. The problem, for Burack, is not that feminist psychological theory has evaded the importance of the passions; on the contrary, recognizing them as been one of its most impressive accomplishments. Theorists like Chodorow and Gilligan have offered a "new language of the passions - a new language in which to found knowledge about the dense and resistant reality of the self in relations."[235] The problem is the "ambivalence toward the disagreeable passions," a weakness of feminist thought that needs to be addressed so that we can "envision especially the female self not only in its loving and empathic relatedness but

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[234] Ibid., 4.

[235] Ibid., 24.

also in its 'disagreeable' variation."[236]

In Burack's critique of Carol Gilligan's theory of women's moral development, she explicates Gilligan's avoidance of the disagreeable passions by comparing her work to that of Klein particularly, and secondarily, Winnicott. Ultimately, in Burack's view, Gilligan's neglect to introduce the disagreeable emotions in an ethic of care and the description of relations makes hers a "sanguine vision."[237]

Gilligan is critical of the contribution of Freud and other psychoanalytic theorists with respect to the development and dynamics of women's moral identity. Yet, the object relational approach to moral theory developed by Melanie Klein, extended by D.W. Winnicott, and ignored by Gilligan, is in many ways compatible to the ethic of care. Burack suggests that even more - so than Gilligan, Klein's model of moral selfhood pays sensitive attention to the "interaction between internal and external worlds, especially the ways in which psychic processes are used to create meaning in the world of relations with others."[238]

While Klein's theory does not emphasize the gendered nature of morality, it does disclose love and care for others as

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[236] Ibid., 4, 25.

[237] Ibid., 56, 49.

[238] Ibid., 49.

central. Of equal import, however, is the role that hatred and psychic aggression play in moral life. This is where there is significant divergence in Gilligan's and Klein's theories. For example, in Klein's view, psychic life is an intricate, intense struggle of conflicting passions; hatred and love compete with each other in "explicable patterns and processes."[239] I think Gilligan, on the other hand, tends to idealize relational connection when she defines the experiences of emotion other than empathy and love as "antithetical to relationship" and "destructive to connection."[240]

Furthermore, for Klein, reparative activities occur naturally in healthy development and are foundational to mutual and empathic relations between persons. As Klein writes, "Making reparation - which is such an essential part of the ability to love - widens in scope, and the child's capacity to accept love and, by various means, to take into [herself or] himself goodness from the outer world steadily increases....The essential capacity for "give and take" has been developed in us in a way that ensures our own contentment, and contributes to the pleasure, comfort of happiness of other people."[241] For Klein, as well as

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[239] Ibid.

[240] Ibid., 60.

[241] Melanie Klein, *The Writings of Melanie Klein. Vol. 1, Love, Guilt, and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945,* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 342, quoted in Burack, 64.

Winnicott, the prodigious frustrations inherent in the "project of living" engender disagreeable passions that must be acknowledged and managed. Both theorists address our reluctance to acknowledge these passions in ourselves and both argue that "genuine love and reparative concern require such acknowledgment."[242] In Winnicott's words, "The human individual cannot accept the destructive and aggressive ideas in his or her own nature without experiences of reparation."[243] At the same time, "constructive effort is false and meaningless unless...one has first reached to the destruction."[244]

Burack acknowledges that Gilligan's account of moral life, especially that of women, is "provocative" and in many ways unique. Yet, in rejecting psychoanalytic theory, Gilligan neglects to take account of possible predecessors in the persons of Klein and Winnicott. In Burack's view, Kleinian object relational theory privileges neither "masculine development nor the desired outcomes of separation and detachment." Rather, Klein consistently argues for the importance of the "maintenance of relationships"; she is sensitive to the "centrality of loving, empathic care for others."[245] Burack sees Klein's view of

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[242] Burack, 66.

[243] W.D Winnicott, *The Maturational Processes*, 176.

[244] Ibid., 81.

[245] Burack, 66, 67.

reparation as a necessarily "*interpersonal* process; it, like the experience of emotion itself, presupposes the existence and meaningfulness of others whose fates are of concern."[246]

There are significant similarities between Gilligan and Klein's theories. For example, both emphasize that the foundations of moral life are "empathy, care, and love." However, they differ in their treatment of the disagreeable passions. For Klein, these passions, which are far less evident in Gilligan's account, are "foundational in the formation of self and relational capacities."[247] Because they are considered as threats to both self and others, emotions like hate and rage are often denied.

Gilligan's response to her critics around this issue is to insist that the disagreeable emotions are rendered visible in her theory. Burack however suggests that Gilligan refers not to "hatred and rage, and fear of these emotions," but to "moral outrage" and "moral passion" as consequences of failures of "human connection." Furthermore, when the situations that elicit them are amended, these passions disappear.[248]

As noted above, for Klein, the capacity for reparation is

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[246] Ibid., 67.

[247] Ibid.

[248] Ibid. Burack is quoting Gilligan and Grant Wiggins, "The Origins of Morality in Early Childhood Relationships," in *Mapping the Moral Domain*, 120.

both an achievement of development and fundamental to human relationships. Reparation has to do with the "necessity to repair, to reconstitute, to, in Klein's words, to "make good" what which has been threatened or endangered." Burack is of the opinion that when Gilligan speaks to a "restorative activity of care" and of reparation, she does not address experiences of "anger or destructive desire" that are so intrinsic to Klein's perspective.[249]

It is in this way that Klein's account can provide a corrective to Gilligan's omission. In my and Burack's view, Kleinian theory, by "acknowledging the ubiquity and functions of the disagreeable passions,...accomplishes much: it does not deny gender differences but instead challenges the theorist to locate differences in the context of the human struggle with the passions; it restores the denied parts of the narrative of feeling to moral and social theory." In contrast, the lack of a depth psychology constrains Gilligan. While she insists on the foundational role of relationships in human life, in the end, "she is unable to explain why this is so."[250]

Notwithstanding this omission, I do believe Gilligan convincingly accounts for the need to place body, relationships, and culture at the center of our theorizing. As will be examined

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[249] Gilligan and Wiggins, Ibid.; Burack, Ibid.

[250] Burack, 68.

in the next chapter, the problematic of embedding "Psyche in body means giving up the platonic legacy of one pure form, along with its nemesis of endless relativism." At the same time, the embodiment of Psyche calls attention to vulnerability - "to the ability of people to be wounded by others and also to wound others and themselves - and thus to the hope for protection, the wish for morality, the wish that people would or the belief that they should act justly and take care. To embed Psyche in relationship means to leave behind the image of perfection and the search for self-sufficiency and control. And, finally, to embed Psyche in relationships and culture means to open psychology (and other disciplines) to moral scrutiny - to observe what voices are amplified and what voices are muted or silenced, as well as to identify values currently masquerading as psychological (and cultural) norms." (brackets mine)[251]

I propose my research project intervenes here. Specifically, I argue that the problems of relationality and embodiment also have religious nuances. Neither the Harvard Project nor the Stone Center's work accounts for what I would suggest is an added dimension of the dilemma facing girls and women: namely, for girls and women with a religious sensibility and commitment, whose orientation in life is to be "good" and pleasing to the all-knowing and all-seeing Father, it is

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[251] Gilligan, *Psyche Embedded*, 12-13.

precisely by becoming voiceless and selfless in their relationships, by diminishing themselves in a distorted notion of empathy and compassion, that they are promised acceptance and positive regard - by both their human and divine fathers. For the religiously devout adolescent girl, it is not only peer acceptance and support that is crucial to her emerging self identity; to be well regarded by her God she sometimes not only must go against what she knows and wants, but also must choose between conflicting loyalties - between her God and her peers. We need to be concerned, I believe, about how submerged her own voice, body, and will, becomes in the midst of such a difficult dilemma.

I was thus heartened to discover that the importance of relationship, and the erotic, in women's experience is emerging as a significant theme in the work of scholars in feminist studies in religion. For many of them, "the self is essentially embodied, passionate, relational and communal .... the self cannot exist apart from relationships .... and identity is found in community."[252] Beverly Harrison writes that "relationality is at the heart of all things."[253] Both Harrison and Mary Grey

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[252] Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ, ed. *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 173.

[253] Beverly Wildung Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," in Plaskow and Christ, 221.

consider the work of Carter Heyward to be foundational and pioneering in the development of a feminist theology of relationship.[254] For Heyward, "connectedness" and "radical relatedness" are ways of imaging being in the world that are more liberating than those offered by an ethic of separation and individualism.[255] In her book, *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God (1989)*, Heyward acknowledges her indebtedness to the work of the Stone Center theorists.[256] She sees corollaries to their work in contemporary western theology, particularly as it is articulated by Martin Buber, Dorothy Sölle, Beverly Wildung Harrison. She notes, for example, that Buber proposed, "In the beginning is the relation."[257] Heyward seeks, through the relational theory espoused by the Stone Center, to clarify the meanings associated with her understanding of the divine as power-in-right-relation. For Heyward, feminist/womanist liberation theology is about celebrating that

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[254] Grey, *Feminism Redemption and the Christian Tradition*, 1990; "Claiming Power in Relation," in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 7, 1, (Spring, 1991), 7.

[255] Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation*, (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982); "Sexuality, Love, and Justice," in Plaskow and Christ, 293-301.

[256] Carter Heyward, *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989).

[257] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Trans, Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970) 69, quoted in Heyward, *Touching Our Strength*, 192.

"we live in a relational matrix .... and have a common response/ability to live in mutual relation."[258] Making God present in the world - "godding" - happens in the matrix of the relational self.[259] The patterning of this is justice: "the shape of God in our life together and in our lives as particular selves-in-relation."[260] Justice, or 'right relation', is both the goal and purpose of our living on this earth together.[261] The absence of mutually empowering relationships is a mark of alienated power and injustice. For Heyward, the 'yes' that connects us in our yearnings and openness to life is our "erotic energy".[262] This erotic power is sacred power. In Heyward's vision, the "erotic is our creative life force, our Sacred Spirit."[263] She views the erotic to be "the sacred/godly basis of our capacity to participate in mutually empowering relationships."[264] Heyward believes our eroticism to be the "deepest stirring of our relationality, our experience of being

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[258] Ibid., 16.

[259] Ibid., 34.

[260] Ibid., 23.

[261] Ibid., 191.

[262] Ibid., 102.

[263] Carter Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us: Beyond Illusions in Therapy and Life*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 248.

[264] Heyward, *Touching Our Strength*, 187.

connected to others."[265]

Carol Christ also describes eros in a similar vein; for her it is the "deep feeling, both physical and spiritual that connects us to other people and all beings in the web of life."[266] Both Heyward and Christ are indebted to Audre Lorde's foundational essay, "The Uses of the Erotic" for their understanding of eros.[267] Lorde's analysis, and by extension, that of Christ and Heyward, is a provocative testimony to both the suppression of the erotic and our need to reclaim it as a creative assertion of our life force. Lorde reminds us of the etymological origin of the word erotic; it comes from the Greek *eros*, "the personification of love in all its aspects - born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony."[268] Lorde evocatively writes that we have been raised to fear this deeply creative energy, "the *yes* within ourselves." Moreover, "living from within outward, in touch with the power of the erotic...we begin to be responsible for ourselves in the deepest sense...[and] we begin to give up...being satisfied with suffering and self-negation, and with the numbness that seems

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[265] Ibid., 55.

[266] Christ, *The Power of Eros*, 16.

[267] Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic," in *Weaving the Visions*, 208-213.

[268] Ibid., 210.

like their only alternative in our society."[269] Lorde believes that recognition of the power of the erotic within us calls forth the transformative energy we need to pursue change in our world.

For Lorde, Christ, and Heyward then, the erotic is a transformative power, a resource within each of us that can help us 'wake-up' to how alienated we are from our bodies, and thus, our sacred power. For Heyward, in distrusting the erotic, we resist relating in "right mutual relation with others."[270] All three authors decry the alienation and fear generated by abusive power relations. Power here, as in the writings of others, most notably Starhawk, is, however, "power-with", rather than "power-over." For Starhawk, "power-over is linked to domination and control; power-from-within is linked to the mysteries that awaken our deepest abilities and potential. Power-with is social power, the influence we wield among equals."[271] Heyward, utilizing Starhawk's typology, envisions the erotic as "power-with"; by that she means, "*power-with serves to further empower all persons in a relationship.*"[272] (I suggest that Heyward's notion of the erotic is more fully encompassed by including Starhawk's

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[269] Ibid., 211, 212.

[270] Heyward, *Touching Our Strength*, 187.

[271] Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 9.

[272] Heyward, *Touching Our Strength*, 192.

description of both "power-within" and "power-with".) Heyward's language here is reminiscent of that of Carol Christ when she writes: "Our eroticism is the deepest stirring of our relationality, our experience of being connected to others. In the context of alienation, our eroticism, the root of our relational capacity, is infused with the experience of alienation. We are electrified by alienated power dynamics, turned on by currents of domination and submission that are structured into the world we inhabit. As mirrors of the world, our bodyselves reflect the violence intrinsic to the dynamics of alienated power. What we know, what we feel, and what we believe, is mediated by images, symbols, and acts of domination and control."[273] A primary thesis, then, of Heyward's work is that bodily energy is sacred power, sourced in the relational character of human being. She and Christ are among those who are advocating the recovery of eros in their reconceptualization of the traditional androcentric understanding of the body as source of sin and shame. For them, a fundamental task of feminist studies in religion is that of reclaiming the transformative power inherent in living fully our embodied, erotic selves.

Mary Grey draws from these notions when she suggests that by claiming this sacred power, we can reverence each other in ways that are truly liberating. For Grey, Heyward, and Christ, it is

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[273] Ibid., 55.

in discovering and articulating this synthesis of feeling and knowing, this knowledge grounded in bodily experience, that we are strengthened in the struggle to overcome the exploitation of women's bodies, to heal our common body, to transform alienated power into right relation.

Catherine Keller's vision of the connected self is articulated in her 1986 work, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self*, and in her article on the ethics of inseparability, "*Feminism and the Ethic of Inseparability*".[274] In her analysis of the separative and the connective senses of the self, Keller proposes that it is through the generation of "connection that counts" that we can give new meaning to what it is to be a self.[275] She argues that the contemporary patriarchal context reflects the traditional view of the self in relation to itself and to others. "Unless we continue to unveil the connections between the power structures of patriarchy and the psychopolitics of separative selfhood, connectedness itself cannot be known."[276] While connectivity is over-extended in women, even incorporated into the very structures of our personality, men develop a separative sense of self,

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[274] Catherine Keller, *From a Broken Web;* "Feminism and the Ethic of Inseparability," in *Weaving the Visions*, 256-65.

[275] Keller, *From a Broken Web*, 3.

[276] Ibid., 218.

incorporating the "delusion of permanence and separation".[277] This perverted connectivity is based, for women, on a too soluble self. It requires her self-dissolution in the service of existing for others and so creates a psychosocial bondage. It is a sense of having no self of one's own, a sense to which the young girls of Gilligan's Harvard Project bring faltering voice. "Inwardly/outwardly, the soluble woman has embodied connection without self, while the separative male has incarnated self without connection."[278] That women are less likely to repress, and more likely to reinforce the connectivity that Keller believes is potential in all persons, is both an ideological and an ontological problem - and carries within itself the possibility for mutual transformation.

The post-patriarchal quest is for a way in which we can become ourselves *in* relation. It is the way of interconnectedness, marked by a vision of "internal relatedness".[279] Keller believes that process thought can contribute to the articulation of an alternative vision: "The notion of a person in process, creatively emergent from his or her inner and outer multiplicity, provides one useful twist of

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[277] Ibid., 203.

[278] Ibid., 206.

[279] Ibid., 211.

vision, a clearing within the cultural congestion."[280] In process thought, every entity in the universe is seen to be mutually involved with every other being in a process of becoming.[281] There is an organic interconnection between all living things. Such thinking obviously effects our self-understanding; body and soul, mind and heart are inseparable. Furthermore, I cannot define myself as a self over against other selves. It is in relation to other selves that I become a connected self. Within a 'hermeneutic of connection', the self is both one and many, desiring not less, but more, of relation. We are part of each other, and of the time and place within which we are situated. Without denying the dangers inherent for women in sliding into the "undifferentiated slime of emotional dependencies" - as was discussed earlier - these "epiphanies of interconnection" contain, I believe, the desires for relatedness, ensouled and embodied within each one and all of us.[282]

Returning to Gilligan, I would suggest that in the call to discern 'a different voice', we may find a model of "public resistance" for relating to our world.[283] Feminist scholars in

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[280] Ibid., 211-22.

[281] Ibid., 5.

[282] Ibid., 2; Keller, "Feminism and the Ethic of Inseparability," 256.

[283] Gilligan, "Joining the Resistance," 44.

religion, like Christ, Heyward, Grey, and Keller would concur that in our attempts to be faithful to an ethics of care and responsibility, we live out our yearnings for meaningful relation. By creating worlds in which we can speak our minds with all of our hearts, we enable, not separation, but particularity and diversity *in* connection. Each of the scholars presented here has given voice and vision to this quest and are often indebted to one another for their respective analysis. I suggest that feminist scholars in religion and in psychology have contributed to the focusing of a "wildly diverse and differentiated .... universe of interknit subjectivities".[284] They bring to the fore the notion that this intuition of connection not only energizes our ways of living and experiencing, but is the stuff of "redeeming grace".[285] These scholars speak to how 'at-one-ment' is grounded in eros, the transformative power that "shapes every feeling of deep connection, uniting our physicality with our deepest knowledge."[286] They mirror for us how this new order of living, "issues from touching a wellspring where tenderness, a passionate caring for the entirety of the relational nexus presents itself

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[284] Keller, "Feminism and the Ethic of Inseparability," 264-265.

[285] Grey, *Feminism, Redemption and the Christian Tradition*, 198.

[286] Carol Christ, "The Power of Eros," 177.

as ultimate."[287]

However, I suggest there is a problem throughout the accounts of relationality and the erotic as articulated by the feminist scholars in religion noted above. That is, in each, there is a tendency to idealize relationality, just as in the accounts of the Stone Center theorists and Carol Gilligan and her colleagues. Furthermore, as evocative as their presentations of eros and embodiment are, feminist scholars in religion also tend to idealize eros. Kathleen Sands' work provides a corrective to these problems of idealization. She critiques the feminist theology of the erotic as articulated by both Heyward and Christ in her essay," *Uses of the Thea(o)logian: Sex and Theodicy in Religious Feminism.*"[288] In her later text, *Escape from Paradise*, she further explicates tragedy as a theological heuristic and applies this heuristic to the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether and Carol Christ.[289] Sands contends that "what women really need from feminist thea(o)logians...is assistance in cultivating a practical sexual wisdom." This has been impeded by our tendency to defend and idealize eros.[290] In Sands view, "religious

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[287] Grey, "Claiming Power in Relation," 13.

[288] Kathleen Sands, "Uses of the Thea(o)logian: Sex and Theodicy in Religious Feminism," in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 8, 1, (Spring 1992), 7-33.

[289] Sands, *Escape from Paradise*, 1994.

[290] Sands, "Uses of," 8.

feminists have tried to make unrepressed eros the central norm of a feminist ethic. It is as if they assume that only the idealistic view of eros is a truly *theological* view... But if feminist theologians were to realize that the true is not the same as the good, power not the same as love, pleasure not the same as power, but that each nonetheless deserves a distinct place in our lives - then might we be of more practical use to women?"[291]

Sands argues for a feminist sexual theology sensitive to tragedy. For her, "tragedy...is much more than meaninglessness...[it] is part of the grammar of meaning, illuminating the bounds within which our humanity must be negotiated." Tragedies refer to stories or "ways of telling stories" that emphasize conflicts of "elemental goods and powers." Sands does not believe that the elemental is inevitable, or always beyond our control. It is, however, that which arises in a specific historical moment as among the basic features of existence for which we strive or against which we struggle. In her view, "Elemental goods can generate tragic conflicts because of the inherent vulnerability to which each is subject individually and also because of the perpetual conflicts that arise among them collectively." Because the magnitude of goods within our lives varies, every conflict is not necessarily

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[291] Ibid.

tragic. I agree with Sands that "it is the possibility rather than the actuality of tragedy that must always be affirmed, just as what always must be negated is not transcendence as such, but the illusion that circumstances can be transcended absolutely."[292]

The definition Sands employs for tragedy makes a basic distinction between goodness and power. For her, power "refers to efficacy and actuality, and is always linked to position and purpose;" it is thus plural and positional. Truth, refers not to goodness, but to actuality and power, and is perspectival. In this persectival and nonabsolute sense then, evil is "true" and is "given its due as part of the given, yet also protested with the force of one's existence."[293] In *Escape from Paradise*, Sands suggests that evil does not refer to an essence, but rather to "the negative moral judgements that infect morality with fault and reason with absurdity."[294]

In Sands' framework, "morality is a venture of mortal beings," and as such the effort to be moral can fail, sometimes for reasons over which we have no control. Because of this,

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[292] Ibid., 12. My note: the "illusion that circumstances can be transcended absolutely" could be a potent antidote to the 'just do it' philosophy of current strategies of body management, and beyond that, to the shallow conceptualizations of suffering, aggression and tragedy that seems to permeate our psychological and religious responses to these facts of existence.

[293] Ibid.

[294] Sands, *Escape From Paradise*, 133.

Sands argues, "tragedy is morally as well as logically repulsive." As "heuristic situations", or "dramas", tragedies have three characteristics that should be part of our "criteria for theological adequacy," and by extension, would also be included in feminist theologies of sexuality. For Sands, tragedies have "(1) a mystical dimension in which elemental powers are acknowledged, (2) an aesthetic dimension in which beauty is apprehended in the midst of evil, and (3) a communal or relational context in which moral acts and attitudes are assessed." Furthermore, adequate theologies of sexuality should consider that the "somatic" is a feature of the "integral good" and is a potential "source of tragic conflicts."[295]

Sands applies this framework in her analysis and critique of Heyward and Christ's treatment of eros. Accordingly, she affirms Heyward's honoring of the "aesthetic potential of sexuality", and her (Heyward's) appreciation of the "somatic values of pleasure and vitality."[296] However, Heyward's acceptance of the notion of original sin to describe universal patterns of relational abuse and domination creates, in Sand's view, a "seismic tension" at the core of Heyward's erotic theology. That is, the tension between "the normative erotic mutuality which is said to be the basis of all desire, and actual sexual experience, which is

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[295] Sands, "Uses of," 13.

[296] Ibid., 23.

always stamped with patterns of injustice and nonmutuality."[297]

While she does not ascribe to classical ideas of divine omnipotence, Heyward does regard eros as divine power, originating in mutuality and justice. She says, for example, that "nothing can separate us from the power of the good, the power in right relation, which christians and other theists may choose to name, 'the love of God.'"[298] For Heyward, "alienated power" is misdirected, false power, or "wrong relation."[299] The issue here for Sands is not whether there are "good forms of erotic power," but whether "power as such is in some way identical with goodness, whether good power has some kind of ontological standing that evil power lacks." Sands believes that in her attempts to equate the true and the good, Heyward "denies the appearance of destructive or tragically conflicted desire."[300] Sands applauds Heyward's effort to connect ethics and theology by way of eros, thereby infusing theology with the "mystery of eros" rather than imposing moral rule on sex. However, in Sands' view, Heyward's "treating the mystical and the moral dimensions of sex as if they were conterminous, ...simultaneously overburdens sex with intrinsic moral meaning and deprives it of the extrinsic

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[297] Ibid., 19.

[298] Heyward, *Touching Our Strength*, 18.

[299] Ibid., 107.

[300] Sands, "Uses of," 20.

moral discernment it requires."[301] I agree with Sands that Heyward asks too much of sex, "expecting it to encompass the entire content of communal good."[302] However, I do appreciate Heyward's recognition that expectations of eros and relational mutuality often fail, resulting in, I suggest, a vast array of consequences, only a few of which can be addressed in this thesis. In response to these inevitable failures, Heyward develops an eschatological approach to eros. For Sands, Heyward's eschatology is "a single, inclusive ideal which, though not without "tension and turbulence," tends toward a final convergence of goods and powers."[303] Sands replies to Heyward's hope that "pleasure is ultimately found in relational mutuality, and power is ultimately identical with love," by offering this word of caution: "if our goal is not to reach the eschatological end, but to make the story go on, should we not consider removing the weight of the world from eros?"[304]

While reviewing Carol Christ's thealogy of eros, Sands again sees problems in attempting to equate the true and the good. As was discussed in Chapter One and above in this chapter, Christ is motivated by her desire to develop a theological method and

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[301] Ibid., 21.

[302] Ibid., 23.

[303] Ibid.

[304] Ibid.

praxis based on eros and empathy. In Sand's reading, Christ's notion of eros "defies not only spirit/matter dualism, but also the moral dualism of good and evil, or sin and grace. In Christ's system, nothing can be called evil; the natural or erotic therefore become good in an amoral sense, beyond accusation or accountability."[305] I agree with Sands that in viewing sexuality in this manner, Christ does speak eloquently about the "mystical and transpersonal powers" of the erotic. However, Sands argues that Christ is not as affective in relating sexuality to the interpersonal and social good because she lacks an ethical language that is responsive to tragedy. I think Sands treats Christ rather harshly on this point. For example, in her essays "Rethinking Theology and Nature," "Finitude, Death and Reverence for Life," and throughout her text, *Rebirth of the Goddess*, Christ does acknowledge that it is impossible "to live in perfect harmony with all people and all beings in the web of life." Christ is very aware that our violence, individually and collectively, is exacting far too great a cost " on human bodies, the body politic, and the earth body."[306] She recognizes "the

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[305] Ibid.

[306] Carol P. Christ, "Finitude, Death and Reverence For Life," in *Laughter of Aphrodite: Reflections on a Journey to the Goddess*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 213-227; "Rethinking Theology and Nature," in *Weaving the Visions*, 314-325.; *Rebirth of the Goddess*, 1997.

enormous power of force and violence, the fragility of good."[307] Furthermore, she is very cognizant of the fact that death and destruction are necessary features of the human condition. In Christ's estimation, the Christian doctrine of original sin imposes an "infinite standard on our finite lives."[308] Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, death is punishment, an "enemy of life", rather than an accepted and implicit part of life - "we all die so that others may live."[309] For Christ then, it seems that sin is both pervasive and unacceptable, whereas for Sands, if we are to engage with tragedy, we must acknowledge that our mortal condition binds us *both* to sin and death. She queries, "what if the pathology of patriarchal Christianity is not just its inability to face death but also its inability to bear the experience of *fault* in which sociality and embodiment entangle us?"[310] With Sands, I wonder if we disengage absolutely from sin, do we not also tend toward disengaging from the realities of life? As long as, with Heyward, we read injustice as "breaking connection rather than as bad connection" and with Christ, we interpret violence as the "repression of desire rather than bad desire," do we not run the risk of trying to resolve aggression,

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[307] Christ, *Rebirth*, 177.

[308] Christ, "Finitude," 217.

[309] Ibid., 218.

[310] Sands, "Uses of," 27.

suffering and evil through the "proclamation of an ideal good." Such a proclamation does not allow us to "affirm that the world in which elemental conflicts occur is the ultimate context of human meaning."[311]

Although I am concerned about both Heyward's and Christ's reliance upon 'essential' ontological categories of truth and goodness, I do appreciate that they have taught us something of what is required in this journey from "lofty ideal to conflicted earth."[312] As I will argue in the next chapter, we should be wary of the contemporary reading of the platonic ideal that equates perfect body with perfect humanness. Perhaps, to go back to Winnicott, we are in yet another religious variation of the psychological "space between" - here, between lofty ideals and conflicted earth, between the platonic ideal which is our heritage and our engagement in the messiness of life. If we were to acknowledge this, perhaps we may be of more use to girls and women who are tormented by experiences of dis/embodiment, dis/carnation as will be described later in this thesis. For, they are also engaged in a critical life and death struggle for the honorable pursuit of practical relational and erotic wisdom. I suggest we fail them, and each other as a community, if we do not see that the quest for immortality masks our need to

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[311] Ibid.

[312] Ibid.

recognize and deal with passions like rage and hate, and the anxieties and fears associated with our finitude.

In summary, we have seen throughout this chapter that beginning with Klein, Winnicott, and Kohut, the centrality of the striving for connection, for relationship, has been a key component of object relations theory. This theme has been expanded upon by contemporary feminist psychologists and scholars in religion who have incorporated an analysis of gender in their theorizing of relationality. While many of them speak in similar ways to women's proclivity for connection, they do not always speak with a single voice on the subject of women's hatred and rage, nor our complicity in tragedy and suffering. Perhaps, inadvertently, our neglect of these aspects of our humanness in our theorizing "reproduces a patriarchal horror" of evil and of enraged women.[313] Women's greater capacity for connection has become not only socially acceptable; it has also become theoretically sanctioned. With Sands and Burack, I propose our task now is to confront the remaining, tenacious, barriers to theorizing the fact of evil and suffering and the role of *all* the passions, in our theories and in our lives. We must be ready to confront the silences surrounding the realm of the messy, disruptive, and distressing passions that we have excised in our imagining an ideal world of 'erotic power' and 'mutuality in

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[313] Burack, 112.

relation.' Perhaps then the chasm between 'lofty ideals and conflicted earth' may be bridged.

CHAPTER THREE

SITUATING THE INFERIOR BODY

In the previous chapter I reviewed traditional and contemporary theories of relationality. Consistent in all, although differently articulated in each, is, I believe, an emphasis on the embodied nature of subjectivity. In this chapter, I will describe some of the issues concerning the body as they are addressed by various theorists in philosophy, cultural, and religious studies. I do so to foreshadow the discussion in chapter four, where I intend to bring together theories of relationality and theories of the body, thus highlighting their points of convergence, so that we may better articulate the problems of subjectivity and embodiment in the lived experience of girls and women in contemporary culture.

It is useful to situate the analysis of contemporary scholars in a broad overview of the historical legacy of mind/body dualism, which is arguably *the* paradigmatic duality of Western metaphysics. Doing so provides both for an appreciation of how deeply embedded disdain for female corporeality is in Western religion and culture, and for an understanding of the pervasiveness with which women have been associated with evil and inferiority.

Following this overview, I will present selected contemporary analytical models of the regulation and containment

of the female body. In this, I am indebted to the theorizing of Susan Bordo, Sandra Bartky, Lynda Nead, and Elizabeth Grosz, among others. Both Nead and Grosz employ the work of Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva, while Bartky and Bordo utilize Michel Foucault in their respective analyses of the containment and regulation of the female body in contemporary culture.

According to Fatmagül Bertkay, "both in the past and in the present...monotheistic ideology and practice have given central emphasis to the social control of women's body, legitimized by women's relation to the body and by a series of social/cultural implications of this relation."[314] Bertkay suggests that by the time human beings began to symbolize both the universe and humanity's relation to the sacred, the inferiority of women to men had been so entrenched in the foundational metaphors and symbols of Western civilization that it seemed 'natural' to both women and men. The metaphorical constructs of 'man' and 'woman', "hierarchically different in terms of their essence, their function and their potential...penetrated every explicatory thought system."[315]

The man/woman duality and its parallel association of male soul/mind and female body was systematized by Plato. According

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[314] Fatmagül Berktay, *Women and Religion*, trans. Bela Otus-Basket (Montreal and New York: Black Rose Press, 1998), 107.

[315] Berktay, 108.

to him, soul belongs to the realm of ideas, of non-matter, the "real universe of perfection and immutable structures." The body, on the other hand, belongs to the realm of matter, imperfect and transient. Soul defines the essential value of human beings before or at the moment of birth, and as a result, their position in society. For Plato, "inferior souls are related to inferior bodies...and women have the souls of cowardly and inferior men."[316]

Aristotle extended Plato's concept of the soul/body dichotomy by emphasizing the 'naturalness' of inequality, and thus of dominance, among human beings. His philosophy posited that "soul/spirit dominates body; reason dominates emotion; man dominates women."[317] Pure and active reason, belonging to men only, is an aspect of the Godly spirit, and thus is superior to, and more sacred, than all matter. For Aristotle, women's 'natural' inferiority is based on their passive and emotional bondage to their physical beings. Their purpose is relegated to that of motherhood, but even here, their role is secondary. It is men's sperm that contains soul, and women are mere repositories, vessels, for nurturing men's seed. Man is the primary creator. Berktay points out that "this concept... is the sign of a definitive change in the history of human

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[316] Ibid., 109.

[317] Ibid., 110.

thought...This discourse of 'natural' differences between men and women...forms the framework for the dichotomy of the nature of the sexes and the legitimation of man's superiority over women."[318]

The Aristotelian philosophical tradition was merged with Hebrew theology in the writings of Philo of Alexandria. Specifically, he joined the ancient Greek notion of women's deficient and inferior status with the Hebrew view of women as the source of evil. Two attitudes may be discerned in Philo's anthropology. One posits that there are deep cosmological roots to the definition of man and woman: "Man, as representative of mind (Logos), the principle on which the world is constructed, is related to continuity, stability and unchangeability. Woman's closer links to matter put her in the category of the unstable, changeable and corruptible."[319] For Philo, the man/woman dichotomy embodies principles inherent in cosmological reality. It is thus an unalterable phenomenon.

Philo's second anthropological source is the Creation story of the Old Testament which, for him, is a symbolic representation of cosmic reality. According to his interpretation, the central negative result of the fall is the 'absoluteness' of the man/woman polarity, according to which man (mind, active, strong,

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[318] Ibid., 110-111.

[319] Ibid., 112.

stable) is contrasted with woman (emotion, passive, weak, unstable). Because of her inability to control her passions, it was Eve/woman who fell prey to the pleasures promised by the serpent. Eve's punishment is thus deserved and legitimate; her "structural inferiority" as the "devil's accomplice" is thus assured for all eternity.[320]

However, for Philo, all human beings possess both male and female characteristics. The battle with Satan, the aim of which is control of the body and of desire, occurs within every person. Berktay suggests that in Philo's reasoning, we see the "beginning of the internalization of the practice of controlling the body and turning it into a real "discipline" in the Foucauldian sense."[321]

In early Christianity, through the influence of Greek philosophy, the separation of mortal body and immortal spirit is continued. The hierarchical mind/body dualism is evident in the writings of, for example, Paul and Augustine, both of whom, as we shall see, emphasize the particular shamefulness of women's bodies.

Most scholars agree that Paul's letters to Timothy, Titus, and the Ephesians were written by someone other than, and later than Paul. Furthermore, even if Paul is not the author of some

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[320] Ibid., 113.

[321] Ibid., 114.

of the most troubling passages about women in the New Testament, those passages considered authentic to him are interpreted in various ways by feminist and non-feminist scholars alike. Nonetheless, some passages do stand out, I believe, as illustrative of Paul's views regarding the body and women. For example, in Galations 5: 16-24, Paul exhorts his followers in the early Christian communities:

> My point is that you should live in accord with the spirit and you will not yield to cravings of the flesh. The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh: the two are directly opposed. This is why you do not do what your will intends. ...It is obvious what proceeds from the flesh: lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I have warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God! In contrast, the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity...Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.(italics mine) I will argue later that this early Christian attitude toward the body has been internalized by women throughout the ages. For example, Metchild of Magdeburg poignantly writes:

> I looked at my body
> it was mightily armed
> against my poor soul
> with much might
> and with the full power of nature.
> I saw that it was my enemy,
> and saw also that if I wished to escape eternal death
> I would have to conquer myself

> And that would be quite a battle.
> 1210-1282, Convent of Hafta, Germany[322]

Over 700 hundred years later, a modern anorectic reflects, "My soul seemed to grow as my body waned."[323]

In 1 Corinthians 11:3-10, Paul's views on women and the relationship between women and men seem quite clear:

> I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ; the head of a woman is her husband; and the head of Christ is the father. Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered brings shame upon his head. Similarly, any woman who prays or prophesies with head uncovered brings shame upon her head. It is as if she had her head shaved. Indeed, if a woman will not wear a veil, she ought to cut off her hair. If it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, it is clear that she ought to wear a veil. A man, on the other hand, ought not to cover his head, *because he is the image of God and the reflection of his glory. Woman, in turn, is the reflection of man's glory. Man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman but woman for man. For this reason a woman ought to have a sign of submission on her head... (italics mine)*

It seems to me that Paul then confounds his own teaching when he goes on to say, in 1 Corinthians 11: 11-12:

> Yet, in the Lord, woman is not independent of man nor man independent of woman. In the same way that woman was made from man, so man is born of woman; and all is from God.

However, Paul then reverts to the spiritual and social dualism

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[322] Quoted in Berktay, 115.

[323] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 68.

inherent in early Christian thought and practice by stating:

> I will let you judge for yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God unveiled? Does not nature itself teach you that it is dishonorable for a man to wear his hair long, while the long hair of a woman is her glory? Her hair has been given her for a covering. If anyone wants to argue about this, remember that neither we nor the Churches of God recognize any other usage.
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> 1 Corinthians 11: 13-16

In my reading of these passages, man is the glory of God; woman is the glory of man; and woman's hair is the glory of woman. Yet it is her unique glory that must be concealed, because it also brings her shame. Furthermore, it is the sexual authority of the male gaze that confers her particular shame.[324] Paul shames the unveiled woman, insisting on a covering because of her secondary character and status. In the next chapter, I will discuss how the requirement both to *conceal* from and to *reveal* to the dominant male gaze exists simultaneously in contemporary women's experience, creating for many, an untenable paradox.

I realize that passages such as those noted above are open to various theological interpretations.[325] Nonetheless, my point

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[324] For a similar but more detailed analysis, see Mary Rose D'angelo, "Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels: Women's Heads in Early Christianity," in *OFF with Her Head: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Swartz and Wendy Doniger (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 131-164.

[325] I am grateful to Elisabeth Lacelle for the interpretive nuance she brings to the texts I have utilized in my analysis. For example, in her view, Berktay's reading of Paul is erroneous. Lacelle points out that the term 'flesh' is not equivalent to

is this: such teachings continue to have enormous influence in contemporary religion and popular culture. Paul's messages regarding the flesh and women are read from many pulpits throughout the Christian world, with little or no interpretive nuance. For the millions of women and men who receive these teachings, the flesh must be regarded as a cunning vehicle for the transmission of depravity. Furthermore, women's flesh in particular must reflect both man's glory and her secondary role in creation. It is a message that seeps beyond the pulpit to the culture at large, and, as we shall see later, effects both women and men in very specific, practical ways.

Augustine's teachings have influenced subsequent Roman

'body' in Paul's work. She argues that for Paul, flesh refers to the notion of the human being in its perishable dimension. Furthermore, within this conception, both women and men are flesh, and both can become spirit. Lacelle suggests that Prudence Allen's text, **The Concept of Woman,** more adequately demonstrates the complexity of this history, than does that of Berktay. Allen researched the concept of woman in relation to the concept of man as it has been articulated throughout twenty centuries of Western philosophy. Her study reveals four general areas of theoretical concern. As stated by Allen, "in metaphysics the question arose about how, or if, man and woman are opposite; in the philosophy of science, questions focussed on the relation between the contribution of mother or father to generation and sex identity itself; in epistemology, the issue focussed on whether women and men had the same or different faculties of reasoning and whether they were wise by knowing the same or different things; in ethics, the question was whether women and men were virtuous by performing the same or different acts." Allen structured her study around three different theories of sexual identity: sex unity, sex polarity, and sex complementarity. See Allan, Prudence. *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC - AD 1250.* Montreal and London: Eden Press, 1985.

Catholic doctrine on marriage and sexuality more than any other church father. He often turned to Genesis 1-3 to clarify his position on these themes. For Augustine, gender differentiation and hierarchy was a part of God's original plan for creation. The male was created first, and the female from his rib to indicate "the relation of superiority and subordination by which the genders are to relate to each other in the social order."[326]

In paradise, generation would have been lust-free and bodily integrity protected. With the fall however, humanity "lost both its original immortality and freedom of will."[327] While Adam and Eve are equally to blame, they were culpable for different reasons. Eve was approached first by the serpent because, as a woman, she was closer to the "lower soul." Her inferior rationality made it easier for the serpent to deceive her. Adam, on the other hand, was not deceived, but went along with Eve so that she would not be alone beyond paradise.[328]

Adam's sin was that he did not insist on Eve's obedience to him as "her head." Rather, he chose to obey his wife, "his lower self", thus breaking the natural order of creation. Rosemary

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[326] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 72. Ruether is referring to Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 9.5.

[327] Ruether, 74.

[328] Ibid., 73. Ruether is referring to Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 11.42 and *City of God*, 14.11.

Radford Ruether points out that "Despite Augustine's theoretical view that both men and women have intellects (the image of God), when referred to as a couple, man and woman as male and female are seen as representing the relation of mind and body, intellect and passions, as dominant and subordinate, superior and inferior."[329] Social hierarchy and "coercive relations of men over women, masters over slaves, state over subjects" were justified by Augustine's position on the fall.[330]

In God's original created design, Augustine insisted, men were to rule over women. The fall occurred because of woman's subversion of this natural order. For Augustine then, "in fallen society men are justified in acting coercively to force their wives to obey them, and women should submit to this coercion as their duty, even if at times it is unjust or excessive."[331]

Augustine believed that, at the resurrection, chaste and devout women, because they are equal in the image of God, will "shine as gloriously as men."[332] Although all hierarchies will be transcended in heaven, on earth the rule of men over women will continue as the right relation in the natural order of creation.

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[329] Ibid.

[330] Ibid.

[331] Ibid., 75. Ruether is referring to Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 11.37.

[332] Ibid., 77.

All women, including virgins, must submit to this design.

Ruether convincingly argues that within this regime, "Salvation does not liberate women from male domination here on earth, but teaches them to redouble their submission to their earthly lords, both to repent the original subversion of this gender order by their wayward mother Eve and to anticipate that heavenly state in which redeeming grace empowers us to submit our will to the will of God."[333]

Again I suggest these philosophical and religious views on the "naturalness" of male superiority and female submission must be interrogated at the level of practical effects in contemporary culture. Augustine's positions on sexuality and marriage were, and are, part of the standard teachings of the Roman Catholic church and thus continue to have significant influence. Views such as Augustine's continue to be used to justify gender and social hierarchies in popular thought and practices, at both a psychological and political level.

Following the teachings of Paul and Augustine, the church of the 13th century reinforced its position with respect to women. In Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, the official stance of the church was communicated.[334] Aquinas incorporated the Greek

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[333] Ibid.

[334] For a comprehensive discussion of Aquinas's theological anthropology, see Kari Borresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Women in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas*,

philosophical position on maleness, femaleness, and reproduction; in particular, he referred to the sociobiological thesis of Aristotle. According to Eleanor Commo McLaughlin:

> Although the medieval centuries saw some amelioration of the patristic sexual pessimism in admitting a more positive view of Christian marriage, ultimately our medieval commentators deepened the androcentric and antifemale character of the tradition under the influence of a strongly patriarchal Germanic society and with the scientific support of the wholly androcentric Aristotelian biology. Aristotle's intellectualistic definition of human nature combined with the inherited ascetic tradition to further strengthen the limitation of the female human being to the auxiliary and instrumental role of sexual procreation, defining the woman as a misbegotten and wholly subordinate creature, hedged about with fear and loathing as an embodiment of the sensuality that threatens the purity of male mind and spirit. By giving a "scientific" basis to the earlier patristic attitudes, the Middle Ages guaranteed the survival of the antifemale anthropology long after rigorist ascetic attitudes had ceased to dominate Western society.[335]

The Aristotelian framework within which Aquinas's theology developed had defined the female as the "misbegotten male;...perfect humanity was humanity in its male form."[336] Furthermore, Aquinas combines the Augustinian view of the female as a "helpmeet to the male in the role of creation" with

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(Washington, D.C.,: University Press of America, 1981), 141-334. Rosemary Radford Ruether's references to Aquinas rely heavily on Borresen's analysis.

[335] Eleanor Commo McLaughlin, "Equality of Soul, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Medieval Theology," in *Women and Religion*, ed. Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), 79.

[336] Clark and Richardson, 79.

Aristotle's depiction of the female as "defective in her bodily, volitional, and intellectual capacities."[337]

For Aquinas the soul, naturally immortal, and in its essence, intellect, is superior to the body, yet is also the "form of the body,...incomplete in itself."[338] In this way, Aquinas affirms Augustine's position that as "asexual soul in relation to God," woman does possess the image of God and therefore can anticipate joining with God and man, for eternity, in heaven.[339] However, on earth, the female must submit to her defective nature, which by extension, implies that she has no sovereignty over her own body, or over others. For Aquinas, as for Augustine and Aristotle, "the male seed provides the form and active power in creation, while the female only provides the "matter" that is formed. Normatively every seed would produce another male so the very procreation of the female must come about through a defect in this process of formation of the female matter by the male seed, resulting in an incomplete or defective female."[340] Accordingly, women's inferiority is not merely a result of her role in procreation; rather, perhaps more

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[337] Ruether, 94. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1.92.1.c, is quoting from Augustine, *Genesis ad Litteram*, 9.5.

[338] Ibid.

[339] Ibid.

[340] Ibid.

importantly, it has to do with female *interiority*. In other words, Aquinas emphasizes that because women possess "inferior capacities for intellect and self-control...[they] cannot image and represent human nature normatively."[341]

Unlike Augustine, Aquinas believed that even in paradise biological nature necessitated the subjection of women. Their inferiority then, existed prior to the fall. What paradise would have offered, however, is the "perfect submission of the body to the intellect," and therefore, the perfect submission of humanity to God. For Aquinas, this "perfect ordering" of superior and inferior, was "original justice."[342]

This original justice, however, was obliterated by the fall. While the soul's intent was still towards virtue, the body, now "no longer submissive to the intellect and to God, asserted its natural mortality," and by extension, I suggest, its imperfect submission. For Aquinas, Eve was even more culpable than Adam for the fall since she sinned, not only against God (in disobedience), but against her helpmeet Adam, in her seduction of him. Nonetheless, it was only through Adam's consent that the fall could have occurred, for it was Adam, not Eve, who "possessed the higher reason that can exercise headship over

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[341] Ibid., 95. Ruether is referring to Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1.92.1, ad.1.

[342] Ibid. Ruether is referring to Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1.95.1.c and i-2.82.3.c.

humanity as a whole."[343]

In the original order of creation, then, woman's state of subjection illustrated her inferior nature biologically, and thus her lesser role in procreation. With the fall, she was condemned to domination by the authority of her spiritual father and the human male to whom she was bound. Furthermore, as a consequence of her transgressions she would forevermore endure pain in childbirth, the only role for which she was considered sufficient.

Aquinas's concept of salvation and redemption are also reminiscent of that of Augustine. For both, there will be no gender hierarchies in heaven. For Augustine, this will mean that woman will return to her original state as the image of God before the fall. For Aquinas, salvation ensures that even her original state as imperfect being will be overcome.

The protestant Reformation changed the approach to family life and sexuality in the 16th century, and Martin Luther was a seminal figure in this reconceptualization. He believed marriage to be a state commanded by God rather than one of denigration,

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[343] Ibid. Ruether is referring to Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2.163.4.c. It is interesting to speculate upon this from the point of view of Eve's agency, rather than her shame. If we think of her as an active agent, perhaps there is something celebratory in her subverting the natural order. However, even here, her agency is, on the one hand, the primary source of her sin and inferiority, and, on the other, even *it* is taken away from her by the insistence that she needed Adam's consent for the act to be undertaken.

and so argued against the exaltation of celibacy and the superiority of the priesthood as a vocation. However, this view of marriage as the normal state for all men and women was combined with a very definite patriarchal view of the family. Although companionship and cooperation (rather than procreation alone) between husband and wife were emphasized, it was still axiomatic that the husband was the divinely appointed head of the family and that his wife should be submissive to him.

Although Luther affirms Eve's original equality with Adam in the image of God, he equivocates about this in two ways. First, their ontological difference was such that the male was naturally superior. For example, his reflections on Genesis, "male and female He created them," reads as follows:

> ...for the woman appears to be somewhat different from the man, having different members and a much weaker nature. Although Eve was a most extraordinary creature - similar to Adam so far as the image of God is concerned; that is, in justice, wisdom and happiness - she was nevertheless a woman. For as the sun is more excellent than the moon (although the moon, too, is a very excellent body), so the woman, although she was a most beautiful work of God, nevertheless was not the equal of the male in glory and prestige.[344]

Commenting on I Timothy, Luther states:

> God himself so ordained that man be created first - first in time and first in authority. His perfect place is preserved in the Law. Whatever occurs first is called most preferable. Because of God's work, Adam

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[344] Ibid., 118. Ruether is quoting Martin Luther in *Luther's Works*, Vol.1, 2: 27, ed. James Atkinson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1966), 68-69.

> is approved as superior to Eve because he has the right of primogeniture...Adam was wiser that Eve...Paul has thus proved that by divine and human right Adam is the master of the woman.[345]

Secondly, Luther emphasizes Eve's role as mother and homemaker in paradise, and accordingly, her differences from Adam. Even in paradise, Eve would have been led by Adam since she was the lesser being. Luther agrees with the view that Satan first approached Eve because, in her weakness, she was more easily deceived than Adam. With the fall their world is fundamentally altered: Adam is punished by the hard labor of working the unyielding earth, and Eve by painful labor in childbirth, her previous "primary expression of blessing." Furthermore, her original relationship with her husband in paradise was in the context of an "acceptable companionship of greater and lesser;"it has now been replaced by a "burdensome servitude."[346]

> This punishment too springs from original sin, and the woman bears it just as unwillingly as she bears those pains and inconveniences that have been placed on her flesh. The rule remains with the husband, and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. He rules the home, and the state, wages war, defends his possessions, tills the soil, plants, etc. The wife, on the other hand, is like a nail driven into the wall. She sits at home... If Eve had persisted in the truth, she would not have been subjected to the rule of her husband, but she herself would have been a partner in

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[345] Ibid., 318. Ruether is quoting Luther in *Luther's Works*, vol. 28, 278-279.

[346] Ibid., 119.

> the rule which is now entirely the concern of men... In this way Eve is punished.[347]

In Luther's anthropology then, God's original plan intended that the male be preeminent, the female secondary in her role as companion and childbearer. With the fall, this ordering came to be one of domination. Even though men and women are equal in the image of God, this "basic ordering of greater and lesser perfections and patriarchal family roles" remains unchanged. Furthermore, while in paradise Eve and Adam shared in the "governance of creation," in their fallen state, women were confined to domesticity under the headship of their husbands whose power also extended to all areas beyond the home. For Luther this hierarchical ordering was not due to injustice on the part of men, but rather, constituted "divine punishment," to which women must submit.[348] According to Luther:

> Thus that ordinance of God continues to stand as a memorial of that transgression which by her fault entered into the world. That subjection of women and domination of men have not passed away, have they? No. The penalty remains. The blame is passed over. The pain and tribulation of child-bearing continue. Those penalties will continue until judgement. So also the dominion of men and the subjection of women continue. You must endure them.[349]

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[347] Ibid. Ruether is quoting Luther in *Luther's Works*, Vol.1, 3:16, 202-203.

[348] Ibid., 121.

[349] Ibid. Ruether is quoting Luther, "Commentary on 1 Timothy," in *Luther's Works*, vol.28, 276-77.

In Luther's view, "when the present historical era of sin and fall is overcome," women and men will participate equally in immortal, eternal life. But here and now, in their earthly life, women's status is necessarily secondary, her purpose that of bearing children, and her exclusion from public life divinely ordained punishment.[350] It is however, a "gladsome punishment if you consider the hope of eternal life and the honor of motherhood which have been left her."[351]

In the 16th and 17th centuries misogyny reached yet another level in the witch-hunting craze. Concurrently, with the 17th century scientific revolution, a new, 'empirical', or 'natural' philosophy emerged. It was based on the overturning of both Aristotelian cosmology and of superstition. The latter helped to ameliorate the witch hunts. However, Aristotle's position about the mental and emotional inferiority of women vis a vis men was maintained and even supported by 'modern' views. Mind/reason continued to be associated with the male and conquest of both the body and of nature was the aim of 'natural' philosophy. The scientific quest was perceived as "penetration into a female nature deprived of creative maternal status."[352] As Francis Bacon

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[350] Ibid., 121-122.

[351] Clark and Richardson, 148. They are quoting Luther, "Lectures on Genesis 3:16," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 1, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958).

[352] Berktay, 120.

explained, the new science would not only employ a ""gentle guidance over nature's course" but would "conquer and subdue her...even shake her to her foundations."[353]

The French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes continued the classical tradition of associating "male mind to spirit and the godhead," and of "purifying knowledge and reason from the uncleanliness of the body," of matter. Matter was still associated with the maternal and all things female.[354] As with Plato and Aristotle, the dualism of Cartesian thought was reflected in a divisive society.[355] The specific form of Cartesian dualism illustrated the nature of that society. With the rise of the merchant class came a concerted effort to observe and manipulate nature in order to profit from her resources.[356] Descartes' theory was reflective of the new social and economic forces that predicated advancement on the mastery of nature and the rule of the incorporeal over the corporeal. As stated by

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[353] Brian Easlea, *Science and Sexual Oppression*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 86, 88, 89.

[354] Berktay, 120-121.

[355] Perhaps we should ask whether it was the historical divisiveness of society that gave rise to the hegemony of such dualism?

[356] Are we not witnessing in the 1990's the after-effects of this attempt to master nature - both at an ecological level, and at a personal: for example, cosmetic surgery is the fastest growing speciality in the field of 'medicine', at the same time that eating disorders, particularly anorexia nervosa, have the highest mortality rate among 'psychiatric' illnesses.

Ruth Berman:

> Philosophies reflecting these new social and productive power relations soon emerged. Again, a rigid dualism, dominated by geometric-mathematical abstractions and the separation of both mind from body and "thinker" from thing or object thought about, was advanced by Rene Descartes... Descartes predicated existence on our *innate* capacity to think about it (I think, therefore I am). Rational thought, he held, is "objective"; it alone could lead to the truth, without reference to space or time or physical substance. And here too it is a function of the immaterial, immortal mind/soul. But matter, corpuscular, extendable and mutable is the object to be thought about, the physical substrate of which things are made. It is also the substance of the body, which is like a clock, a machine controlled by the completely distinct and incorporeal mind.[357]

To summarize, I have illustrated how women have long been associated with matter and nature, and that from Plato onwards, nature and the body have been considered inferior to spirit and mind. In Plato's dichotomy, immortal and noncorporeal soul/mind gives form to the mortal body. Aristocratic male bodies possess superior souls, while inferior souls are passed on to inferior bodies. For Aristotle, the soul is located *within* the body, yet retains its separate and immaterial nature. With Descartes, the eternal character of the soul is maintained and the body is transformed into a machine.

The Judaic and Christian traditions supported and emphasized

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[357] Ruth Berman, "From Aristotle's Dualism to Materialist Dialectics: Feminist Transformation of Science and Society," in *Gender/ Body/ Knowledge/: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, ed. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 235.

the Aristotelian ordering of values by appropriating Aristotle's most damning charge against the nature of the female, namely, her basic weakness as a moral being. Since depravity would result if she were given more knowledge and power, she was confined to home and children under the authority of naturally endowed moral (male) agents. It seems evident, then, that fear and denigration of female physicality predates the Judaic and Christian traditions, and as we shall now discuss, persists today.

In the section that follows, I will describe how selected contemporary analytical models of the body attempt to interrogate the male/mind/soul and female/body/nature dualisms outlined above. Here and in the next chapter, I argue that these historical metaphysical positions continue to dominate our experience of body and of soul, not only at the level of theoretical abstraction, but more importantly, and in a particular way for girls and women, at a basic ontological level. Women's ways of being-in-the world continue to be marked by the experience of damnation and the pursuit of redemption. However, in our era, it is the desire for and pursuit of the perfect body that signifies just where we are on that path.

"We need to imagine a world where every woman is the presiding

genius of her own body."[358]

That women's bodies, from Eve to Mary to Madonna, have inspired both fascination and fear in the individual and collective imagination of Western culture is hardly a novel idea, as was examined above.[359] Margaret Atwood writes that the body is "a hot topic".[360] Indeed, Maud Ellmann points out how theorizing about the body "has become the academic version of the 'workout'", in that essays about the body are "churned out of PC'S with the same demonic rigor that the bodies of their authors are submitted to the tortures of the gym."[361] We might wonder what is it about 'this body', now? It seems there is a constant shifting in the meanings inscribed on the body such that the markings of each historical period are defined as new and temporary.[362] In our era, as Elizabeth Grosz points out, through

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[358] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 285.

[359] See, for example, Susan Bordo, "Material Girl": The Effacements of Postmodern Culture", in *The Female Body: Figures, Styles, and Speculations*, ed., Laurence Goldstein (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), 106-130, especially 122-130.

[360] Margaret Atwood, "The Female Body", in Goldstein, *The Female Body*, 1.

[361] Maud Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 1993, 3.

[362] For example, see Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Susan Bordo, "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallisation of Culture," in Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, eds., *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (Boston: Northeastern University Press,

contemporary modes of cultural inscription, flesh is made into a particular type of body". [363] When Mary Douglas states "bodily perfection can symbolise an ideal theocracy",[364] she is clearly articulating how the body functions to represent the collective fantasies and obsessions of a society.[365] Emily Martin has noted that the recent fascination with the body in the West may be related to "our sense of the demise of the body as we have known it"; we are nostalgic for a world in which the boundaries between nature and culture are clear.[366]

In this age of technological sophistication, we are challenged to understand practices such as cosmetic surgery, or in-vitro fertilization, the results of which include changes in

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1988), 87-117; "Material Girl"; Caroline Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Helena Michie, *The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[363] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward A Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 142.

[364] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 1966, 1992), 4.

[365] See Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 193.

[366] Emily Martin, "The End of the Body?" Keynote address at the Annual Meeting of the American Ethnological Society. Atlanta, Georgia, April, 1990. Cited in Francis E. Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe, eds., *Tattoo, Torture, Mutilation, and Adornment: The Denaturalization of the Body in Culture and Text* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), 5.

the very tissue of the body. What the body is, and who has the right to define it, is being contested as never before.[367]

Added to this is the unprecedented extent to which the contemporary encoding of the body is perpetuated by the visual mass media. Ours is an image bedazzled world of instant archetypes presented to us, at least in part, through television's panoptic reach, the borders of which may soon be eclipsed by the Internet. The representations of women constructed by the image makers of popular culture may well seem obviously manipulated and limiting to us. We may (perhaps rightly) argue with the notion of women as passive, unwitting participants in the production of 'artifice', in the remapping of the 'natural' body. We may have heard the anecdotal evidence that suggests young men no longer seem immune to the effects of overexposure to the GQ male; they too compare and find themselves woefully inadequate. Yet, as provocative as such discussions may be, the disturbing reality is that, through the proliferation of the impoverished images of dominant culture, girls and women learn too well to be uncomfortable with their untransformed bodies. There is little relief in it being a bifurcated awareness. Most young - and not so young - women will admit knowing they are encouraged to pursue the unattainable. At the same time, within the heterosexual *weltanschauung*, they watch and

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[367] Mascia-Lees and Sharpe, Ibid.

want to *be*. Men, however, while also thoroughly engaged in this voyeuristic preoccupation, watch and want to *have*.[368] Whether the gaze is 'male', or 'only male' may, and should, be debated. Nonetheless, in dominant culture at least, the gaze by which women are so extensively surveyed is undoubtedly internalized by many.[369] Both men's and women's bodies *are* important sites of cultural and religious inscriptions. Yet, these markings have particularly devastating consequences for girls and women. Women's bodies are presented as spectacle, while at the same time, as Kristeva says, woman "is simply a name for the unrepresented and repressed of patriarchal culture." [370] Just as girls and women are claiming ourselves as subjects of our histories, in Ann Pellegrini words, " we are engaged in a renewed metaphysic of the subject", we are also confronted with, and participate in, this profound caricature of woman as the 'perfect object'.[371]

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[368] See Elizabeth Renzetti, "Skin Deep in Fashion Television," *The Globe and Mail*, 24 February 1996, sec. C2.

[369] See E. Ann Kaplan, "Is the Gaze Male," in *Powers of Desire*, eds. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 309-327.

[370] Kristeva is discussed by Ann Rosalind Jones, "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of L'Ecritive Feminine," in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Summer 1981), 249, and cited by Michie, *The Flesh Made Word*, 144-145.

[371] Ann Pellegrini, "Gender and the Religious Imagination: Reflections on /of the Phallus," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the *American Academy of Religion*. Washington, D.C.,

In *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, a compilation of essays that Bordo has written in the past decade, Bordo articulates her concerns about women and men's vulnerability to the powerful cultural images and ideology that are pervasive within the dualistic metaphysics of Western culture.[372] The mind/body duality of "active spirit" and "passive body" has been one of the most "historically powerful of the dualities that inform western ideologies of gender."[373] For Bordo, the mind/body dualism is not just a philosophical stance, it is a "practical metaphysics" that has permeated medicine, law, literature, art and - I would add, religion. This practical metaphysics has also profoundly informed "the psychological construction of the self, interpersonal relationships, popular culture, and advertisements."[374] Deconstruction of this metaphysic can only occur through concrete interventions in the practices and institutions that support and sustain it.

Along with Bordo, I am concerned with the *effects* of the "everyday deployment" of cultural representations of gender, class, and ethnicity. For Bordo, these representations have a two-fold function: they both homogenize and normalize. That is,

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November, 1993.

[372] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 1993.

[373] Bordo, 11.

[374] Ibid., 13, 14.

they conflate 'differences' that might threaten white, heterosexual identifications and "they function as models against which the self continuously measures, judges, 'disciplines,' and corrects itself."[375]

Everyday deployment of cultural representations requires an understanding of the pathways of modern power. For Bordo, as for the authors discussed below, Michel Foucault's theorizing of power relations has provided a fruitful model for the feminist analysis of both power and gender. In Bordo's reading of Foucault, "modern (as opposed to sovereign) power is non-authoritarian, non-conspiratorial and indeed non-orchestrated; yet it nonetheless produces and normalizes bodies to serve prevailing relations of dominance and subordination."[376] Implicit in this model of power are two conceptual reconfigurations. "First, we must cease to imagine "power" as the *possession* of individuals or groups...and instead see it as a dynamic or network of noncentralized forces."[377] Second, these noncentralized forces are not "random or haphazard, but configure to assume particular historical forms, within which certain groups and ideologies *do* have dominance."[378] For Foucault,

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[375] Ibid., 24, 25.

[376] Ibid., 26.

[377] Ibid.

[378] Ibid.

dominance is sustained through multiple processes, "of different origin and scattered location" rather than 'from above'.[379] This form of dominance however *does* regulate that which is most "intimate and minute" in the way we construct "space, time, desire, embodiment."[380] Power 'from below' operates by self-surveillance rather than coercion. Prevailing norms of subjectivity and selfhood - including gender - are thus maintained through "an inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself."[381]

Bordo believes that such ideas concerning power relations are helpful in illuminating the dynamics of the contemporary "politics of appearance." As will be examined in further detail in the next chapter, Bordo understands eating disorders and disciplines of diet and exercise, for example, as "reproducing normative feminine practices of our culture, practices which train the female body in docility and obedience to cultural demands while at the same time being *experienced* in terms of

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[379] Ibid., 27. Bordo is quoting Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 138.

[380] Ibid.

[381] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 155.

power and control."[382]

For Foucault, resistance, which is perpetual, co-exists with power, thus destabilizing it. New forms of subjectivity and culture are continually, if gradually, penetrating dominant norms through minute and local power shifts. Knowledges, styles, and values emerge then, "at the margins", contesting prevailing forms and institutions and providing opportunities for transformation of those forms.[383] However, as Bordo suggests, even though resistance is continual, it does not follow that it (resistance) is on an equal basis with culturally entrenched forms. She argues, against those who adhere to the notion of "the absolute heterogeneity of culture," that in the contemporary aesthetics of appearance, there are "dominant, strongly normalizing (racial and gendered) forms", the coerciveness of which must be acknowledged if they are to be effectively struggled against.[384]

Bordo believes that American feminism has played a significant role in transforming Western intellectual paradigms that define and represent the body. Along with the theorists discussed below, she describes certain consistent features within traditional paradigms, the most pervasive being the location of the body on the nature side of the nature/culture duality. She

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[382] Bordo, 27.

[383] Ibid., 28.

[384] Ibid., 29.

notes that Karl Marx's reimaging of the body as a "historical and not merely a biological arena, an arena shaped by the social and economic organization of human life and, often, brutalized by it," was crucial to the paradigm shift of this century according to which the body has moved from the nature side to the cultural.[385] In Bordo's view, the former unitary conception of 'the body' was replaced, with Marx, by a discourse that takes into account *whose* body we are talking about, along with the differences wrought by gender, class, race, and age.

I agree with Bordo's assessment that the current tendency to "textualize" the body gives "a free, creative reign to *meaning* at the expense of attention to the body's material locatedness in history, practice, culture. If the body is treated as pure text, destabilizing elements can be emphasized and freedom and self determination realized."[386] With her though, I am left pondering, "is there a body in this text?"[387] As was discussed in Chapter Two, here in Chapter Three, and will be later in Chapter Four, it seems to me that the body we experience is mediated by various

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[385] Ibid., 33.

[386] Ibid., 38. I suggest Judith Butler's analysis exemplifies this tendency to textualize the body. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1990); and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

[387] Ibid.

psychological, religious, and cultural constructs and images. If we are to imagine the possibilities inherent in the postmodern sensibility that recognizes both multiplicity and "limitations of the self" along with "the weight of collective history", it will, in my opinion, be necessary to acknowledge this embodied point of view.[388]

Bordo argues that the transformation of culture requires that we bring "the margins to the center"; in other words, when we bring those aspects of our identities that have been marginalized or excluded into the center of culture, (Kristeva's notion of the abject comes to mind here), "they are themselves transformed and *transforming*."[389]

We will return to Bordo's analysis in the next chapter, with a particular emphasis on how she interprets the physical transformations sought by many women, and increasingly men, in contemporary Western culture.

In order to expand upon the myriad ways in which the contemporary female body is regulated I turn now to the work of Sandra Bartky. In her essay, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," Bartky applies Foucault's analysis of the discipline of the body to the particular "styles

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[388] Ibid., 40.

[389] Ibid., 41, 42.

of the flesh" embedded in modern requirements of femininity.[390] She persuasively illustrates how specific disciplinary practices produce a recognizably feminine body.[391] She notes that such practices consist of at least three categories: "those that aim to produce a body of a certain size and configuration; those that bring forth from this body a specific repertoire of gestures, postures, and movements; and those that are directed toward the display of this body as an ornamental surface."[392] In keeping with my intent in this thesis to utilize a pragmatic methodological approach, I especially appreciate Bartky's emphasis on the *consequences* of these disciplinary practices for female identity and subjectivity.

Bartky notes that styles of the female body have changed over time and across cultures, a reflection of distinctive cultural obsessions and preoccupations.[393] The current ideals exemplified in the emaciated, prepubescent body, and the large breasted, slim-hipped taut body, require diet and exercise regimes that, regardless of the intensity with which they are

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[390] Sandra Lee Bartky,"Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 63-82.

[391] While I prefer the term female to feminine, Bartky uses the latter.

[392] Bartky, 65.

[393] Ibid., 66.

undertaken, still leave their adherents perceiving themselves as woefully inadequate. Constantly monitoring one's appetite for food and attempting to sculpt one's body through vigorous exercise can lead, as will be examined later, to anorexia nervosa and other eating disorders. However, even for girls and women whose obsession does not carry them to such extremes, "the body becomes one's enemy, an alien being bent on thwarting one's disciplinary project."[394] Even facial expressions can betray this project; women must learn then to restrict the extent to which emotions are registered on the face.[395]

Along with such bodily preoccupations, women are restricted in terms of how they move and the spaces within which movement must be contained. For Bartky, who, in turn, is commenting on the work of Iris Young in this regard, "Women's space is not a field in which her bodily intentionality can be freely realized but an enclosure in which she feels herself positioned and by which she is confined."[396] Along with dramatic differences in typical masculine and feminine body posture, women's faces and

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[394] Ibid.

[395] In an example that borders on the ludicrous, were it not so poignant, Bartky relates how Sophia Loren recommends applying a piece of tape to the forehead or between the brows to remind one not to frown. This, of course, must only be done when one is home alone! Ibid., 67.

[396] Ibid. Bartky is referring to Iris Young, "Throwing like a girl: A phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility, and spatiality," in *Human Studies*, 3 (1980): 137-156.

bodies are trained to defer to male scrutiny: lowering or averting her eyes, the 'nice girl', as compared to the 'loose woman', abandons her "claim to the sovereign status of seer."[397] Furthermore, there are significant imbalances within both the 'economy of smiles' and the 'economy of touch': Nancy Henley has found, for example, that the rate of smile return by women was 93%, while 67% by men and that men touch women with more liberty and on more parts of the body than women touch men.[398] Women are trained to move, gesture and stand not only in a constricted manner, but one that also includes "grace and a certain eroticism restrained by modesty."[399]

Along with such requirements of feminine motility, size, and shape, the production of an ornamental surface also demands vigilant discipline and a specialized knowledge. Countless hours and untold financial resources are necessary for compliance with respect to make-up, hair, clothes selection and application. There is no evidence to suggest that women of color and working class women are less committed to these endeavours than their more privileged sisters; the differential may be found in the

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[397] Ibid., 63. We will discuss later how Anne Marie Hunter picks up and expands upon this theme.

[398] Ibid., 68. Bartky is referring to Nancy Henley, *Body Politics*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 176, 177, 108.

[399] Ibid.

price one pays, rather than the preoccupation involved. Bartky argues that for all women within this "disciplinary project of femininity," the pervasive sense of bodily unacceptability gives rise to compulsive and ritualistic practices and technologies in service of the required bodily transformation. Ultimately, she is destined to fail: "thus a measure of shame is added to a woman's sense that the body she inhabits is deficient," a fact even more poignantly borne by poor women who also carry the "more general shame of poverty."[400]

In Bartky's view, "a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women...femininity as spectacle is something in which virtually every woman is required to participate."[401] Moreover, the imbalance of the social power of the sexes is reflected in both the inescapability of judgement and the criteria by which women are judged. For example, the contemporary demands of femininity require that a woman possess the body of an immature adolescent, a face that defies age and character, and that she take up as little space as possible. At the same time, she is ridiculed for being preoccupied with such trivial concerns. For, as was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, her status is certainly not enhanced within a society that for centuries has been profoundly suspicious of both the

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[400] Ibid., 72.

[401] Ibid., 72, 73.

body and sexuality.

If this is a system of, as Foucault says, "micropower" that is "essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical" then who and where are the disciplinarians?[402] Bartky argues that in spite of the influence of the media, parents, or image consultants, "the disciplinary power that inscribes femininity on the female body is everywhere and it is nowhere; the disciplinarian is everyone and yet no one in particular."[403] Because it is anonymous and so widely dispersed, this disciplinary power must be understood not only as that which produces a "subjected and practiced, an inferiorized, body" but within the context of a much greater discipline, which for Bartky is "an oppressive and inegalitarian system of sexual subordination."[404] Both women's lives and their very subjectivities are structured within this hierarchal system of gender. According to Bartky, this illustrates "the ancient tension between what-is and what-appears: the phenomenal forms in which [the system of gender subordination] is manifested are often quite different from the real relations that form its deeper structure."[405]

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[402] Ibid., 74. Bartky is quoting Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 222.

[403] Ibid.

[404] Ibid., 75.

[405] Ibid., 76.

Bartky later comments on women's experience of shame, a theme that will be examined in more detail in Chapter Four. For her, the intensity of women's shame is a reflection of the extent to which dominant culture's standards of physical perfection have been internalized. She expands upon this notion of internalization by describing it as the process by which something is "incorporated into the structure of the self." For Bartky, it is a "generalized male witness" that structures women's "consciousness of [themselves] as bodily being[s]."[406] Both women's sense of identity and of mastery are threatened by entry into this "machinery of power" according to which their appetites, body size and shape, posture and movements are regulated.[407]

In an other essay titled "Narcissism, Femininity and Alienation," Bartky states: "Knowing that she is subjected to the cold appraisal of the male connoisseur and that her life prospects may depend on how she is seen, a woman learns to appraise herself first. The sexual objectification of women produces a duality in feminine consciousness. The gaze of the Other is internalized so that I myself become at once seer and

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[406] Ibid., 77.

[407] Ibid., 80. Bartky is quoting Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 138.

seen, appraiser and the thing appraised."[408] For Bartky, this Other is often what she calls the "fashion beauty complex" which overtly glorifies the female body while covertly depreciating it.[409] This complex creates in women an estrangement from their very bodily being: "on the one hand she *is* it and is scarcely allowed to be anything else; on the other hand she must exist perpetually at a distance from her physical self, fixed at this distance in a permanent posture of disapproval."[410]

In its effects at the subjective level, Bartky believes the fashion beauty complex can be compared to the church. She states:

> The church cultivates in its adherents very profound anxieties about the body, most particularly about bodily appetites and sexual desires. It then presents itself as the only instrument able, through expiation, to take away the very guilt and shame it has produced. The fashion beauty complex refines and deepens feminine anxieties which would accompany the status of sex-object in any case; like the church, it offers itself, its procedures and institutions as uniquely able to diminish these anxieties. Magical physical transformations can be accomplished by the faithful like the spiritual transformations promised by the church. ... Body care rituals are like sacraments; at best they put a woman who would be lost and abandoned without them into what may feel like a state of grace; at worst, they exhibit the typical obsessive-compulsive

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[408] Bartky, "Narcissism, Femininity and Alienation," in *Femininity and Domination*, 38.

[409] Ibid., 39.

[410] Ibid., 40.

features of much religious behavior.[411]

In Bartky's view, the decline of the family and the church in their roles as "producers and regulators" of femininity has coincided with the growing importance of the fashion beauty complex. I believe we need to be concerned about the fact that both younger girls and older women, across cultures, are entering into and existing within this machinery of power with devastating consequences to self-worth, identity, and creativity. The alienation women experience is two-fold: we are destined to mere bodily being while having little control over the configuration this being is to take.

Of course, preoccupation with youth and beauty is not a new phenomenon. What may be unprecedented however, is the extent to which the norms of femininity are focused upon women's bodies, not in terms of their innocence or maternal qualities, but rather, their appearance. It is, in fact, "infatuation with an inferiorized body."[412] The escalating power of the image of normative femininity has taken the place of the religious tract of the past, effecting women from prepubescence throughout the life cycle, producing a "self-policing subject, a self committed to a relentless surveillance [which is] a form of obedience to

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[411] Ibid., 41.

[412] Ibid., 40.

patriarchy."[413] Women paradoxically exist in a state of perpetual visibility, while remaining largely unheard and invisible as active subjects within this machinery of power. Bartky is not optimistic that a far-reaching resistance to contemporary requirements of femininity can be anticipated. Nonetheless, she insists "We women cannot begin the revision of our own bodies until we learn to read the cultural messages we inscribe upon them daily."[414]

In her text, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, Lynda Nead argues that through the deployment of the female nude in art, the female sexual body has been both contained and regulated.[415] Her analysis has relevance, I believe, beyond examining the meaning of art because it also engages in specifying more general structures of meaning, of values, and beliefs. Her analysis also provides a framework within which we can follow Bartky's suggestion that we learn to read the cultural messages inscribed on the body. For Nead, "the forms, conventions, and poses of art have worked metaphorically to shore up the female body - to seal orifices and to prevent marginal matter from transgressing the boundary dividing the inside of the

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[413] Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," 80.

[414] Ibid., 82.

[415] Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

body and the outside, the self from the space of the other."[416] Of particular interest to this thesis is how, as Douglas suggests, bodily boundaries are related to social and cultural boundaries. Do we have, for example, in various bodily transgressions, images of social deviation? If Douglas is correct in saying that bodily margins are considered dangerous, then perhaps the female body in particular is in need of containment. It is possible, as Nead suggests, that the transformative desires of the female body builder and the anorectic, for example, carry echoes of the magical regulation provided by the classical art form of the female nude.

Within the contemporary aesthetic of the slim, taut, youthful and muscularly defined female body, "fat is excess, surplus matter."[417] The meanings attributed to fat, perfection and beauty are socially constituted and given meaning through social and cultural representations. Over the past two decades in particular, women's quest for the ideal body is also seen as her quest for freedom, for realizing her potential. Nead refers to Foucault's theory of how power is inscribed on the body, not coercively, from above or outside, but "through the production of knowledge concerning the body and self regulation...organized

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[416] Ibid., 6.

[417] Ibid., 10.

from within the subject."[418] This is readily demonstrated within the ethic and aesthetic of the 'work-out' where, through the exercise of power and control over oneself, the ideal of being 'close to the bone' is promised. With excess flesh trimmed, one is closer to one's true self.

The centrality of boundaries in the configuration of the female body is also exhibited by the anorectic's determination to be rid of surplus flesh. I will pursue this notion further in the next chapter, but for now I want to suggest that the anorectic may be understood as one whose distorted perceptions of her body's form and boundaries compels her to return to her original, essential self. For Nead, what is common about these various styles of the flesh, (for example, the body-builder and the self-starver) is the "female body as representation, with woman playing out the roles of both viewed object and viewing subject, forming and judging her image against cultural ideals and exercising a fearsome self regulation."[419] It is this issue of space and boundaries then, around which "form and identity, visual representation and psychical boundaries overlap."[420]

Nead later refers to the "foundational opposition within Western metaphysics" as an explanation for the difficulty in

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[418] Ibid.

[419] Ibid.

[420] Ibid.

reconciling form and matter in the representation of the female body.[421] That is, women's role in Western philosophy and religion has been secondary to the primary subject. However, Eve/woman's supplementary function is threatening because her existence continuously testifies to the "original lack" in Adam/man. The Adam/Eve, man/woman pairing is the foundational opposition upon which other oppositions (for example, culture/nature) are mapped. The transformation in art of the potentially wayward woman, who is both "mater (mother) and materia (matter)" is then, a significant accomplishment. Pure nature is converted into pure culture, through the forms of art.[422] I would suggest that, at the symbolic level, the same processes occur in so-called low or mass culture through the images of the contained and controlled female form produced, for example, by contemporary advertising. Furthermore, in terms of their dispersal throughout the culture, these images are viewed by a far larger and more diverse audience than that of the high-art tradition.

Both Nead and Elizabeth Grosz discuss Mary Douglas's work on the significance of boundaries for maintaining order and definition for the subject, and in society. In her text, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Grosz points out that, for Douglas, the question of purity and danger is located

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[421] Ibid., 18.

[422] Ibid.

in the paradigmatic relations between the two sexes.[423] In *Purity and Danger*, Douglas states: "the two sexes can serve as a model for the collaboration and distinctiveness of social units. So also can the processes of ingestion portray political absorption. Sometimes bodily orifices seem to represent points of entry or exit to social units, or bodily perfection can symbolize an ideal theocracy."[424] In Grosz's view, for Douglas, the body functions to symbolize the "collective fantasies and obsessions" of a society.[425] Bodily margins, and all other borderline positions are sites of possible contamination or pollution. Power and danger lies in these transitional states; the marginal is always located as a site of vulnerability.

Douglas claims that within some cultures, each of the sexes poses a threat to the other, and that this threat is located in the polluting powers of the other's sexual fluids. In other societies, it is believed that only one sex, usually the male, is endangered by contact with the other (female). Bodily fluids then, are borderline states, conveying different indices of "control, disgust, revulsion."[426] Perceptions of the social order are expressed through these ideas of pollution and sexual

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[423] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 1994.

[424] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 4.

[425] Grosz, 193.

[426] Ibid., 195.

dangers. Furthermore, within this schema, rituals of purification serve as "metaphors for the processes of cultural homogeneity."[427]

Grosz suggests that in its regulation of the body, patriarchal culture has not allowed for a model of dual sexual symmetry according to which the contamination of sexual bodies would be a two-way process.[428] For example, she argues that men's bodily fluids are not considered as polluting for women as women's are for men. "It is women and what men consider to be their inherent capacity for contagions, their draining, demanding bodily processes that have figured so strongly in cultural representations, and that have emerged so clearly as a problem for social control."[429]

Julia Kristeva has also employed Douglas's analysis of purity and pollution in her formulation of abjection. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva outlines the symbolic significance of the markings of various bodily margins and orifices for the subject and for the culture.[430] She is heavily dependent upon Douglas's analysis of purity, pollution, and

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[427] Ibid., 193.

[428] Ibid., 197.

[429] Ibid.

[430] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

danger in constructing her "typology of personalized horror."[431] She is concerned with the conditions within which the clean and properly socialized body are produced. The most important border for Kristeva is the space between subject and object, the inside and the outside of the body. Subjectivity, for her, is organized around the distinction between the subject/object and inside/outside polarities and on the sense of the body as a "unified whole."[432] The abject is that which, because it is considered impure, is expelled from the clean and proper body. Kristeva describes the ambiguous quality of that which calls for abjection: "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite...The abject simultaneously beseeches and polarizes the subject."[433]

Subjectivity and sociality then, are constructed on the expulsion of corporeal functions that are considered filthy or antisocial. In Nead's reading of Kristeva, "this process of rejection can never be final or complete but remains always at the border of the subject's identity, threatening to dissolve apparent unities and making identity a continuously provisional

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[431] Grosz, 192.

[432] Nead, 32.

[433] Kristeva, 4, 5.

state."[434] In Kristeva's words, "There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being...[The abject] is death infecting life....It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us."[435] The abject then, is the site of both danger and desire.

For Kristeva, the abject opposes the patriarchal order of the symbolic and stands thus on the side of the feminine. Grosz articulates her appreciation of Kristeva's work when she says, "this notion of abjection links the lived experience of the body, the cultural investment in selectively marking the body, the privileging of some parts and functions while resolutely minimizing or leaving un- or underrepresented other parts and functions. It is the consequence of a culture effectively intervening into the constitution of the value of the body."[436]

Nead suggests that the connections between Douglas' and Kristeva's arguments are evident in that, for both, power is located at the borders of socially formulated categories. It is at these margins that meaning is interrogated. While Douglas's work on defilement is from a sociological and anthropological

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[434] Nead, 32.

[435] Kristeva, 3, 4.

[436] Grosz, 192.

perspective, Kristeva's account moves it into a more psychological and subjective domain. Finally, Nead proposes that the central difference in their analysis is that "for Douglas bodily boundaries are not privileged in any way but are seen as symbols of and responses to social orderings, [whereas] for Kristeva the body's margins are primary as the site of the subject's struggle for attainment of identity."[437]

I agree with Nead that this discussion of the manner in which meaning is regulated at the margins of categories raises possibilities for a feminist critique of patriarchal representations of the female body.[438] If the boundaries of the contemporary idealized form can be challenged, possibilities exist for the articulation of differences across race, age, size, and physical abilities. Within the current aesthetic of physical perfection, many women's bodies are rendered invisible. As will be examined in the chapter that follows, women's right to self-definition and self-representation may depend upon the acknowledgement of many different types of bodies, thus challenging dominant ideologies so that existing values may be critiqued and new meanings for the female body made visible.

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[437] Nead, 32.

[438] Ibid., 33.

CHAPTER FOUR

BRINGING RELATIONAL THEORY AND THEORIES OF THE BODY TOGETHER

While referring to 'the body', this chapter is more accurately about the tragedy of disembodiment, and the experience of shame wrought, I propose, by both cultural and religious practices that expose and mortify female flesh.[439] It represents the beginning of an effort to redeem the body from the violence of narcissism and is predicated on the assumption that acknowledgement of the fragmented body is what will paradoxically permit new forms of desire, new connections to the self to emerge. Themes of incarnation and discarnation, along with the attendant notions of indulgence and denial will be examined. I consider the female body to be both a site of shame *and* of transformation and suggest that, indeed, women embody shame for the culture, just as they incarnate possibilities for its transformation. In other words, women carry *both* ecstasy and horror for the culture. In a more psychological vein, I argue that women's internalization of

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[439] I will explore shame as protective of psychic and cultural life, as well as its phenomenological sense, which includes the affects of contempt and revulsion and the dread of exposure.

patriarchal standards of bodily acceptability is central to the experience of body-shame and self-hate. In this chapter, the 'starving body' will be emphasized. However, attention also needs to be drawn to the 'tattooed body', the 'surgically-corrected' body, the 'newly-reproductive technologized' body, the 'mastectomied body', the 'self-slashed' body - to name but a few of the ways the contemporary female body is encrypted, all of which beg an analysis that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Here, I consider the starving female body as a metaphor for our age as well as a striking symbolic form: it is the site where the "excruciating spectacle" of "starvation amidst plenty, ... denial set against desire, the striving for invisibility versus the wish to be seen" is played out in patriarchal time and space.[440] The anorectic, "half heroine, half horror", has become the "enigmatic icon" of contemporary culture; her macerated form symbolizes both her own and the community's malaise.[441]

The themes discussed here are situated within the contemporary analysis of the body and culture as it was articulated in the previous chapter. We saw there how theorists like Bordo and Bartky ascribe to the notion of the body as

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[440] Susie Orbach, *Hunger Strike: The Anorectic's Struggle as a Metaphor for Our Age* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1986), 26; Betsy Ettorre, "Women and Substance Abuse: Towards A Feminist Perspective or How to Make Dust Fly", in *Women's Studies Int. Forum* 12, no.6 (1989), 595.

[441] Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 2.

inscriptive surface. More particularly, for them, the body is a cultural medium upon which are inscribed the politics of gender.[442] As well as a text of culture, the body is a site of practical social control.[443] As I pointed out in Chapter Three, Bordo applies a feminist appropriation of Foucault to her reading of how the changing forms and meanings of the body reflect historical conflict and change. For Foucault, the culture's practices, which are more primary than belief, are inscribed upon the body, thus determining its "forces, energies, sensations, pleasures."[444] Paradoxically, then, the body's spontaneous desires are a product of the same culture that abhors them. Our bodies are marked by the current forms and norms by which the self, femininity, masculinity, and desire are produced, not by way of ideology, but by virtue of the manifold ways our bodies

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[442] Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 1990; Susan Bordo, "Material Girl"; "Reading the Slender Body", in *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science*, ed. Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller, and Sally Shuttleworth (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 83-112.; "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault," in *Gender /Body /Knowledge*, ed. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 13-33.; "Anorexia Nervosa," 73-104.; Maud Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists;* Anne Marie Hunter, "Numbering the Hairs of Our Heads: Male Social Control and the All-Seeing Male God", in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 8, 2, (Fall 1992), 7-26.

[443] Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity," 13.

[444] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol.1, trans Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 155, quoted in Bordo, "Anorexia Nervosa," 90.

are organized and regulated.

For Bordo, contemporary eating disorders reflect one aspect of the regulation of the female body, and of the reproduction of gender relations. Looked at historically, it can be said that the discipline of the female body has been a very effective strategy of social control: female bodies become, in Foucault's words, "docile bodies", habituated to the requirements of cultural life.[445] In our era, the rigorous and obsessive pursuit of the impossible ideal of femininity, reproduced in terms of the slender, young, and firm body, has become the organizing principle and "central torment" of too many women's lives.[446] Bordo argues that preoccupation with fat, diet, and slenderness functions as a powerful "normalizing strategy", and thus ensures "the production of self-monitoring and self-disciplining `docile bodies', sensitive to any departure from social norms, and habituated to self-improvement and transformation in the service of those norms."[447]

Bordo suggests that the key mechanism of this normalizing strategy is the correct management of desire. The slender (and,

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[445] Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity," 14.

[446] Ibid.

[447] Bordo, "Reading the Slender Body," 85. Bordo is citing Foucault on "docile bodies". Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Allan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 135-169.

by association, attractive, successful, desirable) female body is a metaphor for the regulation of desire. This is particularly interesting, given that female hunger has long been a powerful cultural metaphor for female power, desire, and sexuality. If there is "no such thing as an uncoded body", then the body's determination by the culture's practices may be particularly exemplified by hunger.[448] Maud Ellmann notes how the meanings attributed to hunger vary depending on the circumstances of the starver, in other words, the social context in which it occurs, rather than any knowledge we have of its "essence". Starvation may be the result of war, political statement, famine, psychosis, disease, piety or dieting.[449] Thus it is that "a reading of its signs", or the interpretation of its symptoms, will vary depending on the pressures of the world view.[450] Nonetheless, hunger speaks in a particular way to the "savage loneliness of bodily experience", a fact made even more compelling by virtue of the modern frenzy of dieting, body sculpting, and surgeries devoted to the mortification of fat and the perpetuation of youth.[451] Ellmann proposes, contrary to Bynum's view which will

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[448] Lukas Barr, "An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," *Blast unLtd* (Summer 1989), 12. Cited in Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 5.

[449] Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 5, 4.

[450] Ibid., 5.

[451] Ibid., 6.

be taken up later, that the saints of the Middle Ages fasted to regulate their sexual desires. Contemporary slimmers, however, starve to "immolate their fat, blind to the social economics of their sacrifice."[452] Quoting Horkheimer and Adorno, Ellmann attests, "If ... "the history of civilization is the history of the introversion of the sacrifice," slimmers are even more civilized than saints, because they internalize the rites of expiation once regulated by the Church."[453] Ellmann argues the Church controlled the meanings of the macerations of the female saints, while "the modern anorectic starves at large, deliriously."[454] I disagree with her here, however, and would argue instead that the contemporary cult of thinness and youth functions as an institution. For example, the diet industry is a multi-billion dollar a year business in North America and cosmetic surgery is the fastest growing 'medical' speciality.[455] The anorectic starves, perhaps deliriously, but not "at large"; rather she does so within this very specific and very regulated social phenomenon. Since "slimming has become the national

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[452] Ibid., 7.

[453] Ibid. Ellmann is citing Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1972, 1994), 55.

[454] Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 7.

[455] Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, (Toronto: Random House, 1990), 181.

religion in America, and slenderness the measure of one's moral caliber", the rhetoric of fitness requires that we be unremittingly vigilant and penitent in liberating our bodies from fat and the shame of our histories.[456] As Simone Weil argued, "to starve is to renounce the past."[457] I believe self-starving women, many of whom are also survivors of sexual abuse, encrypt this renunciation: it is a past so savagely carved in their flesh that the wordless testimony of discarnation is their only apparent alternative.

For other eating disordered women, the message of female hunger as a potent metaphor for out-of-control desire, sexuality, and power is frequently internalized in gendered terms as the battle between their male (for example, disciplined and spiritual) and female (dangerous and insatiable) selves. As Bordo writes: "In the anorectic's lexicon, and throughout dominant Western religious and philosophical traditions, the virile capacity for self-management is decisively coded as male. By contrast, all those bodily spontaneities - hunger, sexuality, the emotions - seen as needful of containment and control, have been culturally constructed and coded as female."[458] The

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[456] Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 5.

[457] Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (London: Routledge, 1987), 18, quoted in Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 10.

[458] Bordo, "Reading the Slender Body," 102-103.

dualistic construction of an appetitive, bodily female principle that opposes the disciplined, wilful male principle is supported and maintained by a network of practices, institutions and technologies; in other words by patriarchal power relations.[459]

Anxiety about women's desires and hungers - that they are threatening to the patriarchal order - increases during times of upheaval in established gender relations. It is significant, then, that anorexia, the stifling of desire, has peaked during a period of cultural backlash against efforts to reorganize and redefine female and male roles. Both Susan Brownmiller and Naomi Wolf analyze this phenomenon and, like Bordo, they point out that it is women and their bodies who pay the greatest price when the regulation of desire is especially problematic for a culture.[460] I suggest the anorectic manifests, in a most radical way, what many girls and women live, as discussed in the previous chapter. Specifically, too commonly, girls and women believe they need to eat up their words, to swallow their desires, to shut down what they know, lest they engorge the possibilities, the knowledges, that have been denied them. In both symbolic and material terms, women of all ages risk hard-earned freedoms by colluding with

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[459] I suggest it is a dualism that requires collapsing if we are to develop alternatives to the more traditional modes of theorizing the body.

[460] Susan Brownmiller, *Femininity* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984); Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 1990.

those forces that sustain their oppression. If we understand anorexia in terms of female protest, then we also have to account for the fact that such protest functions, paradoxically, to reproduce rather than to change those very conditions being protested.[461] For, what finally is achieved when starvation, a metaphor for the rejection of social constraints, approaches its extreme point - at the moment of death?

Through multiple points of intervention, then, the rules and requirements of culture are written on - and with cosmetic surgery, *in* - the flesh of women. These incisions are arguably voluntary, as compared to the more openly violent markings that occur in many of our institutions including, for example, our prisons and psychiatric hospitals. Nonetheless there is, as Grosz points out, "nothing natural or ahistoric about these modes of corporeal inscription. Through them, bodies are made amenable to the prevailing exigencies of power." Furthermore, she notes that the various procedures of bodily scarification "do not

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[461] For analyses of anorexia as protest see, for example: Catherine Steiner Adair, "The Body Politic: Normal Female Adolescent Development and the Development of Eating Disorders," in *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 14, 1, (1986), 95-114; Kim Chernin, *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1981); *The Hungry Self: Women, Eating & Identity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985); Susie Orbach, *Fat is a Feminist Issue* (New York: Paddington Press, 1978); and *Hunger Strike: The Anorectic's Struggle as a Metaphor for Our Age* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986); and Marcia Millman, *Such a Pretty Face: Being Fat in America* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1980).

simply adorn or add to a body that is basically given through biology; they help constitute the very biological organization of the subject." For Grosz, "every body is marked by the history and specificity of its existence."[462]

The history and specificity of the anorectic body illustrates how anorexia usually begins in the pursuit of the slender body, an indication that it emerges out of what are in fact conventional, expected, 'normal' feminine occupations and practices. The anorectic's disordered, yet meticulously controlled body is a reminder of how difficult it is in our image-driven culture to distinguish between "parodies and possibilities for the self"; between image and reality.[463] Within this configuration, anorexia may well be, at least in part, a vehicle of protest against a culture that disdains female appetite, causes women to be ashamed of their hungers and needs and requires them to be vigilant in their efforts to transform their bodies.[464] The anorectic protest marks the "stifling of the female voice through one's own voicelessness"; it is, of course, an ambiguous protest given that the silent and uncomplaining woman is idealized in patriarchy.[465] Bartky reminds us that this

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[462] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 142.

[463] Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity," 19.

[464] Orbach, *The Hunger Strike*, especially 23-115.

[465] Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity," 21.

protest and self disclosure is ambiguous because of the contradiction between appearance and reality that constitutes women's experiences within patriarchy. For Gilligan, women's protest is ambiguous because it arises from the "deeply-knotted dilemma" that is central to the lives of girls and women; namely, how can women be anywhere but "inside and outside" of the beliefs, practices, and structures of patriarchy?[466]

Gilligan and other relational theorists at both Harvard and the Stone Center, believe that eating disorders need to be addressed in the context of the significance of attachment and relationships in female identity formation. Catherine Steiner-Adair, for example, proposes that since girls' sense of identity develops within a relational context, they consequently depend upon, and are vulnerable to, external referents. Research both with anorectic girls, and with the development of 'normal' female adolescents, report that positive self evaluation is based on acceptance from others: "girls are oriented toward an external audience for a sense of self, for making judgements, and for signs that will confirm self-esteem."[467] By adolescence, familial, religious, and cultural influences have educated girls to be compliant, dependent, and interpersonally sensitive. For the past thirty years however, shifts in values may have

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[466] Gilligan, "Joining the Resistance," 20.

[467] Steiner-Adair, "The Body Politic," 165.

contributed to a double bind for adolescent girls; not only are they socialized to value relationships, they also learn that relationships are generally not socially valued, and now, they also are expected to be autonomous, independent, assertive 'super women'.

Added to these dilemmas in identity formation is their struggle to accept and integrate their changing bodies. While both girls and boys experience some degree of anxiety, preoccupation and dissatisfaction with their bodies at adolescence, the impact of sociocultural influences seems to have a far more dramatic impact on girls. They must come to terms with their developing bodies in the context of a society that judges girls and women by their appearance, and by their ability to remake their bodies to conform to the current rigidly and narrowly defined beauty ideal. Wooley and Wooley found that by age five girls have been socialized to hate fat.[468] At adolescence, their self-consciousness and critical appraisal of their bodies reaches new proportions. This is compounded by, and I would suggest, generated by, a culture that trains girls and women to be dissatisfied with their bodies; in fact, to compromise on their appearance is considered pathological.

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[468] Susan C. Wooley and O.W. Wooley, "Eating Disorders, Obesity and Anorexia," in *Women and Psychotherapy: An Assessment of Research and Practice*, ed. Anita Brodsky and Rachel Hare-Mustin (New York: The Guilford Press, 1980), 135-159.

Rather than helping girls to relate to, and celebrate, their own bodies in a creative way, culture requires girls to deny the validity of who they really are as young women. Steiner-Adair and other relational theorists argue that eating disorders and body image disturbances are not, as traditionally understood, a result of the failure to achieve autonomy. Rather, "eating disorders have erupted in this culture because of an unhealthy and unrealistic emphasis on autonomy in women."[469] For Steiner-Adair and other relational theorists, "eating disorders are tied to girls' perceptions of cultural values that make it difficult for girls to integrate and value relationships."[470] Janet Surrey of the Stone Center also contends that eating disorders should be understood in terms of the cultural discrepancy between the course of relational self-development for young women and the current cultural values that emphasize self-development through autonomy, self-sufficiency, assertiveness and competition. When basic relational needs are thwarted, there is a sense of being disconnected, of being out of touch with oneself. Surrey suggests that psychologically, "the internalized mother/daughter relationship is disrupted"; food then, becomes an important

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[469] Steiner-Adair, "The Body Politic," 169. I would add that this emphasis on autonomy and self-sufficiency has harmed boys and men, albeit with different consequences, as it has girls and women.

[470] Ibid.

vehicle for acting out the daughter's protest.[471]

Steiner-Adair prefers the term "body politic" to refer to the use of the body in making a political, social, or spiritual statement. She suggests that if we understand the phenomenon of self starving as it exists in contemporary culture as a "body politic" rather than a "body pathology", then "emaciated females become a symbol of a culture that does not support female development or the value of relationships."[472] As others have done, she points out that historically, "the rounded female body has symbolically represented the value of relationships in life, the interrelatedness and interdependency of people."[473] In contemporary culture, where interrelatedness is denied and devalued, and thinness and youth are idealized, the adolescent girl learns to disdain full breasts, wide hips, and rounded bellies - in short, bodies that signify interdependence and relationality. Her self-starving, then, may well be a mode of truth-telling, of witnessing to, and protesting, the relational impoverishment of contemporary culture, and of the difficulties in growing up female in such a world.

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[471] Surrey, "Eating Patterns as a Reflection of Women's Development," in *Women's Growth in Connection*, 248.

[472] Steiner-Adair, "The Body Politic," 175.

[473] Steiner-Adair, "The Body Politic," 174. She is referring here to the work of Eric Neumann, *The Great Mother*, (Princeton, N.J.: Bollingen Foundation, Princeton University Press, 1955).

As well as protest, however, anorexia may signify retreat. Chernin has suggested that, in entering the adult world, the daughter risks surpassing the mother in the sense of having choices available to her that her mother only dreamed of; the daughter's anxiety and guilt is assuaged by her attack against her own body.[474] I would add that if her appearance, in the sense of exposure, triggers shame, then her solution - to disappear, to become voiceless, to suffer aphonia - is a logical, albeit futile and tragic one. Caught in the throes of intransigent ambiguity and paradox, the anorectic is enacting, through her much politicized and macerated body, a culture that is hungry for genuine relationship.[475] Yet, the rigorous restraint of self starvation is such that the codes that bind one to humanity are abandoned.

With Ellmann, I propose that beyond 'protest', beyond 'retreat', lies the vision of a miraculous transformation in which the body is released "from all contexts, even from the context of embodiment itself."[476] If this is so, then the anorectic, along with the medieval mystic and the political hunger striker, undergoes the "ineluctable invasion of the

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[474] Chernin, *The Hungry Self*, 90-93.

[475] Steiner Adair, "The Body Politic," 176.

[476] Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 14.

void."[477] For Ellmann, "the quest for bodilessness - "immortality" - masks a darker quest for bodiliness - "immorality" - and for the most ecstatic surrender to the flesh.[478] They all witness to the "strange affinity between askesis and excess."[479] To understand, then, "what it means to live starvation", we need to go beyond the language of protest and retreat and the rhetoric of slenderness and self control.[480] I agree with Ellmann's suggestion that there is something "more *eschatological* at stake" in this strange "discipline of disengendering".[481] To grasp it, we might explore the realm of fantasy, which for Ellmann means concentrating on literature. As she so eloquently states, the starving body is itself a text, "the living dossier of its discontents" for "the injustices of power are encoded in the savage hieroglyphics of its sufferings."[482] I suggest that by focusing on the body *as* text, "as the living dossier of its discontents", we can discover the role of the imagination in the attempt to interpret what it means

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[477] Ibid., 16.

[478] Ibid., 15.

[479] Ibid.

[480] Ibid., 16.

[481] Ibid.

[482] Ibid., 17.

for the body "to reject itself".[483] The context, we must remember, is one wherein eating is the route to knowledge, as implied in Genesis, and "to be female is to be hungry."[484]

I ask, then, what lure does the dream of disembodiment hold in the imagination of the adolescent girl whose developing body encodes the power relations of patriarchy? At what point does the anorectic's starving against injustice, against rape, for voice and for fully enfleshed body, become transgressed so that she is starving, not for justice, "but for jouissance", for the "ecstasy of disembodiment"?[485] I question how it is that starving, surgically tucking, sucking, or scraping becomes, in Ellmann's words, a "pursuit of the nothing", taking girls and women beyond the "limits of corporeality", affirming the "supremacy of lack".[486] I am reminded of the persistence with which Atwood's protagonist in the novel *Surfacing* pursued the dream of an extraordinary transformation. Such is the frenzied quest of many women seized by the North American cult of dieting and youth. In my view, the macerations of the anorectic, the weigh-in's of the weight-watcher, and the austerities of a Saint Catherine, originate in "the dream of a miraculous

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[483] Ibid., 15.

[484] Ibid., 43.

[485] Ibid., 13, 2.

[486] Ibid., 13, 27.

transfiguration, whereby the immolation of the flesh will be rewarded by its resurrection" - be that in the body of a model, or an angel - the two indistinguishable in most representations, I might add.[487]

Both Bordo and Ellmann clarify that an intoxicating discovery is made in the process of body immolation: through the denial of her flesh, a woman can share in the hitherto unavailable male ethic and aesthetic of self-transcendence and power over others. Rather than an obstacle to transcendence, her now disavowed body is her entry into the privileged male world. While in both a literal and symbolic sense she is taking up little space and has little power, her lean body may represent freedom from a construction of femininity that is constraining and prohibitive, and which destines her for domesticity.[488] Ellmann notes that she devours books rather than food; the kitchen usurps the bedroom as the "theatre of temptation and the scene of sin."[489] I suggest her indulgence in the accoutrements of 'the diet' teasingly, deliciously mocks her self/body denial, augmenting her pride in the macerations that assure her perfection. Like the Virgin and the mystic of the Middle Ages,

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[487] Ibid., 14.

[488] Although not very convincing, there is some debate as to whether anorexia signifies a fear of pregnancy.

[489] Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 22.

she is no longer confined to the realm of the corporeal; through her asceticism she, too, renounces her association with the maternal, and the insatiable form of hunger that may be "specific to the tragedy of femininity."[490]

In both material and symbolic terms, the self starving woman pays for her desire with her martyrdom, all the while claiming power and transcendence. With Bordo, I argue that it is, in the end, an illusory experience of power for it is predicated on the reproduction of 'docile bodies' in the service of gender normalization. I believe Ellmann concurs when she states that in transfiguring "all their thoughts into dietics", anorectics "starve their language as they starve their flesh."[491] As I see it, the anorectic feeds herself with the words of her silence.

I also agree with Bordo's assessment that the disciplines associated with the tyranny of 'beauty' and youth, i.e. near starvation diets, 'cosmetic' surgery, body sculpting, are, in fact, normalizing rather than transformative. Such disciplines, devoted to the pursuit of bodily acceptability, are aggressive efforts to control, to master and mortify, and ultimately to transform the female body. They are, of course, *ideals* of

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[490] Ibid., 43. Ellmann notes how Freud, in an aside to his essay, "Female Sexuality," commented that girls reproach their mothers not only for not giving them a penis, but for *not giving them enough milk*. See Sigmund Freud, "Female Sexuality," SE, 21, (1931), 234.

[491] Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 43.

femininity, based on the "masculine appropriation of desire" that are being reproduced by the image makers of our culture, and internalized by girls and women.[492]

While Bordo's psychological approach is necessary and useful, Grosz contests that it leaves open the question of the ontological and sociopolitical dimension of the body. She comments, for example, that "the very status of the body as product - the question is whose product? - remains at stake here." [493] Grosz argues that the analyses of theorists like Bordo and Bartky are in danger of perpetuating mind/body dualisms insofar as the body is perceived to be the natural *tabula rasa* upon which the psychological and sociological analyses of culture are inscribed. For Grosz, both women and men are subjects of corporeal production; both are objects of disciplinary surveillance within the orbit of patriarchal power relations. She argues it is not a matter of "more or less, but of differential production".[494] In my estimation, Grosz is extending Foucault's point that *all* bodies are under surveillance, while critizing his use of a "corporeal universal".[495] I believe her analysis is a most valuable contribution in the effort to

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[492] Goldstein, *The Female Body*, viii.

[493] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 143.

[494] Ibid., 144.

[495] Ibid., 188.

understand the sexual, racial, and cultural specificity of bodies. Nonetheless, I conclude it remains significant that in our era, women's bodies are far more thoroughly disciplined and punished than the bodies of men. Furthermore, I submit this is so precisely because women's bodies are the privileged locus for mind/body dualism in the context of the equation between female and body.

As will be discussed below, the female body as object of the male scrutinizing gaze is not only fundamental to women's social location and relational experiences, it is key to the disciplines of disengendering discussed here. Internalizing the all-knowing and all-seeing gaze, girls and women oblige the male spectator, human or divine, in their attempts to embody perfection, while memorizing "the feel and conviction of lack, insufficiency, of never being good enough."[496]

Seeing, and seeing that one is being seen, are powerful determinants in the development of the sense of self. In a similar vein to the object relations theorists discussed in Chapter Two, Francis Broucek has pointed out that being perceived (seen) by the other, and perceiving (seeing) that one is perceived by the other, "calls into being the sense of self."[497]

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[496] Bordo, "Reading the Slender Body," 86; "The Reproduction of Femininity," 14.

[497] Francis J. Broucek, *Shame and the Self*, (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1991), 36.

As we saw earlier, a disruption in this reciprocal exchange, because of, for example, an inadequate maternal holding environment, or inconsistent parental empathic immersion, may cause profound anxiety, fear of separation, and the inability to 'feel real.' In my view, this can result in a compelling belief that one is incapable of intention or able to establish a sense of efficacy. I suggest that the potential for experiencing shame is born in these moments when the sense of self is thwarted. Furthermore, I propose the experience of shame is linked to what Kohut would call the acquisition of selfobject awareness. Can it not be argued, then, that the female body is a site of shame, as other, as "object of vision: a sight", a site of scrutiny upon which contempt for corporeality is inscribed?[498] As was discussed in the last chapter, the disdain of female physicality throughout history has been, and continues to be, illuminated by Western metaphysics and social practices. Furthermore, this disdain is internalized by women and exhibited in their uncomfortable and conflicted relationship with their bodies. Perpetually engaged in a self-surveillance that is soul-destroying, many women not only experience themselves as shamed, they shame themselves, *and* they shame their spectators.

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[498] John Berger, Sven Blomberg, Chris Fox, Michel Dibb, and Richard Hollis, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin Book, 1972), 47; Berger et al is quoted in Hunter, "Numbering the Hairs on Our Heads," 21.

I wish here to draw attention to an analysis of shame that relates it to these issues of exposure and concealment. Doing so, I believe, allows us to better understand the notion of surveillance and women's hypervisibility which will follow. Carl Schneider points out that while the English language has only one word for shame, others typically have two or more. For example, in French, *pudeur* and *honte* are used to convey 'discretion' shame and 'disgrace' shame respectively. Pudeur refers to the sense of shame as "modesty or discretion" and its significance as a "positive restraining influence" in human experience.[499] Pudeur, or discretion shame, "reflects an *order of things*"...and "sustains our personal and social ordering of the world." Discretion, or anticipatory, shame thus safeguards psychic life.[500] Honte, or disgrace shame, is a "*painful, unexpected,* and *disorienting*" experience; one's world disintegrates, there is a rupture in one's relationship with oneself and others.[501] It is both revelatory and relational. As Gershen Kaufman describes it, to feel disgrace shame is "to feel seen in a painfully diminished sense." Disgrace shame is "the affect of inferiority...the most poignant experience of the self by the self...dividing us both

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[499] Carl D. Schneider, *Shame, Exposure, and Privacy,* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977, 1992), 18, 19.

[500] Ibid., 20.

[501] Ibid., 22.

from ourselves and others."[502] For Silvan Tompkins, "shame is the affect of indignation, of defeat, of transgression, and of alienation...shame is felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul."[503]

For Leon Wermser, shame has three forms, the description of which seems to correspond to the meanings associated with pudeur and honte, as articulated by Schneider. In Wermser's typology, there is 1) shame anxiety, or fear of disgrace; 2) shame affect, a complex reaction pattern that includes the affect of contempt and the shame of being exposed; and 3) shame as a preventative attitude which is marked by a stance of reverence and a sense of awe.[504] It is this third aspect of shame that Schneider believes is seriously devalued in contemporary western culture. He suggests there are moments, central privacies, that should be protected by shame. He decries the reduction of all of life to the explicit and the public and believes we should hold on to our vulnerability. He argues that to 'see through' in the pursuit of revealing truth in our tell-all society ignores the shame that

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[502] Gershen Kaufman, *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes*, (New York: Springer, 1989), 17.

[503] Silvan S. Tomkins, "Shame," in *The Many Faces of Shame*, ed. Donald L. Nathanson (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1987), 17.

[504] Leon Wermser, "Shame: The Veiled Companion of Narcissism," in Nathanson, 67-68.

this evokes. Such voyeurism amounts to a ruthless denial of the needs of the other and serves no more that the rapacious instincts of the see-er.[505] For Schneider, the "exposure and violation of one's body, face, name, or other phenomena that symbolize the individual elicit shame. Such phenomena belong to the realm of the private, warranting safe guards from unrestricted encroachments by others."[506] Schneider quotes Erik Erikson, "Shame supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at...One is visible and not ready to be visible."[507]

In my opinion there is a connection between the erosion of discretion shame, the concomitant valuing of the explicit, and the rise of disgrace shame in many girls and women. I propose that to be exposed and visible, when one is not ready, marks a fundamental conflict for girls and women in contemporary culture. As we have seen, many of them conceal their thoughts, feelings and desires while being excruciatingly aware of the exposure of their female bodies. As Schneider understands it, shame is a "symbol of separation" and exposure is a "relational metaphor".[508]

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[505] Carl D. Schneider, "A Mature Sense of Shame," in Nathanson, 194-213.

[506] Schneider, *Shame, Exposure and Privacy*, 49.

[507] Erik Erikson in Schneider, *Shame, Exposure and Privacy*, 29.

[508] Ibid., 39, 35.

I argue the vulnerability to observation that so marks the ontological experience of girls and women reflects their intense desire for concealment from unwanted and unsupported exposure, their concerns that such visibility threatens relationship, and their consequent fear of judgement and abandonment. Paradoxically, the hypervisibility for women of appearance and desirability results in a heightened sense of invisibility. Ellyn Kaschak has emphasized that "many different kinds of women experience themselves as invisible in the world and in relationships, giving them a sense of both safety and diminishment." They are not speaking metaphorically, rather, they both "desire affirmation and are terrified of the danger of greater visibility."[509]

Central then, to this examination is the notion of surveillance and the public (male) gaze. Anne Marie Hunter's analysis of surveillance and battered women can be readily applied to women generally and, I suggest, specifically to those whose paradoxical desire to please and to protest, to deny excess by practising askesis, is enacted through eating disorders.[510] It can be argued that *all* women experience in their everyday lives the "continuous scrutiny" and intrusion that so radically marks

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[509] Ellyn Kaschak, *Engendered Lives: A New Psychology of Women's Experience*, (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 100.

[510] Hunter, "Numbering the Hairs of Our Heads," 7-26.

the lives of battered women.[511] Again the paradox of women's social location is revealed: their visibility in terms of the normalizing male gaze mirrors their social invisibility and disempowerment. This is not surprising if we remember how 'visibility that is everywhere' becomes 'invisible'. For Stephanie Kiceluk, "mirrored in the eyes of men, women are spectral, not quite all there; paradoxically, at the same time, they are all too fearfully present in the flesh." [512]

Hunter argues that the extremes of "intrusion and possessive control" experienced by battered women are embedded in and sanctioned by the norms of heterosexual gender relations.[513] In western culture, this monitoring and control is eroticized and institutionalized in, for example, the discourses of male gender identity, and in the practices that facilitate male consumption of erotic images of exposed women.[514] Hunter utilizes Foucault's work on the panopticon as a model for defining disciplinary power. It is a useful model for following the mechanisms by which surveillance and social control operate and, in this case,

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[511] Ibid., 8.

[512] Stephanie Kiceluk, "Made in His Image: Frankenstein's Daughters," in *The Female Body*, 216.

[513] Hunter, "Numbering the Hairs of Our Heads," 10; Hunter is quoting Angela Browne, *When Battered Women Kill* (New York: MacMillan-Free Press, 1987), 42.

[514] Hunter, "Numbering the Hairs of Our Heads," 13.

effect women's self-understanding. The key to the effectiveness of the panoptic system is the requirement for *visibility* on the part of the system's subjects, a requirement that is exercised by its *invisible* disciplinary power. The pervasive effect of the disciplining gaze - which "*could be* but is *not necessarily watching*" is such that the subject participates in her subjection by her vigilance.[515] The panopticon serves as a model of the larger system of social control whereby women internalize the normative gaze to which they are subjected - in Bartky's terms, they become "isolated and self-policing subjects".[516]

As Bartky attests, the 'docile bodies' produced by the panoptic social gaze are not gender free; in fact they are specifically female.[517] Just as the inmates of the panopticon become their own guards, Hunter proposes that in the "panoptically controlled society" women become their own "police, judge, and executioner" with respect to their bodies.[518] Bartky notes that women, aware they are always being watched and judged, internalize the male normative gaze and are controlled by it.[519]

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[515] Ibid., 15; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202, 203.

[516] Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," 72, 80.

[517] Ibid., 63, 64.

[518] Hunter, "Numbering the Hairs of Our Heads," 15.

[519] Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," 72.

For her, their relentless self surveillance is, then, "a form of obedience to patriarchy".[520] While Lorde reminds us that this is complicated further by the dynamics of racism and heterosexism in North America, the internalized "male connoisseur" exists within the consciousness of many women in North America and, as Gilligan's research reveals, seriously constricts the self-image and aspirations of girls at the edge of adolescence.[521]

Ellmann's analysis of surveillance and the public gaze also has particular relevance for this effort to follow the adventures of 'docile bodies' in the art of discarnation. She argues in her reading of Kafka's story, *A Hunger Artist*, that the hero is kept visible by the public gaze, the moral being that "it is not by food that we survive, but by the gaze of others."[522] One must be represented or seen as starving in order for it to be the performance that it is. The anorectic then, is making a spectacle of herself in that she depends upon the other as spectator in order for her emaciated body to be "read as representative of anything."[523] She utters a profound demand through her wordless body; her spectators are required to confront their complicity in this exhibition. Foucault's 'docile

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[520] Ibid., 80.

[521] The term "male connoisseur" is Bartky's, Ibid., 72.

[522] Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, 17.

[523] Ibid.

body', the disciplined, obedient social subject has now attacked the social fabric indiscriminately: she "overpowers the oppressor with the spectacle of disempowerment."[524] I propose she brings shame, not just by her famished flesh, but by making a spectacle of it. Here I am extending my earlier point that women, as 'object' to the male 'subject,' embody shame *for* the culture by suggesting that women and, in particular, anorectic girls and women also are bearers of shame *to* the culture through the spectacle of their disintegration. In this way they are, as Ellmann reads it, rejecting "the rituals of commensality that form the foundation of society" and repudiating "the limits of organic life".[525] I suggest the tragedy here is that their emaciated bodies are the only text there is - for they rarely speak, and when they do, often it is to lie, to deny that they are starving, so as to preserve intact the disciplines of their faith.

We are left, then, with the problematic of what will the female body be if not body? I think Helena Michie begins to address this when she writes: "Full representation of the body is necessarily impossible in a language that depends for meaning on absence and difference."[526] Women's self representations in

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[524] Ibid., 21.

[525] Ibid.

[526] Michie, *The Flesh Made Word*, 149.

nonpatriarchal terms are still being formulated; articulating what the conditions are for representing women as "intellectual, social, moral, and sexual agents" is a work in process.[527] The framework proposed by Grosz, and discussed earlier, appears promising in that it "acknowledges both the psychical and interior dimensions of subjectivity and the surface corporeal exposures of the subject to social inscription and training."[528] Such a framework can aid us in developing alternatives to current representational practices. It is, I suggest, a matter of some urgency if we are to intercept the disdain for female corporeality exhibited by most girls and young women.[529]

To conclude, the analyses presented here join with ongoing and much-needed discussions as to how the female body is a site of struggle and, I argue, of shame, in the cultural reproduction of gender. I propose that beyond the repudiation of the maternal body, beyond the creation of a phallic body, is situated the anorectic's determined pursuit to rid herself of her body, to not 'be' body. Failing this, in ridding herself of all that is 'abject,' she can at least (re)turn to her essential self - to her 'clean and proper' body.

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[527] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 188.

[528] Ibid. See especially, chapter 8, "Sexed Bodies".

[529] Recent surveys of primary and secondary school girls indicate four out of five are worried about their weight.

I have argued that we need to learn to read the cultural and religious messages that are inscribed upon women's bodies if we are to understand how this vigorously sought quest for a miraculous transformation gives way to the inexorable dream of, and finally death by, discarnation. With Ellmann, I suggest it is impossible "to say which is the greater agony: to be unfed or to be unheard."[530] Both askesis and excess, horror and ecstasy, absence and presence "provide the lessons in revulsion that teach us to recoil from the grand fiasco of creation."[531] For, finally, "there are many nuances of nothingness: and every hunger artist eats a different absence, speaks a different silence, and leaves a different kind of desolation."[532]

I have been aided in reading the religious meanings associated with this quest for a miraculous transformation by the work of Caroline Walker Bynum and Margaret R. Miles. While both are rooted in an historical appreciation of symbolic provisions for food and body, each, in their own way, extend their analysis to the contemporary context.

In her text, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, Bynum explores the religious significance of food to medieval women within the context of two more encompassing issues, that is, "the nature of

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[530] Ibid., 112.

[531] Ibid., 113.

[532] Ibid.

medieval mysticism, and the significance of gender in medieval religion."[533] Bynum advises that we should not interpret medieval penetential practices as an extravagant attempt to escape from the body. Rather, Bynum argues, in contrast to other scholars of this period, that "late medieval asceticism was an effort to plumb and to realize all the possibilities of the flesh. It was a profound expression of the doctrine of the Incarnation: the doctrine that Christ, by becoming human, saves *all* that the human being is. It arose in a religious world whose central ritual was the coming of God into food as macerated flesh,...They were not rebelling against or torturing their flesh out of guilt over its capabilities so much as using the possibilities of its full sensual and affective range to soar ever closer to God."[534]

Furthermore, according to Bynum, medieval women's piety should not be understood as internalized, misogynist dualism. Women's sense of self *was* formed within the symbolic dichotomies of the dominant theological tradition outlined in Chapter Three, that is, spirit/flesh, superior/inferior, male/female. However, we should not assume that women themselves wholeheartedly accepted these notions. The symbolic universe inhabited by women was different from that of men. According to Bynum, "the

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[533] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1987), 294.

[534] Ibid., 294-295.

difference lay not merely in what symbols were chosen but also in how symbols related to self. Where men stressed male/female contrasts and used imagery of reversal to express their dependence on God, women expressed their dependence on God in imagery at least partly drawn from their own gender and avoided symbolic reversals. Although men wrote about the nature of women, women tended to write, not about gender (male versus female), but about the soul or about humanity."[535] Men who were dominant, renounced wealth and power, whereas women renounced that which they controlled, food. In the ways they used and lived with symbols, women "expanded the suffering, giving self they were ascribed by their culture, by becoming ever more wonderfully and horribly the body on the cross. They became that body not as flight from but as continuation of self."[536]

All dualities, whether of spirit/flesh or male/female, were less significant to women; they understood themselves to be firstly human beings, "fully spirit and fully flesh." Furthermore, since all humanity was created in God's image, all were capable of imitating Christ in body as well as soul. In Bynum's reading of medieval women's religious practices, they "gloried in" or exalted the mortifications of their flesh, for such suffering parallelled that of the man on the cross. In

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[535] Ibid., 293-294.

[536] Ibid., 296.

Bynum's estimation, "it was human beings as *human* (not as symbol of the divine) whom Christ saved in the Incarnation; it was body as flesh (not as spirit) that God became most graphically on the altar; it was human suffering (not human power) that Christ took on to redeem the world. Religious women in the later Middle Ages saw in their own female bodies not only a symbol of the humanness of both genders but also a symbol of - and a means of approach to - the humanity of God."[537]

What, we might ask, are the implications of Bynum's work for twentieth-century culture? There continues to be a profound association of women and food, yet the *meanings* of this association have changed considerably. Both Bynum and Margaret Miles, whose analysis I will discuss later, suggest that our modern assumptions about the meanings of body and food are based on strikingly limited symbolic repertoire, in contrast to what Bynum describes as the "range and richness" of medieval symbols. She argues, rightly so I believe, that our modern understanding of flesh is "fearful and awkward," and "our use of *body* and *food* as symbols is narrow and negative."[538] Our response to eating disorders, for example, illustrates this impoverishment when we focus on the issue of control for those girls and women who "see

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[537] Ibid.

[538] Ibid., 299.

no beauty or hope in the fact of embodiment."[539] With Bynum, I suggest that such a focus is a reflection of the cultural emphasis that creates the problem. In contrast to medieval people who saw food and body as "sources of life, repositories of sensation," signifying "generativity and suffering," we see food and body as resources in need of control, signifying the excessive, untamed, all that threatens mastery. Food and body then, are symbols of our unsuccessful efforts to control our selves.[540]

Bynum posits that this is dangerous in two ways. First, "our modern assumptions obscure the fact that food *is* food and body *is* body." She suggests we may gain some insight into contemporary eating and dieting practices if we relate these practices and symbols to each other in their cultural context. For example, modern conceptualizations of anorexia nervosa seem to assume that "body means sexuality" and "eating means control." In Bynum's view, however, the refusal of young women to eat may also be related to "the physiological changes of puberty, which signal the possibility of motherhood and to the basic assumption in our culture that women are food preparers, not food consumers."[541]

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[539] Ibid., 300.

[540] Ibid.

[541] Ibid., 300, 301.

Secondly, and in my view, more importantly, all our concerted efforts to control our bodies obscure the fact that such control can never be total, unless we conquer death itself. For, unless we can control death, "suffering must always be a reminder of it...and fertility will be necessary for our survival: new life, issuing from women's bodies, will be our collective immortality."[542]

Bynum contends that the tendency to see the body, especially the female body, as a threat to mastery and control may foster both violence toward female bodies and insensitivity toward any suffering that is beyond our ability to assuage. I wholeheartedly agree with her suggestion that we need more "positive symbols for generativity and suffering." As she eloquently states: "Our culture may finally need something of the medieval sense, reflected so clearly in the use of *birthing* and *nursing* as symbols for salvation, that generativity and suffering can be synonymous. Perhaps we should not turn our backs so resolutely as we have recently done either on the possibility that our suffering can be fruitful or on food and female body as positive, complex, resonant symbols of love and generosity."[543]

Along with Bynum, Margaret R. Miles laments the "paucity of symbolic provisions" for young women's subjectivity or inner

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[542] Ibid., 301.

[543] Ibid.

life. In her essay, "Religion and Food: The Case of Eating Disorders," Miles outlines the significance of food and the activity of eating for the cultivation of a religious self within Christianity.[544] She then considers contemporary food practices, and particularly the phenomenon of eating disorders as a consequence of "thwarted desire, *eros*, desire in its broadest sense, as simultaneously sexual, social, and spiritual."[545] Finally, she suggests we need to recognize that eating disorders in the Post-Christian west reflect the scarcity of symbolic resources that could facilitate the development of an inner life for young women.

Miles notes that within Christianity there has often been an "anxious ambivalence" associated with food; it (food) has been seen as both "symbol and site of pleasure and danger, nourishment and prohibition."[546] Throughout history and across cultures, the management of food has been one of the most consistent ways for both "resisting secular socialization" and creating a religious self. Within the Christian tradition the rhetoric of spirituality has often been described in terms of the vocabulary of food. Miles points out that the "power of religious language

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[544] Margaret R. Miles, "Religion and Food: The Case of Eating Disorders," in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, (LX111/3), 549-564.

[545] Ibid., 553.

[546] Ibid., 549.

depends, in fact, on its ability to evoke and reconstruct physical pleasure as spiritual pleasure."[547]

In the devotional literature of Christianity, it is not food itself, but the activity of eating that assumes "symbolic significance" for the creation and nurturance of a religious self. Yet, food practices and spiritual sustenance are connected, and that connection is "desire, hunger, or appetite." For example, Miles posits that for Augustine, "a self is called into being and configured by its desire. Whether that desire leaned out in longing towards objects in the world, or toward the source of its being, God, determined who the person *is* in the most profound and fundamental way....His model of self was one in which the person or self is almost infinitely plastic, *composed* of and articulated by what it loves. He saw the most important task of religion is that of calling forth, shaping, and ordering desire."[548]

As I have discussed at some length, in contemporary culture desire is associated with the body, and the correct management of desire is a profoundly individual *and* social problem. Unlike Augustine, we see the self as the "helpless victim" of the desires of the body. Along with other scholars discussed here, Miles contends that this understanding of the "desiring body"

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[547] Ibid., 550.

[548] Ibid., 551.

neglects to investigate how our culture's representation of desire is gendered.[549] The social assumptions reflected in modern representations of objects of desire need to be examined, for even as we resist such representations we nonetheless *are* affected by these "repetitiously circulated media images."[550]

In examining one of the explanatory theses for eating disorders, namely, that young women want to *look like* the women they *look at*, Miles draws our attention to the fact that representations "provoke and inspire imitation." In her 1985 text, *Image as Insight*, she emphasizes that for both historical Christians and people of our era, the "self-images" and "ideas of relationship and community" are profoundly informed by the images that surround us. For example, historically, a key theme of religious life was the imitation of earlier Christian devotees, as found in sculpture, painting, sermons and devotional literature.[551] In contemporary culture however, Miles argues, "media images masquerade as entertainment and/or information, concealing their ability to provoke imitation."[552] Nonetheless, the imitative practices of our society *are* exposed when we

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[549] Ibid.

[550] Ibid., 552.

[551] Margaret R. Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985); "Religion as Food," 553.

[552] Miles, "Religion as Food", 554.

examine the representations of young women by contemporary media.

As I discussed earlier, young women are commonly portrayed in the very publically circulated images of advertising, film, and increasingly, the internet, as combining innocence and experience, danger and delight, sexual object and commodity. Miles contends that "ancient habits of representation" are very much with us; contemporary images of half or unclothed "Eves, Judiths, and Susannas" permeate our visual fields, "*cumulatively*" informing both individual and collective desire.[553] For Miles, "today, as formerly, consistent representational strategies lock in place a public gaze that fixes women's bodies as objects of voyeurism...the contemporary secular dress (or undress) of media images of women masks the amazing continuity of such representations across the historical societies of the Christian West."[554]

Miles addresses a second explanatory hypothesis concerning eating disorders, analyzed here earlier, namely, the view that eating disorders illustrate attempts to control their own bodies by otherwise powerless young women. Again, she traces contemporary efforts to master the body to the Christian tradition which encouraged its followers to adopt the "project of self-chosen self-shaping." Miles emphasizes how beginning with

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[553] Ibid., 554, 555.

[554] Ibid., 554.

the earliest Christian devotional literature, "a rhetoric of choice and change accompanied instructions in the practice of piety. The earliest best-selling, self-help manuals were based on the assumption that one could substantially develop and exercise one's soul, creating a religious self that survived death and determined what came after."[555] As I argued earlier, this rhetoric of the discipline and transformation of the soul has been replaced in contemporary culture by that of the body. While historically the soul was imaged as the "battleground for a mortal struggle over its eternal destiny," today "the body is the battleground." As Miles sees it, "The ancient Grail question, "Whom does it serve?" needs to be asked."[556]

Perhaps then, the contemporary media jargon of 'no pain, no gain,' masks an ancient Christian phenomenon. Susan Bordo articulates this quite effectively in her most recent text, *Twighlight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.*[557] She contends, for example, that the new morality narratives have more to do with 'being' than 'doing'. Their admonishments are more spiritual than social in that they show us how *to be* rather than how *to act*. She describes how we learn,

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[555] Ibid., 556.

[556] Ibid., 557.

[557] Susan Bordo, *Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.*, (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1997).

through cultural images, to despise ourselves; only if we admit that we are fundamentally flawed will we be rewarded by the promise of power. While Bordo call this "the pedagogy of defect", I suggest it is a contemporary 'take' on the ancient narrative of damnation and redemption.[558] We can be saved if we first accept we are damned. If we 'just do it,' we need not succumb to the lure of confessing our spiritual and psychological weakness. In the current lexicon of 'power feminism', victimhood has to do with not taking care of ourselves and more specifically, our bodies. Not being a victim requires that we be perpetually young, thin, perfectly toned, and well dressed. As with religion, if by ordinary attempts we can not be saved, we can - and must - avail ourselves of the more drastic forms of penance that are currently within our reach. Our recalcitrant flesh can always endure more exact punishments and flagellations. As disciples of the pedagogy of defect, we can always rely on the new High Priest of the spirit, the plastic surgeon. For those who can afford it, empowerment can be purchased and the disciplined, controlled madonna may be achieved.[559]

The assumptions articulated by the current 'go for the burn' jargon are, in Miles' view, very familiar to Christian asceticism

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[558] Ibid., 37.

[559] For an interesting review of Bordo's text, see Indira Karamchet, "Jingle all the way," in *The Women's Review of Books*, XV, 8, (May 1998), 15-17.

and provide for us significant insights about both the "covert longings expressed by food and exercise practices," and the connections between "ancient and modern asceticisms and desire." She suggests that if we conceptualize eating disorders as "misplaced asceticisms, then the longing to control or *shape* some part of oneself is prominent."[560] For Miles, the suffering experienced by eating disordered girls and women is distinctively related to the history of Christianity, "both in its focus on the body and in its location in a post-Christian society in which ancient attitudes towards women's bodies now appear in secular dress."[561]

I agree with Miles' proposal that eating disorders may be understood as the expression of covert longings for an interior life, "a *will*," and a sense of agency that our media culture does not encourage or support. She believes religious groups, and I would add, we all collectively, ought to "seek out and create a repertoire of verbal and visual images" that can nourish young women's attempts to "place their desire in objects worthy of their attention and affection."[562]

Miles' observations are not inconsistent with other scholars discussed here, yet I believe she and Bynum offer a more richly

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[560] Miles, "Religion and Food," 557.

[561] Ibid., 560.

[562] Ibid., 563.

textured analysis when they connect the fetishization of women's bodies to issues of interiority and the paucity of symbolic resources that would encourage a sense of embodied subjectivity for women. I agree with them that the current cult of the body has deep 'spiritual' dimensions that have not been addressed in the discourse elicited by contemporary theory. I hope this thesis contributes to the explication of these dimensions for, conceptualizations of the body are, I suggest, rather shallow if they only consider the external body configuration without reference to the psychical and interior dimensions of subjectivity.

Furthermore, I submit that the analyses of all the theorists discussed here are connected by an underlying theme, namely, that a profound sense of loss is being expressed in the various contemporary forms of bodily manipulation and scarification. While there are as many 'nuances of nothingness' as there are human beings, I suggest we all, and especially young girls and women, are mourning not being spiritually fed nor relationally heard. We are longing for experiences of personhood that celebrate both the "soulfulness of our bodies and the bodiliness of our souls."[563]

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[563] Keller, "From a Broken Web," 237.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have attempted to bring together feminist scholars, particularly in religious studies and in psychology, and secondarily in philosophy and cultural studies. These scholars are advancing theory in similar directions with respect to themes of relationality, and the female body. One of the unique contributions of this thesis, I propose, is that my analysis of the work of these various theorists illuminates intersecting themes among them. While they do not speak in a single voice, I suggest there are points of convergence in their respective analyses. I have shown an aspect of this convergence in Chapter One by examining the distinctive methodological features of feminist analyses as they have been articulated by theorists in philosophy, the natural sciences, and religious studies.

In my view, areas of theoretical confluence in feminist theory and practice include: the inclusion of gender as a critical analytical category; the articulation of the problems associated with ascribing privileged ontological status to women's experiences when these experiences are considered normative to theological or psychological inquiry; the requirement to acknowledge the relative and perspectival

character of experience and 'truth claims'; a critique of the tendency to universalize localized experience; an appreciation of the need for a dynamic, rather than static, interpretation of reality; an awareness of the interrelatedness of objectivity and autonomy; and a vision of a scholarship based upon an ethos of eros and empathy.

These elements not only constitute a framework for this project. They can be found, I suggest, in the research designs of an otherwise disparate group of scholars like Evelyn Fox Keller and Carol Christ, as well as in the work of Carol Gilligan and her colleagues in psychology, and Catherine Keller and Carter Heyard, among others, in theology and religious studies. In my opinion, it is within such paradigms that the much needed 'fabric of female thinking' can be brought into being.

Chapter Two begins with a summary of object relations theory as it was developed by Malanie Klein and D.W. Winnicott, and of self psychology theory as advanced by Heinz Kohut. I bring these authors here because all three have enhanced our understanding of the complex role of relationships in psychic and cultural life. It has generally been regarded that Klein's most significant theoretical contributions concern her depiction of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, her description of projective identification, and her analysis of envy. In my view, Klein's

importance for later relational theory begins with her assumption that the basis of attachment is psychological rather than libidinal. Specifically, she argues that it is the anxiety aroused by aggressive impulses that causes the child to relate to objects, or in Fox Keller's words, "other subjects". In light of this, the most compelling dilemma of life is to escape from the force of one's own aggression, thereby assuaging one's terror of annihilation.

Furthermore, Kline's concept of projective identification, whereby an expelled part of the self becomes located in the other so that it can thus be controlled illuminates, I believe, the dynamic at work when the noxious unwanted characteristics associated with femaleness are projected onto women in patriarchal religion and culture.

Klein's depiction of the paranoid-schizoid position could further enhance our understanding of the exigencies of the anorectic's quest. Drawing from Klein and Winnicott, I submit that the anorectic has turned the force of her aggression and destructiveness back upon herself and her body. The deadly intensity of her rage and self-hate overwhelms her ability to love and her capacity for self-love. In my view, as a result, her reparative capabilities have been seriously damaged, if not destroyed, and what remains is almost impossible for her to access. For, she does not believe that her love is stronger than

her hate, nor that she can ever undo the ravages of her destructiveness.

Furthermore, in my opinion, Klein's analysis of aggression and envy has provocative implications for understanding what I later call the 'messy passions' and our avoidance of them. I agree with her argument that envy is powerful because of the significance of the uncontrollable other; love and gratitude have, then, the potential to be bearers of unspeakable pain and suffering. This was demonstrated later in the observations of contemporary relational theorists. Both the Stone Center and the Harvard Project groups are writing about how, in their desire for relational connections, girls and women paradoxically leave themselves 'out of' relationship in order to maintain it. They lose the courage to speak their minds with all of their hearts, with the result that their thoughts, desires, hopes, and fears become submerged in the quest for love.

Winnicott's theory has generally been considered more palpable to many feminist theorists than that of Klein. Commentators on his thought have appreciated his view that healthy development proceeds from 'good-enough' care and that inadequate care causes dysfunctional and painful internal experiences. He has appealed to many then, because of his recognition of the importance of external experiences and social arrangements in the construction of the self. Moreover,

theorists like Chodorow and Gilligan, for example, have found in Winnicott's thought "a caring sensibility, an aversion to hatred and aggression, and a sanguine conceptualization of intersubjectivity."[564] I think this reading of Winnicott overlooks his emphasis on how the destructive passions are intrinsic to human life. One of the most compelling features of his theory is, in my estimation, his acknowledgement of the problem of ambivalence in human relations. Although he chose language that would reflect his divergence from Klein, with her, he believed that the child's discovery of her uniqueness required that some other person (or persons) had to be defied and hated. In the recognition that the other has survived her destructiveness, the child's capacity to connect in a complete manner with her own passion is born. I appreciate Winnicott's view that the experience of destruction, and its grasp on the internal life of the individual, is enduring and must be constantly negotiated throughout life. The ongoing task to keep "inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated," and to "make objects real" involves the recognition that objects are "hated as well as loved."[565] I submit here that many girls and women in contemporary culture are encountering enormous psychological and religious struggles as they attempt to resolve the hold

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[564] Burack, 103.

[565] Winnicott, 1971, 2, 11.

destructiveness has on them. Socialized to be 'good' and pleasing, they have not been given opportunities to deal with the fact that they hate as well as love. I believe that, as a society, we have failed them in their efforts to develop relational and embodied wisdom. In Chapter Four, I argue that the anorectic manifests this struggle in a most radical and devastating manner. The force of her destructiveness is not only turned back on her self, she repudiates all social and communal bonds as she adheres to the savage loneliness of her bodily experience. Taken together then, the theories of Klein, Winnicott, and Kohut have contributed enormously to our understanding of the deep structures of psychic life and our ways of being in our worlds. These theories provide a rich analysis of the foundations of human interactions.

Later in Chapter Two, I argue that contemporary relational theories have not adequately accounted for the facts of aggression, destructiveness, and envy in their depiction of women's psychological development, and their approach to relational connections and disconnections. In this way, they avoid theorizing the messy and disagreeable passions. In my view, Klein and Winnicott's theories can provide correctives to this omission. I believe their accounts are especially useful in examining our cultural and religious responses to our capacity for aggression and hate, as well as empathy and love. At the

same time, however, I propose the work of the Stone Center theorists and of Carol Gilligan and her colleagues provide important correctives to early object relations theory. Specifically, they interrogate the actual, not merely fantasized, interactions between mothers and their children, men and women, and women and girls, and in doing so, they more thoroughly investigate the ambivalences generated by our relational connections. Furthermore, they situate these relational connections and disconnections in the context of the larger material and cultural milieus in which they occur.

Bringing together the work of feminist scholars in psychology and in religion also reveals significant convergences. I believe this is best illustrated when one examines how these various theorists approach our human desires for relatedness. My review of the relational theories of the Stone Center, and of Carol Gilligan and the Harvard Project indicates how, though working independently, these groups are contributing to our understanding of the significance of relationships in women's psychological development. Various theorists in women and religion are also formulating a feminist theology of relationship. I propose that within and between these two disciplines, there are a number of intersecting themes. They include, for example, the use of evocative and expressive language to convey the centrality of relationship; the endeavour

to construct an ethic of care and responsibility; the articulation of the problems associated with women's 'too soluble' sense of self; the reflection upon the disconnections often elicited by our passion to connect; the belief in the transformative power of eros in the quest for embodied wisdom; the exploration of women's particularity and diversity *in* connection. Furthermore, both disciplines are joined in a common problem, that is, the tendency to idealize both the 'mutuality of relationship' and 'erotic power'. In my view, the chasm between 'lofty ideals and conflicted earth' may be more adequately bridged by attending in our theories and in our lives, to the reality of, and our complicity in, relationships that generate aggression, violence, and suffering.

My research intervenes here. Specifically, I argue that the problems of relationality and embodiment also have religious nuances. Neither the Harvard Project nor the Stone Center's work accounts for what I suggest is an added dimension of the dilemma facing girls and women: namely, for girls and women with a religious sensibility and commitment, whose orientation in life is to be 'good' and pleasing to the all-knowing and all-seeing Father, it is precisely by becoming voiceless and selfless in their relationships, by diminishing themselves in a distorted notion of empathy and compassion, that they are promised acceptance and positive regard - by both their human and divine

fathers. For the religiously devout adolescent girl, it is not only peer acceptance and support that is crucial to her emerging self identity; to be well regarded by her God she sometimes not only must go against what she knows and wants, but also must choose between conflicting loyalties - between her God and her peers. We need to be concerned, I believe, about how submerged her own voice, body, and will become in the midst of such a difficult dilemma.

I was thus heartened to discover that the importance of relationship and the erotic in women's experience is emerging as a significant theme in the work of scholars in feminist studies in religion. For many of them, "the self is essentially embodied, passionate, relational and communal ... the self cannot exist apart from relationships ... and identity is found in community".[566]

However, there is a problem throughout the accounts of relationality and the erotic as articulated by the feminist scholars in religion noted in my thesis. That is, in each, there is a tendency to idealize relationality, just as in the accounts of the Stone Center theorists and Carol Gilligan and her colleagues. Furthermore, as evocative as their presentations of eros and embodiment are, feminist scholars in religion also tend to idealize eros. In my view, girls and women need to be

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[566] Plaskow and Christ, 173.

supported in their attempts to develop a **practical** sexual and embodied wisdom, a theme explored more fully in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Three, I examined the historical continuity of mind/body dualism, its role in perpetuating disdain for female corporeality, and the ongoing pervasive association of women with evil and inferiority. I am most interested in how the mind/body dualistic tradition is being dealt with in contemporary analytical models of the regulation and containment of the female body. The association of female flesh with depravity and inferiority persists not only in the discourse of Christianity, but has been extended to the broader contemporary cultural mileau. Even if their origins are obfuscated, such metaphysical positions continue to permeate our experiences of body and soul, and the psychological construction of the self. For example, in my experience as a psychotherapist, women's subjective realities continue to be marked by the experience of damnation and the pursuit of redemption described in Chapter Three, even when faintly disguised as the quest for physical perfection.

One notion I wish to highlight here concerns Julia Kristeva's conceptualization of the abject. I would extend this notion to propose that, today, the abject is symbolized as excess flesh. Excess flesh, as abject, is impure, it is the site of danger and desire, it disturbs identity, and thus must be

expelled from the clean and proper body. It is only by being 'close to the bone' that one's true self may be revealed. Furthermore, the complexities and ambiguities inherent in bringing the 'margins to the center' may be illuminated by Kristeva's analysis of abjection. Susan Bordo proposes the transformation of culture requires that we bring those marginalized or excluded aspects of our identities into the center of culture, and Gilligan calls for the embodiment of psyche in relationships and culture. In my view, their respective proposals would be further enhanced by attending to Kristeva's testimony; we are, after all, dealing here with 'personalized horror'.

I submit here that there are further areas of confluence in the various contemporary analyses of the regulation and containment of the female body. They include: the appreciation of the relationship between bodily and cultural boundaries and the resulting view that female bodies are particularly in need of containment; the acknowledgment of the body's material locatedness in history, practice, and culture; the notion of the female body as inscriptive surface upon which the requirements of femininity are encrypted; the attention to how recognizably female bodies, and particular styles of the flesh, are produced through specific disciplinary practices; the understanding that these disciplinary practices emerge from a modern "machinery of

power" according to which power is 'from below', non-authoritarian, anonymous, and widely dispersed; the awareness that women's internalization of dominant culture's standards of bodily perfection structures their consciousness of themselves as bodily beings; that such a self-consciousness emphasizes their shame in never being 'good enough'; and finally, the conviction that women's right to self-definition and self-representation depends upon the acknowledgment of many different types of bodies, rather than a unitary, ideal, platonic form.

In Chapter Four, I illustrate how relational theory and theories of the body generated in psychology and in feminist studies in religion, can, if in dialogue with one another, illuminate the exigencies of girls' and women's struggles for embodied, relational wisdom. Both disciplines address that by acknowledging the fragmented body, new forms of desire will be permitted and new connections to the self will emerge. In this chapter, I carry forward a theme of Chapter Three; that is, girls' and women's internalization of current standards of bodily acceptability is central to their experience of body-shame and self-hate.

I propose there is a relationship between Western culture's valuing of the explicit, and the concomitant experience of exposure, both of which seem to be constitutive of the sense of shame, and of women's sense of personal inadequacy. I

acknowledge the role of the narcissistic assumption of the body as spectacle in the context of women's enforced visibility within the ensemble of social relations. This is organized around the reification of the cult of the body. The female body as spectacle is part of a more comprehensive interaction between shame and shamelessness in the psychological construction of the self. I argue the vulnerability to observation that so marks the ontological experience of girls and women reflects their intense desire for concealment from unwanted and unsupported exposure, their concerns that such visibility threatens relationship, and their consequent fear of judgement and abandonment.

While I explore modes of cultural inscription of the body, I am most interested in disciplines of disembodiment, symbolized here in the fragmented body of the anorectic. I argue that girls ad women are starving themselves to the point of death with a zeal once reserved for an aesthetics of the soul. The macerated form of the anorectic reveals this phenomenon; her emaciation is symbolic of both her own and the community's malaise. In contemporary Western culture, the rhetoric of the discipline and transformation of the body has replaced that of the soul; while historically the soul was imaged as the battleground for creating a religious self, today the body is the battleground. Moreover, I argue that the cult of the body is more than a cultural phenomenon. 'Slimming', and the perpetuation of youth, are,

arguably, a national religion in America and one's success or failure is a reflection of one's moral calibre. I propose that expanding and diversifying our symbolic repertoire so as to accommodate many different types of bodies in our representations is a crucial theoretical and practical task. I conclude that the fetishization of women's bodies and disciplines of disengendering are connected to issues of interiority. Specifically, in both contemporary theory and culture we have not addressed the spiritual dimensions associated with the development of girls' and women's sense of embodied subjectivity. For example, the torment expressed in their struggles with their bodies may be a reflection of their covert longings for an interior life, and for authenticity in their relationships. I also submit that the analyses of all the theorists discussed in this chapter are connected by a general underlying theme, namely, that a profound sense of loss is being expressed in the various contemporary forms of bodily manipulation and scarification. While there are as many 'nuances of nothingness' as there are human beings, I suggest we all, and especially young girls and women, are mourning not being spiritually fed nor relationally heard. We are longing for experiences of personhood that celebrate both the "soulfulness of our bodies and the bodiliness of our souls."[567] I propose that the particular quest of the anorectic reveals, in

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[567] Keller, 1986, 237.

this sense of loss, a more universal existential dilemma. Namely, the quest for immortality both obscures and reveals the impoverishment of our experiences of interiority and relatedness. Although it may be difficult to discern which is the greater agony, to be unfed or to be unheard, I propose that in our theories and in our lives, we must more effectively respond to both or need to be spiritually fed and relationally heard.

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