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Emancipatory Discourses : Utilizing Kleinian Psychoanalysis and Poststructuralist Theory to
Deconstruct and (Re)Present Phallocentric Themes in *Rebecca* and *American Beauty*

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**EMANCIPATORY DISCOURSES:
UTILIZING KLEINIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND POSTSTRUCTURALIST
THEORY TO DECONSTRUCT AND (RE)PRESENT PHALLOCENTRIC
THEMES IN *REBECCA* AND *AMERICAN BEAUTY***

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By
Lynda Hosking

To
The Department of Classics and Religious Studies

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This thesis develops a theoretical methodology that deconstructs and (re)presents phallogentric themes in cultural narratives. This methodology, I argue, is an analytical strategy that displaces the primacy of the mythic structures of the Oedipal narrative in contemporary Western culture because it attends to other means of subjectivization and highlights sites of resignification. The theorization accomplishes three related tasks: it identifies areas in discourse that promote images of integration and wholeness; it reveals the performative nature and historical contingency of phallogentric discourses in cultural media; and it allows for the emergence of de-centered subjects. Drawing from Melanie Klein and Judith Butler, I argue that the Oedipal drama is not the means by which bodies in nature become subjects in culture; rather, it is a discourse that sustains the power and privilege of shifting conceptions of masculinity through its perpetual iteration. The symbolic order is the temporal regulation of signification that describes the atmosphere in which consent and regulation are secured, but it does not determine it. If the Oedipal complex is understood to be a performative expression of dominant discourse rather than a natural process, the Oedipal complex can be said to produce that which it claims only to describe. A poststructuralist psychoanalytic criticism interrogates the text, searching for traces of the *always already said* embedded in discourse. The analyses of the films *Rebecca* and *American Beauty* demonstrate that a Kleinian-poststructuralist methodology identifies new and different interpretations of texts.

Thank you Noah.
Thank you Naomi.

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INTRODUCTION

At the heart of this thesis is a desire to understand the social construction of difference and the means by which difference is sustained. This project developed around a single question that recurred, for me, throughout graduate school: Why does masculine language structure feminist critical engagement? Implicit in this question is a greater problem: How can language, in which exclusions are embedded, dismantle oppressive power structures? These are the sorts of questions that postmodernist and poststructuralist thought approach and deconstruct in order to theorize emancipatory possibilities. Engaging these theoretical methods can seem, to those outside the disciplines that utilize them, obscure and abstract. However, theory teaches us about the world, about each other, and about ourselves. I want to make the case that theory has politically transformative goals. And, that it is a necessary component of any sociopolitical

effort because theory can unveil hidden ideological commitments that shape individuals and groups.

The Oedipal complex, described by Sigmund Freud, has become a dominant paradigm in contemporary Western culture. The Oedipal complex is a “masterplot” (P. Brooks 1994, 106) that shapes literary and cinematic narratives and is thus constantly produced in discourse. According to Freud’s re-reading of Sophocles’ myth, young boys experience a sexual attachment to their mothers. The father’s intervention separates the boy from his mother, preventing an incestuous relationship. Once the boy has surrendered his initial desire for the mother, he identifies with the father, and transfers his desire to women other than the mother. Freud theorized that all of civilization, and all social relations, are predicated on the father’s intervention because it is this process that transforms the body in nature to a subject in culture. The dynamics of the Oedipal conflict chart the development of the father-son relationship, and how men assume their dominant position in culture. The theory is less concerned with the girl’s Oedipal journey, which may reflect the subordinate social position generally held by women in the early 1900s, when Freud developed psychoanalysis.

The popularity and lasting imprint of Freud’s masculinist theories continues to inform and shape cultural material and the academic study of culture. The Oedipal narrative has become a mythic structure that is embedded everywhere in culture. The phallocentrism of the complex excludes women from a primary role in the construction of culture because it identifies the paternal intervention as the

foundation of civilization and social relations, thus devaluing the important work performed by women. As a mythic structure, the Oedipal complex endorses the primacy of shifting conceptions of masculinity. Undoing mythic structures is an arduous task. One of the functions of myth is to depoliticize speech (Barthes 1972, 143), thus obscuring the human contingencies that found it. Jacques Lacan (1977) has further obscured the historical human role in the perpetuation of the Oedipal construct by abstracting its dynamics to the realm of language. Freud's paternal intervention is transformed by Lacan into the Law of the Father, in which the masculine role, represented by the phallus, signifies meaning in language. Freud made men the founders of culture and Lacan made the phallus the guarantor and origin of meaning. How can feminists challenge the dominance of masculinity and the phallus in culture and language when these theories argue that without the father and the phallus there would be no culture or meaning in language?

To address these issues, I focus on the process of subjectivization to deconstruct the hegemonic operations of interpellation, thereby assisting the growth of individual agency, which promotes a politics of resistance to phallogentrism. To perform this analytical work, I employ poststructuralist theories of subject formation because they address a wide range of issues, such as gendered subjectivity, the multiple points of power relations, and citationality. However, poststructuralist methodology has certain limits because it relies on Lacanian psychoanalysis, which is a closed system of language that perpetuates

the production of exclusive binary categories because Lacan's re-reading of Freud's Oedipal complex retains the gender disparity that feminism rejects. Woman is always figured as "other", "inadequate", and "lack". Therefore, I suggest that the psychoanalytic theories of Melanie Klein, which do not rely of phallogocentric theories of the subjectivity, can collaborate with poststructuralism to form a theory of subjectivization that articulates a politics of resistance.

Drawing from Butler and Klein, I argue that the Oedipal drama is not the means by which bodies in nature become subjects in culture; rather, it is a discourse that sustains the power and privilege of shifting conceptions of masculinity through its perpetual iteration. The symbolic order is the temporal regulation of signification that describes the atmosphere in which consent and regulation are secured, but it does not determine it. If the Oedipal complex is understood to be a performative expression of dominant discourse rather than a natural process, the Oedipal complex can be said to produce that which it claims only to describe. Thus, if the Oedipal complex is productive rather than merely descriptive, the prohibitions it demands are constitutive of identity.

Klein offers a description of the subject's transition to a place in culture that does not rely on castration, phallogocentrism, or the father. Instead, Klein examines the earliest relationship shared by the infant and mother. Klein's analytic practice focused on young children. She developed the play technique, in which the children played with toys while Klein interpreted their actions. The children were able to resolve anxieties in the analytic situation, leading Klein to

argue that analysis does work for children. Klein theorized that the infant's earliest experiences are characterized by violent and aggressive feelings caused by physical discomfort; she called this the "paranoid-schizoid position". The infant's ambivalent feelings towards his or her mother, or caregiver, gradually allow for the process of integration to introduce a calmer mental state; Klein called this the "depressive position". In Klein's work, the ability to integrate objects in the external world encourages interior integration, in which the destructive impulses of the death instinct are mitigated by the capacity for love. The process may sound linear, but, for Klein, there is a constant shifting of intense feelings, emotions, and sensations that continues throughout life.

For Klein, knowledge is central to a balanced life. She believed that the foundation for the understanding of the social world is knowledge of the interior world. Moreover, all of the dynamics the infant experiences will affect his or her adult life. In Klein's work, transference always allows individual to return to their earliest experiences and work through their present difficulties. Klein felt that culture is a larger arena for individuals to work through their anxieties. In Klein's work, individual development, culture, and social organization do not depend on the devaluation of a person or group, which, I argue, aligns her theories with poststructuralism's political goals.

Kleinian psychoanalysis coupled with poststructuralism's commitment to "democratic contestation within a postcolonial horizon" (Butler 1992, 8) can disrupt the Oedipal narrative's hegemony. Freud's theory of melancholia has

been used by Klein and Butler; however, I argue that contingency is another avenue which connects the two theorists and theories. I define contingency as the vigilant investigation of foundations in the interior and external worlds. Both Klein and Butler claim that contingency is worthwhile, even if it is a source of ontological uncertainty, because it demands that we continually investigate the means by which knowledge, of ourselves and of the world, is produced and sustained.

There is a complex weaving of social, religious, phallogentric, and visual discourses embedded in the social fabric of Western culture, and the continuous performance of oppressive narratives further solidifies their power. Using a psychoanalytic theory that does not rely on phallogentric origins of subjectivity in culture and language, in conjunction with social and political critique, demonstrates that consent and regulation are performatively secured and not inherent in subjectivity. The subject, according to Butler, can be theorized as a place from which to choose among available discourses. Re-reading existing narratives to mine them for non-phallogentric themes creates more discourses from which subjects may choose.

Visual narratives powerfully convey discourses and thus shape individuals. Contemporary, Western culture is visual; and, those images have tremendous impact on how we understand and come to know each other, the world, and ourselves. Butler writes that interpellation “cannot be accomplished without a certain readiness or anticipatory desire on the part of the one addressed” (1997a,

10). Therefore, Klein's theories of infant development can be understood to prepare individuals for subjectivization.

I argue that using Kleinian psychoanalysis and feminist poststructuralist methodology as a collaborative theoretical program can disrupt the iterative power of phallogentrism. Further, it can identify and promote emancipatory sites in cultural media. In order to accomplish this task, it is not enough to describe the problem and suggest an alternative conception of reality. The discourses that create socially constitutive narrative webs must be wrenched apart, fissures and gaps must be located, and new theories must work in a way that makes sense with the world, as it is currently understood.

A MODEST PROPOSAL

The Oedipal complex is a dominant paradigm in contemporary Western culture which valorizes shifting conceptions of masculinity and devalues, by rendering "other," woman. The Oedipal complex has become a mythic structure that is performatively secured with each iteration. In addition, the phallogentrism of the Oedipal complex is reinforced by religious themes which have been appropriated by, and pervade, popular cultural material. Phallogentric themes are exclusionary, often excluding men who do not fit with the narrow construal of proper masculinity. Such themes are especially damaging to women because they

are relegated to a location outside of the popular worldview, that is, the symbolic order.

The performative nature of subjectivity and cultural production perpetuates phallogentric themes, covering over and obscuring other possible discourses. Klein offers a (non)theory¹ of subjectivity that does not rely on gender disparity. Therefore, Kleinian psychoanalysis can be utilized for its politically transformative potential. Aspects of development that Klein describes are already represented in cultural material; but, these themes must be analyzed and put into discourse. Discourses are sets of conventions that subjects may choose from to shape and inform their own personal stories. Therefore, if the socially and politically transformative potential of Klein's (non)theory of the subject circulated in discourse, more people would have access to its beneficial content.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

Section One of the thesis introduces the concepts that will be utilized in Section Two. Chapter One details the issues and concerns with the pervasive influence of the Oedipal complex and feminist responses to it. I also argue, in Chapter One, that the mythic structure of the Oedipal complex is reinforced by popular culture's appropriation of religious themes, especially unexamined phallogentrism. Chapter Two outlines Melanie Klein's extensive work and

develops the foundation for the claim that Klein and Butler are compatible theorists. Chapter Three, which briefly introduces poststructuralist thought, focuses on a tripartite organization of Butler's feminist poststructuralism. I draw from four of Butler's main texts to describe the production, construction, and subversion of the subject. In Chapter Four, I argue that Klein and Butler can be brought together to theorize the potential subversion of the subject through representations of Klein's theory of integration and Butler's theory of cultural slippage and resignification. I then describe the combination of integration and resignification as "contingency", and make the case that contingency is a method of textual analysis that creates new sets of conventions from which subjects can choose in order to function within the limited terms of the symbolic order.

In Section Two, I apply the theory developed in Chapter Four to two film narratives. In both cases, I argue that this method locates previously unexplored discourses in the narratives. I also demonstrate that the collaboration of Kleinian psychoanalysis and Butler's feminist poststructuralism is productive in a way that neither method is alone. In Chapter Five, I analyze the film *Rebecca*, which was a popular subject for the work of early feminist film theorists. They tended to laud the narrative for following the female Oedipal trajectory. I argue that this film is not limited to an Oedipal interpretation, and focus my analysis on the integrative and socially subversive narrative themes. In Chapter Six, I analyze *American Beauty*, again, undermining the notion that it charts the Oedipal complex. The cinematic landscape, I argue, invites a Kleinian analysis. And, the film's attention

to contemporary social and cultural concerns invites a poststructuralist eye. The film highlights the complexity of interior integration and its relationship to external factors. Both films, I argue, disrupt traditional phallogentric structures and allow for new forms of social relations.

CONTRIBUTION

The originality of this project is twofold. First, I develop a theoretical method that deconstructs and (re)presents phallogentric themes in cultural narratives. Second, this method, I argue, is an analytical strategy that displaces the primacy of the Oedipal narrative in contemporary Western culture because it attends to other means of subjectivization and highlights sites of resignification. The analysis in the thesis accomplishes three related tasks: to identify areas in discourse that promote images of integration and wholeness; to reveal the performative nature and historical contingency of phallogentric discourses in cultural media; and it allows for the emergence of de-centered subjects

My proposal is that, utilized together, Kleinian psychoanalysis and Butler's feminist poststructuralism can deconstruct and (re)present phallogentric themes in cultural media and thereby locate the emancipatory potential of the *already said*.

SECTION ONE

This thesis is divided into two sections; the first section includes the first four chapters and develops the theoretical argument that will be applied to *Rebecca* and *American Beauty* in the second section. The first chapter focuses on the pervasiveness of the Oedipal drama, and it is problematized in relation to (post)modern culture and gendered subjectivity. The next three chapters provide context for my proposition: that utilizing Kleinian psychoanalysis and poststructuralist methodology is a productive theoretical program that can not only uncover phallogentric themes, the two discourses collaborate to form a new method of analysis. Chapter Two introduces the main tenets of Melanie Klein's psychoanalytic thought. The third chapter focuses on Judith Butler's poststructuralist theory of gender construction and subjectivization. In the fourth and final chapter of the first section, I bring Kleinian psychoanalysis and Butler's feminist poststructuralism together to create a method of cultural analysis that can identify and dismantle phallogentric themes in cultural media, as well as suggest an alternative reading strategy. In this thesis, I utilize Kleinian psychoanalysis and poststructuralist thought to deconstruct and (re)present phallogentric themes in two film narratives.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM WITH OEDIPUS

This analysis draws from Sigmund Freud's contention that religion is an Oedipal phenomenon, that is primarily concerned with the father-son relationship. Freud's theory of the Oedipal complex has shaped cultural representations in Western society and spawned a backlash of theorists attempting to undermine its influence. The Austrian novelist Robert Musil commented that the modern age has become dangerously dependent upon Oedipus because almost all phenomena are adduced to it (Scott 2005, 4-5). Juliet Mitchell (1974) explains the power and influence that the Oedipal complex has in the contemporary world, writing that for Freud, Oedipus describes the process by which individuals become members in the human community. In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983 [1972]), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe the Oedipus complex as an internalized boundary, imposed by the colonizing efforts of capitalism, that limits human desire. While other theorists argue in favor of the primacy of the complex

in contemporary global culture, Jerry Aline Flieger (2005) expands upon the theory of the Oedipus complex in order to argue that it is the blueprint for “complexities” in the postmodern cyber age. Andreas Bertoldi (1998) finds evidence of Oedipal themes among non-Western people, concluding that the structure of the complex is universal. A chief concern for feminism is that the Oedipal complex attends mainly to father–son relationships and excludes women from world-making and culture-building² because women are thought to be incapable of attaining full subjectivity within the symbolic register. The question I raise, in the context of Oedipal themes in culture and religion, is whether a different analytic perspective will yield new, productive insights. If cultural analysis continually looks for Oedipal dynamics, thereby participating in the performative repetition of it, then, surely, that is all that will be discovered and produced.

RELIGION AND CULTURE

Religious themes have been appropriated by popular cultural material. Conrad Oswald Jr. (1998) argues that the secularization of traditional religious material may blur the boundaries between the sacred and secular but secularization is by no means destroying religion. Moreover, cultural forms that are understood to be secular might address religious questions and relate to religious sensibilities.

Therefore, questions and issues that once belonged to religious discourse and institutions permeate popular culture.

In order to determine what content will be deemed religious in this project, I will not focus on a certain practice, belief, or ritual belonging to a particular faith. Instead, religion will be analyzed, in very broad terms, as *narratives that shape and inform social dynamics by expressing worldviews and values*. Two scholars of religious studies who have developed theories that interrogate the social and cultural nature of religiosity are Jonathan Z. Smith and Margaret Miles. Smith understands religion as one of the ways that human beings construct worlds of meaning in a conscious quest “within the bounds of the human, historical condition, for the power to manipulate and negotiate one’s ‘situation’ so as to have a ‘space’ in which to dwell meaningfully” (1978, 291). For Miles, religion is a “cultural institution that must perform cultural work; it must organize people’s social arrangements and suggest attitudes towards people’s lives, towards the religious community, and towards others” (1996, 12-3). From this perspective, religion is a social and cultural discourse that helps to bring order and coherence to the human experience.

One of the ways that religion continues to perform such tasks is through film. Diane Jonte-Pace writes that, “religious ideas are often communicated in movie theaters rather than churches” (2001a, 147), and this may be because “film serves as a transitional realm within which we are offered opportunities to remember and to work through our own stories” (2001a, 145). The notion of

collective and personal stories as the means to make sense of one's life experience has been developed in the context of narrative studies. The narrative chain, according to Peter Brooks, connects one event with the next by reasoned causal links and marks the "victory of reason over chaos" (1994, 49). Psychoanalysis is an indispensable approach within the study of narrative because psychoanalysis draws a "symbolic and fictional map of our place in existence" (P. Brooks 1994, 44). For Brooks, the narrative impulse is a means to cope with the "human situation", to use Smith's phrase, of our existence in the body and in time. Narratives bring coherence and order to human existence. Religion is one such narrative, and psychoanalysis is an effective strategy to interrogate its functions and limits.

Religion is deeply imbricated in the social fabric of contemporary society. While it may appear to some observers that religious influence and practice have declined in the last century (Kristeva 1995), I argue that religious themes have been taken up in popular cultural media; and, therefore, retain a central place in contemporary society. Jonte-Pace describes this cultural shift accurately, "In the context of the secularizing forces and rapid changes marking modernity, all religions are in transition. We continually encounter new losses of traditional religious forms, new religious pluralisms, and new forms of secularism" (2001a, 147). The idea of religion in transition, rather than the decline of religion, reflects the representation of religious themes in secular media. That is, religion may not be declining; rather, it is traditional forms of religiosity that are waning. Irena

Makaruska describes religion as the creative process performed by individuals and communities to make life meaningful. Religious processes occur, according to Makaruska, when people grapple with ultimate questions such as, “Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? What is the significance of this journey?” (quoted in Martin and Oswalt Jr. 1995, 122). These questions may be explored and answered in a traditional religious context or not. However, what is clear is that religion is very much a part of the processes by and through which identity is formed and imposed.

John C. Lydon (2004) presents an excellent example of a secular film performing religious functions. Lyden argues that Woody Allen’s *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, a 1989 film, in which the main character gets away with the murder of his mistress, is concerned with “the lack of justice in the world and how this creates an existential situation in which people must choose good or evil even though it appears that good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people” (2004, 45). The conflict between right and wrong, good and evil is subtly portrayed in this film, unlike, for example, in *Face/Off*. In the climax of John Woo’s 1997 action thriller, the main characters battle in an almost biblical setting, surrounded by rays of sunlight and fluttering doves in a Gothic church. In this secular film, religious imagery maximizes the audience’s sense of good triumphing over evil. Though some viewers may have chosen to not appropriate a religious perspective, these films employ the imagery and ethics associated with traditional religion and place them in new, secular narratives.

Oswalt (1998) argues that cultural forms that are understood to be secular may address religious questions and tap into religious sensibilities. That is, questions and issues that once belonged to religious discourse and institutions have been transferred to the realm of popular culture. For Oswalt, this social dynamic may be the result of Enlightenment discourses that posited the inevitable death of religion by the hand of rationality. The rational mind, described by Enlightenment and Modernist philosophers, does not believe in an omnipotent God that controls man's destiny; man controls his own destiny. Therefore, transferring religious issues to secular culture mitigates the confusion between rationality and religiosity while continuing to narratively map human experience. The myth of secularization is, then, the notion that contemporary Western culture is shifting away from religious beliefs and practices. Instead, religion is shifting from institutional worship to popular culture.

It is through the normativizing influence of hegemonic discourses that the dominant class maintains control. Hegemony is the process through which subordinated forms of consciousness are constructed without recourse to violence. The interests of the ruling group pervade all of society because popular culture and knowledge have developed in such a way as to secure the participation of the masses in their projects. That is to say, for a ruling group to maintain its dominance it must impose non-coercive measures upon subordinate groups, to which they conform. One of the aims of cultural studies is to identify hegemonic discourses and expose how they operate. One purpose of hegemonic discourses is

to naturalize human social constructions thus transforming such constructions into seemingly natural ways of being. Religion, in contemporary Western culture, “is part of the intricate intellectual and practical apparatus by which consent to relations of domination is created” (Dyke 2001, 235). Carl Dyke draws from Antonio Gramsci to argue that Christianity has a hegemonic and normalizing function in culture regardless of an individual’s belief structure because Western society is saturated with biblical culture.

Mythic structures can function as hegemonic discourses. Roland Barthes defines myth as depoliticized speech that “has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal” (1972, 142). Moreover,

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact...In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves (1972, 143).

In Barthes framework, mythic structures are ideological because they demonstrate a body of ideas and practices that defend and promote the interests of the dominant groups in society. Moreover, the hegemonic tone of myths is naturalized through repetition. Over time, hierarchical social constructions appear to be ordained by nature.

The Oedipal drama, described by Freud, is a mythic structure that has become the dominant paradigm of contemporary Western culture. John Toews describes the myths place in culture,

The Freudian Oedipus myth was a story of the human struggle for emancipation, first from nature and then from culturally produced constraints – ‘illusions’ – that mediated the original break with nature. The Freudian critique of femininity was an analysis of failed emancipation, of incomplete detachment from the pre-historical mother/child dyad, of the inability to move beyond dependence on protective father figures. Freud’s ideal Oedipus became the master of his fate, the possessor of his own story, by courageously recognizing and rejecting the redemptive illusions produced by his unconscious wishes to submerge his individuality in the pre-historical mother/child symbiosis and find consolation in the protective loving arms of an all-powerful father. Both illusions were ‘feminine’. Oedipus achieved autonomy and mastery by repudiating the feminine, as object and as model, by renouncing instinctual gratification and the illusions of consolatory or escapist cultural meaning (1986, 297).

GENDER, RELIGION, AND CULTURE

One of the ways that phallocentrism has sustained and reproduced itself, as a dominant cultural paradigm, is through religion. Religions have tended to idealize masculinity through its representation of the male god, the exclusionary access to institutional hierarchy, and the long history of associating the feminine or female body with impurity and as a source of pollution. Gender disparity in Western religions has been a chief concern for feminist scholars working in religious studies since the 1970s because women have been excluded from positions of power within their institutions and outside of them³. Elaine J.

Lawless (2003) argues that religion's phallogentric hegemony continues to exclude women today. She writes, "I certainly see evidence that the religious master narrative – in which males are privileged by culture, society, and the church – continues to gain new strength, power, and renewed reinforcement" (2003, 61). Lawless draws from postmodern theory to challenge the subordination of women by a "religious master narrative" that endorses "racism, sexism, homophobia, and other exclusionary policies" (2003, 73). I argue that religion is being subsumed into popular culture without adequate analysis or an interpretation including religion's phallogentric roots.

Feminist epistemologists have worked to de-naturalize claims to absolute or objective knowledge that buttressed the primacy of shifting conceptions of masculinity in historical and modern culture. An important component of this theorization is acknowledging the processes that have separated thought from the body and the association of the feminine with corporeality. Elizabeth Grosz (1994) contends that Enlightenment discourses concerned with rationality created woman as the irrational and emotional counterpart to the objective, rational man. Knowledges are drives for power and mastery that are exhibited corporeally, "They mis-recognize themselves as cerebral, a product of ideas, thought, and concepts forgetting or repressing their corporeal genealogies and processes of production (1994, 204). Grosz argues that Enlightenment thinkers abstracted knowledge and knower into a theory removed from the body, which was, and is, the female domain. Grosz's deconstruction of Enlightenment epistemologies

echoes Naomi Goldenberg's (1990, 2005) analysis of the ways that religious traditions have systematically excluded women and repressed the female body for more than three thousand years. According to Goldenberg, "There is always a duality about the human being in religious traditions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism; in philosophies that are religious, such as Platonism; and in psychologies that are religious, such as Jungian psychology. Something – usually mind or soul – is contrasted with body, and is seen as better, nobler, cleaner, and ultimately of a different character or substance than the body" (1990, 177). And, commenting on Goldenberg's body of work, James W. Jones writes, "culture equates women's body with the flesh, with embodiment, and so the hatred of the body becomes the hatred of women, repression of the body becomes the repression of women. Again it is no coincidence that anti-body religions are also anti-women; a deep dynamic connection is at work in both" (1992, 360). If knowledge, culture, and religion operate to exclude women and sustain a deep, abiding loathing of the female body, Kleinian theory works to affirmatively restore the body, female and male, to knowledge, culture, and religion, and extends traditional boundaries to include women.

RELIGION AND AN OEDIPAL PHENOMENON

Freud theorized that religion developed from the father-son dynamic that is described by the Oedipal conflict. Freud began this investigation with *Totem and Taboo* (1946 [1918]) and continued it with *Moses and Monotheism* (1967 [1939]). In these books it becomes clear that for Freud religion is a system of codified reactions to the murder of the father by the sons (Goldenberg 1981, 23). Freud found a similarity between the Oedipal conflict in individuals and the role of the father in Western religious traditions. He suggested that the primal father, murdered by the sons of the tribe, is the image upon which the Jewish and Christian God had been modeled. Freud concluded that “Religion...arose out of the Oedipus complex, out of the relation to the father” (Freud, SE, XXI, 43). One of the reasons that religion was so problematic for Freud is that it limits thought and intellect. Freud felt that this maze of restrictions and observances demanded in Judaism, which are attempts to work through the guilt of parricide, limited the free exercise of thought. He criticized Christianity for obscuring the murder of the father with the concept of original sin, thus distorting the crime and impeding its resolution. Moreover, religion demands that all adherents follow the same path to happiness or employ the same methods for coping with suffering and loss (Freud, SE, XXI, 84). Thus, religion’s tendency to limit the free exercise of intellect and its strategies to homogenize individuals directly opposes Freud’s hopes for the

possibilities offered by psychoanalysis to achieve the psychological ideal: “the primacy of intelligence” (Freud, SE, XXI, 48).

Naomi Goldenberg has demonstrated that the “religion of the fathers” has a particularly negative impact for women. Religion encourages the stagnation of the Oedipal complex for both men and women because it focuses so heavily on the father (1981, 27-29). Intellectual development is problematic in females because without the fear of castration there is little motivation to set-up the superego. Freud argued that women have more difficulty overcoming their Oedipal issues than do men because women have a secondary role in the crisis. Religion for Freud, “was a factor which operated against resolution of the Oedipal complex and which thus encouraged oppression of human intellect” (Goldenberg 1981, 32). Therefore, religion can said to be a detriment to women’s capacity to develop their intellects and exercise free thought in a culture in which the Oedipal complex is a deeply embedded mythic structure. However, Freud saw one advantage for the complexity of the Oedipal conflict in women: it allows women to more easily accept male authority. If Freud were writing today, perhaps, he would not extol the virtues of the subordinate woman. With that in mind, I suggest that the performative repetition of Oedipal dynamics necessarily includes the primacy of castration fears and therefore remains detrimental to women’s independent subjectivity, the exercise of free thought, and intellectual development.

Gail Boldt (2002) argues that the Oedipal complex should be understood in at least two ways. First, it describes a discourse about what is proper and

improper sexuality. Second, the complex produces exactly what it claims to only describe. To grasp the impact of the performative nature of Oedipus, I utilize Judith Butler's account of citationality, which describes the production, construction, and subversion of the subject. I argue that the Oedipal complex is not the means by which bodies in nature become subjects in culture; rather, it is a discourse that sustains the power and privilege of shifting conceptions of masculinity through its perpetual iteration.

Melanie Klein drew from Freud's theories, but also, in the course of her observations, departed from his theorization. For Klein, C. Fred Alford writes, the Oedipal complex is not the sexual desire for the mother's body but the "desire to possess and control the riches and goodness of the mother's body" (1989, 24). Moreover, the theory of positions described by Kleinian psychoanalysis marks the infant's transition from nature, the body dominated by impulses, to culture, a subject with a desire for knowledge of others.

CONCLUSION

The difficulties women encounter in the resolution of the Oedipal conflict include the stagnation of intellectual development and submission to authority. While I am not arguing that the Oedipal conflict is a natural or universally occurring phenomenon, I am suggesting that it is the dominant paradigm of late capitalism,

which is continually performed in cultural material. One aspect of the performance is the attention paid to the elements of the complex by scholars, critics, and other cultural observers. By identifying and describing cultural material as Oedipal, intellectual growth stagnates because we cease to consider other important themes that suggest different aspects of psychical development and emotional maturity.

CHAPTER TWO

KLEINIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS

Melanie Klein presents a theory of infant development that can be difficult to conceptualize. She describes a fragmented infant fueled by violent phantasies, desiring to harm the parents and then repair the damage because he or she feels anxiety and guilt about the phantasied attacks. Anxiety is central to Klein's thought; without it the infant can not mature beyond the early paranoid-schizoid stage into the somewhat balanced depressive position. Klein's insights into infantile rage, anxiety, guilt, and mental health draw from Freud; however, Klein further develops her theories through the analysis of children and her method, the play technique⁴. She locates the Oedipal complex at a much earlier stage than did Freud, and she does not emphasize its centrality in the developmental process. Importantly, Klein did not develop a theory of subjectivity around the fear of

castration. Instead, Kleinian psychoanalysis focuses on the infant-mother relationship.

I understand Klein to be describing emotional and psychical maturation as a dulling, containing, and re-directing of the intense emotional and physical sensations experienced by almost all infants. Klein is also concerned with the means by which individuals are shaped into productive members of society⁵. For Freud, the Oedipal complex is pivotal in this process. Andreas Bertoldi summarizes Freud's position writing, "the Oedipal complex is fundamental and constitutive of our very subjectivity. Oedipus explains how the body in nature becomes the body in culture and how the psychic apparatus is divided – a division that transforms sexual instincts into culturally determined drives" (Bertoldi 1998, 102). For Klein, the Oedipal complex is not the process by which individuals learn to create and cope with the social world. Julia Kristeva succinctly describes the Kleinian concept of the subject, writing that matricide, envy, and guilt are at the origin of the human ability to think (2001, 13). Thus, it is working through intense embodied emotions that transforms the body in nature to the subject in culture. I am turning to Klein to think about the formation of subjects in language and culture, focusing on Klein's concept of integration.

THEORIZING THE SUBJECT

The origin and formation of subjects in culture, or subjectivization, is a contested issue in contemporary academia. Angela McRobbie (1994, 63-8) describes the conflict as the debate between the “Es and the Anti-Es”; that is, between the essentialists and anti-essentialists. Essentialism is the contention that there is a unity of self that underlies the social body. Anti-essentialists argue that such a notion of a secure and stable self is a fiction that obscures the fragmentation and dislocation of the (post)modern subject. The crisis of subjectivity emerged due in part to Freud’s work on pre-rational and unconscious mechanisms. However, the recent emphasis on desire⁶ risks promoting a new sort of essentialism because it posits that desire is the origin of the will to know and the desire to say. That is, desire, born from castration fears, as the origin of thought produces an essentialist notion of subjectivity. Poststructuralist writer Chris Weedon defines subjectivity quite simply as “the site of consent and regulation of individuals” (Weedon 1987, 108). Moreover, subjects are understood to be products of the discourses that intersect in their lives (Foucault 1977, Benhabib 1999). Discourses are both oral and written, existing in all aspects of daily life. The subject, then, is a body that has been discursively transformed from the body in nature to a body in culture. In this project, I relate Kleinian concepts to the process of subjectivization. Poststructuralism has relied exclusively on Lacanian psychoanalysis, failing to explore and include other psychoanalytic theories.

The problem I find with Lacan (1977) is the hopelessness of gender disparity implicit in his writing and theories. Castration is the unavoidable condition of subjectivity, which is theorized as an effect of language in culture. The phallus, the symbol of the Law of the Father⁷, is the equivalent of culture and accessible only to men. Woman remains outside the symbolic as “otherness,” signifying lack. Although Lacan’s work has made it possible for feminists to theorize masculine power and privilege in terms of symbolic systems perpetuated through the operations of language, his theories remain problematic for feminism. For example, Dana Heller argues that Lacan represses the “conditions, contradictions, and variants that have historically maintained an undeniable correlation between the penis and the phallus” (1995, 35), which allows masculine dominance to “assert and consolidate itself in and through such disjunctures rather than disappear in the gap between penis and phallus (1995, 35-6). Lacan, familiar with Klein’s theories, described her as an “inspired gut butcher” (Kristeva 2001, 148). He also criticized Klein’s emphasis on the maternal connection at the foundation of human thought. Moreover, he denounced Klein’s theories for failing to recognize the cultural priority of the phallus and the linguistic relationship between the penis and phallus (Kristeva 2001, 225-30). In the humanities, writes Jacqueline Rose, “a post-Lacanian orthodoxy has blocked access to Klein” (1993, 139) because Klein is both “too safe and too dangerous” (1993, 140). Introducing Klein into poststructuralist dialogue, I hope to open a

door to different way of understanding the complex relationship between subjects and culture, bodies and nature, text and action.

OBJECTS, DRIVES, PHANTASY

Melanie Klein describes the relational necessity of human experience. Psychoanalytic theory uses the term *objects* to describe those with whom we interact. For Klein, objects are whole, or integrated, and part objects, or split objects, exist internally and externally, and they can be real or phantasied. The interaction between the self and objects, internal and external, is called *object relations*. These relations are constitutive of subjects. Beginning with the first caregiver, usually the mother, infants form, or introject, a good internal object, which becomes a foundation for trust in the self, trust in others, and trust in the world. The good object helps infants increase their capacity to relate to reality. The internal conflict between the love and death drives is the linchpin of Kleinian theory; she describes this interaction as the “fundamental sources of mental life” (EG, 271)⁸. She understood the primary components of the death drive to be the anxiety that motivates object relations and, importantly, a fear *for* the annihilation of life (Kristeva 2001, 82-4). Because of Klein’s focus on the violent phantasies of infants and the ways that such phantasies retain their influence throughout life, few critics have attended the paradoxical nature of Klein’s death drive (Kristeva

2001, 83). Kristeva describes it as a condensation of love and hate (2001, 85), which is clearly represented in the dyad of envy and gratitude⁹. The Kleinian term *phantasy* denotes its significance as the “basic substance of all mental processes” because infantile phantasies construct the inner world. According to Klein, the infant’s “impulses and feelings are accompanied by a kind of mental activity which I take to be the most primitive one: phantasy-building, or more colloquially, imaginative thinking” (LGR, 60)¹⁰. Phantasies enable the ego to perform its most basic function: the establishment of object relations. Phantasy is constructed from external reality and modified by feelings and emotions; it is an integral part of perception, interpretation, and a form of reality testing. Phantasies, according to Klein, “becoming more elaborate and referring to a wider range of objects and situations - continue throughout development and accompany all activities; they never stop playing a great part in mental life” (EG, 251). Phantasy mediates between the interior and external worlds and is the foundation for future symbol formation and creativity.

POSITIONS AND DEFENSES

For Melanie Klein, the world of the infant is tumultuous, violent, and filled with loss. Klein shifted the focus from the Freudian emphasis on desire and repression to concentrate on the newborn’s psychic pain (Kristeva 2001, 12).

Central to Klein's approach is the relationship between child and mother. A satisfactory early relation between mother and infant is "the foundation for the most complete experience of being understood and is essentially linked with the preverbal stage" (EG, 301). From the beginning of life the infant's drives are directed towards an object, usually the mother or her breast. However, according to Klein, even the happiest relation with the mother is never undisturbed. Regardless of how well cared for the infant is, he or she will be dissatisfied in some way; thus the infant views the mother as both a source of goodness and love as well as a source of discomfort and persecution.

In this early relation between the child and the mother the breast plays a central role. The breast, according to Dorothy Dinnerstein, (1976, 96) should be understood metaphorically as a "source of goodness" because it nourishes the child; but, that source of nourishment is sometimes absent, which causes the child discomfort and results in anger and hatred towards it. The infant deals with this confusion by splitting the object into good and bad parts. The splitting mechanism involves an idealization and devaluation of the divided object; which means the infant regards the good part as entirely without fault and completely good, while the bad part is capricious and actively malevolent (Dinnerstein 1976, 95). Splitting the object separates the good from the bad in order to preserve the former from the destructiveness of the latter. This external split is copied within the child's ego, in which love and hate are separated. The good object is internalized

while the bad, that is, the child's own aggression, is projected out into the surrounding environment, especially onto the parent.

The projected aggression is felt by the infant to be persecutory anxiety, and the child fears retaliation from the parent. In the first few months of life the infant feels fragmented and fears the loss of good things; Klein calls this experience the paranoid-schizoid position. Feelings of hatred, phantasies of persecution, and attempts to overcome anxiety characterize the paranoid-schizoid position. Another anxiety defense experienced in early infancy is sadism. The sadistic tendency is directed towards the breast and body of the mother. The infant has phantasies of scooping out the breast, devouring it, and ultimately destroying the maternal body (Klein 1991[1986], 116-117). The child also fears he or she too will be poisoned and devoured (Klein 1991[1986], 177). Klein named the infant's destructive rage "envy." Envy is the feeling that someone else possesses something desirable, and the envious impulse is to take it away and spoil it (EG, 212).

These positive and negative feelings in tandem reinforce the conflict between the two fundamental instincts: love and hate. Because the child believes that the breast keeps for itself the nourishment and pleasure she or he desires, the infant, as a coping mechanism, splits the breast into the good part and the bad part to prevent the bad breast from contaminating the good one (Mitchell 1991[1986], 20). The splitting dynamic is closely related to projection. In the process of splitting, the infant can disown unwanted, negative parts of the self by projecting

those aspects onto the bad object. Concurrently, the infant must introject the good object; if he or she fails to do so sufficiently, the child will be unable to build up an inner good object. This, later in life, will prevent him or her from firmly establishing good objects in his or her inner world (Klein 1991[1986], 215).

The foundational component of Klein's early-development theories is the conflict between love and hate. The primary anxiety, emanating from the death instinct, is fear of annihilation (Sayers 1987, 27). Greed and envy are closely associated; the difference is that greed is bound to introjection and envy to projection. Klein insists that the first envied object is the feeding breast, which the infant believes is hoarding the love, nourishment, and gratification for itself. The infant projects bad parts of the self, including excrement, into the bad breast in order to spoil and destroy it. To defend against the bad persecuting breast the infant idealizes the good breast; therefore, because the idealized object stems from persecutory anxiety, it is not healthy for the idealization to be felt too strongly. The dynamics of splitting and idealization can disrupt normal development if they are too strong or too weak. If envy is excessive it interferes with the development of the good internal object, and the primal split between good and bad cannot be sufficiently achieved. This results in a disturbed understanding of good and bad (Klein 1991[1986], 217). If the split is too deep the important process of ego integration and object synthesis are not successful; that is, the comprehension by the child that good and bad aspects comprise a single object cannot be achieved. The result is intense persecutory anxiety, envy, and other destructive impulses.

Around the third month of life, the infant begins the transition from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position. The child realizes that the loved and feared objects are qualities belonging to one person, that is, the mother. As the fear of persecution lessens, the integration of the ideal object and the persecuting object allows the young ego to integrate its own split-off parts. As the ego becomes stronger it does not fear disintegration and annihilation acutely (Segal 1964, 24). The infant should be emotionally and cognitively capable of perceiving the complexity of single objects and be able to endure conflicting feelings towards them (Dinnerstein 1976, 97). When the infant sees the world as unified, and compassion is possible, fear for the self becomes fear for others (Goldenberg 1990, 161). The ambivalence that characterizes life's first position slowly melts as the splitting of images gradually comes nearer and nearer to reality. The ambivalence, or splitting mechanism, allows the child to develop love and trust in the good objects. As the child realizes that the good and bad objects are one, he begins to feel guilt and remorse, believing his destructive rage has, or could have, damaged the loved object. The child compensates for the damage through the drive for reparation. Reparation, according to Klein, is "the variety of processes by which the ego feels it undoes harm done in phantasy, restores, preserves and revives objects" (1991[1986], 48).

In order for the child to make the transition to reparative morality, three barriers must be overcome (Alford 1989, 84-7). First, the child must receive love from the parent in return for his hate. Also, a decrease in splitting must occur,

which can only happen if there is a concrete “other” into which the child can integrate harmful images. The concrete other is a good parent or loving care provider. Finally, the depressive anxiety, such as guilt, must not be too intense; if the child does not believe that his or her drive for reparation can compensate for the damage done in phantasy, the infant will resort to defense mechanisms of the paranoid-schizoid position. If this process is not successful, the infant may never work through the first position and the paranoid-schizoid anxieties will surface in adulthood, inhibiting positive, productive object relations. In normal development the ambivalence that characterizes early life will diminish and positive object relations can follow. The process of development during the first year of life can be succinctly described as ambivalence, guilt, integration, and reparation. However, even though a transition from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position occurs during infancy, the two positions are active throughout life to varying degrees.

There is a rift among Kleinians about the importance of her later writings, and especially the value that the concept of reparation has for psychoanalysis (Gordon 2003, Rose, 1993). Some theorists argue that the emphasis in Klein’s later writings on reparative morality undermines the power and the lasting effect of infantile aggression. Reparation becomes a sort of theoretical bandage, naturally repairing the difficulties of infantile aggression, thereby mitigating the importance of the early paranoid-schizoid stage and its affect on the adult world. For example, in their essay on Klein and Christianity, Sophia Forster and Donald

Carveth (1999) compare the process of reparation to repentance, and compare the mother-child relationship to that of sinners and God. Forster and Carveth use reparation to bridge psychoanalysis with Christianity in order to demonstrate the inherent goodness of humanity. For many Kleinians, reparation is too easy a road traveled to mental health and productive inner worlds. Kristeva, for example, emphasizes the violent beginnings of human thought by attending to essential operations psychical matricide and envy (2001, 13). And Suzy Gordon describes the constitutive devastation necessary for the subject's own preservation (2003, 2). Therefore, the aggression and violent phantasies of early infancy must be recognized and incorporated into a productive Kleinian analysis.

SYMBOLIC FORMATION

Klein theorized that symbolic formation enables infants and adults to work through the painful, conflicting emotions that plague the interior world. At the heart of symbolism is identification, "which is essentially the young child's effort to discover, within every external object, his own organs and their function" (Kristeva 2001, 159). In infancy, the developing ego attaches intense emotions, feelings, and sensations to various objects in the interior and external worlds, "which become symbols and provide an outlet for the infant's emotions...the drive to create symbols is so strong because even the most loving mother cannot satisfy

the infant's powerful emotional needs" (EG, 299). Klein explored the operations of symbolic formation in her patients and in literature. She wrote,

We see then that the child's earliest reality is wholly phantasmatic; he is surrounded with objects of anxiety, and in this respect excrement, organs, objects, things animate and inanimate are to begin with equivalent to one another. As the ego develops, a true relation to reality is gradually established out of this unreal reality. Thus, the development of the ego and the relation to reality depend on the degree of the ego's capacity at a very early period to tolerate the pressure of the earliest anxiety situations...A sufficient quantity of anxiety is the necessary basis for an abundance of symbol formation and of phantasy; an adequate capacity on the part of the ego to tolerate anxiety is necessary (1991[1986], 98).

For Klein, inhibitions prevent the capacity for symbolic formation, which all individuals need to negotiate phantasy and engage reality. One of Klein's patients, a boy known as Dick (1991[1986], 95-107), was so inhibited he could not express any aggression and was unable to bond part objects. It is likely that Dick would be diagnosed with autism today (Kristeva 2001, 159), and, accordingly, Klein treated the boy with limited success. Klein's interpretation of the meaning of Dick's actions, while he played with toys during their therapeutic sessions, eventually allowed him to symbolize his inhibitions, thus mitigating his anxiety, and Dick increasingly developed the "desire to make himself intelligible" (1991[1986] 106). Symbol formation, then, is a means by which selves come to know the world as well as the means by which others can come know them.

Symbol formation is active in adults as well; however, adults can distinguish more easily between phantasy and reality. Klein refers to an article in which the author describes a woman, Ruth Kjar, who was plagued with depression

that Klein attributed to unresolved anxiety from her childhood. In the process of overcoming her depression, Ruth painted pictures, which Klein understood to restore and repair phantasied damage Ruth had done to her mother in childhood (1991[1986], 90-4). In the case of Ruth Kjar, symbolic formation functioned through creative impulses which turned into a reparative gesture, healing Ruth's own guilt and anxiety¹¹. Symbol formation in art or literature can operate in larger social arenas. Klein felt that the *Orestian Trilogy*, written by the Greek tragedian Aeschylus, expresses the depths of human nature and that the greatness of his plays owes to his understanding of the unconscious. Klein also thought that symbols pervade cultural productions, writing that "The creative artist makes full use of symbols; and the more they serve to express the conflicts between love and hate, between destructiveness and reparation, between life and death instincts, the more they approach universal form" (EG, 199). Kristeva lauds Klein's understanding of symbolic formation and its relation to the depressive position, writing, "Klein's depressive position offers yet another innovation, one that will eventually encourage creativity: the feeling of depression mobilizes the desire to make reparation" (2001, 79).

The importance of symbol formation cannot be overemphasized in Kleinian theory. Symbol formation, impelled by anxiety, is the vehicle for external connections, and it also motivates creativity. Without symbol formation there would be no relationship with the external world.

DESIRE AND INTEGRATION

Klein did not describe the processes through which individuals assume their places in culture with the same dedication and zeal that shapes much of Lacan's writings. However, Klein outlines the features of mental health and mental illness and thus one's ability to function, or not, in culture. Klein uses the phrase "adaptation to reality" to describe the transition from the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions during infancy. For Klein, the well-integrated personality is the foundation for mental health and for social interaction (EG, 247). All social interactions consist of individuals in relation to one another and must be supported by knowledge of human psychical development. The most significant achievement in life is the capacity to tolerate the interplay between love and hate within the self and others. This process is so difficult because the infant, or adult, must risk the comfort and security of love and goodness, allowing it to come into contact with hatred and aggression. Klein writes,

The more the ego can integrate its destructive impulses and synthesize the different aspects of its objects, the richer it becomes; for the split-off parts of the self and of impulses which are rejected because they arouse anxiety and give pain also contain valuable aspects of the personality and of the phantasy life which is impoverished by splitting them off. Though the rejected aspects of the self and of internalized objects contribute to instability, they are also at the source of inspiration in artistic productions and in various intellectual activities (EG , 245).

The work of integration is difficult because the infant's destructive phantasies are so violent. Klein writes, "In his aggressive phantasies he wishes to bite up and to

tear up his mother and her breasts, and to destroy her also in other ways” (LGR, 61). Moreover, the infant believes that “what he desires in his phantasies has really taken place” (LGR, 61), the infant believes he or she has actually destroyed the target of the destructive impulses. Guilt will lead the infant to reparative phantasies in which the infant restores the damaged object. However, the infant will continue to have fears that he or she has destroyed the object that he or she “loves and needs most,” and, Klein continues, “In my view, these basic conflicts profoundly influence the course and force of the emotional lives of grown-up individuals” (LGR, 62).

The initial step toward integration in the infant requires that he or she surrender the “close contact between the unconscious of the mother and of the child” (EG, 301). Klein describes this early relationship shared by mother and child as the “foundation for the most complete experience of being understood and is essentially linked with the preverbal stage” (EG, 301). Integration and moving into the depressive position entails the loss of this unconscious connection. The sense of loss remains for life and creates in individuals the desire to experience a profound connection with another person. Therefore, loss and desire from a Kleinian perspective are radically different from the Lacanian version that currently informs much of cultural studies. In “The Signification of the Phallus” (1977, 298), Lacan writes that the desire of the mother *is* the phallus and thus the child wishes to be the phallus to satisfy her desire. The mother’s thwarted desire

for the phallus mirrors the child's frustrated desire for the mother. Lacan concludes, "Driven by desire, the subject is ever split."

Desire, from Klein's perspective, develops from the anxiety of the death drive. Desire *is* the desire to damage, the desire to repair, and the desire for an intimate experience and knowledge of the other. Desire, then, like the death drive, is a condensation of love and hate and the fear *for* life. In a Kleinian framework, desire has no relation to castration fears or phallic signifiers. I want to be clear here, I am not arguing that desire always has positive aims and goals. I concur with the Lacanian theory of desire on this point: desire is complex and can be both a destructive and constructive force. However, in contrast with Lacan, desire is unrelated to the phallus.

In one of Klein's later papers, "On the Sense of Loneliness" (EG, 300-13), she investigates the source of the inner sense of loneliness that many people feel even in the presence of friends or receiving love. Klein makes the case that this type of a sense of loneliness is the "result of a ubiquitous yearning for an unattainable perfect internal state" (EG, 300). She pays close attention to the concept of integration in this article. Integration and the urge to split exist from the beginning of life within the ego. Klein believed that the ego exists and operates from birth onwards, although the very young ego lacks cohesion and is dominated by the splitting mechanism (EG, 300). The internal dynamics of ego development, splitting, and integration are interdependent and rely upon the successful introjection of a good object. The good object, at this early stage of

life, is a part object, that is, a split object, usually the mother's breast. If the good internal object is established with relative security it will become the core of the developing ego and assist the process of integration (EG, 300-301).

The depressive position, in normal development, begins around the third month of life. The depressive position requires some degree of integration and a growing sense of wholeness within the baby's inner world. Integration begins to work effectively because the "splitting processes by which the early ego attempts to counteract insecurity are never more than temporarily effective and the ego is driven to attempt to come to terms with the destructive impulses" (EG, 301). It is this drive, that is, the drive to overcome the dominance of splitting and projection, which contributes toward the rise of integration. Integration, if achieved, mitigates hate by love and thus renders destructive impulses less powerful. Ultimately, the result of this process is the young ego feels more secure about its own survival as well as the preservation of the good object. Unfortunately, the process of integration is extremely painful regardless of whether it is successful or fails. The bonding of destructive and loving impulses, and good and bad parts of the object, brings on the anxiety that destructive feelings may overwhelm the loving impulses and damage the good object. Therefore, there is a conflict between needing integration to mitigate destructive impulses, persecutory anxiety, and inaugurate the depressive position and fearing the damage and loss of the good internal object and the good parts of the self due to this process. According to Klein, integration is a slow and difficult process during the early stages of development and

throughout life. Moreover, “full and permanent integration is never possible for some polarity between the life and death instincts always persists and remains the deepest source of conflict. Since full integration is never achieved, complete understanding of one’s own emotions, phantasies, and anxieties is not possible” (EG, 302). Integration is a complex, tenuous, and necessary process that demands to be analyzed closely and carefully.

Although this early transitional stage in which the infant progresses from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position is tumultuous, even chaotic, the infant also has the “most complete experience of being understood” which he or she will try to replicate throughout life. Klein suggests that a relation with the mother that is satisfactory enough to establish a good internal object “implies close contact between the unconscious of the mother and of the child” (EG, 301). This intimate experience of understanding another and being understood so completely belongs to the preverbal stage and creates in people an unsatisfied, and unsatisfiable, “longing for understanding without words - ultimately for the earliest relation with the mother. This longing contributes to a sense of loneliness and derives from the depressive feeling of an irretrievable loss” (EG, 301). This moment of desire (for the m/other) and loss, within the theory of dynamic positions, is what so much of human culture seeks both to express and hide. There is a certain irony in the notion that the formation of one’s identity, which allows for participation in culture, comes at the expense of true connection with another. Because integration is both the introjection of the good object that

becomes the core of the ego, as well as the bonding of good and bad objects within the inner and external worlds, it is impossible to bypass this process. If one could somehow negate the process of integration he or she would not be left with the potential for preverbal connection; instead, the result would be an incoherent life story. Sanity has a downside.

The feeling of irretrievable loss described by Klein belongs to the depressive position. Or, perhaps more accurately, it is at the beginning of the depressive position. The depressive position arises as the integrative process brings together the bad and good parts of the split object into a single object. The infant begins to feel guilt and anxiety for the damage it has done in phantasy and tries to repair both the internal and actual objects. Following D. W. Winnicott, Harriet Lutzky (1989) writes that Klein's concept of the depressive position is a contribution to psychoanalysis whose importance ranks with Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex. Moreover, Lutzky finds the concept of the depressive position at work in cultural representations: "it might be expected that cultural representations of the dynamics of the depressive position exist – just as the Oedipus myth expresses the psychodynamics Freud uncovered" (1989, 449). Lutzky demonstrates that the Kabbalistic story of tikkun gives mythical expression to the psychodynamics described by Klein. In this sense, religious myth and social narratives perform similar functions because they express and help people to cope with the difficulties of integration and the polarity between the life and death instincts.

Stephen Frosh (2001) asks important questions about the limitations of discourse and narrative theory for psychoanalysis. These would seem to be unusual questions for a psychological method often referred to as the “talking cure.” Freudian psychoanalysis may be described as the chronicle of a personal narrative. For Ricoeur, “life can not be understood other than through the stories we tell about it;” thus a life examined is a life narrated (1991, 434). However, Frosh returns to Freud, and the notion of the dream’s navel, in order to argue that “psychoanalysis shows very clearly that there is a point where discourse fails, where language in all its guises is characterized by its insufficiency rather than its expressive capacity, where what is known in and by a person lies quite simply outside of symbolization” (2001, 640). The dream’s navel is a spot where the dream reaches into the unknown and unknowable. For Frosh, like Freud, there is always a passage in a dream that must be left obscure because it can not be interpreted

Narrative truths, Frosh argues, illuminate half-understood meanings, provide structure, and offer coherence where there is fragmentation (2001, 634). However, the unconscious realm that is outside of language continually seeks expression and disrupts narrative. Frosh’s unconscious realm seems to bear similarities to Klein’s preverbal stage, in which aggressive phantasied attacks are experienced alongside a profound sense of connection with the m/other. The importance of phantasy can not be overestimated. Klein’s approach differs significantly from Freud and Lacan on this topic. Freud argued that the repressed

material that constitutes the unconscious of the subject attempts to return to consciousness through various disruptive forms. For Lacan, such material is abjected and forms the foundation of what the subject will become, by being what the subject is not, and then forever haunting the boundaries of identity. Freud and Lacan locate the repressed or abjected material that forms identity in a closed-off mental space (id, real), not readily available to the consciousness of the individual. From this perspective, the work of culture is largely the work of covering over or making more obscure painful events in order to help individuals cope with them (Kaplan 1993[1983]). Klein, on the other hand, regards cultural artifacts as an attempt to express such painful events and anxieties because they are never that far from consciousness; take, for example, the case of Ruth Kjar. The idea of positions between which individuals oscillate means that the most painful experiences that inform and shape identities are never entirely lost to us. For Klein, the unconscious contains the life and death instincts as well as their affects. Unlike the Freudian and Lacanian formulations, in Klein's theory these instincts are always seeking expression, even when the means of expression fails. The Kleinian concept of phantasy aids this process because it is the principle mode of functioning of the mind. Hanna Segal wrote that phantasy "is not merely an escape from reality, but a constant and unavoidable accompaniment of real experiences, constantly interacting with them" (Segal 1964, 14). Juliet Mitchell relates phantasy to human biology. She writes, "the Kleinian concept of phantasy describes the human being's vast elaboration through perceptions and experience

of the animal, biological instincts” (1991[1986], 22). Klein’s theory of phantasy can be difficult to grasp because it is both mental activity and the product of such activity; that is to say, phantasy is mechanism, mediation, and result.

Anxiety, phantasy, and symbolization are essential to operations of the unconscious and conscious mind. Mitchell describes Klein’s concept of phantasy as something that “emanates from within and imagines what is without, it offers an unconscious commentary on instinctual life and links feelings to objects and creates a new amalgam: the world of imagination” (1991[1986], 23). Symbol formation is the act of equating things felt by the child in phantasy with actual things and objects. Klein writes, “I drew the conclusion that symbolism is the foundation of all sublimation and of every talent, since it is by way of symbolic equation that things, activities, and interests become the subject of libidinal phantasies” (1991[1986], 97). Symbol formation arises due to persecutory anxiety experienced by the infant in the earliest stages of development. The infant wishes to destroy the internal organs, which stand for (represent) the objects that have been split off to protect the good parts from the bad parts of the object and of the self. Anxiety is experienced as dread, which impels the infant to equate the objects of destruction with other things, which in turn become objects of anxiety, impelling the child to constantly make new equations to allay the sense of dread. Therefore, symbol formation is the foundation of the infant’s interest in the world and relations to objects outside the self. The infant needs a sufficient amount of anxiety to encourage him or her to invest in the world, however unreal that

phantasied connection may be, without crippling the young ego. As the ego develops, a true relation to reality is gradually established. However, that relationship depends on the developing ego's capacity to tolerate early anxiety situations.

Melanie Klein envisions infantile ego development as a complex, tenuous, and sometimes chaotic process. However, I find her theories of infantile development to be radically human. She offers a vision of subjectivity and identity formation that does not depend on the devaluation of a group, person, or thing¹². Instead the mechanisms that dominate the individual's interior world are a constant shifting of disintegration and cohesion. The emphasis on the death drive may seem nihilistic, but her theories also promote the human capacity for a positive, productive engagement with the self, with each other, and with the world. Klein's theories of the interior world and its relation to the external world relate to the study of religious images in secular media. According to Naomi Goldenberg, Klein describes "human life as a fervent, never-ending psychic struggle with emotions addressed by religious discourse – namely, love, hate, guilt and fear. Because Kleinian concepts blur inner and outer, past and present, rational and irrational, word and flesh, her thought can contain the ambiguities and intensities of religious systems" (2005, 10).

This is not to say that Kleinian theory is a replacement for religiosity; rather, Kleinian theory applied to narrative will help to name, describe, and analyze religious themes in secular culture.

CONCLUSION

A Kleinian theoretical method for cultural analysis will deepen our understanding of religious images, ethics, and themes produced in secular film media. This approach escapes the hopelessness of gender disparity that is intrinsic to methods that attend only to representations of Oedipal dynamics by focusing on how narratives help individuals cope with the process of integration and the polarity of the life and death instincts. Focusing on the internal dynamics described by Melanie Klein shifts psychoanalytic cultural studies in a new direction. Films and theaters help individuals to work through their own stories; but the story of integration, loss, and desire from a Kleinian perspective has not been the focus of Kleinian-informed cultural accounts. Theorists utilizing Klein's methods have emphasized the operations of individual psychical dynamics such as splitting, anxiety, guilt, gratitude and reparation. Or they have focused on the importance of the mother in the infant's world and in discourse. The fragmented world of the infant is dominated by the conflict between the urge to split and the drive towards integration. This dynamic is complicated by the irretrievable loss of a profound, wordless connection with the mother. Finally, the desire for such a

connection is forever present in the individual but always disrupted by integrative anxiety, such as fear that the bad objects will overwhelm and destroy the good objects, which accompanies individuals throughout life. These three dimensions of Kleinian thought, which bear similarity to religious themes in popular media, can be imaged as utopia (integration and connection) and distopia (irretrievable loss and ceaseless desire). Of course, in Kleinian terms, utopia is never possible and distopia is never far off. By attending to the collaborative and overlapping dimensions of integration, loss, and desire, Klein's theories of infant development can be productively applied to media images.

To summarize, the specific Kleinian dynamic on which I will focus is integration, loss, and desire. Integration of the good and bad objects means that the profound, preverbal connection with the mother is lost and creates the ceaseless, though impossible, desire to replicate that connection. This dynamic plays a formative role in the development of the depressive position and continues to influence individuals throughout life. Harriet Lutzky correctly suggests that representations of the dynamics of the depressive position exist in cultural material. Furthermore, Klein believes cultural artifacts are attempts to express such painful events and anxieties because they are never far from consciousness. This Kleinian cultural analysis is built upon two pillars: the idea that religious themes, ethics, and images have been transferred to secular media; and that post-structuralism is a politically engaged cultural critique that will be enriched by a Kleinian contribution.

Thus, reading cultural narratives in order to identify and analyze the representations of interior conflicts will produce new and different meanings in those texts. What if the Oedipal complex is not the only means by which the body in nature becomes a subject in culture? What if the Oedipal complex merely describes an aspect of the operations of hegemony? What if its performative repetition ensures consent for gender disparity and intellectual stagnation? And, what if the formulaic repetition of the Oedipal drama serves only to sustain relations of domination?

CHAPTER THREE

POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Poststructuralism¹³ is a theoretical methodology that has as one of its aims to understand the construction of individual subjects in language. It is comprised of a variety of theories that complement and conflict with one another. Andreas Huyssen (1986) contends that poststructuralism is the heir to the emancipatory discourses of modernity. The project of modernity, developed by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, centered on two related discourses which envisioned a utopic transformation of society. The political discourse posited the slow-process human emancipation, and the philosophical discourse supposed that a self-conscious mind would evolve from ignorant matter. The political and philosophic discourses would affect society through science, morality, and art, thereby facilitating emancipation. Human emancipation was imagined to be the synthesis

of reason and society (Zaretsky 1998). However, postmodernity became a dominant cultural paradigm before the project of modernity had achieved its emancipatory goals. Postmodernity undermines modernity's assumptions about universality, meaning, and control. The postmodern impulse is to distrust grand narratives, universal foundations, and claims to legitimate knowledge because they rely on a privileged perspective that tends to result in cultural imperialism¹⁴.

Central to the rift between modernism and postmodernism are notions about subjectivity, self-awareness, and agency. Modernity situates the subject external to the web of cultural relations. While postmodern theory locates the subject within, that is, produced and constructed by, the web of cultural relations. Poststructuralism creates a bridge between these two extremes, theorizing that although the subject is socially constructed she or he does possess individual agency. Thus, to say that the subject is discursively constituted is not to claim that the subject is determined by its constitution. Therefore, from a poststructuralist perspective, subjects are not overdetermined but possess the agency to choose among available discourses. It is a commitment to social transformation based on equality that distinguishes postmodernism from poststructuralism. Butler argues that poststructuralism questions the foundations it is compelled to create in order to facilitate social theory that is committed to democratic contestation within a postcolonial horizon (Butler 1992, 8). And, Jeremy Carrette asserts that poststructuralism identifies "hidden oppressions and power structures" (Carrette 2001, 113). Thus, poststructuralism is the heir to the emancipatory discourses of

modernity because it is a politically engaged critique. However, it goes beyond the limitations of modernity because it continually interrogates what is legitimated by theoretical foundations and what is foreclosed by those foundations (Butler 1992, 6-7).

Carrette finds poststructuralist theory to be valuable for the psychology of religion because it attends to the ways in which “discourses and knowledges are shaped by hidden political assumptions and social structures” (Carrette 2001, 111). Psychology of religion is the “systematic application of psychological theories and methods to the contents of the religious traditions and the related experiences, attitudes, and actions of individuals” and groups (Wulff, 2001, 15). Poststructuralist methodology provides a means to analyze the origins of the psychology of religion in a way that recognizes its positivistic foundations but does not dismiss the area entirely. That is to say, poststructuralism deconstructs notions such as “objective reason, a value-free empiricism, and the search for a universal nature” (2001, 114-15), while retaining the useful framework that psychology of religion offers. Conceiving of the subject within specific constellations of social discourses and historical epochs, the psychology of religion is theoretically prepared to deconstruct the modernist notion of the subjectivity shaped by binary logic.

Carrette argues that the binary divisions that separate the mind from the body, devaluing the latter, pervade the literature of psychology and “support oppressive social practices, particularly in terms of gender, ‘race’ and sexual

orientation” (2001, 118). The work of psychology must recognize that the mind is always embodied and historically located. Finally, Carrette contends that psychology of religion informed by poststructuralist methodology must “carry out three related tasks: first, an examination of the social and historical roots of human image construction and identity; second, an exploration of religious ideas that infiltrate into psychology; and third, a critical assessment of the models of human beings provided by psychology” (2001, 121). In this thesis, an examination of the Oedipal complex meets Carrette’s criteria for a poststructuralist psychology of religion.

A theory of subjectivization is a vital component of poststructuralist thought. Louis Althusser, the French Marxist philosopher, theorized “that all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects” (1984, 162). Ideology works effectively through ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) to secure consent to relations of domination¹⁵. Judith Butler writes, “Althusser’s doctrine of interpellation continues to structure contemporary debate on subject formation, offering a way to account for a *subject who comes into being as a consequence of language, yet always within its terms*” (1997a, 106) (emphasis mine). Though Althusser’s theory of the social construction of subjects in language has been questioned, it continues to survive such critiques. Althusser’s primary focus is “the question of the reproduction of the relations of production” (1984, 128); that is, how are relations of domination reproduced and sustained? To answer his own questions, Althusser theorizes that ideology functions in such a

way that it recruits subjects among individuals. He imagines this dynamic to be as commonplace as police hailing a pedestrian on the street, “Hey, you there!” (1984, 163). This dynamic has been critiqued as too dyadic and therefore too simplistic. However, the call “arrives severally, and in implicit and unspoken ways” and the scene is never as dyadic as Althusser claims (Butler 1997a, 106). Moreover, Jacques Derrida (1998[1968]) makes clear that the *power which enables the call (the scene of the utterance) is never the function of an originating will, but is always derivative*. Althusser’s “Hey, you there” is a reiteration of a norm or set of norms which conceals the conventions of which it is a repetition. Therefore, individuals are socially constituted as subjects within always-already-existing social relations. It is then culture that interpellates subjects, ensuring the reproduction of relations of production (and domination). As we construct our world, our world constructs us.

Poststructuralism is an ideal tool to theorize the production of meaning in narratives and its relationship to the formation of subjectivity. According to Fredric Jameson, the world comes to us in the shape of stories (Jameson 1981, Dowling 1984). He is making a radical claim: it is not that humans create stories to make sense of the world, but rather that narrative is the very foundation of knowledge. Without narratives the world would be unintelligible. Gail Boldt adds that “each of us creates narratives of our lives that can either produce the necessary foothold for reflection and change or that rehearse our justifications for

the status quo” (Boldt 2002, 377). The Oedipal conflict will be examined, in this thesis, as a mythic structure upon which other narratives are based.

BUTLER’S FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Judith Butler’s feminist poststructuralism theorizes the construction of gendered subjects and also challenges the limits of the Lacanian symbolic. It is my goal in this chapter to unpack that statement and also attend to the nuances of Butler’s theoretical program that stand in the shadow of the concept of the performative construction of gendered subjects. I present an overview of Butler’s theoretical program that focuses on three related and overlapping areas: the production, construction, and subversion of the subject within the symbolic economy. I emphasize four of Butler’s texts. *Gender Trouble* (1990) introduces Butler’s theory of performativity and compares it with other feminist social critiques. *Bodies That Matter* (1993), which responds to much of the criticism that *Gender Trouble* received, focuses on three main areas. First, she explains how the materiality of the body is constituted through discursive construction. Second, she rethinks the theory of performativity through Derrida’s concept of citationality. Finally, Butler explores the ways in which the limits of the Lacanian symbolic can be challenged, subverted, and reconstituted. The paper “Contingent Foundations” (1992) focuses on the potential of poststructuralism for political emancipation. Poststructuralism recognizes “that power pervades the very

conceptual apparatus that seeks to negotiate its terms, including the subject position of the critic" (1992, 6). Therefore, poststructuralism can ensure that political signifiers are not anchored to exclusive foundations, truths, and significations. Finally, *Antigone's Claim* (2000) demonstrates that the incest taboo works to foreclose social and sexual arrangements that are not incestuous or heterosexual. Butler advocates rethinking heteronormative kinship arrangements in order to exceed the limits of the Lacanian symbolic. In this chapter, I extract and elaborate several aspects of Butler's theoretical program, paying particular attention to the notion of resignification, which challenges the limits of the symbolic rather than attempting to install a utopic vision of sociality.

Butler's work brings disparate strands of poststructuralism into dialogue and thus designs a comprehensive theoretical program. Butler draws mainly from the theories of Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida. Significantly, the theories and methods devised by these three theorists are not congruent. For example, Foucault is concerned with the discursive construction of knowledge and the operations of the microphysics of power which produce and regulate disciplined docile subjects. He rejects psychoanalysis because of its tendency to normativize the bourgeois family. Lacan proposes a psychoanalytic foundation for the construction of the subject. He reads the theories of Freud through the structuralist linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and the structuralist anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss. Lacan retains the foundational theory of the Oedipal crisis, but assigns the construction of the subject to the social sphere, thus

limiting the importance of the ego, id, and superego. The social sphere is structured by three registers: the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. Derrida's central project is to valorize written language in a philosophic system that has celebrated the primacy of speech since Plato. The Western tradition argues that in spoken language "meaning is 'present' to the speaker through an act of inward self-surveillance which ensures a perfect, intuitive 'fit' between intention and utterance" (Norris 1991, 23). Derrida rejects this claim, arguing instead that meaning is always made through a process of delay, difference, and deferral. He combines the three terms to create "différance." He also develops a method of analysis called "deconstruction," which identifies and unpacks the binary opposites that structure Western thought. Butler draws from Foucault's notions of discursivity and power and Derrida's concept of citationality to challenge the limits of the Lacanian symbolic.

Butler's feminist poststructuralism can be organized according to three main components: the production of the subject, the construction of the subject, and challenging the limits of subjectivization¹⁶. The first component argues that subjects are produced through the force of exclusion and foreclosure. Following their production, subjects are constructed through performativity, which usually functions as a normativizing power that anchors and stabilizes identity within the symbolic. While the first two components address the normativizing functions of interpellation within the terms of sociality, the third component allows for resistance and subversion within the powerful operations of the symbolic order.

Foucault argued that “where there is power there is resistance” and that “points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network” (1977, 95). Drawing from Foucault, Butler contends that subjects are not over-determined by discursive practices and can therefore subvert hidden oppressions through the process of resignification. These three components comprise an effective theoretical program that is a politically engaged critique as well as a discourse of emancipation from oppressive power structures.

The subject is produced through the force of exclusion and radical foreclosures. Abjection, according to Butler, means “to cast off, away, or out and, hence, presupposes and produces a domain of agency from which it is differentiated” (1993, 243). Abjection implies a “foreclosure which founds the subject and which, accordingly, establishes that foundation as tenuous... Moreover, the notion of abjection designates a degraded or cast out status within the terms of sociality. Indeed, what is foreclosed or repudiated within psychoanalytic terms is precisely what may not re-enter the field of the social without threatening psychosis, that is, the dissolution of the subject itself” (1993, 243). For Julia Kristeva, the abject is that which “disturbs identity, system, and order” (1992, 4). Hence, the objects that are abjected are not in and of themselves harmful; it is the signification that is attached to them that is disruptive. The abject, then, draws its power from the fragility of the social order. Butler theorizes the notion of abjection in relation to the constitution of identity. The construction of any identity is contingent upon a repudiated not-self or not-group. Moreover,

for both the collective and individual identity, the abjected cast-out material constantly threatens the stability of the self or group. The abject haunts the boundaries of intelligibility, always threatening to re-emerge and disturb established order. Therefore, in order to sustain itself, identity must be reconstituted through rituals. Butler contends that the practice of iteration performs the same function as purification rituals because they stabilize and naturalize social boundaries (1993, 10).

The theory of the performative construction of gender is the most widely known aspect of Butler's theoretical program. Speech-act theory argues that some words or phrases are performative, which is a discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names (1993, 13). Butler transposes the notion that words produce what they name on to gender politics. Gender, she argues, is a process of regulated repetition that is inscribed on the materiality of the body. It is also a formative aspect in the construction of subjects. That is to say, there is no "I" which is anterior to the construction of gender (1993, 7). Butler argues that the "doer is constructed in and through the deed" (1990, 181). Thus, the subject does not have a stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiates. The cultural field is dominated by the regulatory apparatus of heterosexuality, which renders all other forms of sexuality unintelligible. Heterosexual desire is secured through the abjection of non-heterosexual identifications, depositing such desires into the domain of cultural impossibility (1993, 111). Gender operates through an exclusionary matrix that produces both the intelligible and the unintelligible.

Preconditions for intelligibility are foreclosures, that is, the constitutive outside, that haunt the boundaries of cultural articulation. According to Butler, “that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (1990,173). The emergence of the subject is then co-extensive with the performance of gender.

Performativity is a complex dynamic that involves reiteration, citationality, and resignification. Performativity’s power lies in the reiteration of culturally sanctioned conventions. Culture, then, reproduces itself through individual performances. Butler writes, “performativity is not thus a singular ‘act’, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or sets of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition” (1993, 12). The power of performativity draws not from the original act but from the repetition itself. Butler draws from Derrida’s notion of citationality to support her theory of performativity. Butler contends that,

performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by the subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that ‘performance’ is not a singular act or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist determining it fully in advance (1993, 95).

Butler’s concept of performativity focuses on the reproduction of social norms that compel individuals through violent and non-violent coercion. She does not refuse

or ignore the materiality of bodies but contends that the physical borders of the body are mapped by its discursive limits. That is, the materiality of the body can be known only through discursive representations of it and that those representations have histories that are imbricated in the operations of power. Materiality, she argues, can never be taken for granted because it is acquired and constituted through the development of morphology (1993, 69). Moreover, it is through reiterative practice that the process of materialization, which stabilizes bodies over time, is able to produce the “effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter” (1993, 9). Thus, reiteration and discursivity are constitutive of materiality.

Although critics of poststructuralism have argued that performativity occludes individual agency (1993, 9), Butler insists that agency lies within the practice of citationality. Citationality, drawn from the Derridean corpus, asserts that the power of performance is always a derivative power because it cites the *already said* or the *already done*. Citationality relies on Derrida’s notions of differance and trace. Language, according to Derrida, is a system based on difference because meaning is produced through negative recognition, that is, knowing what something is not (Derrida 1998 [1968], 392). Differance is thus the “movement of play that ‘produces’ (and not by something that is simply an activity) these differences, these effects of difference... Differance is the non-full, non-simple ‘origin’; it is the structured and differing origin of differences” (1998[1968], 393). Ultimately, Derrida concludes that in language and speech

there can never be self-presence because the origin of the utterance, the transcendental signified, is illusory.

The idea of the trace is central to the theory of differance. The trace is the origin of all repetition (Derrida 1974 [1967], 65). It is not a material entity; but rather a “psychic imprint” (1974 [1967], 66). Derrida contends that meaning is made in the process of signification; however, that process does not cite an originary concept, a signified, but is rather a process of repetition. The trace constitutes the present through its relation to both the future and the past because it is a “simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself” (Derrida 1998[1968], 403). Therefore, if meaning is made through a process of negative recognition and temporal delay, the trace is the structuring element that mediates presence and absence because it constitutes *what is*, draws from *what was*, and refers to *what will be*. Hence, the trace is extremely powerful in its very absence. Citationality, like differance, is the practice of repetition that is not based on an original transcendental signified (Butler 1993, 109). Significantly, part of the power of citationality is that it simultaneously “draws on and covers over the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized” (1993, 27). This means that iterative power appears original rather than as a reiteration of norms and sets of norms. For Butler, performance is a reiterative practice that draws its power and legitimation from the citation and dissimulation of already socially sanctioned conventions. Agency is located within the practice of citationality as the ability to choose between conventions.

The first two components of Butler's theoretical program, the production and construction of subjects, are concerned with the hegemonic means by which the conditions of the symbolic reproduce themselves. The third component of the program attends to the possibility of subversion through the resignification of social conventions. Challenging the limits of subjectivization requires a return to the structuralist account of the constitution of the symbolic. It is important to note that kinship relations, which normativize heterosexuality and thus foreclose all other sexual arrangements, have a formative role in the construction of the body's materiality because, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the paternal law that structures kinship establishes the symbolic order. The development of morphology, that is, the materialization of the body, draws from the rules of differentiation based on idealized kinship relations (Butler 1993, 69). Anne Brooks defines the morphology of the body as the ways it has been represented, conceptualized, and articulated in discourse (A. Brooks 1997, 78). Furthermore, the discourse of kinship arrangements establishes masculine subjects through a denial of the feminine.

The structuralist account of social relations is based on the prohibitive law that demands the heterosexual reproduction of kinship. The symbolic order is the zone of cultural intelligibility that maintains its hegemony through the mutually exclusive positions of having the phallus (masculine) and being the phallus (feminine). The symbolic order is the domain of sociality that is marked by the acquisition of language and the Oedipal crisis. The dyadic unity shared by the

mother and child in the imaginary register is interrupted by the paternal imperative “NO!” (no access to the mother), which then demands that the child repress his desire for the mother in order to obey the Law of the Father. The Law of the Father, represented by the phallus and the fear of castration, is the threshold between culture and nature. Furthermore, the Law is an organizing principle of kinship systems in which sexual access is denied to members who have been named as family (Grosz 1990, 70). Membership in the symbolic demands that subjects act according to socially constructed cultural practices. This means that to successfully attain a subject position the child must surrender his desire for the maternal body in order to obey the Law. In the process of subjectivization a gap is created by the lack of what the child believed to be truly meaningful - which is the absence of unquestionable, transhistorical social meaning, that is, presence. Thus, when the child articulates “I am” he is really saying “I am that which I am not” and “I am he who has lost something” (Moi 1985, 99). The symbolic order is dominated by prohibitive law, which identifies the incest taboo as a universal foundation of kinship arrangements (Butler 2000, 30).

Lacan believed that names emblemize and institute the paternal law. Names are tokens of the symbolic order which legislate viable subjects through the institution of sexual difference and heterosexuality (Butler 1993, 152). The name, according to Butler, “as part of a social pact and, indeed, a social system of signs, overrides the tenuousness of imaginary identifications and confers a social durability and legitimacy” (1993, 152) on the subject. The name secures identity

and stabilizes the body over time within the limits of the symbolic. For Lacan, “kinship is rarefied as a linguistic structure, and thus removed from the domain of the social” (Butler 2000, 3). The Lacanian relocation of kinship from the social to the universal freezes the social relations of kinship as something intractable (2000, 14). The kinship system, in which men establish relationships based on the exchange of women, exercises phallic control through patronymic names. To have a name is to be positioned within the idealized kinship relations that organize the symbolic (Butler 1993, 72).

Lacan assigns a privileged status to the phallus within the symbolic, asserting that it originates and generates significations (Butler 1993, 60). However, the phallus has power only because it belongs to a signifying chain. The phallus does not exist outside of, or anterior to, the signifying chain. That is, the phallus gains its power and privilege from perpetual reiteration of its signification. The phallus symbolizes the penis but it is not identical to it. The phallus derives its power from its metaphoric relation to the penis and the masculine institutions of power that it discursively represents. Thus, Anne McClintock asserts that the “phallus is powerful not because it symbolizes the penis (which it does and it doesn’t) but because it is the sign of male social power that originates elsewhere” (McClintock 1995, 199). Yet, Lacan never investigates the genesis of masculine power. Butler, recognizing that the phallus is not ontologically anchored to masculinity, suggests that the phallus could be transferred and discursively connected to other body parts, including female body parts (Butler 1993, 82).

Thus, the phallus can be resignified and therefore exceed the limits of its structural place (1993, 89). This move would result in either deprivileging the phallus as a signifier or restructuring the signifying chain to which it belongs.

The symbolic order, which contains the domain of agency, is constituted through an act of repudiation which designates abject zones, things, and states. That which is repudiated is precisely that which may not re-enter the social field without threatening the subject with psychic dissolution. It is the threat of death or psychosis - that is, expulsion from the terms of sociality - that maintains the symbolic's oppressive domination. However, Butler proposes that there could be a domain that is excluded from the symbolic and can therefore expose its (the symbolic) hegemonic grip rather than its totalizing reach. If such a zone can be identified either within or outside the symbolic economy it could be utilized as a means of strategic intervention (Butler 1990, 53). This supposition leads Butler to reformulate Lacan's symbolic order to include "certain abject zones within sociality [that] also deliver this threat, constituting zones of uninhabitability which a subject fantasizes as threatening its own integrity with the possibility of psychotic dissolution (I would rather die than do that!)" (Butler 1993, 243). Of course, this fissure within the terms of sociality is occupied by the constitutive abject material and identifications.

Challenging the limits of subjectivization is not a simple task or process. The cultural field is dominated by prohibitive law which reproduces itself through individual performances. Recasting one's self or one's group outside of the

symbolic does not necessarily subvert its boundaries. For example, feminist resistance to the symbolic unwittingly protects the law of the father by relegating feminine resistance to the less enduring realm of the imaginary (Butler 1993, 106). And, parodic performances of heterosexuality, such as drag, which are intended to denaturalize kinship arrangements, can fail if they re-idealize norms instead of calling them into question (1993, 231). But, it is possible to destabilize the symbolic economy through slippage and resignification.

Slippage and resignification are useful tools to explore how resistance and transformation are possible within the symbolic economy. Butler describes the symbolic as a “normative dimension of the constitution of the sexed subject within language,” moreover, “it consists of demands, taboos, sanctions, injunctions, prohibitions, impossible idealizations, and threats -- performative speech acts” (1993, 106). Performative speech acts have subjectivizing power only insofar as they reiterate norms or sets of norms. Though each repetition is a signification, and a deferral that constitutes legitimacy, it does not recover an originary act. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that “there are repetitions of hegemonic forms of power which fail to repeat loyally and, in that failure, open possibilities for resignifying” (1993, 124). According to Butler, interpellative law can produce disobedience that breaks with the demands of intelligibility and thus re-articulates, that is, reproduces but not exactly, the citation. This dynamic is a slippage between discursive command and appropriated effect.

Resignification has two meanings in Butler's text. Resignification occurs each time a social convention is cited, and it refers to the possibility of subversion. As an act of subversion, resignification is the appropriation of hateful terms in order to drain them of their social power. In this instance, resignification is not merely a repetition because it alters the context of the hateful term. Therefore, resignification has a productive force that can utilize social power. Although the appropriation of hateful terms by the group they are intended to harm is not a new social strategy, Butler claims that resignification as a social strategy reveals "explicitly the performance essential to repetition" (Jenkins 2001). Moreover, Butler asserts that significant social transformation can occur within the terms of sociality based on the acts of individuals and not through the valorization of peripheral domains. The abject zones within the terms of sociality are, according to Butler, cultural spaces of ambivalence "which open up the possibility of a re-working of the very terms by which subjectivization proceeds" (Butler 1993, 124). This cultural space is the site where slippage and resignification occur. According to the logic of repudiation, the symbolic is always already inhabited by constitutive abject material and agency is located in the re-articulation of social conventions. Thus, the symbolic is not intractable law but the temporalized regulation of signification. Ultimately, then, within the theory of performativity the possibility of subverting social conventions exists.

If it is possible to subvert the hidden and oppressive structures of the symbolic, why is sociality still governed by restrictive kinship arrangements and

normative heterosexuality? According to Mark Bracher, "identification is one of the primary ways in which subjects are interpellated and their subjectivities changed by discourse" (Bracher 1993, 21). In order for identifications to establish identities, identifications must also repress all desires that are not congruent with the identity (1993, 22). Identifications are never simply descriptive, they are always normative (Butler 1992, 14). Thus, identifications are always motivated, striving to articulate a coherent identity within the symbolic. Butler argues that fear of castration motivates the assumption of masculinity and that the fear of not being castrated motivates the assumption of femininity (Butler 1993, 97). On the periphery of identity, within the symbolic, is the abject zone which is occupied by at least two inarticulate figures: the feminized fag and the phallicized dyke. The Lacanian scheme presumes that fear of becoming either of these two positions motivates individuals to assume an appropriately gendered position within language (1993, 97). Therefore, the threat of dissolution that haunts the borders of the symbolic also polices gendered identifications. Butler suggests that it is only by risking the incoherence of identity that a decentered subject can emerge within the limits of the symbolic. Thus, integral to the constitution of identity are the identifications that are acknowledged within the symbolic economy, as well as those that are excluded, and thereby allow identities to emerge.

To assert that racial, sexual, and ethnic differences are social constructs, and not natural entities, does not erase these categories. The identification of social constructs and the erasure of categories of difference does not guarantee

equality, liberty, or democracy. Theory can, however, interrogate the means by which categories of difference are constituted and resignified as marginal or other. Butler's theoretical program can accomplish such a task. Slavoj Žižek disavows political signifiers as performatives because they inadequately instantiate that which they name; Butler contends, rather, that if performativity is rethought as citationality then the performance is connected to a larger signifying chain (1993, 220). She proposes that political signifiers, such as the category "women," can designate an "indesignatable field of differences, one that cannot be totalized or summarized by a descriptive identity category, then the very term becomes a site of permanent openness and resignifiability" (Butler 1992, 14). Furthermore, "the constitutive instability of the term [e.g., women], its incapacity ever fully to describe what it names, is produced precisely by what is excluded in order for the determination to take place" (Butler 1993, 221). Butler celebrates instability as the political (un)ground of emancipation. Moreover, to deconstruct political signifiers does not censure or erase the terms but rather opens them to multiple significations which can become the ungrounded "ground" of theory and political contestation (1993, 218). From this perspective, foundations are sites of contestation always open to new resignifications and expansive rearticulations.

Judith Butler's feminist poststructuralism, particularly her theories regarding the production, construction, and subversion of the subject, is the heir to modernity's emancipatory discourse. Further, her program achieves what modernity failed to do: to see through the eyes of the other. Butler's goal is not to

usher in a modern utopia but to rethink contemporary social arrangements. Accordingly, emancipation is figured not as freedom from ignorance or un-reason, but freedom from the oppressive power structures that favor a small few and occlude the rest from full membership within the terms of sociality. Butler addresses how subjects are produced and constructed within relations of power, why subjects are complicit in their own domination, and the ways in which subjects can emerge from oppressive structures. Although Butler focuses on heteronormativity and its relationship to the production and exclusion of homosexuality, I think that her social critique and theoretical innovations can be deployed successfully by any individual or group, such as theorists or political parties, trying to subvert the phallogocentric economy.

BUTLER AND KLEIN

Butler clearly works within poststructuralism's Lacanian framework. Her goal, to find a means of subversion within the limits of the symbolic, is a textual, historical, and theoretical project. While she does not abandon this project, Butler has addressed Kleinian psychoanalysis on at least two occasions. Butler contributed an essay to a recent volume dedicated to Klein (Phillips and Stonebridge 1998), entitled "Moral Sadism and Doubting One's Own Love: Kleinian Reflections on Melancholia." Butler also touches upon Klein's treatment

of mourning and melancholia in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997a). In both texts, Butler draws primarily on Klein's reformulation of mourning and melancholia.

Klein builds upon Freud's account of mourning and melancholia to include a fear for the internal good object (Klein 1991 [1986], 146-74). In Freud's view, the mourner tests reality to make the painful discovery, again and again, that the loved object no longer exists (SE, XIV, 245). To a theory of mourning, Klein adds,

In my view, there is a close connection between the testing of reality in normal mourning and early processes of the mind. My contention is that the child goes through states of mind comparable to the mourning of an adult, or rather, that this early mourning is revived whenever grief is experienced in later life. The most important of the methods by which the child overcomes his states of mourning, is, in my view, the testing of reality; this process, however, as Freud stresses, is part of the work of mourning (1991, 147).

For Klein, the loss of the external loved object revives the early depressive anxieties, in which the mourner fears losing the good internal object. If the mourner has not sufficiently worked through his or her paranoid-schizoid and depressive anxieties, paranoid fears of persecution may surface, causing further disintegration. The melancholic result is internal emptiness: a stark landscape incapable of forming an attachment to a good object. Successful mourning means re-establishing the good objects in the interior world, which calms the sense of internal chaos (Klein 1991 [1986], 165).

Butler utilizes Freud's theory of mourning and melancholia to theorize the effects of the cultural demand to abject same-sex desire in order to establish an

identity within the symbolic. Butler concludes that Klein's contribution to Freud's account of loss incorporates the Kleinian theory of the death drive in a way that is useful to Butler's poststructuralist project because it retains a memory of and devotion to objects that have been lost to the demands of the constitutive prohibition. Butler emphasizes the work of guilt in the preservation of internal objects. One experiences guilt because the object is loved; guilt, motivated by a desire for reparation, limits aggression, thereby mitigating the damage done in phantasy. Butler suggests that this notion of the guilty preservation of objects can be transferred to the operations of social power in a way that will preserve objects marked for social death. She writes that an account of regulatory power should include the "recognition that the subject produced as continuous, visible, and located is nevertheless haunted by an inassimilable remainder, a melancholia that marks the limits of subjectivization" (Butler 1997a, 29). If all subjects perceived the guilty recognition of their own "remainder", which is the abjected material that constitutes identity within the symbolic, a politics of inclusion may follow¹⁷.

I do not turn to the concept of mourning and melancholia to bring these disparate theorists into dialogue. Instead, I find that Butler and Klein recognize and value the concept of contingency in their work; valorizing contingency as a means to promote the emergence of de-centered subjects¹⁸. Bringing Kleinian psychoanalysis into dialogue with Butler's poststructuralism is an act of resignification. Utilizing Kleinian theory, to re-work the terms by which subjectivization proceeds, is an effort to disrupt the unexamined performance of

Oedipalized gender difference. An analysis of Kleinian themes in narratives may help us to better understand individual personalities and thereby facilitate a better understanding of social interactions (EG, 247). Klein's description of the interior world and infant development echoes Butler's argument that de-centered subjectivity disrupts the operations of hegemonic culture. A Kleinian poststructuralist analysis of cultural texts will explore why and how it is that regulation and consent are achieved and sustained.

CHAPTER FOUR

KLEINIAN POSTSTRUCTURALISM

In this chapter, I develop the idea of a Kleinian-informed poststructuralist methodology that can be utilized by a variety of forms of narrative studies to deconstruct and (re)present texts. Erin Runions eloquently writes that, “it has become increasingly apparent to me that social change can only come through a process whereby people’s ideological commitments shift; but effecting such a shift is an extremely complex task” (Runions 2003, 4). This brief reflection on her experiences as both an academic and an activist demonstrates the relationship between theory, often abstract and obscure, and sociopolitical transformations. Understanding why it is that individuals continue to support prohibitive, exclusionary discourses that render others, and often themselves, marginalized is a type of work often met with skepticism. Butler, for example, has been criticized for her work on this topic. In the *Psychic Life of Power* (1997a), she explores how and why individuals are complicit in their own subjection. But it is only by first

exploring why individuals submit to oppressive power structures, and how those structures are sustained, that a theory of resistance can be postulated. Marjorie Garber writes that, "Cultural meanings, in other words, are not so much determined as overdetermined, produced by multiple associative paths fortuitously converging on the same points" (Garber 1998, 11). Garber illustrates the complexity of the task: at what point does theory fortuitously intersect with cultural meanings?

I suggest that Kleinian psychoanalysis coupled with poststructuralist theory will yield new productive insights into cultural narratives and the means by which they sustain or subvert the phallogentric symbolic economy. Klein offers an entirely different perspective on the formation of subjects, one that does not rely on castration to motivate community membership. Therefore, attending to the Kleinian dynamics in narrative may open a new space in cultural studies. A Kleinian poststructuralist approach is not an attempt to undo Lacan's cultural analysis. Instead, this method recognizes the limitations inherent in his theorization and operates in the margins of the boundaries set by Lacanian analysis in order to extend it. The symbolic register is the temporal regulation of signification, not an immutable historical event. The symbolic, then, describes the atmosphere in which consent and regulation occur, but does not determine it. Kleinian poststructuralism can be a tool that disrupts regulation and consent by envisioning the human community bound together, not by hegemonic narratives

such as the Oedipal drama, but through the common experiences of fragmentation, the pain of integration, and desire born from loss.

PERFORMING

In Chapter Three, I argued that performativity is a methodological tool to deconstruct and subvert the phallogocentric economy. Performativity is the reiteration of culturally sanctioned conventions or sets of conventions which are always derivative and never original. Butler argues that we have limited power within the symbolic because there are repercussions for challenging it, such as ostracism or even death. Citationality is a means to transgress the boundaries of what currently constitutes the symbolic because it allows for agency, that is, allows for the possibility that subjects will choose to alter the ritualized production of the terms of sociality. But agents need narratives from which to choose in order to shift dominant paradigms and effect social transformation. I argue that the Oedipal myth is a “dominant fiction”¹⁹ that retains its power through perpetual iteration. Utilizing Klein, I introduce a different perspective that offers an alternative to the phallogocentric fiction that has become a mythic text.

The power of repetition is significant, particularly when the repetitions have been naturalized and depoliticized. John E. Toews contends that,

Freudian Oedipal theory can be considered a mythic text in the sense that it provides not only critical analysis of the human production of manifest, illusory meaning, but also a positive construction and symbolization of the hidden, true meaning of human experience. It constitutes a narrative account, a story in terms of both personal and collective history, of the primal genesis and universal structures of human experience as nature remade in culture. The verification of the truth of this story ultimately remains dependent not on the marshaling of empirical data or on logical incontrovertibility, but on the act of mutual recognition whereby one person discovers an adequate symbolization of his or her life in the story of another (Toews 1986, 289).

Toews highlights how Freud's version of the Oedipal myth selectively re-interprets Sophocles' text, shifting the perspective to that of the son, ultimately providing an anthropological account of the emergence of human, patriarchal culture. Moreover, Freud maintained that the complex was both universal and of epochal importance in human history (Toews 1986, 294). However, Freud's asymmetrical account of the transition from nature to culture not only described the historical problem of patriarchy. It transformed biological difference in a parable of gender disparity. Toews' quotation above suggests how easily stories become mythic structures, embedded in the social fabric or daily life. It also demonstrates the power of agency, which is the ability to choose from available discourses, in order to make sense of one's experiences.

The family romance, Oedipal crisis, and familial conflict certainly resonated with European intellectuals and aesthetes. Heller suggests that, through psychoanalysis, Freud sought to "articulate a critical apparatus for an understanding of the family as the cultural catalyst for the relations of private fantasy and public belief" (Heller 1995, 22). Juliet Mitchell argues that Freud

was a man of his time working within the constraints of patriarchal culture and classist, sexist, and racist scientific methodology²⁰ (Mitchell 1974, 409). He therefore accurately described his present by re-formulating the past. Freud, Heller argues, understood the “Oedipal crisis to be the privileged event in human psychological development. The event itself is organized around the central significance of the phallus” (Heller 1995, 33). Feminist interventions have been unable to significantly diminish the power of the phallus as an organizing structure within the terms of sociality. Perhaps, following Toews, to effectively impair the influence of the Oedipal drama another story with “adequate symbolization” must be identified and brought to the fore in popular cultural material. But first, the mythic status of Freud’s Oedipal story in contemporary culture must be addressed.

Mythic structures in text and language tend to go unrecognized, that is, the power and paradox of myth. Roland Barthes has written that, “myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal” (Barthes 1972, 142). Myth according to Barthes is a type of speech conveyed in discourse that empties itself of history and fills with nature, thereby losing the memory of how and when it was made. Myth is depoliticized speech, putting into discourse that which it seeks to obscure, thus removing the historical and political meaning it once had. For Barthes, mythic structures in language sustain the power and desires of the dominant class because they “immobilize the world: they must suggest and mimic a universal order which has fixated once and for all the hierarchy of possessions” (1972, 155). Myths, as

Barthes employed the term, are not false; instead, they are part of a common cultural heritage into which members of a culture are formally or informally socialized. Myths are, then, the translation of meaning systems into lived experiences.

Barthes highlights the pervasive nature of Freud's Oedipal myth when he writes "Doesn't every narrative lead back to Oedipus?" (Barthes 1975, 47). He argues that storytelling is a way in which individuals find their places within the confines of the symbolic order, search for their origins, and settle for the conflicting nature of desire. I believe that Barthes' summary of the complex in culture describes its performative nature, thereby helping to dislodge the Oedipal complex from its mythic, naturalized status. This task, dislodging the primacy of the Oedipal complex in contemporary culture, means shifting "people's ideological commitments."

In an essay exploring her own ideological commitments, Gail Boldt examines the role that parenting plays in the maintenance of the Oedipal complex. Boldt's essay is a personal reflection of the means by which her son adopted traits of the complex in spite of her "anti-sexist and anti-heterosexist commitments as major parenting imperatives" (Boldt 2002, 366). Boldt writes,

I am arguing that a major facet of parenting for most contemporary, heterosexual Western parents involves the *need* for our children to experience the Oedipal complex, to love us in certain ways, to come to understand subjectivity, self and other as part of the child's development of recognizable gender and proper sexuality. Heterosexual parents have many ways, probably largely unconscious or taken for granted as a normal part of good parenting, for assuring this happens (2002, 266).

Boldt draws from Lacan to discuss hegemonic discourses that shape gender identity and sustain exclusionary, normative social roles. Her self-analysis suggests that heteronormative fantasies of belonging to mainstream society are pervasive, deeply embedded, and subtly transferred in public and private discourse. Boldt demonstrates the complexity of recognizing and refusing the dominant fiction:

But the truth is that our desires for ourselves, each other, and for our child are complicated, elusive and contradictory; for they do not seem to follow either logic or political will. I make contradictory demands; I give mixed messages. 'Be successful and prove your mother to the world; reject the world for the sake of your mother and other women.' In asking my child to define a clear position in the highly contested field of gender, I am reproducing the Oedipal conflict (2002,75).

Butler addresses how such discourses retain power in her study of subjection (Butler 1997a). Developing Althusser's theory of interpellation in a framework that critiques heterosexism, she contends that the terms that call us, or hail us, into subject positions are necessarily injurious because they regulate, prohibit, and subordinate as they confer identity. However, to reject the injurious call means never inhabiting a subject position at all. Thus, Butler writes, "because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence, because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially" (1997a, 104).

The terms of the Oedipal complex are no exception: woman, wife, mother, or man, husband, father. Its terms may shift to accommodate life's changes yet they remain loyal to the heterosexist demands of the symbolic.

Boldt's essay demonstrates how difficult it is to escape the normativizing function of narrative paradigms once they are embedded in the terms of sociality. As an academic, Boldt studies the effects of heterosexism in education, but it was not until her child displayed Oedipal behavior that she became aware of *her* own investments in the fantasy of a fixed, stable, and proper identity. The Oedipal drama, re-written by Freud, is a mythic text that assigns central importance to the phallus, and the performative repetition of that myth only further solidifies its place in contemporary culture.

NARRATING

Narrative theory has, since 1980, grown from what was the dominant semiotic or narratological perspectives focused primarily on literary texts to address a variety of forms of communication and academic fields. Mark Turner writes that human beings have the ability to recognize and execute small spatial stories, and that humans have these stories instead of a chaotic experience (Turner 1996, 14). Stories, then, bring order to an otherwise disordered, chaotic engagement with our selves, with the world, and with each other. Peter Brooks

echoes Turner's assessment of the value of narrative to the human experience. For Brooks, the narrative impulse is an attempt to cope with the limitations of existence in the body and in time (P. Brooks 1994). In this sense, all narratives have some relationship to religiosity. Jacob Belzen summarizes this point well, "in the course of their lives, people hear and assimilate stories which enable them to develop 'schemes' which give direction to their experience and conduct, schemes with whose help they can make sense out of a potential stimulation overload" (Belzen 2001, 50). Religion is one of the stories that shape and inform people's lives and conduct. Belzen further develops the relationship between narrative and religiosity: "people who, among the various culturally available life forms, have also been introduced to, or have appropriated, a religious life form, have at their disposal a system of interpretation and conduct which (narratively) prefigures reality for them" (2001, 51). However, Belzen simplifies the influence and effect that "religious life forms" have in contemporary culture. Modern culture, particularly media culture, is saturated with religious themes, references, and meanings. Therefore, as participants in culture and observers of culture, the choice to "appropriate religious life forms" may not be a choice at all. If religion is always-already present in popular, pervasive media, which influences and shapes participants, how can individuals choose not to appropriate it? In other words, how many choices are available to participants in culture?

A psychoanalytic approach to narrative is productive because of the correspondence between the structure of texts and the structure of the human

mental apparatus (P. Brooks, 1994). Drawing from Freud, Peter Brooks writes that, “mental health is a coherent life story” (1994, 49). The psychoanalytic encounter constructs a narrative that illuminates the buried history of unconscious desire and helps to make sense of an otherwise muddled life story (1994, 71). The reader of texts, like the psychoanalytic patient, is affected by the work of interpretation and construction (1994, 72). Brooks’ contention is that textual engagement exhibits the same dynamics as the psychoanalytic encounter due mainly to transference. Transference is the space in between the reader and the text or analyst and analysand. Freud realized that the “relation of teller to listener inherently is part of the structure and meaning of any narrative text, since such a text (like any text) exists only insofar as it is transmitted, insofar as it becomes part of a process of exchange” (1994, 51). It is the process of exchange that places the text in the realm of interpretation and construction. Therefore, it is in the space-in-between the individual and the text where people construct worlds of meaning and locate a place in which to “dwell meaningfully” (Smith 1978).

Philosopher Paul Ricoeur also finds similarities between psychoanalysis and textuality. According to Ricoeur, human experience is “mediated by all kinds of stories we have heard” (Ricoeur 1991, 434). The meaning or significance of the story is located at the intersection of the “world of the text and the world of the reader” (1991, 430). The text mediates between an individual and the world, an individual and others, and an individual and the self. Ricoeur describes these three dynamics as reference, communication, and self-understanding. Thus, it is the act

of engaging with the text that produces meaning. I think this point is significant – even if a little obvious. Texts, of any kind, must be actively engaged with in order to produce, transmit, and sustain meanings. Therefore, texts that deal with ultimate (religious) questions and community values may find a larger audience with which to engage in secular media than in media that is restricted to a strictly religious context.

The poststructuralist version of psychoanalytic textual criticism has shifted the focus from authors to texts and rhetoric (P. Brooks 1994, 23). A poststructuralist psychoanalytic criticism interrogates the text, searching for traces of the always already said embedded in discourse. Accordingly, Ricoeur describes literary texts as “sedimented tradition whose genesis has been obliterated” (Ricoeur 1991, 429). He contends that models of knowledge do not possess eternal essences; instead, they are layers of meaning upon layers of meaning that are contextual, temporal, and contingent. Poststructuralists argue that identities are formed in a similar process of sedimentation of discourses upon a contingent foundation that is temporal and contextual. Such discourses, or stories, are the only means through which reality is experienced. For Ricoeur, subjectivity is narratively constructed because there is no “access to the temporal drama of existence outside of the stories” we tell (1991, 434). Judith Butler (1993) draws from Foucault to argue that we can only know the world through what is said about it. Thus, knowledge is made, transmitted, and transformed narratively.

Psychoanalysis is not new to film studies. Lacanian psychoanalysis has been the dominant method in this field; it is common to find references to the “symbolic” or the “imaginary” in studies that deal with film, television, music, and style. Many film theorists focus solely on the Oedipal trajectory of contemporary narratives. They argue that the dominant narrative in Hollywood cinema is constructed according to the unconscious of patriarchy and phallogentric language. Raymond Bellour (1998) asserts that the trajectory of *all* Hollywood narratives traces the male Oedipal journey. From this perspective, the female body suggests the possibility of castration and therefore challenges the stability of the phallogentric order. The cinematic camera unconsciously fetishizes the female body in order to mitigate the threat it poses. Thus, fetishism functions to displace that fear by rendering the female body phallus-like in order to allay the threat of castration. E. Ann Kaplan (1993 [1983]) concludes that the masculine gaze is a strategy deployed by men to contain the threat the *mother’s body* poses and to control the traces of pre-Oedipal memories of the mother that are locked in the unconscious. Furthermore, Ann McClintock (1995) contends that Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory is incapable of theorizing outside of phallogentric constraints.

The Oedipal scenario described by Freud and elaborated by Lacan draws from anthropological studies of kinship. Structuralist anthropology has found that all kinship systems are based on the incest prohibition and operate according to the fundamental principle of the exchange of women by men in order to establish

alliances among men. This system not only organizes society, it organizes and reproduces itself (Rubin 1998 [1984]). Thus, Lacanian psychoanalytic method suggests that the rules of exogamous marriage, which found kinship arrangements, are replicated by the processes of individual development. Here the child's desire for the mother is prohibited by the paternal imperative "No!" which incites fear of castration in the male child. This process is gendered: the boy, fearing castration, which is demonstrated by the maternal body, represses his desire for the mother and acquires language, thereby entering the symbolic order. The girl must overcome her attachment to the mother in order to attach to a man. According to Lacan, the paternal imperative "No!" is a cultural imperative that is commanded in language. Hence, Lacan posits only a paternal intervention against incest, thus denying women an active role in the Law that organizes and reproduces society. Therefore, the terms of sociality, as described by Lacan, are based on an exclusionary matrix that centers on shifting conceptions of masculinity.

Although it is not the purpose of this thesis to displace Lacanian-inspired approaches to cultural studies, I am suggesting that other psychoanalytic methods, such as Melanie Klein's theory of psychical development, will yield informative and productive results. A Kleinian contribution to film analysis is valuable because it attends to the infant's interior world and his or her interactions with the world, the mother, and the self. For Klein, it is not the paternal imperative commanded in culture and in language that forms the basis of identity and allows for subjectivity; instead, aggression, loss, and desire shape and inform the subject.

Therefore, a Kleinian theoretical method for cultural analysis can escape the hopelessness of gender (class, race) disparity that is intrinsic to Lacan's model.

Roland Barthes has shown that authorship is a function of social sedimentation rather than the final signified. Therefore, textual representations of Kleinian dynamics do not require intentional articulation. For Barthes, it is "language which speaks, not the author" (Barthes 1977, 143). He describes the text as a complexly woven tapestry of sociality, "a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" because "the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original" (1977, 145). Thus, for Barthes, texts do not merely record and depict; texts are performative – performing the always already said. The birth of the reader requires the "death of the Author" in order to negate the imposition of limits in the text. That is to say, the author is a discursive vehicle transmitting, relaying, and re-presenting for the reader. And, to assign to the author an omnipotent position obscures the fact that the author is embedded in discourse not external to it. Thus, in relation to Klein, texts are not consciously representing the psychodynamics she describes nor are authors self-consciously channeling such experiences into their texts. The dynamics of Kleinian positions are ever present in discourse because they are ever present in the structure of the mind (EG, 299).

In 1967, the British art critic Adrian Stokes published *Reflections on the Nude*, in which he drew from Kleinianism to analyze art. Stokes had been Klein's analysand since her arrival in England and he incorporates a Kleinian perspective into art theory (Grosskurth 1986, 413). Stokes argued that images should promote and foster a positive sense of being in the world by conveying depth and wholeness. His focus in this book is the art tradition of nudes; however, he extends the theory to include other visual forms that help provide a sense of psychical and social cohesion. Stokes feels that experiencing integration in the surrounding world would encourage and help to sustain the process of integration for individuals. Stokes both was and was not concerned for the future of art. He felt that if all people could access and reflect upon their interior experiences in a manner that promotes integration and sustains the depressive position, as do artists, then art would be unnecessary. However, he also felt that the presence of integrated, whole images in art and the human environment were decreasing. Alford writes that "the problem of integrating our love and hate is so profound – and constitutive of reality – that it will remain a severe problem in any imaginable society" (1989, 135). Thus, art has a necessary function, to help mitigate the increasing fragmentation of daily human life. I suggest that narratives also perform an integrative function, helping individuals to sustain a sense of cohesion in the world. Visual narratives, such as films, may be an effective means to promote the process of integration.

Barthes poses the question, “If there is no longer a Father, why tell stories?” (Barthes 1975, 47). His question suggests that stories negotiate our relationship with God-the-Father, the Law of the Father, and other Fathers; and, without these figures, which are representations of phallic power and privilege in the symbolic order, what is left to negotiate? Klein offers another perspective, another story, and another public and private history. We must tell stories to aid in the cohesion of the interior and external worlds, to keep the fragmentation of the paranoid-schizoid position at a comfortable distance.

CONTINGENCY, INTEGRATION, & DESIRE

A Kleinian-poststructuralist narrative analysis will attend to the elements of contingency, integration, and desire in texts. Contingency, as Barthes used the term, contrasts historical human intention with eternal, naturalized justifications. Thus, contingency is a reading strategy that denaturalizes mythic structures, revealing the narrative construction of subjectivity and creating a space in which new discourses can challenge the hegemony of already embedded ones. Contingency searches for the unsaid in narrative conventions in order to provide new discourses from which agents may choose to inform and shape their personal stories. Furthermore, attending to how narratives encourage, or discourage, the process of integration will create new opportunities for analysis and thus put into

discourse new modes of encountering the world, each other, and ourselves. Finally, reformulating desire, not as the signifier of lack, but as the condensation of love and hate that impels subjects to make connections outside of the self and the interior world eliminates the gendered association with castration fears from the notion of desire. The subject can therefore be understood as narratively constructed although not based upon phallic law. In this analysis the unsaid, which can be excavated in narrative discourses, are Kleinian concepts of the development of the interior world and the ways in which connections are made and sustained with the external world.

Contingency entails risk because it decenters identifications; therefore, the risk of incoherence is implicit in the process. The valorization of contingency is an overlapping theme in Butler's poststructuralism and Klein's psychoanalysis. Butler has argued that contingent foundations must be accepted in philosophical and political theories in order to escape the totalizing tendency of such discourses. Butler celebrates instability as the political (un)ground of emancipation. To deconstruct political signifiers does not censure or erase the terms but rather opens them to multiple significations which can become the ungrounded "ground" of theory and political contestation (Butler 1993, 218). From this perspective, foundations are sites of contestation always open to new resignifications and expansive rearticulations. Bringing Kleinian theories into the discourse concerning the formation of subjects is an act of resignification. The term desire

is resignified outside of phallogocentric constraints, and the concept of integration is resignified to represent Klein's usage.

For Klein, balance, mental health, and happiness are contingent on understanding the operations of the mind and also contingent on the fluctuations between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions (EG, 247, 268). Both theorists claim that contingency is worthwhile, even if it is a source of ontological uncertainty²¹, because it demands that we continually investigate the means by which knowledge, of ourselves and of the world, is produced and sustained. That is to say, contingency restores history to all discourses, including discourses about the self. From a Kleinian perspective, the self always has a history – the other is always already there – because the mother or first caregiver, as the good object, becomes the foundation for the self. The process of introjection ensures that there is never an origin to the self, because the foundation for the self, the good object, is a trace of the past. The struggle to integrate the interior and external worlds is an ongoing defense against fragmentation. Cultural hegemony is effective, subjects consent to regulation, because it sustains a coherent sense of the world and one's place in it; that is, "a coherent life story". But, according to Klein, if each individual can gain a better understanding of the self, then a better understanding of others will develop and, finally, a better understanding of social interactions will grow. To discuss the performative repetition of Kleinian themes will mitigate the power of the Oedipal narrative to sustain phallogocentric power structures.

A goal of poststructuralism is to re-think contemporary social arrangements in order to dismantle oppressive power structures. Gender inequity is a pervasive oppressive power structure that organizes and reproduces itself in contemporary society. Kleinian psychoanalysis offers a theoretical strategy that moves beyond gender disparity because it does not rely on phallocentrism as its structuring principle. Lacan assigns a privileged status to the phallus within the symbolic, asserting that it originates and generates significations (Butler 1993, 60). However, the phallus has power only because it belongs to a signifying chain. The phallus does not exist outside of, or anterior to, the process of signification. That is, the phallus gains its power and privilege from the perpetual reiteration of its signification. Yet Lacan never investigates the genesis of masculine power. Butler, recognizing that the phallus is not ontologically anchored to masculinity, suggests that the phallus could be transferred and discursively connected to other body parts, including female body parts (1993, 82). Thus, the phallus can be resignified and therefore exceed the limits of its structural place (1993, 89). This move would result in either de-privileging the phallus as a signifier or restructuring the signifying chain to which it belongs.

To the idea that the phallus can be transferred to other, and Other, body parts, Naomi Goldenberg adds that the phallus may also function to cover over the powerful connection to the mother. That is, behind the emphasis on the phallus and the centrality of masculinity in culture and religion is the breast. Juliet

Mitchell describes the importance of the breast in the infant's interior and exterior worlds.

When its caretaker (usually but, more important, prototypically – its mother) satisfies the baby, she is 'at one' with it and hence not felt as separate. When, however, she is felt to fail to satisfy the baby's need, she (or her Breast) is experienced as separate from the baby and hence as the first distinct psychological object. When she is thus perceived to be missing, two things happen. One is that the loss or removal of the means whereby its needs are met make the baby feel anxious. Anxiety is an affectual state that warns the baby of danger. The danger is not experienced directly but is apprehended as a danger on the model of a preceding danger that was actually experienced (a 'trauma' – such as birth). The second is that the baby re-creates the mother for itself, making the satisfaction she has represented seem now to be inside itself (for instance by hallucinating a 'good feed'); thus it forms a separate area within itself – which in part becomes the ego (Mitchell 1991 [1986], 19).

The centrality of the breast, and the mother it represents, is clear from Mitchell's description. The comfort of the breast, the nourishment it provides, and the security in the world it ensures can not be overemphasized for the development of the infant's interior world. Moreover, the breast, once introjected, forms the good object, which is the foundation of the ego. The good object, the introjected breast, is immensely important in individual and social development. Klein writes, "In the course of development, the relation to the mother's breast becomes the foundation for devotion to people, values, and causes (EG, 187). Therefore, the relation with the mother and the mother's body are central to the terms of sociality.

However, Klein suggests that children, while being weaned, often turn away from the mother in anger and regard the father as the preferred parent.

Children, according to Klein, imagine the father's penis to be a perfect breast (Goldenberg 1986, 47). Klein believed that the "deprivation of the breast [was] the most fundamental cause of the turning to the father" (1986, 78). The infant will become disappointed with the father's inability to properly nurture and turn to the mother again. Klein felt that children alternate periods of preferring one parent to the other. It should be noted that the splitting of the mother into a good, nourishing mother and a bad, withholding mother is masked by the infant's attachment to the father. However, Klein asserts, "The very important part which the father plays in the child's emotional life also influences all later love relations, and all other human associations. But the baby's early relation to him, in so far as he is felt as a gratifying, friendly and protective figure, is partly modeled on the one to the mother" (LGR, 59). The penis, then, is a significant symbolic formation. In language, the penis is transformed into the phallus – the representation of masculine privilege and power – which maintains its cultural priority through perpetual reiteration. But it also retains its attachment to the breast and maternal relations.

Kleinian theory affords an opportunity to look behind the iterative power of the phallus in an effort to challenge phallocentrism. This is not to say that the early dynamic in which the infant turns away from the mother to favor the father is the genesis of masculine privilege and power. It is, rather, to argue that a theoretical approach that locates the origins of subjectivity anterior to the recognition of the phallus, that is, in the pre-verbal period, has the potential to

identify and deconstruct phallogentric themes and images, and, perhaps, disrupt the means through which phallogentrism reproduces and sustains itself.

In *Antigone's Claim* (2000), Judith Butler suggests that Antigone could serve as a counterpoint to phallogentric political hegemony. I read this suggestion as a possibility for introducing new perspectives in an ongoing struggle. I believe that Melanie Klein's theories can serve a similar purpose. Klein, perhaps unintentionally, shifts the focus away from the centrality of masculinity to attend to the pervasive influence that the mother has in the early experiences of everyone's lives. Unlike other psychoanalytic theories, Klein's does not rely on the gendering of the infant, whereby one gender is excluded from culture-making and world-building. Thus, gender difference is not figured as gender disparity from the moment language is acquired. In Lacan's description of the (male) infant's entry into symbolic order, the phallus represents the Law of the Father (threat of castration), which signifies the loss of the maternal body. The infant's desire for the mother must be forever repressed. This Lacan calls the primary repression that founds the unconscious. In return for the loss of unity with the mother, the child acquires language and a subject position in the symbolic order. Thus, when the child says, "I am", which distinguishes his subject position from others, he is really saying "I am he (she) who has lost something" – that is, the unity with the mother (Moi 1985, 99). Both men and women are marked by castration; however, men take up a (linguistic) place of privilege and women are consigned to the realm of otherness.

In the Kleinian system, however, fear of castration is not the reason for dissolving the connection with the mother, nor is it the origin of the unconscious; the infant possesses an active unconscious at birth. And language is not a reward for surrendering unity with the mother. These differences are pivotal. The infant, already possessing an active unconscious, severs the connection with the mother because of early developmental mechanisms, such as persecutory anxiety and projective identification, which are necessary precursors to the depressive position. Thus, the infant's loss of the pre-verbal connection with the mother is not the result of the imposition of the phallogentric symbolic order but a necessary step towards the depressive position and participation in the human social environment. Therefore, in Kleinian terms, when the child says, "I am", she or he is saying, "*I am she or he who is seeking something*". That is, seeking to replicate that important connection once shared with the mother.

Therefore, desire is borne from loss, which then impels individuals to seek fulfillment in the external world. Desire is related to, but not identical with, symbol formation. Symbol formation, the result of persecutory anxiety, is the foundation of the infant's interest in the world and relations to objects outside of the self. Desire develops following the loss of the pre-verbal connection with the mother. Desire is, then, the desire to mitigate the sense of loss experienced by the infant, whereas symbol formation lessens the sense of dread felt by the infant. Dread is the human experience of feeling "vulnerable, alone in the universe, and doomed to die" (Alford 1999, 31). It is through symbol formation that the infant

can project those intense feelings and fears onto external objects, and eventually the adult can symbolize such feelings in a variety of discursive sites, such as art, narratives, and religion. Dread is often experienced as a “formless dread”, which is the loss of context and meaning “where boundaries fail and things that should be separate flow into each other” (1999, 37). Because creativity plays with limits and boundaries, it channels symbolic formation, thus mitigating a sense of dread. To offset the ramifications of dread, Alford suggests “teaching people how to symbolize their dread, so that they might contain it in more abstract and knowable forms. It is an education that begins with the mother and baby and ends with our culture’s finest achievements, such as art, religion, and music” (1999, 41).

Integration is based on the introjection of the good object – prototypically the mother’s breast. The good object will become the foundation of the developing ego. However, persecutory anxiety will arise due to discomfort and feelings of insecurity in the infant. The persecutory anxiety, which is at its height in the first three months of life, is the source of both symbol formation and desire. Klein writes that some degree of anxiety is necessary for the ego to develop. Integration is a means of overcoming the destructive impulses and mitigating the sense of loneliness that are caused by persecutory anxiety and paranoid insecurity. Therefore, desire and symbol formation are bound together from the earliest stages of life.

Symbol formation, according to Klein, is the foundation for creative impulses. Klein believed that it is through symbolic equations that infants develop

an interest in the world. Moreover, all sublimation and every talent result from the dominance of the infant's libidinal phantasies in his or her relationship with reality (Klein 1991, 97). Klein writes that the "sadistic phantasies directed against the inside of her [the mother's] body constitute the first and basic relation to the outside world and reality" (1991, 98). One of the anxieties that fuels symbol formation is the questioning impulse and the frustration of a desire "to know" prior to the acquisition of language (1991, 73). The infant is frustrated by his or her inability to understand language in spite of growing sexual curiosity aroused by the Oedipal stage. Thus, the sadism experienced in phantasy gives rise to epistemophilic impulses, which is the desire to know. Early infantile aggression is a necessary component of both epistemophilia and symbolic formation. Therefore, Kleinian method does not aim to remove aggression from the infant but, rather, to interpret it in order to maximize the individual's potential for world-making.

Drawing from Klein, Dorothy Dinnerstein has made a compelling argument for the revaluation of gender arrangements in the social world and in the domestic sphere. Her solution for gender inequity is to extend early child-care arrangements to include men because infant ambivalence would not be directed solely towards women. In her treatise on the topic, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (1976), Dinnerstein writes, "The universal exploitation of women is rooted in our attitudes toward very early parental figures, and will go on until these figures are male as well as female" (Dinnerstein 1976, 102). However, she

also states that “Man’s dominion over what we think of as the world rests on a terror that we all feel: the terror of sinking back wholly into the helplessness of infancy” (1976, 161). Dinnerstein’s thesis is not an effort to mitigate the sense of helplessness felt by the infant; rather, the helplessness would not be felt in relation to the mother only. The infant would have the same ambivalent feelings towards the mother and father if early childcare arrangements were changed. She writes,

If these first encounters had not taken place under all-female auspices, if women were not available to bear the whole brunt of the unexamined infantile rage at defeat that permeates adult life, the rage could not so easily remain unexamined; the infantilism could be more easily outgrown...safe under the control of a new boss, we can go on raging at the old one (1976, 191).

Dinnerstein’s new boss is, of course, the masculine power and privilege that dominates phallogentric culture.

The infant feels helpless because she or he relies entirely on the (m)other to satisfy its needs. Inevitable discomfort causes phantasied aggression, which ultimately results in the infant’s investment in the external world, arouses the impulses to acquire knowledge, becomes the source of creativity, and gives birth to desire. Therefore, the complex dynamics of this early period form the basis of individual subjectivity and its importance cannot be overemphasized. Moreover, according to Klein, such dynamics continue to play a role throughout adult life. It is in the transference situation that their influence and affects become clear. Klein wrote, “I hold that transference originates in the same processes which in the earliest stages determine object relations. Therefore we have to go back again and

again in analysis to the fluctuations between objects, loved and hated, external and internal, which dominate early infancy” (1991 [1986], 206). The correct analytic situation involves “constant interpretation, the gradual solving of resistances, and the constant tracing of the transference to earlier situations” (1991 [1986], 66). By focusing on the dynamics between the introjection of the good object following birth and the fluctuations of internal conflicts a better understanding of infantile anxiety situations and their ramifications for adults can be achieved.

In a paper delivered to the British Psychoanalytic Society in 1929, entitled “Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse” (1991 [1986], 84-94). Klein interprets an opera by Ravel. The opera’s libretto features a destructive child seeking revenge against the world through phantasied sadistic attacks. Klein suggests that the child’s destructiveness is driven by an old anxiety situation he had not mastered. Also, because anxiety enhances repetition compulsion, there can be no end to the acting-out of the anxiety until it is resolved (1991 [1986], 90). Thus, Klein’s essay suggests that shared culture has the potential to be a transferential space in which old anxiety situations are worked through. The relationship between transference and repetition is central to a psychoanalytic theory of culture. Freud felt that patients unconsciously re-enact repressed or forgotten experiences. He wrote that the patient “does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it...the greater the resistance, the

more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering” (quoted in Jonte-Pace 2001a, 143-44). Transference is an effective space for healing past anxiety situations because it “creates an intermediate region between illness and real life through which the transition from one to the other is made” (quoted in Jonte-Pace 2001a, 144). D.W. Winnicott further develops the notion of transitional space, proposed by Freud, in relation to culture.

Winnicott proposes an active space that mediates between the inner and external worlds without belonging to either one, which he calls *potential space* (1997 [1971], 41). Potential space exists first between the infant and mother but remains throughout life; later cultural experience is located in the potential space between the individual and the environment (1997 [1971], 100). Winnicott theorizes potential space in order to provide a location for his concept of *play*. Playing is central to object relations described by Klein and Winnicott. Klein created and developed the play technique to analyze children and others with inhibited speech (1991 [1971], 35-54). Winnicott furthers the importance of play, claiming that it is integral to psychological health and development. Winnicott writes, “it is play that is universal, and that belongs to health: playing facilitates growth and therefore health; playing leads into group relationships; playing can be a form of communication in psychotherapy” (1997 [1971], 43) and “Cultural experience begins with creative living first manifested in play” (1997, 101). Winnicott argues that play is possible only when the infant feels enough security in relation to the mother. Klein argued that the infant’s early emotional

experiences are characterized by the recurring sense of losing and gaining, which is the absence and presence of the mother (EG, 304). For Winnicott, the experience of having and not having the mother is formative; the infant must be able to depend on the mother's eventual return. With the requisite confidence in the mother and the environment the infant will develop the capacity for play, creative living, and the ability to draw from and contribute to culture. The infant deprived of the "good-enough" mother is too restless to play and therefore inhibited in all other creative and cultural arenas. Thus, the overlapping, potential space in-between patient and analyst, infant and mother, individual and culture, and reader and text must be further explored.

Drawing from Freud and Winnicott, Diane Jonte-Pace explores how the patient-analyst therapeutic relationship that enables transference to successfully work through old anxiety situations and repressed memories may work in a larger cultural arena. She argues that film creates an "intermediate region", similar to art, literature, and religion, which may provide an opportunity to revisit, remember, and possibly resolve repressed or forgotten experiences. However, Jonte-Pace only hints at what narratives may accomplish this profound psychological task. She writes, "Some films merely 'act out' unconscious fears and fantasies, but others provide the space in which the imagery of the counterthesis²², under certain conditions, might be transformed, remembered, and worked through" (Jonte-Pace 2001a, 145). The theorist suggests Alfred Hitchcock's film *Vertigo* (1958) provides such a space: "Hitchcock creates a

narrative full of repetitions and returns that invite reflection....The story is carried forward by identities destroyed and re-created in an intellectually complex and aesthetically stunning narrative of a man's obsessive encounter with love and death" (2001a, 145). Are films such as *Vertigo* the only film narratives that can aid is the psychological process of growth?

Jonte-Pace notes her debt to Winnicott's theory of transitional space and the centrality of infantile play, although she suggests that only "an intellectually complex and aesthetically stunning narrative" can access the "unspeakable" of fears and fantasies locked in the unconscious. For Klein and Winnicott, playing is at the foundation of human engagement with the world, with others, and with the self. Or, as Ricoeur has termed it, reference, communication, and self-understanding are built upon the infant's ability to play. Winnicott suggests "playing leads on naturally to cultural experience, including its most sophisticated developments, and indeed forms its foundations" (Winnicott 1997 [1971], 106-107). A significant element of children's play and adult cultural experience is repetition. While some cultural engagements may be more profound than others, for example, *Vertigo*, lauded for its complex narrative, and *Face Off*, a box-office success that lacks a complicated narrative, the sheer force of repetition in popular culture must be acknowledged. Freud, Klein, and Winnicott agree that repetition, in terms of acting out or revisiting the past, signal anxiety situations which beg to be resolved. Art, literature, religion, and film are narrative maps that have the

potential to evoke transformation but also have the power to stave off significant change through iterative power.

Therefore, cultural narratives occupy a theoretical space where old anxiety situations can be resolved *or* they can maintain their power through unexamined iteration. The dynamics that must be brought to the surface and examined begin at an early stage of human development, prior to the acquisition of language. The unspeakable, the dream's navel, or the pre-verbal describe a period in which there are no words to accompany the feelings of loss of the maternal connection due to integration and the birth of the desire to replicate that connection. Therefore, one of the ways that individuals continuously try to work through the trauma of loss is through cultural representations. A Kleinian poststructuralist methodology understands that cultural artifacts are attempts to work through the primary anxiety situation, the loss of a profound, preverbal connection with the mother, and that individuals forever try to replicate it. Thus, the poststructuralist description – self/other – that encapsulates the binary logic which structures modernity and postmodernity can be modified to appropriately include Kleinian thought. This new representation would not be a binary but triad:

self/(m)/other

The bracketed “m” that separates the self from other represents a region of mediation, dominated by the relationship between the infant and mother, that must be explored, analyzed, and brought to the fore, where it can be actively engaged and worked through. The mediated region also represents the imprint of Derrida's

notion of trace. The trace of the mother is found in the good object; the mother necessarily bears the trace of her mother, which she passes to the next generation. Therefore, subjectivity, in a Kleinian framework, is a truly sedimented tradition whose origins have been obliterated. The trace imprinted on each psyche refers to the generations that came before it coupled with the ongoing narrative construction of subjectivity, and suggests that contingency, searching for the unsaid and investigating foundations, has the potential to disrupt regulation and consent because history is restored to the subject without a claim to origins.

Dinnerstein's theory, that bringing the father into the infant's world mitigates the rage directed towards the mother, is part of the solution. However, it does not sufficiently deal with the need for theorizing, interpreting, and resolving infantile rage. Jonte-Pace's proposition that culture has therapeutic potential similar to that of the analyst-analysand relationship offers an excellent starting place, but I argue that extending the analysis of culture to include the repetitive themes that sustain the phallogocentric logic that dominates media will be productive in this discussion.

CONCLUSION

Kleinian themes exist, often unrecognized, in popular cultural material. By attending to those themes the potential to disrupt the process of regulation and consent that narratively constructs subjects is created. Moreover, disrupting

subjectivization highlights the temporal contingency of the symbolic, thereby creating the potential to shift people's ideological commitments. Kleinian themes offer the possibility of political transformation because they do not rely on an exclusionary history of human culture, subjectivity, and desire. This is not to say that Klein promotes a neat and tidy version of human development, but she does offer something quite different than the mythic structures that currently dominant Western, Christian culture, which privilege shifting conceptions of masculinity and relegate women to an undesirable realm of otherness.

SECTION TWO

What if new questions were asked? What else might be said within a narrative and about a narrative that has been considered Oedipal? I suggest that the performative repetition of the Oedipal drama in cultural narratives has resulted in intellectual and academic stagnation, which are always searching for and attempting to dismantle, or valorize, Oedipal themes. The notion of “social fabric” is an apt metaphor to describe the complex weaving of discourses within the terms of sociality. Religion is a thread in that fabric which carries immense significance because of its association with timelessness, the sacred, and transcendence. Further, the symbolic connections that align woman/feminine with death/chaos and man/masculine with life/order must be denaturalized and examined. I suggest that utilizing a different perspective disrupts the regulatory mechanisms that secure consent to oppressive power structures and encourages new analytical methods.

I have argued that contingency denaturalizes mythic structures in an effort to locate the emancipatory potential of the *already said*. Contingency brings together the methods of poststructuralist textual analysis with Kleinian psychoanalysis. Poststructuralist theorists such as Butler, Derrida, and Ricoeur contend that the terms of sociality are maintained through the iteration of conventions or sets of conventions. Butler’s theory of performativity understands the dynamics of the symbolic to be so pervasive and deterministic that there is

little room within it for subversion. She draws from Louis Althusser to trace the process of subjectivization to its roots in language, arguing that social construction of subjects involves, as Klein might say, both projection and introjection. Understanding interpellation in Kleinian terms continues to recognize constitutive social relations, beginning with the maternal relation. Klein writes, “from early days onwards the mother’s unconscious attitude strongly affects the infant’s unconscious processes” (EG, 116). Klein emphasizes the powerful influence of the maternal relationship within sets of already-existing social relations that constitute subjects.

Klein found that representations of the interior dynamics she describes already exist in cultural materials. She analyzed a Greek tragedy, *The Orestia* (EG, 269-99), and the film *Citizen Kane* (Klein, 1998), concluding that the brilliance of the authors, and the lasting popularity of their work, lies in the symbolization of the infantile anxiety described in their texts. When the dynamics of the depressive and paranoid-schizoid positions are projected into culture, the audience is given the opportunity to experience the transformative effects of the transference situation and work through their own anxieties. Creative work, as Alford and Stokes have each demonstrated, transforms the artist as well as the audience. Stokes promotes images that portray and encourage wholeness and integration. Alford builds on his work, suggesting that people must project their fears and anxieties into the world in order to rid themselves of dread, in order to sustain a sense of wholeness. For Alford and Stokes, this means creating and

consuming all forms of art. Art, then, is a defense against fragmentation and anxieties, both paranoid-schizoid and depressive.

This thesis extends Klein's limited project of cultural analysis to locate and describe, that is, put into discourse, an alternative to the phallogentric mythic structures that dominate contemporary cultural media. Foucault (1978) has demonstrated the immense power of discourse in his study of the transformation of sexuality from something one does to the truth of what one is. Discourse does not merely describe, it also constructs, defines, and extends knowledge of a topic or site. Drawing from Foucault, I contend that putting Kleinian psychoanalysis into discourse contributes to the process of resignification, that is, the transformation of the terms that socially constitute the subject. Resignification has socially subversive potential because of the power held by individuals. About power Foucault writes,

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application (1977, 98).

For Foucault, the symbolic produces the possibility of its own subversions because individuals are both articulations of power and articulated by it. Therefore, where ideology interpellates and hegemony secures consent, resistance to those terms is

also made possible. *Narratives that are sites of consent and regulation have the potential to also be sites of disruption and resignification.*

In this section, I draw from the theories described in the previous chapters to deconstruct and (re)present phallogentric themes in two film narratives. Cinema, according to Jonte-Pace, is a transference space in which old anxiety situations can be re-enacted, examined, and resolved. Those same situations, Dinnerstein explains, can become part of hegemonic discourses that sustain discriminatory social positions. I have chosen to discuss two films, *Rebecca* and *American Beauty*, which have been described as Oedipal narratives. However, they also demonstrate Kleinian themes. My readings of the films will include both poststructuralist textual analysis and Kleinian psychoanalytic method.

I approach these films in different ways because they each have something unique to offer this analysis. *Rebecca*, described as the one film that follows the female journey of enculturation, was significant in its day, winning the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1940, and reemerged in the 1970s as a central narrative for the burgeoning field of feminist film theory. Laura Mulvey (1990 [1975]) uses Hitchcock's films to help theorize a feminist approach to cinema. She recognized what may be one of the most difficult aspects of the (at the time) nascent academic area: to do film analysis we have to surrender the pleasure, enjoyment, and satisfaction that cinema offers. Margaret Miles, many years later, argued that film studies does not necessarily entail the destruction of the "pleasure of spectatorship" (Miles 1996, 14). I suggest that there is compromise between the

two positions: we must be at least willing to surrender the pleasure of spectatorship. Surely, the embodied and visceral pleasure of the cinema will contradict, or conflict, with the tenets of film analysis, particularly feminist film analysis, at least some of the time.

American Beauty also enjoyed enormous popularity and critical praise. A more recent production released in 1999, highlights contemporary issues surrounding the disintegration of the nuclear family and its relation to consumer capitalism. In the film, Carolyn rebuffs Lester's sexual advances, to protect her furniture from the potential mess of a romantic encounter, to which he responds "This isn't life, this is stuff". The juxtaposition of (sexual) pleasure with commodification suggests that contemporary Western culture provides one at the expense of the other. The themes in the film invite a Kleinian analysis, and the narrative demands an evaluation of the terms of sociality.

In both analyses the ideal Kleinian, feminist, poststructuralist message is not perfectly fulfilled. There are moments of resistance to phallogentrism, moments in which the operations of desire and integration from a Kleinian perspective are crystal clear, but the narratives also fail to completely achieve the promises they hint at. Suzy Gordon suggests that limits of enunciation in film demonstrate "the difficulty of articulating a politics of resistance outside of certain constraints or confinements" (Gordon 2003, 1). Resolutions do not come easily, and, therefore, the films should not present a utopic, egalitarian, integrated ending. Instead, they offer glimpses.

Drawing from Althusser, I argue that as we construct the world, it constructs us. Therefore, deconstructing and (re)presenting the Oedipal themes in these films will accomplish three related tasks. First, identify areas of discourse which promote images of integration and wholeness, or to identify discourses which are inimical to that goal. Second, reveal the performative nature and historical contingency of phallogentric discourses in cultural media. Finally, follow the narrative path of contingency so that a de-centered subject can emerge. These three related tasks contribute to the formation of emancipatory discourses, which promote new modes of encountering the world, each other, and ourselves.

CHAPTER FIVE

FRAGMENTS OF THE FEMININE

Hitchcock's *Rebecca* is a cinematic representation of the classic Gothic novel that recalls a young woman's transition from innocence to womanhood. Perhaps the most compelling character in the film is one who remains outside of the screen image -- Rebecca. The dead wife of the film's Byronic hero, Rebecca never enters the specular image, though her emblem marks the mise-en-scene and her presence is felt everywhere. In her absence, Rebecca exudes a powerful effect. When the long hidden truth about Rebecca is revealed in the film's narrative, the extent to which she had subverted the dominant social order becomes clear. According to Foucault, "We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (Foucault 1977, 93). Rebecca is certainly powerful, and this raises an important question: What truths are produced by and through her? To approach

this question I will draw from Derrida's notion of the "trace" and Butler's theoretical repositioning of the structures that govern society through the prohibitive law to argue that, in *Rebecca*, the limits of the symbolic are challenged effectively, thereby demonstrating the potential to recast the terms of sociality. I will also draw from Kleinian psychoanalysis to examine how the process of integration disrupts the performative repetition of the Oedipal complex.

This analysis of *Rebecca* argues that in mass-produced narratives that derive from and reproduce cultural norms there are alternatives to the Freudian and Lacanian systems that continually construct woman in opposition to the masculine norm. Anne McClintock correctly asserts that Lacan's social-psychoanalytic method refuses full membership in the symbolic to women. In recent years, Lacan's theories have become a popular theoretical framework, informing many contemporary psychoanalytically oriented cultural analyses. It is common to find references to the "symbolic" or the "imaginary" in studies that deal with film, television, music, and style. Therefore, it is not enough to assert that Lacan bars women from social equality. Theorists must exceed the limits of that phallogocentric system -- the terms of sociality dominated by the Oedipal drama -- in order to demonstrate that it is temporally and spatially specific, not a universal phenomenon, and is therefore subject to subversion. Kleinian psychoanalysis and feminist poststructuralist methodology collaborate to produce a theoretical strategy that disrupts the regulation and consent of subjects and challenges the limits of the symbolic.

REBECCA

Rebecca, released in 1940, was Alfred Hitchcock's first American film. And though the film won him an Academy Award²³, the director believed this was not a "Hitchcock picture" (Modleski 1988, 43). Hitchcock felt that the film was novelettish, belonging to a school of feminine literature that lacked humor. His solution to the problem of humor was to script two scenes that involved vomiting on boats. The film's producer, David O. Selzenick, demanded the elimination of both scenes from the script because they were contrary to the "feminine nature of the book" (1988, 43). *Rebecca* is based on Daphne du Maurier's 1938 Gothic novel, *Rebecca*. Gothic novels draw from the classical detective story and from the popular romance genre. The Gothic genre tends to deal with women's "fears and confusion about the masculine in a world in which men learn to devalue women" (1988, 60). The typical Gothic heroine is plagued by feelings of helplessness, confusion, fright, and hatred. Hitchcock's *Rebecca* closely follows this pattern as it tells the story of a young woman recently married to an older man whose wife died the previous year.

The film opens in Monte Carlo. A young woman (Joan Fontaine) is the paid traveling companion to a vulgar American socialite, Mrs. Van Hopper (Francis Bates). Mrs. Van Hopper and her companion meet Maxim de Winter (Lawrence Olivier) at their hotel. The older woman explains that de Winter's wife died tragically one year earlier in a sailing accident. While Mrs. Van Hopper is

bedridden with an illness, love quickly blooms between the paid companion and Maxim. When Maxim learns that the young woman he is courting is to return to America at Van Hopper's behest, he proposes marriage and the two hastily wed. Following a brief honeymoon in the south of France, the newlyweds travel to Maxim's country home, Manderly, in England. Almost immediately the bride suffers from feelings of inadequacy and confusion in her new home surrounded by servants. Modleski elaborates the cinematic effects of the heroine's sense of inadequacy,

The mise-en-scene and the camerawork collaborate with the script to convey the heroine's sense of her own insignificance: she is continually dwarfed by the huge halls in which she wanders, and even the doorknobs are placed shoulder-level so that the viewer receives a subliminal impression of her as a child peeking in on or intruding into an adult world that provokes both curiosity and dread (1988, 47).

This is exacerbated by the stern housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers (Judith Anderson), who had been the loyal servant to Maxim's former wife.

The heroine feels completely overshadowed by the subtle yet ominous presence of the former Mrs. de Winter, Rebecca. The house bears her mark virtually everywhere; the initial "R" for the name "Rebecca de Winter" is inscribed or embroidered on books, writing paper, napkins, handkerchiefs, and pillows. Mrs. Danvers dedicates herself to Rebecca's memory, maintaining Rebecca's things as though she might return at any moment. Rebecca's bedroom is a shrine, preserved by Mrs. Danvers, but off limits to everyone else, including the new Mrs. de Winter. The heroine gradually believes that her husband is still

obsessively in love with Rebecca. After a visit to Rebecca's bedroom, the heroine finally asserts her authority as Manderly's mistress, demanding that all of Rebecca's things be removed from her sight. Soon after, the heroine persuades Maxim to throw a lavish costume ball reminiscent of the days when Rebecca was Manderly's hostess. Mrs. Danvers suggests to the heroine a costume based on the portrait of Lady Caroline de Winter, Maxim's ancestor, that hangs in their home. On the evening of the ball, the heroine descends the stairs, dressed as Lady de Winter, only to be received by her husband with shock, repulsion, and anger. Mrs. Danvers had tricked the heroine, under the guise of friendship, into wearing the same costume Rebecca had worn to the last costume ball at Manderly. Mrs. Danvers capitalizes on the bride's anguish, almost convincing her to commit suicide. But, at that moment the heroine's trance is interrupted by a shipwreck near the estate.

In the process of rescuing the ship and its crew, Rebecca's boat is discovered with her body still in it. This is a tragic discovery for Maxim, who identified the body of another drowned nameless woman as Rebecca. The heroine finds her husband in the cottage by the shore where Rebecca spent much of her time. The cottage, filled with Rebecca's things, looks as though it has been abandoned since her death. Maxim, obviously distraught, reveals to the heroine -- and to the audience -- the truth about his marriage to Rebecca. She learns, much to her surprise, that Maxim hated his first wife and that the marriage was based on a lie. Rebecca, according to Maxim, was incapable of love and tortured him with

continual infidelities. Maxim's ugly description of his first wife stands in contrast to Mrs. Danvers' loving recollections that cast Rebecca as the ideal woman. In the cottage, Maxim describes Rebecca as an evil woman who, for no apparent reason, rejoiced in his misery. She had taken many men as lovers, but was particularly fond of one, Jack Favell, her cousin. On the night she died, she suggested to Maxim that she was pregnant with another man's baby. Maxim recalled that she was amused by the notion that this child would be Maxim's heir. Shocked by her callousness, Maxim struck his wife; she stumbled, fell, hit her head on a piece of ship's tackle, and died. Rebecca's death, from Maxim's perspective, was a suicide because she intentionally fell forward onto the metal equipment.

The remainder of the film follows an investigation into Rebecca's suspicious death. The heroine remains loyal to Maxim throughout the inquiry. Everyone involved in the case suspects Maxim because he knowingly identified another woman's body as Rebecca's. As the inquiry proceeds, Maxim's defense, that she committed suicide, is accepted when it is learned that Rebecca was suffering from an incurable form of cancer. Not only is Maxim cleared of the crime of murder, Maxim and his wife -- along with the audience -- know without a doubt that Rebecca had taunted Maxim into striking her in order to make her death look like murder. It is never explained in the film why Rebecca despises her husband enough to frame him for her murder. After the trial, Maxim returns to Manderly to witness its destruction in a fire set by Mrs. Danvers, a fire which also

claims her life. The film closes with a loving embrace between Maxim and his nameless wife.

HITCHCOCK AND THE OEDIPAL DRAMA

Many film theorists focus on the Oedipal trajectory of contemporary narratives. Drawing from Roland Barthes' influential theories, which claim that melodrama maps the male Oedipal journey, Stephen Heath and Raymond Bellour argue that Hollywood cinema is a "psychic and representational machine that continuously recycled and resecured the terms of phallic identity for a male or masculinized spectator" (Fletcher 1995, 346). That is, the dominant Hollywood cinema is constructed according to the unconscious of patriarchy and phallogentric language. Women in film are not signifiers for real women, but instead represent the "not-man", a construction stemming from the masculine unconscious (Kaplan 1993[1983], 257). This contention allows Bellour to assert that the trajectory of *all* Hollywood narratives traces the male Oedipal journey (Modleski 1988, 2). Feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey asserts that the cinema relies on fetishism and voyeurism to "construct the male spectator in accordance with the needs of his unconscious" (Kaplan 1993[1983], 257) and to construct the female as the eroticized object of the masculine gaze. Psychoanalytic methodology finds that the female body suggests the possibility of castration and therefore threatens the

stability of phallogentric order. Thus, fetishism functions to displace that fear by rendering the female body phallus-like in order to allay the threat of castration. The cinematic camera unconsciously fetishizes the female body in order to mitigate the threat it poses. E. Ann Kaplan (1993[1983]) concludes that the masculine gaze is a strategy deployed by men to contain the threat that the mother's body poses and to control the traces of pre-Oedipal memories of the mother locked in the male unconscious.

Therefore, psychoanalytic film theory has relied almost exclusively on Freudian and Lacanian interpretations of the construction of the subject. The subject is produced in language through the Oedipal drama, which results in a phallogentrism that constructs and devalues the feminine in relation to the masculine. In accordance with this notion, shifting conceptions of masculinity organize the terms of sociality (symbolic order) while the feminine principle is relegated to the margin, or excluded from, the symbolic order. Theories of spectatorship are limited by the constraints imposed by psychoanalysis. For example, Mary Anne Doane (1990[1982]) postulates that female spectators identify with either the woman-as-object or assume a masculine gaze. Teresa de Lauretis (1984) challenges the limitations of psychoanalysis, contending that cinematic identification for female spectators is more complex than feminist theory has understood. Women always participate in an act of double desire, simultaneously identifying with the passive female object and the active male subject (de Lauretis 1984, 68). Consequently, feminist psychoanalytic theory has

progressively challenged the limits of Freudian and Lacanian interpretation. Introducing Klein into this arena is a further extension of feminist film theory. Because woman is understood by mainstream film theorists largely in terms of her relation to the phallus and castration, Kleinian themes can resignify feminine roles. Reading cinema for representations of integration rather than castration creates new discourses and new sets of conventions.

Modleski (1988) and de Lauretis (1984) offer a feminist psychoanalytic reading of Hitchcock's *Rebecca*. Both theorists focus on the female Oedipal trajectory of the film's nameless heroine. Modleski contends that Hitchcock's films are marked by a concern for gender relations: "It is that feminine element in the textual body that is unassimilable by patriarchal culture and yet cannot be 'vomited' out" (1988, 44). She reads Hitchcock's vomiting scenes as his desire to vomit out the feminine elements of the book's discourse (1988, 44). Modleski rejects Bellour's assertion that all films follow the boy's entry into the social and symbolic order, instead positing that there is "at least one film dealing with woman's 'incorporation' into the social order" (1988, 45). Modleski's larger project is to demonstrate that Hitchcock's films display an ambivalence towards women that can not be reduced to either a positive or a negative cinematic representation of women. *Rebecca* is unique among films because it attends to the heroine's transition from the imaginary stage to adulthood (1988, 48). Modleski argues that the heroine's clumsiness, helplessness, and insignificance can be interpreted as a sign that she is in the imaginary stage of (Lacanian)

development. In this stage, the child is overwhelmed by what he or she perceives as the mother's superhuman perfection (1988, 48). The success of this transition in the film depends on the heroine's ability to detach herself from the mother figure, represented by Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers, in order to attach herself to a man, represented by Maxim. Consequently, the heroine continually tries to take Rebecca's place in the specular image until, finally, the truth about Rebecca surfaces and Mrs. Danvers dies in the fire she set at Manderly. In the end, the heroine disavows her desire for the mother and affirms her primary attachment to the male. Significantly, the camera captures Mrs. Danvers' death in the fire as well as the destruction of the embroidered pillow which bears Rebecca's initial. The female Oedipal drama is complicit in the project of heterosexual kinship relations. That is, this drama colludes with the male experience in order to subordinate women and direct their desire into heterosexual marriage. Hence, de Lauretis is correct to suggest that "dominant cinema works for Oedipus" (1984, 155) even when it sets the terms for female desire.

Anne McClintock contends that Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory is incapable of theorizing outside of phallogentric constraints. The Oedipal scenario postulated by Freud and elaborated by Lacan draws from anthropological notions of kinship. Structuralist anthropology contends that all kinship systems are based on the incest prohibition and operate according to the fundamental principle of the exchange of women by men in order to establish alliances among men. This system not only organizes society, it organizes and reproduces itself

(Rubin 1998 [1984]). Thus, Lacanian psychoanalytic method argues that the rule of exogamous marriage that founds kinship arrangements is mimicked by the process of individual development. Here the child's desire for the mother is prohibited by the paternal imperative "No!", which incites a fear of castration in the male child. This process is gendered: the boy, fearing castration, which is demonstrated by the maternal body, represses his desire for the mother and acquires language, thereby entering the symbolic order; the girl, demonstrated by Rebecca's nameless heroine, must overcome her attachment to the mother in order to attach to a man. The paternal imperative "No!" is a cultural imperative that is commanded in language. Hence, Lacan posits only a paternal intervention against incest, thus denying women an active role in the Law that organizes and reproduces society (McClintock 1995, 196). The Law of the Father, which is spoken through the force of the symbolic, creates and then excludes the category "woman" from full membership. The symbolic is signified by the phallus, which men are said to "have" and women are said to "be" (Butler 1990, 57). Therefore, the terms of sociality are based on an exclusionary matrix which centers on shifting conceptions of masculinity, in contrast to which femininity is constructed.

For that reason, the symbolic order is a cultural system that requires the rejection of the mother and her physical likeness. That is to say, for Lacan, "woman" signifies lack, otherness, and marginality, and conversely, the masculine is symbolized by the powerful phallus. The phallus is invested with social power because it reflects the social privilege already accorded to men. In Lacan's theory,

however, the source of that power is perpetually deferred because Lacan does not investigate the history of masculine privilege. Consequently, social privilege and power belong to the masculine domain while the feminine is relegated to a subordinate position. Foucault is suspicious of psychoanalytic method because, he asserts, it aims to continually re-establish exclusionary normative heterosexual social arrangements that label all other forms of desire and sexuality as unproductive and therefore perversions. "Psychoanalysis", according to Foucault, "rediscovered the law of alliance, the involved workings of marriage and kinship, and kinship at the heart of sexuality, as the principle of its formation and the key to its intelligibility" (1978, 113). Unproductive forms of sexuality were deemed perverse, in Foucault's genealogy of sexuality, because they had the potential to upset, or pervert, social arrangements.

McClintock's negative assessment of Lacanian psychoanalysis complicates Foucault's position. McClintock argues that psychoanalysis and material history can collaborate to strategically engage with unstable power (1995, 73-4). Moreover, psychoanalysis cannot be applied ahistorically, and history should always draw from psychoanalysis. However, this affirmation of psychoanalytic method is not a positive appraisal of Lacan. McClintock asserts that "Lacanian psychoanalysis therefore cannot challenge the subordination of women precisely because it constantly reproduces women as inherently and invariably subordinate, destined to reside permanently under the false rule of the pretender phallus" (1995, 200). Thus, the value of psychoanalytically informed readings of social texts,

such as films, that re-inscribe the terms of subordination onto the feminine should be questioned. That is to say, recognizing in Hitchcock's film the female Oedipal drama instead of the archetypal male Oedipal drama does not, as Robin Wood (1977) pondered, "save Hitchcock for feminism".

MELODRAMA

As early as 1936 Hitchcock knew that the melodramatic genre would be his forte. In a short article entitled "Why I Make Melodramas" (1936), Hitchcock states that "In the cinema a melodramatic film is one based on a series of sensational events." In the article Hitchcock is concerned with how he, as a filmmaker, can both entertain the audience and make a good film. The melodramatic genre serves as a cultural space in which revealing and entertaining films can be made. For example, according to Hitchcock, "understatement in a situation powerful enough to be called melodramatic is, I think, the way to achieve naturalism and realism while keeping in mind the entertainment demands of the screen" (1936). That melodrama draws from several popular narrative genres may be responsible for its success in popular culture. Despite the dismissal of melodrama in the first half of the twentieth century by film critics, it emerged as a powerful genre in the 1960s, with an emphasis on "the operation and ideological effectivity of aesthetic form" (Gledhill 1987, 5-6).

By the 1970s, neo-Marxist film theories and cine-psychoanalysis had cleared a path for melodrama to emerge as a politically radical cinematic form. The classic realist texts had been devalued by theorists who claimed that they “reproduce bourgeois ideology because they implicate the spectator in a single point of view onto a coherent, hierarchically ordered representation of the world, in which social contradictions are concealed” (Gledhill 1987, 8). Therefore, a shift that valued anti-realist excess emphasized melodrama’s attention to Freud and the Oedipal trajectory. In addition to neo-Marxist and psychoanalytic theories, feminism also found radical potential in the family melodrama, a subset of melodramatic films, because it focuses on the domestic sphere and its stories follow female protagonists. The feminine voice, in melodrama, challenges the dominant masculine voice by constantly preserving the possibility of social transformation (Byars 1988, 123). As a result, a category that focuses on personal relationships and the home became known as the “woman’s film”. In spite of its popularity among theorists, Laura Mulvey questions the potential of the woman’s film for feminism. She argues that it functions much like Greek tragedy and Victorian melodrama, reconstituting normative heterosexuality within a phallogentric economy during periods of social transition or discord. Thus, in Mulvey’s view, the family melodrama, popular after the Second World War, did not disrupt bourgeois ideology but, rather, it helped to reconstitute the patriarchal family following the war.

Peter Brooks' influential study of this genre, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976), suggests an alternative analytic perspective. Brooks de-emphasizes the underlying binary oppositions in melodramatic narrative, contending that melodrama is a modern phenomenon (Gledhill 1987, 29). Melodrama -- evolving from the loss of pre-Enlightenment values and symbolic forms -- is a response to the "psychic consequences of the bourgeois social order, in which the social must be expressed as the personal" (1987, 29). Brooks contends that feudal societies, prior to the rise of modernity and the emergence of the bourgeoisie, drew social cohesion and a sense of meaningful community membership from the "Traditional Sacred," which includes religious systems and mythic explanations, to social contradictions that also attend to ethical behavior. The transition from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment yielded a slow process of desacralisation in which individuals lost their connection with the systems of meaning that had previously sustained the ethical and spiritual needs of their communities. Consequently, the "post-sacred society" needed to replace the outmoded systems of meaning with new secular systems of ethics and personal significance. One result of the systems of meaning and significance in the post-sacred society was the repression of all that cannot be contained within the dominant order, such as the anti-social, desire, and the struggle for good and evil (1987, 30). Melodrama, which inherited popular cultural traditions, emerged as the site in which ethical conflicts are expressively resolved. Resolution in

melodrama relies “less on the triumph of virtue than on making the world morally legible” (P. Brooks 1976, 42).

As a cultural form, melodrama is the site of contested meaning that explores both the masculine and feminine experience in society, although melodrama remains closely connected with the woman’s film genre. Gledhill argues that melodrama becomes sociopolitically motivated only at the point at which it triggers psychic mechanisms (Gledhill 1987, 37). Thus, melodrama touches the individual before it “addresses us within the limitations of the status quo, of the ideologically permissible” and, moreover, “it acknowledges demands inadmissible in the codes of the social, psychological or political discourse” (1987, 38). *Rebecca* is a quintessentially melodramatic film. As a melodrama, *Rebecca* depicts a world marked by the polarities of good and evil and makes it legible for the heroine and for the audience. The signs of evil, Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers, are expelled violently from the film’s narrative. It attends to the domestic sphere, highlighting the plight of its female protagonist. Ultimately, the feminine voice is pervasive, suggesting the possibility of social transformation.

TRACE AND DIFFERENCE

Trace and difference are linked in Jacques Derrida’s deconstructive method. Differance combines the terms “difference” and “deferral” in order to

demonstrate the irreducibility of meaning in language (Derrida 1998[1968], 385). The altered spelling of *differance* is, in part, an effort by Derrida to valorize writing within a metaphysical tradition that privileges the spoken word and the voice over the graphic sign and writing. Language, according to Derrida, can “fulfill the condition of self-present meaning only if it offers a *total and immediate* access to all thoughts that occasioned its utterance” (Norris 1991, 46). This is an impossible demand, and therefore meaning in all forms of language is subject to spatial and temporal dislocation. Moreover, language is a system based on differences (Derrida 1998[1968], 392) because meaning is produced through negative recognition: knowing what something is not. *Differance* is thus the “movement of play that ‘produces’ (and not by something that is simply an activity) these, differences, these effects of difference...*Differance* is the non-full, non-simple ‘origin’; it is the structured and differing origin of differences” (1998[1968]: 393). Ultimately, Derrida concludes that in language and speech there can never be complete self-presence because the origin of the utterance, the transcendental signified, is illusory.

Derrida’s notion of the trace is a complex and often contradictory concept which cannot be adequately described by the language of metaphysics (1974 [1967], 65); nevertheless, it is central to the theory of *differance*. He argues that meaning is made in the process of signification; however, that process does not site an originary concept, that is, the signified, but is rather a process of repetition. The trace is the origin of all repetition (1974 [1967], 65). The trace is not a

material entity, for it is better described as a “psychic imprint” (1974 [1967], 66). The trace constitutes the present through its relation to both the future and the past. Although the trace is not a presence, it is rather “a simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself” (1998[1968], 403). The trace does not occupy a single place but becomes a part of the structure of the present (1998[1968], 403). Therefore, if meaning is made through a process of negative recognition and temporal delay, the trace is a structuring element that mediates presence and absence because it constitutes *what is*, draws from *what was*, and refers to *what will be*. Hence, the trace is extremely powerful in its very absence. I will argue that the initial “R” and the name “Rebecca de Winter” which mark Manderly in Hitchcock’s *Rebecca* function as a trace of the unconscious of the mother.

A RETURN TO PSYCHOANALYSIS

A rejection of Lacanian psychoanalysis is not a complete disavowal of psychoanalytic method. Psychoanalysis is a valuable tool in the exploration of social and cultural dynamics. Moreover, despite McClintock’s rejection of Lacan’s method for feminist political theory and social action, it can be useful for feminist poststructuralism. That is to say, Lacan’s theories are helpful tools to read and interpret contemporary social arrangements, especially those reflected in

popular cultural texts. For example, the predominance of the phallogentric economy which constructs woman in opposition to and inferior than shifting conceptions of masculinity invades textual representation. And, although Lacanian psychoanalysis may not be the ideal tool to radically alter the terms of sociality, it interrogates the limitations of those terms. Therefore, the terms of the symbolic are not immutable, transcendent laws, but rather, they are alterable patterns of repetition.

Judith Butler argues that the repetition of norms or sets of norms function as a constitutive element of the individual subject. There are two concepts central to Butler's theories of the human subject, namely, abjection and interpellation. Abjection is the exclusionary means through which human subjects are constructed. It is the creation of a cast-out domain upon which the construction of the subject is contingent; that is, for there to be a "self" there must also be a "not-self." Theories concerned with the interpellation and constitution of the subject in the social domain will be addressed. Specifically, I will discuss the concepts of slippage and resignification that function as methods of social resistance within the performative framework (Butler 1993, 2001). Additionally, I will consider Butler's assertion that if psychoanalysis is to be productive for feminism theorists must choose an alternative to the Oedipal drama as its foundation (Butler 2000). Ultimately, I will apply these ideas to Hitchcock's *Rebecca*.

Butler's concepts operate within the frame of her theory of performativity. These concepts inform and shape Butler's postulation that the subject is

constructed through performative acts. This theory has been controversial since its inception; critics argue that performativity refuses the possibility of individual agency. Butler contends that “the doer is constructed by the deed” (Butler 1990, 181). The “deeds” are performative acts that are “always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms” (1993, 12). Thus, performance is a reiterative practice that draws its power and legitimation from the citation of already sanctioned acts and norms. Butler draws some aspects of the notion of citational practice from Derrida (Butler 1993, 13). Citationality, like *différance*, is the practice of repetition that is not based on an original transcendental signified (1993, 109). It is significant to note that Butler’s theory is not without its limitations. For example, performative acts that do not reiterate sanctioned norms or social conventions are vain efforts to produce effects that cannot possibly be produced (1993, 107). Hence, legitimation occurs through the deferral of the reiterated acts; therefore, subject positions are citational practices instituted through a domain of constitutive constraints (1993, 108). This raises an important question: How are political resistance and social transformation possible within the performative framework?

Butler’s theory of slippage and resignification explores how resistance and transformation are possible within the symbolic. The symbolic is understood by Butler to be a “normative dimension of the constitution of the sexed subject within language;” moreover, “it consists of a series of demands, taboos, sanctions, injunctions, prohibitions, impossible idealizations, and threats -- performative speech acts” which have the power to produce subjectivizing effects (1993, 106).

Performative speech acts have subjectivizing power only insofar as they reiterate norms or sets of norms. Though each repetition is a resignification, and a deferral, that constitutes legitimacy, it does not recover an originary act. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that “there are repetitions of hegemonic forms of power which fail to repeat loyally and, in that failure, open possibilities for resignifying the terms of violation against their violating aims” (1993, 124). The violation is the constitution of the “I” through interpellation and the repetition compulsion it produces. Violating aims refers to violation through injurious terms; and “woman” in the symbolic economy is certainly an injurious term. That is to say, according to Butler, interpellative law can produce disobedience that breaks with the demands of intelligibility and thus re-articulates, that is, reproduces but not exactly, the citation. This is a slippage between the discursive command and appropriated effect. I will argue that a slippage can occur between the demand for femininity and the subjectivization (as other) of the female.

In *Bodies That Matter* resignification is said to occur each time a social convention is cited. In *Excitable Speech* (Butler 1997b) the concept of resignification is given a radical new possibility. Resignification is the appropriation of hateful terms in order to drain them of their social power. Resignification is not merely a repetition because it alters the context of the hateful term. Therefore, resignification has a productive force that can utilize social power for the seemingly powerless. The appropriation of hateful terms by the group they are intended to harm is not a new social strategy. As Butler claims,

resignification as a social strategy reveals “explicitly the performance essential to all repetition” (Jenkins 2001). She asserts that significant social transformation can occur within the terms of sociality. Butler rejects the valorization of the feminine within the imaginary economy espoused by some feminists -- particularly the French triumvirate of Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva. These three theorists, among others, celebrate the feminine qualities that are devalued in the symbolic by relocating them to the imaginary. Butler puts forward that this kind of “feminist resistance to the symbolic unwittingly protects the father’s law by relegating feminine resistance to the less enduring and less efficacious domain of the imaginary” (1993,106). Therefore, Butler’s theory of performativity contends that social equality can be effectively secured only through the transformation of the terms of sociality, which is constituted by the acts of individuals and not through the valorization of peripheral domains.

Butler turns to the notion of repudiation to explain how social transformation can occur within the constitutive constraints of the symbolic order. The symbolic order, which contains the domain of agency, is constituted through an act of repudiation that designates abject zones, things, and states. That which is repudiated is exactly that which may not re-enter the field of the social without threatening the subject with psychic dissolution. However, Butler suggests that there are certain abject zones within sociality that deliver the threat of dissolution (1993, 243). She allows for the possibility of a cultural space of ambivalence “which opens up the possibility of a re-working of the very terms by which

subjectivization proceeds” (1993, 124). This cultural space is the site where slippage and resignification occur. Therefore, as a condition of repudiation the symbolic is always already inhabited by constitutive abject material and agency is located in the rearticulation of social conventions (1993, 15). Butler emphasizes this contention, writing that, “the description of the symbolic as intractable law takes place within a fantasy of law as unsurpassable authority” (Butler 2000: 30). Ultimately, then, within the notion of performance the possibility of subverting social conventions exists. Thus, Butler exceeds the limitations of Lacanian theory that McClintock correctly identifies.

Butler addresses the structuralist account, which bases social arrangements on prohibitive law. She argues that constitutive constraints perform a regulative role: “in the process of articulating and elaborating that prohibition, the law provides the discursive occasion for a resistance, a resignification, and a potential self-subversion of the law” (Butler 1993, 109). Therefore, the prohibition that demands exogamous marriage, that organizes all social arrangements, is responsible for cultural intelligibility and reproduces itself also produces the occasion for resistance to the law. This raises an important question: Why would contemporary theorists want to resist a law that prohibits incest? The law not only prohibits incest, it legitimates only one form of kinship, thereby foreclosing the possibility of other legitimate social and familial arrangements. Butler turns her attention to Sophocles’ tragedy, *Antigone* -- which concludes the Oedipal drama -- to argue that Antigone “fails to produce heterosexual closure for the drama, and

that this may intimate the direction for a psychoanalytic theory that takes Antigone as its point of departure” (Butler 2000, 76). Antigone does not represent kinship or its radical other, but instead occasions an interrogation of kinship structures. Ultimately, Butler contends that,

If kinship is the precondition of the human, then Antigone is the occasion for a new field of the human, achieved through political catachresis, the one that happens when the less than human speaks as human, when gender is displaced, and kinship founds on its own founding laws. She acts, she speaks, she becomes one for whom the speech act is a fatal crime, but this fatality exceeds her life and enters the discourse of intelligibility as its own promising fatality, the social form of its aberrant, unprecedented future (2000, 82).

It is this reading of Antigone that applies to *Rebecca*.

SHE SAID “NO!”

I will draw on the concepts explored above to perform a feminist poststructuralist reading of *Rebecca*. According to Butler’s reading of Lacan, the symbolic order creates cultural intelligibility through the mutually exclusive social positions of “having” the phallus (men) and “being” the phallus (women). Being the phallus means reflecting the position of having the phallus and guaranteeing the possibility of that position by “being” the opposite of the masculine. Thus, women function as the sign and promise of power (Butler 1990, 57-8) and therefore cannot hold power. Modleski asserts that in contemporary, mass-

produced narratives for women there are elements of resistance and protest underlying the “orthodox” plots (Modleski 1993, 25). The heroine of the film, the nameless bride, follows the Oedipal orthodoxy, rejecting her attachment to the mother figure in order to attach herself to a man. However, the film does offer another powerful female character who is anything but orthodox in the phallocentric economy. And significantly, the film bears her name. Rebecca does not function in this narrative to reflect or guarantee masculine power. Instead, she undermines the operation of phallocentric power.

The symbolic order, which constitutes the subject within language, consists of a series of performative speech acts (Butler 1993, 106). These acts have subjectivizing effects because they are the reiteration of socially accepted norms or sets of norms. However, the process of rearticulation also occasions disobedience, which is a slippage in appropriated effect. Rebecca, the character in Hitchcock’s film, demonstrates both a slippage in the citational practice of femininity and the social strategy of resignification through her resistance to the dominant phallocentric order. The film’s narrative misleads the heroine, as well as the audience, representing Rebecca as a much loved beauty whose death is an unspeakable tragedy. When Maxim finally reveals the truth about Rebecca, in the cottage that was once her personal haven, the heroine can finally emerge from Rebecca’s shadow. The truth about Rebecca is that she refused the constitutive constraints of the patriarchal order by failing to reproduce normative

heterosexuality, exogamous kinship relations, and she challenges the law of primogeniture (patriarchal succession).

The most provocative scene in the film is Maxim's confession to his new wife in Rebecca's cottage. According to Maxim, Rebecca revealed the truth about herself soon after their wedding. As Maxim recalls Rebecca's death the camera work insinuates Rebecca into the scene. The audience experiences Rebecca's final moments through her eyes. This scene is dominated by the shot/reverse-shot formation, which is usually a shot of a woman followed by the shot of a man looking at her (Modleski 1988, 52). This camera pattern functions to alleviate the threat of castration that the female body poses to the male spectator. However, that Rebecca is not figured within the *mise-en-scene* is significant. Pascal Bonitzer suggests that, "Specular space is on-screen space; it is everything we see on the screen. Off-screen space, blind space, is everything that moves (or wriggles) outside or under the surface of things" (in Modleski 1988, 53). He asserts that what occupies the blind-space is frightening. Because Rebecca is never within the specular image -- Hitchcock chose not to resort to flashback scenes that would have had to represent her materially -- Rebecca remains a source of fear. The camera cannot allay her threat because she is never within its frame. The threat that Rebecca holds is the threat of the dissolution of the order that she challenges.

In this scene the camera settles, for a brief moment, on a picture of a sailboat on the sea. This is significant because Rebecca is closely associated with

the sea. She is described as a master of boating, comfortable enough with skills to sail on her own. Moreover, Rebecca's body, committed to the sea by Maxim, rests in her sailboat-coffin. The association with the sea represents her "lawless sexuality" (Modleski 1988, 54). That is, Rebecca, like the unruly waters of the world, is not subject to the laws of men. The sea and its chaotic form have been the center of stories for thousands of years, especially in the "Traditional Sacred." In the creation epics of the Book of Genesis and Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, order is imposed on the shapeless primeval void by an omnipotent power, thereby creating the world. These myths are informed by the ancient Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish*; in this account the chaos that pre-exists order is the primeval ocean, a body of water. In all three epics, chaos is transformed into reality by an omnipotent power that imposes the categories of time and space. The structuralist creation epic asserts that upon these categories the terms of sociality -- a phallogentric system dominated by the Oedipal drama -- are imposed. If the masculine is equated with order then the feminine, which is figured in opposition to the masculine, must be equated with disorder. Rebecca's equation with the sea is a potent signifier of the threat to the phallogentric symbolic order that she poses. From this perspective, Rebecca represents that which is outside of order -- chaos.

If Foucault's (1978) assertion that the confessional mode resulted in the equation between one's sexuality and the truth about oneself is correct, then the truth about Rebecca is that her sexuality, which will not adhere to the rules of phallogentrism, poses an immanent threat to it. It is significant that Rebecca does

not enter the specular frame except as a trace. The trace does not occupy a single place but becomes a part of the structure of the present (Derrida 1998 [1968], 403). The trace, according to Derrida, is a structuring element that mediates presence and absence because it constitutes *what is*, draws from *what was*, and refers to *what will be*. If Manderly, Maxim's ancestral home, represents the phallogentric symbolic order, then the initial "R" and the name "Rebecca de Winter" can be read as a trace of something that once was and refers to what will be. That is, Rebecca's mark is a reminder of the past that refers to the future and mediates the present. Rebecca, as a constant presence between Maxim and his new wife, certainly mediates their present.

Rebecca subverts the phallogentric order through a series of transgressive acts. She is the site of power in her relationship with Maxim; it is Maxim who obeys her laws. Rebecca chooses to live outside of Manderly, the representation of the symbolic order, preferring the comfort of the small shore-side cottage or a flat in London. Her promiscuous behavior prevents the reproduction of normative heterosexuality. Rebecca's desire for her cousin, Jack Favell, demonstrates a refusal to adhere to the exogamous rules that create and govern sociality. She taunts Maxim with the notion that any child she produces, regardless of paternity, will inherit his name, his home, and his fortune. This threat transgresses the law of patriarchal succession and therefore threatens cultural intelligibility. For Rebecca, this speech is a fatal crime. Ultimately, Rebecca is easily equated with the disorder that threatens the phallogentric symbolic order. However, *Rebecca*, a

melodramatic film, closes with the rules of the symbolic firmly replaced and the transgressive elements violently expelled from the narrative. Thus, Rebecca, like Antigone, occupies a precarious place in the margins of sociality. Both figures refuse to reproduce normative heterosexuality; yet they fail to constitute its radical other. However, both figures do provide a cultural space that occasions an interrogation of the limits of the Lacanian symbolic.

The poststructuralist reading of *Rebecca* locates a space in which subversion is culturally intelligible and describes new conventions and sets of conventions which disrupt the hegemony of the symbolic. There are, however, two objectives that a poststructuralist reading does not accomplish. The film's ending remains within the constraints of the symbolic because the demands of the Oedipal drama remain intact as Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers are violently expelled from the narrative. The heroine's journey is still marked as Oedipal – she assumes the position of the devoted wife; therefore, a poststructuralist reading alone does not denaturalize phallogentric subjectivization. If Lacan's theory of culture helps to recognize the iterative power of phallogentrism in culture, then Klein helps to extend its boundaries to dispel and dislodge the hegemony of Oedipal enculturation.

Butler envisions a cultural space of ambivalence “which opens up the possibility of a re-working of the very terms by which subjectivization proceeds” where slippage and resignification occur (Butler 1993, 124). Klein uses the term ambivalence to explain the important work that the young ego performs when it

splits objects in order to separate good from bad. Klein writes, “Ambivalence, carried out in a splitting of the imagos, enables the small child to gain more trust and belief in its real objects and thus in its internalized ones – to love them more and to carry out in an increasing degree its phantasies of restoration on the loved object” (Klein 1991, 143). Ambivalence is a concept that, although not used identically by Butler and Klein, overlaps. Ambivalence is space in which the marginalized or powerless can control damaging objects in order to transform their interior or external situations.

The heroine in *Rebecca*, the young Mrs. de Winter, exemplifies many of Klein’s concepts regarding the developing child. Reading this film narrative from a Kleinian perspective shifts the focus from Rebecca, a site of social subversion, to the heroine, a site of infantile ambivalence, working through her paranoid-schizoid anxieties to become more integrated. The heroine, true to the Gothic genre, is “plagued by feelings of helplessness, confusion, fright, and hatred.” She also appears childlike and insignificant – the film intentionally portrays her as a child in an adult world. Therefore, the heroine in the film appears as a helpless child dominated by feelings of fear and hatred. She is much like the Klein’s infant: plagued by insecurity and feelings of persecution, she splits the female figure into an idealized one and a hated one. The similarities between the heroine’s anxieties and Kleinian infantile development are clear.

In the beginning of the film the heroine is travelling with Mrs. Van Hopper until she meets, loves, and marries Maxim de Winter. Their return to his ancestral

home, Manderly, marks the heroine's birth and entry into the phallogentric order, represented by Manderly. It is only in Manderly that she appears childlike and is dwarfed by her surroundings. As with new infants, the heroine is troubled. Klein writes, "the newborn baby experiences, both in the process of birth and in the adjustment to the postnatal situation, anxiety of a persecutory nature" (EG, 248). The (infant) heroine has split the maternal figure into the persecuting one and an idealized one. In the film's narrative, Mrs. Danvers can be read as the persecuting anxiety and Rebecca, for the first half of the film, is idealized. Mrs. Danvers' ominous haunting of the margins of the specular image increases the heroine's sense of vulnerability. Danvers is truly effective as a persecuting anxiety when she tricks the heroine into wearing a dress once worn by Rebecca and then almost convinces her to jump out of a window onto the rocks below. In contrast, Rebecca is the idealized good object that is separated and protected from the hated and feared object. Although Danvers served and loved Rebecca, in life and in death, Rebecca is visually and narratively held apart from her. A Kleinian reading suggests that the narrative presents them as a single object, divided and separated so that the heroine, the infant, can learn to negotiate her place at Manderly.

Splitting female figures along a binary axis has a long history in narrative. Ellen Seiter writes,

The tendency to dichotomize females in this way has a long cultural history (for example, Christian theology with its comparison of the Virgin Mary to Mary Magdalene, and to all mortal women), and has been analyzed by many feminist writers since Simone de Beauvoir. Women in film have been represented according to a series of oppositions embedded in the

narrative: virgin/whore, good girl/bad girl, good mother/bad mother (Seiter 1986, 70).

The cinematic and narrative trope of the split or dichotomized female figure ties not only to Western literary and religious traditions; its genesis is in the infant's perception of the mother. The performative repetition of the split figure is socially damaging because it becomes a set of conventions within the discourses from which agents choose. However, if narrative trajectories include integrating the split image in a way that is recognizable to the audience, or consumers, then the images and conventions are radically altered.

In *Rebecca*, the heroine appears lost, tormented by her persecuting object and stands in the shadow of her idealized good object. Her integrative process begins in Rebecca's cottage, when she learns the real circumstances that lead to her death. The scenes surrounding Maxim's confession and the heroine's reaction are the most pivotal in the film for both the narrative and this analysis. Maxim recalls that Rebecca possessed "breeding, brains, and beauty" but was incapable of "tenderness, love, and decency." As he describes Rebecca's transgressions and indiscretions, the heroine appears to experience a range of emotional reactions. Rebecca, I suggest, becomes integrated into a single object; the loved and hated elements of her character are brought together for the young heroine in Maxim's narrative of the past. The next scene marks the heroine's transition from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position. Inside Manderly once again, the heroine assumes an authoritative position and commands respect from the

household staff. She no longer strives to please Maxim or weeps privately; she has come into her own. In this scene, Maxim recognizes her transformation, "It's gone forever, that funny, young, lost look I loved... In a few hours you've grown so much older." I suggest, following Klein, that the integration of the external object, Rebecca, aids the process of integration in the young woman. Klein writes,

In normal development, with growing integration of the ego, splitting process diminish, and the increased capacity to understand external reality, and to some extent to bring together the infant's contradictory impulses, leads also to a greater synthesis of the good and bad aspect of the object (EG, 255).

The film turns its focus from the heroine's transition at Manderly to Maxim's vindication in court, once Rebecca's body and sailboat have been discovered. The heroine's attachment to Maxim may be related to the periods in infancy when the child turns his or her affections away from the mother towards the father.

I have argued that Manderly represents the structures of phallogentrism. The estate is the residence for the de Winter family, passing through paternal succession. Rebecca refuses to live there, preferring a cottage on the periphery in order to assert her independence. Thus, the estate represents traditional social structures. In the final scenes of the film, Mrs. Danvers dies in a fire at Manderly, which she has set. I read the death(s) of Mrs. Danvers and Rebecca, once integrated they form a single object, as a narrative beginning rather than an end. Matricide is, after all, the origin of thought. From a Kleinian perspective, death has meaning because the death instinct gives rise to anxieties that are necessary for

the development of symbol formation, desire, integration, and the depressive position. Thus, death can be read as an invitation to look beyond the surface of the narrative, to excavate the deeper meanings.

The film opens with a point-of-view-shot, travelling along the road that leads from the gates to the estate. In a voice-over, the heroine narrates the scene, describing a dream of Manderly,

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderly again. Seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while **I could not enter; for the way was barred to me.** Then like all dreamers, I was possessed by supernatural powers and passed like a spirit through the barrier before me. The drive wound away in front of me, twisting and turning as it always had done. But, as I advanced I was aware that a change had come upon it. **Nature had come into her own again** and little by little in encroached upon the drive with long tenacious fingers, on and on wound the poor thread that had once been our drive. And, finally there was Manderly. **Manderly, secretive and silent.** Time could not mar the perfect symmetry of the walls. Moonlight can play tricks upon the fancy and suddenly it seemed to me that light came from the windows. Then a cloud came upon the moon and hovered an instant like a dark hand before a face. The illusion went with it, I looked upon a desolate shell with **no whisper about the past** about its staring walls. **We can never go back to Manderly again, that much is certain.** But sometimes in my dreams, I do go back to **the strange days of my life which began for me in the South of France.** (Emphasis mine)

The heroine's introduction to the story is a reflection from many years in the future. The narrative lends itself to the contention that Manderly symbolizes phallocentrism: it is silent and secretive with no whisper of the past. The association between Rebecca, or women in general, with nature suggests in the narrative that Manderly has succumbed to sociopolitical transformation. Passage into the estate was barred to the woman initially, but she eventually gains access;

just as nature/woman has encroached upon Manderly/phallogocentric symbolic order. The voice-over narrative is both the beginning and the ending. The audience knows that something devastating happened to the estate and must watch events unfold to discover how and why it happened. In this sense, Manderly is a central character in the narrative and the mystery of what happened to it secures the viewers interest. As an ending, the narrative reports that Manderly has stood empty since the fire.

Following the film's narrative trajectory along Kleinian terms transforms it from an Oedipal drama to a story in which part objects are integrated, which promote the maturation of the film's heroine. The process of integration accompanies a narrative that attends to the gendered dynamics of phallogocentrism. These two narratives collude to displace the Oedipal hegemony and disrupt the site of gendered consent and regulation.

CONCLUSION

In this film, Rebecca acts as an alternative site for the production of power and truth. She reveals a truth -- the temporal and spatial contingency of the symbolic order -- by assuming a power that has been denied to her sex. It is necessary to look beyond the structures that presently govern society in order to effect social and political transformation. Judith Butler identifies and names

spaces within culture, and therefore within cultural intelligibility, that have the potential to act as a point of departure for transformative theory. To this end, it is necessary to interrogate the limits of the symbolic, the places where the “No!” is uttered by the marginalized, the excluded, and the other.

This film is not limited to an Oedipal interpretation. It’s a rich and textured representation of the conflict between destructive and loving impulses that characterize psychical development. Butler suggests that only by risking the incoherence of identity can a decentered subject emerge within the limits of the symbolic. Thus, integral to the constitution of identity are the identifications that are acknowledged within the symbolic economy as well as those that are abjected and thereby allow identities to emerge. The young Mrs. de Winter risks her identity as she tries to bring together the disparate elements of Rebecca’s character in order to find her place at Manderly and in the world. She struggles to emerge from the fragmentation she feels in her new life and her new home, to become a more integrated personality. By the end of the film, the split-off elements of her personality are integrated, allowing her to assume a subject position; that is, a place from which to choose among available discourses. Focusing on Rebecca, the un-representable female figure that both dominates and haunts the specular image, contingency, fragmentation, and integration become central to the film’s narrative. And, the process of integration risks internal coherence. In the film Rebecca acts as an alternative site for the production of power and truth. She reveals a truth -- the temporal and spatial contingency of the symbolic order -- by

assuming a power that has been denied to her sex. It is necessary to look beyond the structures that presently govern sociality in order to effect social and political transformation.

CHAPTER SIX

LOVE SMELLS LIKE DEATH

The film *American Beauty* offers another, quite different, opportunity to think about poststructuralism and Kleinian psychoanalysis. As with the film *Rebecca*, analyses tend to focus on the Oedipal content of the narrative. *Rebecca*, lauded by feminist film theorists for following the trajectory of the female experience of enculturation, offers, in this thesis, an opportunity to follow the heroine's interior development according to Melanie Klein. The film, I argue, also locates a space within culture that can celebrate the woman who refused the constraints of the symbolic, thus leaving behind the trace of her rebelliousness, a new set of conventions from which others can choose to emulate. Poststructuralist method served as the theoretical entry point into *Rebecca*, and, from there, Kleinian concepts were applied to excavate the multiple narrative layers of the

text. Rather than limit analysis of the film to the heroine's Oedipal journey, I argue, it can also be understood to reveal the processes of integration.

American Beauty, requires a different process than that employed to deconstruct and (re)present *Rebecca*. I will begin the analysis by summarizing three readings of *American Beauty* that describe the benefits of symbolic castration (Feher-Gurewich 2001), the ways in which the narrative valorizes incest themes (Rowe-Karlyn 2004), and implicitly recognize the Oedipal taboo as a central ethical and moral human choice (Deacy 2002). I then draw from Klein's theory of envy and gratitude to extend the analysis of Fitts and Lester. To better understand the roles of the mothers in the film, I turn to Gayle Rubin's analysis of gender and family. Finally, I use Klein's concept of desire and phantasy. Ultimately, I argue that an alternative reading of the film, utilizing Kleinian psychoanalysis and poststructuralist methodology, does not rely on Oedipus.

AMERICAN BEAUTY

American Beauty, a dark comedy written by Alan Ball and directed by Sam Mendes, was released in 1999. It enjoyed box-office success and critical praise, garnering several Academy Award nominations²³. The film follows two families, next-door neighbors, for less than a year, which are the final months in the main character's life. A voice-over, spoken by Lester, warns the audience that Lester

Burnham, a forty-something advertising executive, husband, and father will be dead by the end of the film. Lester is married to Carolyn, who owns a small but competitive real-estate business; their daughter is Jane, a depressed, self-involved teenager. Their suburban neighbors, the Fitts family, includes Colonel Frank Fitts, an unforgiving and violent military man; his sullen, silent, and lonely wife; and Ricky, their son who videotapes everything that interests him. Ricky survives his father's beatings, but undermines the Colonel's authority by selling drugs. The opening scenes depict families without any connection to each other, alternating between silence and anger. Lester meets and becomes infatuated with Jane's flirtatious friend Angela Hayes²⁴. As the story develops, Lester radically changes his life, trying to recapture the joy he once felt as a young man and to impress Angela. Carolyn, who visits a shooting range for fun, has an affair with a colleague. And, Jane and Ricky fall in love. The Fitts family disintegrates in a different way: Frank mercilessly beats his son for imagined infractions. His wife, at first lonely, sinks into a dissociative state. And Ricky, knowing his family is deeply troubled, increasingly spends time with the Burnhams, befriending and selling drugs to Lester as well as dating Jane. Angela Hayes, an angry girl with seemingly no parental guidance, is the object of Lester's desire. Finally, another set of neighbors, a gay couple Jim and Jim, occasionally appear as friendly, helpful acquaintances.

AMERICAN BEAUTY AND THE OEDIPAL DRAMA

Judith Feher-Gurewich²⁵ (2001) draws from Lacanian theory to argue that the film works to sustain the positive effects of symbolic castration. Kristeva describes symbolic castration as “an imaginary construction stemming from a psychic mechanism that constitutes the symbolic field as well as anyone who enters it...in this way the institution of an articulated network of differences, which refers to objects separated from a subject, forms meaning” (Kristeva 1995, 211). Castration is, then, assigned perhaps the most important role in the transition from nature to culture; it allows for and sustains the possibility of meaning. The symbolic order compensates individuals for the loss of the primary object, preventing psychosis, which exists outside of the limits of the symbolic. Thus, symbolic castration, impelled by the family drama, performs a socially essential role, “the symbolic is what protects us, what sustains desire and fantasy, as opposed to preventing us from doing what we want” (2001, 89). Feher-Gurewich, a Lacanian analyst, argues that the symbolic order is what allows the social body as well as the individual body to function. But Feher-Gurewich also acknowledges that the gender disparity inherent in the terms of sociality complicates human relations with the world, each other, and ourselves. For women, symbolic castration means accepting one’s role as an object of exchange within the system.

The symbolic is slowly adapting to sociopolitical shifts, Feher-Gurewich argues. Her positive summary of the role of symbolic castration is extended to include the slow process of transformation in which sexual minorities are taking their places as subjects within the symbolic. In her discussion, Feher-Gurewich says, “the system of phallic signification is beginning to tell the truth of itself, that it is an arbitrary system” (2001). That truth has been revealed in the work of mystics but it is surfacing more clearly in cultural media. For example, *American Beauty*, through its favorable performance of symbolic castration, aids the operation of the terms of sociality. Feher-Gurewich finds three examples in the film to support her argument. Jim and Jim, the gay couple, are depicted as compassionate and slightly idealized as neighbors: lauding Carolyn’s roses and exercising with Lester. Secondly, the film is a narrative of Lester’s attempt to escape the constraints of the symbolic. His eventual refusal to have sex with Angela only demonstrates that the rules are necessary to ensure appropriate behavior. Finally, Ricky is an example of a heterosexual man living in the margins of the system of phallic signification. He is gentle, observant, spiritual, and appreciates beauty. Feher-Gurewich argues that the boundaries of the system of phallic signification have extended sufficiently to include previously excluded sexual minorities but not so far as to allow the founding prohibition to be broken.

Conversely, Kathleen Rowe-Karlyn (2004) reads *American Beauty* as complicit in a larger trend that tries to rescue male authority from various liberation movements, such as racial, queer, and feminist, using the incest theme.

According to Rowe-Karlyn, *American Beauty* operates through complex displacements, which utilize the incest motif to sustain traditional forms of authority. Father-daughter incest, she argues, is the ultimate expression of male authority. Some films represent the authority figure as sympathetic, thereby insulating and sustaining its powerful role. This dynamic can be overt, and is represented in films such as *The Ciderhouse Rules* (1999) and *Lolita* (1997); in both texts the desire for the daughter or young girl is clear. Prohibitive desire can also operate subtly, as it does in *Clueless* (1995) and *Election* (1999). In both of these films the relationship between the adult male and younger female is ambiguous. Rowe-Karlyn indicts *American Beauty* for telling the story of incest as male fantasy; she writes, “incest drives the film in ways that are typical of contemporary cinema...employing the mechanism of displacement to conceal the dynamics” of incest (2004, 78). Furthermore, she argues, although his murder can be read as Lester’s punishment for his desire, the narrative continues to collude with masculine power not only failing to recognize the harm in his potential actions, but Angela’s self-worth is restored by his inappropriate desire.

The film also reduces Carolyn to damaging stereotypes such as collusive (with incest) mother, missing mother, and phallic, castrating mother. In the film narrative, Carolyn bears the resentment of a culture that is angry about her power, independence, and wealth. She is collusive with incest because she is absent, pursuing a career in the public sphere, and therefore unavailable to police her home. Her success in business is represented, unfairly, as a failure for the family.

She is depicted as phallic and castrating figure belittling her husband repeatedly; stealing from him his rightful place in the symbolic economy. Finally, according to Rowe-Karlyn, Carolyn is guilty in the narrative of deserting her family, which ultimately allows the incest scenario to develop and transforms Lester from predator to sympathetic figure. Thus, Rowe-Karlyn argues that *American Beauty* sustains traditional forms of masculine power.

Chris Deacy states that *American Beauty* is a deeply religious narrative that reflects the current malaise of Western, largely Christian culture, in which individuals are searching for a means to heal feelings of disconnectedness and estrangement. He finds that the narrative closely resembles the parables of Jesus, writing that “the parable is meant to provoke us, challenge us, and transform us, reminding us of our limits and limitations, and laying the groundwork for the possibility of transcendence” (Deacy 2002, 67). The narrative raises questions about the spiritual landscape and normative values at the turn of the century (2002, 67). The film follows Lester’s moral decline and suggests that, because he is without guiding principles, Lester is guilty of lust, rage, and blackmail prior to his “transfiguration” (2001, 69). *American Beauty* conveys the central insights of the Christian tradition, according to Deacy, which include forgiveness, reconciliation, and redemption.

Although the film’s narrative does not explicitly claim that the economy of order is founded on Christianity, it does, according to Deacy, appropriate the Christian vocabulary of redemption and transcendence. Carl Dyke contends that

hegemonic Christian morality is part of the “commonsense grid that marks out fields of normalcy and deviance on which all inhabitants of this country must play” (2001, 230). Deacy contends that Lester’s choice to refuse temptation and embrace his family is a Christian parable about proper morality. The theorist implicitly ties proper Christian behavior to the prohibitive law because Lester’s redemption is based on his moral choice to refuse temptation. Carolyn, from Deacy’s perspective, is contemptuous and homicidal, and therefore is not redeemed in the narrative. Carolyn’s immense and visceral pain at the loss of her husband is not enough for Deacy to grant her redemption. Therefore, redemption in Deacy’s reading of *American Beauty* appears to be available to subjects already articulated within the constraints of prohibitive law.

James Spiegel echoes Deacy’s Christian reading of the film: “*American Beauty*, then, works as an apologetic aesthetic, beckoning us to see the world, ugly and random as it might seem at times, as an altogether beautiful art object created and purposefully guided by a divine being who is both good and creative” (2003, 14). These two deeply religious readings of *American Beauty* link together the phallogentric demands of the Oedipal complex with the teleology of the (Christian) Divine.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

All three descriptions of the film focus on the Oedipal drama in the narrative. For Deacy, the Oedipal drama is played out in terms of temptation and redemption. Rowe-Karlyn argues that films such as *American Beauty* endorse traditional masculine power structures by displacing culpability in the narrative. And Feher-Gurewich emphasizes the positive role of castration in the symbolic economy. However, I suggest that *American Beauty* challenges contemporary Western consumer culture and traditional forms of authority. Judith Butler argues that the Lacanian symbolic is not an immutable, timeless structure but is rather the temporal regulation of signification. That is, the symbolic register is the ordering of meaning in time and space. While it appears to be both permanent and constant, each repetition performed by subjects occasions an opportunity to challenge the limits of the symbolic. If it is the case that citations entail discursive slippage, then it should be the task of interpreters of culture to identify and examine slippages rather than trying to force conformity to dominant discourses. Slippage, the failure to repeat loyally, opens the possibility for re-signification (Butler 1993, 124) and thus the possibility for new performances. The surplus of attention paid to Oedipal themes in culture fails to acknowledge other important dimensions in narratives.

The slippages that open this film to new interpretations are both narrative and visual. The film begins with a grainy piece of videotape that Ricky filmed as

he and Jane spoke openly and intimately in his bedroom. It is clear that this is a decontextualized moment and belongs to a later part of the film's narrative. As they speak, Jane complains about her father and Ricky asks if she would like him to kill Lester. The narrative hints that an Oedipal drama, the murder of the father, will unfold. However, this is not the case, Jane and Ricky do not cause Lester's death. Secondly, Lester does not fulfill his Oedipal fantasy when Angela offers herself sexually; Lester refuses, and the incest theme is never realized. That the two distinguishing components of the Oedipal complex are hinted at but never fulfilled suggests that other analytic possibilities should be pursued. The visual aspects that encourage a different, non-Oedipal analysis are the red door to the Burnham household and the red roses. The color red and the roses are significant because they visually structure the narrative. Finally, Lester, in death, describes his feeling of gratitude for having experienced life. Gratitude, Klein explains, is one of the foundations for a capacity to love.

I suggest that the film should not be read through the juxtaposition of binary opposites represented by the characters. Instead, they should be understood as a constellation of representations that intersect with and are articulated in and through each other. Commenting on Aeschylus, Klein writes,

The creative artist makes full use of symbols; and the more they serve to express the conflicts between love and hate, between destructiveness and reparation, between life and death instincts, the more they approach universal form. He thus condenses the variety of infantile symbols, while drawing on the full force of emotions and phantasies which are expressed in them. The dramatist's capacity to transfer some of the universal symbols

onto the creation of his characters, and at the same time to make them into real people, is one of the aspects of his greatness (EG, 299).

Rather than follow the narrative trajectory of Oedipal desire and conflicts in *American Beauty*, the cast of characters can be examined as infantile symbols. Lester symbolizes gratitude; Carolyn is the object who refuses to be exchanged anymore; Frank represents excessive envy; and finally, Mrs. Fitts symbolizes the suppression of desire. Furthermore, the relationship of this constellation of symbols to the film's social critique of the modern family within the constraints of consumer capitalism must also be analyzed.

ENVY AND GRATITUDE

Lester frames the film narrative with a voice-over that describes his misery at the beginning and his joy at the end:

My name is Lester Burnham. This is my neighborhood. This is my street. This is my life. I'm forty-two years old, in less than a year I'll be dead. Of course, I don't know that yet....I guess I could be pretty pissed off about what happened to me, but it's so hard to stay mad when there's so much beauty in the world. Sometimes I feel I'm seeing it all at once and its so much, my heart fills up like a balloon that's about to burst. And, then I remember to relax and stop trying to hold onto it. And, then it flows through me like rain and I can't feel anything but GRATITUDE for every single moment of my stupid little life. (Emphasis added)

For Klein, gratitude is an essential component for building strength and trust in the good internal object. The capacity to feel gratitude means overcoming envy and

the destructive impulses of infancy. Envy is imbricated in the earliest experiences of infantile rage, arising from the anxieties that dominate the paranoid-schizoid position. The first object envied by the infant is the feeding breast. Regardless of how successful the bonding between mother and infant, there will inevitably be moments when the infant feels hunger or discomfort. The splitting mechanism separates the good, nourishing breast from the bad, withholding breast. The infant can, then, phantasize sadistic attacks on the bad object. The infant can envy the good breast, as well, because he or she wishes to possess the riches of the milk-producing object for itself. Deprivation can increase the intensity of the infant's envy, which causes a further division and deeper split between the good and bad objects. Excessive envy indicates that paranoid-schizoid anxieties are abnormally strong and will be more difficult to mitigate through integration. Envy is related to jealousy and greed but is more severe and more damaging because it aims to spoil its object. And the greater the intensity of envy, and the attacks it gives rise to, the harder it is for the infant to regain the good object.

In Klein's work, conflict is necessary for infants to develop an interest in the world and is the foundation for creativity. However, when conflict is excessive, usually owing to difficulties during birth, disturbed feeding, or inattentive care, the infant is not able to integrate the split objects and securely introject the good object, which is the foundation for the ego and trust in the self (EG, 188). Envy can be both destructive and persistent. Klein found that, in the transference situation, primitive envy is revived in patients who had not integrated

split-off destructive impulses. Klein writes, "The fact that envy spoils the capacity for enjoyment explains to some extent why envy is so persistent. For it is *enjoyment* and the *gratitude* to which it gives rise that mitigate destructive impulses, envy, and greed" (EG, 186-7). The infant's anxiety must not be so great that he or she can not regain the lost good object again and again. Because the impulses of the love and death instincts are constitutional, in Klein's theories, normal development gives rise to the loving impulse, which mitigates envy.

In normal development, gratitude grows out of the experience of losing and regaining the loved object. The infant builds trust and secures the internal good object as he or she begins to integrate split objects in the external world. Gratitude, Klein explains is, "rooted in the emotions and attitudes that arise in the earliest stages of infancy, when for the baby the mother is the one and only object. I have referred to this bond as the basis for all later relations with one loved person" (EG, 187). Moreover, the good object, once it is established internally, is the foundation for trust in "one's own goodness" (EG, 188). Gratitude is essential to happiness, to establishing relationships with others, and developing a sense of desire for life. Klein writes,

Gratitude is closely bound up with generosity. Inner wealth derives from having assimilated the good object so that the individual becomes able to share its gifts with others. This makes it possible to introject a more friendly outer world, and a feeling of enrichment ensues. Even the fact that generosity is often insufficiently appreciated does not necessarily undermine the ability to give. By contrast, within whom this feeling of inner wealth and strength is not sufficiently established, bouts of generosity are often followed by an exaggerated need for appreciation and gratitude,

and consequently by persecutory anxieties of having been impoverished and robbed (EG, 189).

The concepts of envy and gratitude, I suggest, describe the two fathers in *American Beauty*. Frank Fitts symbolizes the violence, anger, and destruction that excessive envy unleashes. He has only the slightest capacity for enjoyment, watching war films and collecting war memorabilia, which is tied to his anger and persecutory anxiety. Any generosity he shows to Ricky ultimately turns violent. For example, Fitts, thinking his son had attempted to steal his prized Nazi memorabilia, attacks Ricky violently and viciously. Klein writes that, “Envy is the angry feeling that another person possesses and enjoys something desirable – the envious impulse being to take it away or spoil it” (EG, 212). Conversely, the film chronicles Lester’s growing capacity for gratitude. He finds pleasure and enjoyment in almost every aspect of his life – a growing sense of enrichment – and by the end of the film his trust in the world is firmly planted.

The penultimate exchange between the two men further exemplifies their symbolic roles. Fitts attempts to seduce Lester, wrongly believing that Ricky and Lester are lovers. When Lester refuses, Fitts walks away, and returns with a gun. This scene recalls the earlier one in which Carolyn rejects Lester’s sexual seduction. Lester, possessing the capacity to mitigate greed and hatred, accepts Carolyn’s rejection and implores his wife to see beyond the materiality of their lives. Fitts, on the other hand, responds with the most destructive impulse: he spoils the loved and desired object.

Fitts does not have the capacity to mitigate hate with love; he does not have trust in the self, and therefore acts injuriously.

In the final moments of his life, Lester's voice-over explains, reflects on the simple pleasures of his life for which he is grateful.

I had always heard your entire life flashes in front of your eyes the second before you die. First of all, that one second isn't a second at all, it stretches out forever, like an ocean of time. For me, it was laying on my back at boy-scout camp watching falling stars. And, yellow leaves from the maple trees that lined our street. Or my grandmother's hands and the way her skin seemed like paper. And, the first time I saw my cousin Tony's brand new firebird. And, Janie, and Janie. And, Carolyn.

Lester's capacity for gratitude includes the bonds of loving relationships that first develop in infancy between mother and infant and then form the basis for future relations.

RED

The visual elements of the narrative that invite analysis, I have suggested, are red and roses. The red roses are central to *American Beauty*'s narrative; the flowers, which bear the name American Beauty, are featured throughout the film. And the color red punctuates the muted palate of the film. The front door to the Burnham's house is the same shade of red as the roses. When Ricky introduces himself to Lester, he notes the red door as an emblem. And moreover, on the morning of his death Lester exists the house through the red door as the voice-over

explains, “every day is the first day of the rest of your life, except the day you die”. Finally, as Carolyn returns home, gun in purse, refusing to be a victim any longer, the scene features the shot/reverse-shot angle in which she approaches the door. The red door and the red roses stand out significantly in the film.

The word “red” has a long linguistic and symbolic history. The etymology²⁶ of *red* is *raeden*, an Old English suffix found in words such as brotherhood, friendship, relationship, and fellowship. *Red* is the root of the Old English, *afeared*, meaning “to terrify”. Two surviving words with that suffix in the English language today are *hatred* and *kindred*. Symbolically, red is tied to anger, to defiance, and to revolution. The linguistic and symbolic connotations of the word lead back into the family home and to the earliest relationships. Together, hatred and kindred describe the psychical dynamics of the Kleinian infant and the struggle between love and death that Klein highlights.

ROSES

In an essay entitled “The Language of Flowers”, George Bataille (1985) writes that flowers occupy an unusual symbolic place because they represent love and beauty as well as ugliness and death. The beauty of the petals hides the filth of the organs and the endless cycle of death and rebirth allow Bataille to write, “love smells like death” (1985, 13). Although flowers represent an ideal of beauty and love, they are also the site of contagion because they are a part of nature and

are therefore connected to chaos, which stands at the periphery of culture (order). The flowers that sit next to Lester's corpse suggest that the imposition of order cannot prevent the inevitability of death. Or, that splitting and separating love from death does not negate negative impulses. Love and hate, Klein posits, are with us for life. Flowers are sites of possible disruption, reminding us that behind beauty and love lies filth and death. Red roses, then, may be the most apt symbol for Kleinian thought, especially Klein's concept of integration.

The polarity and struggle between destruction and reparation that founds the ability to think, act, and participate in culture is seen in the visual representations and narrative of this film. The red roses can be read as a representation of the work of integration, the coming together of good and parts of the self and external objects. In this film, the struggle between death/joylessness and life/erotic power is presented visually, often in moments of fantasy. These fantasies mediate reality for Lester just as Klein believed that phantasy mediates between the individual's inner and external world.

The red roses signify that integration and fragmentation are related aspects of psychical function. For Klein, individuals must risk fragmentation to successfully integrate the split objects in the interior and external worlds. For Butler, de-centered subjectivity disrupts the operations of hegemonic culture. Risk, I have argued, can be figured as contingency, that is, risking ontological security to investigate and rethink how knowledge is produced and sustained. Therefore,

red roses are symbolic of both individual struggles against fragmentation and the cultural and political strategies that undermine oppressive power structures.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE FAMILY

The visual and symbolic themes, I have examined, lead back to the earliest familial relations. And the narrative trajectory of *American Beauty* chronicles the disintegration of two suburban families. A poststructuralist reading of the film examines the social construction of the family based on the prohibitive taboo demanded by the Law of the Father. Butler argues that the incest taboo demands heterosexuality and forecloses the possibility of all other familial situations (Butler 2000). Utilizing Klein to locate fissures that open the narrative to new analysis suggests that the film critiques heterosexist social arrangements, as Dinnerstein has argued, because they contribute to the human malaise that results from the limited understanding of early psychical dynamics in order to sustain Oedipal hegemony.

The “architecture of the family” is the term former UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, Stephen Lewis, has used to describe that changing shape of contemporary families (2006). He is referring to devastation caused by AIDS in Africa, in which a generation has been lost leaving the old to care for the young. However, the term resonates in a broader sense, because issues surrounding family

structure and its constitution are pervasive. In the early 1990s, American culture was deeply concerned for the future of the family because of the growing number of single-parent households²⁷. Recently, debates over same-sex marriage rights have dominated both Canadian and American political agendas. These issues can also be found in popular media. The main themes in *American Beauty* emphasize that postmodern familial and social roles are shifting away from the traditional nuclear constructions and that this is not an easy transition. Moreover, traditional gender divisions are collapsing, effecting the division of labor, the status of marital relations, and shifting social power.

Gayle Rubin (1998[1984]) examines the ways that modes of production maintain traditional structures. In her important essay, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex”, Rubin draws from structuralist theorists Claude Levi-Strauss and Karl Marx to inform her feminist analysis of the sex/gender system that governs social relations and inscribes gender on the body. Rubin defines the sex/gender system as “the set of arrangements by which society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied” (1998[1984], 534). Consumer capitalism is the overarching paradigm and structuring element of postmodern society, thus questions of gender and familial arrangements must take into account its effects.

Rubin, drawing from Marxist political philosophy, contends that production and reproduction of social life, that is, modes of production, determine the course of history and steer human consciousness. Unlike earlier modes of production,

which strove to produce useful items to satisfy human needs, capitalism is a self-sustaining systems that has as its ultimate goal the creation and expansion of capital. Capital “is a quantity of goods or money which, when exchanges for labor, reproduces and augments itself by extracting unpaid labor, or surplus value, from the labor and into itself” (Rubin 1998[1984], 535). Capitalism, then, produces capital and to do so effectively it must transform money, goods, and people into capital. However, capitalism did not invent gendered roles nor is it responsible for the oppression of women by men. So, what does capitalism have to do with either predicament? Capitalism is not merely a system of exchange, it is also a system of power relations that has rendered women, mostly powerless.

Rubin (1998[1984], 536-39) argues that the primary role occupied by women in capitalist societies has been as the principle consumer for their families and their primary function is the maintenance and reproduction of the family. In his 1845 publication, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Engels theorizes the inception and development of socially produced gender roles. He argues that prior to the institution of the family, which he defines as structured conjugal relations, there existed a state of primitive promiscuity in which all were married to all. Through a process of natural selection blood relatives were excluded as eligible sexual partners thus fewer and fewer women in the tribe were available to any given male. This situation, in turn, resulted in the forcible capture and ownership of women by men. At this time, according to Engels, society was matrilineal, despite the growing imbalance in the familial power arrangements.

Men relied on women's domestic knowledge, such as growing food and making household necessities. However, a shift in the mode of production to the domestication of animals demoted women's knowledge and the established patrilineage. Marital monogamy, at least on the wife's part, became essential in a system in which male children inherited from their fathers. Thus, capitalism inherited a set of relations in which women are secondary: "women do not inherit, women do not lead, and women do not talk to God" (Rubin 1998[1984], 537). But, women do produce unpaid labor in the household that is necessary to the reproduction of capitalist relations; moreover, women produce workers for the system. Therefore, capitalism transforms women's lower social status into surplus value because women's work is largely unpaid²⁸. Rubin argues that Engels made a valuable contribution when he located the subordination of women in the modes of production, thereby shifting its genesis from natural justification to historical intention. Rubin turns to kinship arrangements to further investigate gender, family relations, and the mode of production.

Marcel Mauss proposed that primitive social organization was dominated by gift giving and receiving, which establishes bonds and alliances among unrelated tribal groups. Giving women as partners in marriage is a fundamental form of the gift exchange. Levi-Strauss understood cultural organization as order imposed on biological procreation (Rubin 1998[1984], 540). The gift of women between men is more profound than any other gift transaction because it not only forges an alliance between men, it creates a bond of kinship. The universal taboo

against incest necessitates tribal participation in the exchange of women. Levi-Strauss argue that because the content of the taboo varies from culture to culture its goal is not to prevent genetically close conjugal relations; instead, the intention behind the universal incest taboo is to enforce exogamy, thereby reconstituting the sex/gender system with each new union. The reason for the elaborate system, according to Levi-Strauss, is to form kinship bonds that are stronger and more enduring than mere friendship. It is men who organize and benefit from the exchange,

The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman, but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners... This remains true even when the girls feelings are taken into consideration, as moreover, is usually the case. In acquiescing to the proposed union, she precipitates or allows the exchange to take place, she cannot alter its nature (quoted in Rubin 1998[1984], 543).

Once the exchange has taken place, it becomes the woman's duty to bear and raise children. The division of labor, according to Levi-Strauss' surveys of a variety of cultures, is not a biological determination. He asserts that "The sexual division of labor is nothing else than a device to institute a reciprocal state of dependency between the sexes" (cited in Rubin 1998[1984], 545). Rubin adds that the division of labor by sex should be regarded as a "taboo: a taboo against the sameness of men and women, a taboo dividing the sexes into two mutually exclusive categories, a taboo which exacerbates the biological differences between the sexes and thereby creates gender" (1998[1984], 545). Thus, it is not just women who

are organized by this system, men's lives are also shaped by it because these rules and taboos demand heterosexual marriage and masculine wage-earners, and determine certain social roles. Rubin contends that "individuals are engendered in order that marriage be guaranteed" (1998[1984], 546). The engendering of individuals requires identification with one sex and demands that sexual desire be directed towards the other. Normative heterosexuality is a consequence of the sexual division of labor. Capitalism, is then, the heir to a mode of production that was structured by the kinship system, which established the sex/gender system.

Rubin situates this analysis for the contemporary reader,

The organization of sex and gender once had functions other than itself – it organized society. Now, it only organizes and reproduces itself. The kinds of relationships of sexuality established in the dim human past still dominate our sexual lives, our ideas about men and women, and the ways we raise our children. But they lack the functional load they once carried. One of the most conspicuous features of kinship is that it has been systematically stripped of its functions – political, economic, educational, and organizational. It has been reduced to its barest bone – sex and gender (1998[1984], 549).

Despite the apparent choices that women, and men, have in contemporary society, the sex/gender system remains binding. The demand for women to participate in it remains powerful; if one woman extricates herself from the "nexus of debt" another must be found to replace her or the system will fail. The system that organizes family and social relations is imbricated in nationhood.

In 1996, both houses of the American Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which was subsequently signed by President Clinton

(Westervelt 2001, 106). In the wake of same-sex couples' attempts to secure legally sanctioned marriage rights in Hawaii, DOMA was created to exclude sexual minorities from accessing the rights and benefits afforded to married couples. Apparently, lawmakers in the United States believed that same-sex couples do not have the right to rights. In his analysis of DOMA, Don Westervelt contends that sexual norms are linked to national identity. The Republican Party's position statement regarding the Act states,

The traditional family has stood for 5000 years, and whatever the eventual fate of this Nation, it will continue to stand as the fundamental cornerstone of all successful civilizations...Fathers and mothers, not governments, have children, raise them, love them, and teach them to hold and follow the moral virtues without which no civilized polity can exist (in Westervelt 2001, 109).

The authors of this statement make the argument that the government relies on families, and in so doing considers only the limited definition of the traditional family, to produce good citizens. The family is regarded as the seed from which nations grow. According to Anne McClintock, "All nations depend on powerful constructions of gender. Despite nationalism's ideological investment in the idea of popular unity, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender differences" (in Westervelt 2001, 114). In his analysis of the construction of sexuality, Michel Foucault argues that the family unit, headed by a man, is the microcosm of the state. The modern state believed in and enforced the idea that its success relied on the proper functioning of its microcosm – the nuclear family – thus sex was regulated to identify a legitimate

trajectory for desire (Foucault 1978, 26). Those in control of the emerging modern state reasoned that a country had to be populated to be rich and powerful, therefore the future and fortune of a country was tied to the number and uprightness of its citizens, to their marriage rules and family organization, and to the manner in which each individual made use of his sex. Measures were taken to eradicate unfruitful debauchery, bachelors, and libertines in order to increase birthrates. Foucault writes,

Through various discourses legal sanctions against minor perversions were multiplied; sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness; from childhood to old age a norm of sexual development was defined and all the possible deviations were carefully described; pedagogical controls and medical treatments were organized and the effect was to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative (1978, 37).

The Oedipal family is, in Foucault's opinion, a construction employed by the state to ensure its power and longevity. Membership in the nation demands congruency with the national identity. DOMA indicates that there is some concern among U.S. political leaders that if the sex/gender system and the traditional family were to collapse, the idea of the nation that currently informs global politics would collapse with it.

The changing architecture of the family is a pervasive contemporary social issue with roots deep in human history. In *American Beauty*, Carolyn carries the burden of fears and concerns for the dissolving heterosexual family unit. Rowe-Karlyn describes Carolyn as a symbol for the ambivalent feelings that

contemporary culture has towards women who are moving out of the domestic sphere. A significant scene for Carolyn is her visit to the shooting range. The gun is a potent symbol for masculine power. At the shooting range, Carolyn's mastery of the weapon garners praise from the male supervisor. He recalls how inept Carolyn was at first, but over time and with practice, she is as good as "any man" is at the range. Carolyn implicitly challenges the system of power relations which renders women, for the most part, powerless by assuming masculine power in the home, in the work place, and through her symbolic alignment with the firearm. In contrast to Carolyn, Mrs. Fitts is never seen outside of her home. However, her dissociative state suggests that domestic bliss is not the solution to social issues represented by Carolyn. Rubin, drawing from Engels, demonstrates that controlling the mode of production means controlling the mode of social reproduction. Carolyn exemplifies the complexities involved in such a shift and the ambivalent attitude it engenders. If "kinship is the precondition of the human" as Butler argues (Butler 2000, 82), then transforming this system means changing people's deeply held commitments. Rather than read her a failure for the home, I suggest Carolyn be viewed as the object who refuses to be exchanged.

DESIRE

Desire from a Kleinian perspective is radically different than that described by Lacan. For Lacan, desire is the desire for the lost maternal body, which the child surrenders out of fear. Fear of castration and fear of the father's power are central to Lacan's theory of the subject. Thus, desire always has negative connotations usually figured as "lack", driving the alienated subject to seek unfulfilling replacements. For Klein, desire is also for the maternal body lost, not because of fear, but due to the onset of the depressive position – a necessary step towards integration and mental balance. Thus, Klein does not understand desire as a weakness, a gap, or as the dis-ease of the subject. Instead, desire is valued as a positive drive that impels the subject to replace the lost connection with the mother through symbolic formation and object relations. Desire can be read as seeking connection rather than mourning its loss because it is born from the instincts that impel subjects to form symbols, and thus connect outside of the self. Desire, from a Kleinian perspective, is then a productive force.

Audre Lorde writes of the experience of the erotic, "In touch with the erotic, I become less willing to accept powerlessness, or those supplied states of being which are not native to me, such as resignation, despair, self-effacement, depression, self-denial" (Lorde 1984, 58). In the film, Lester's desire for Angela is the awakening of erotic power in him and sets in motion for Lester a powerful new attachment and investment in the world. In contrast to Lester, Mrs. Fitts

exemplifies the absence of desire and the inability to connect outside the self. The association of red roses with Angela occasions a new reading of the film that exceeds the limits of Oedipal desire. The rose petals signify the conflicting impulses of love and death. His desire for Angela symbolizes the desire to integrate those conflicting impulses in himself and in his world. Desire is fulfilled in Lester's sense of happiness and gratitude at the end of the film.

CONCLUSION

The themes in *American Beauty* are concerned with the disruption of traditional phallogentric social structures, thus paving the way for new forms of social relations. The Kleinian themes that structure the narrative include desire, integration, envy, and reparation. Simone de Beauvoir wrote that "It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw out strength to live and our reasons for acting" (in Lorde 1984, 113). Althusser explains that ideology obscures the "genuine conditions of our lives" because it presents partial truths in order to discourage full understanding of the disparity involved in the conditions of existence and the means by which individuals are constituted as subjects. I suggest that the genuine conditions to which de Beauvoir refers include the fluctuations and developments in our interior worlds that Kleinian psychoanalysis deals with as well as the oppressive power structures addressed by

poststructuralism. On the surface, the narrative exemplifies contemporary cultural concerns for the future of the family unit in postmodernity, while the subtext highlights the difficult integrative work of psychical development.

The family drama in the film can be read from a Kleinian perspective rather than Freud's Oedipal structure. Klein argued that the unconscious is active long before the infant enters the Oedipal stage of development. In *American Beauty*, Kleinian psychical dynamics that characterize infancy are played out against the backdrop of the disintegrating modern American family unit. The polarity between the life and death instincts structures the visual narrative. The complex themes articulate concerns for the validity of the family in postmodernity while exposing the mechanisms of the subject's interior world. A significant narrative thread in the film focuses on the role of the patriarch in the family and, by symbolic implication, in society. The narrative questions whether the collapse of traditional value structures necessarily means the disintegration of the individual. If *Rebecca* illuminates how the operations of consent and regulation can be disrupted in individuals, *American Beauty* disrupts the temporal regulation of signification.

DEATH, RELIGION, & RISK

The analyses of *Rebecca* and *American Beauty* demonstrate that a Kleinian-poststructuralist method identifies new and different interpretations of texts. Turning methodological attention away from the Oedipal complex disrupts its performative repetition, thus creating new conventions from which agents may choose. If the symbolic is the temporal regulation of signification, then this method works to disrupt both signification and temporal regulation. Temporality is effected, from a Kleinian perspective, because infantile anxieties effect adult life to varying degrees. Therefore, anxieties, like Derrida's trace, structure the past, present, and future. And, signification is radically altered because the phallus does structure the chain of signification. Desire and integration operate without reference to the phallus. Moreover, the transference situation, in which subjects can work towards integration, is shifted into cultural material. That is to say, talking about Kleinian dynamics may help individuals integrate their part and split-off objects, thus improving their symbol formation and potentially changing social relations. There are three aspects of the method that I will briefly highlight: death, religion, and risk.

I have argued, drawing from Jacqueline Rose (1993), that death has meaning in Kleinian psychoanalytic method and should not be read as the end of signification. In the films discussed in this thesis, cinematic death is the beginning of interpretative possibility. For Klein, matricide is the origin of thought, symbol

formation, and therefore communication. Matricide, of course, does not mean the actual murder of the mother; nor does it refer to a remote period in human history in which the murder of the mother forms, and informs, culture. Matricide describes the phantasies of the paranoid-schizoid position that give rise to symbolization, creativity, and the ability to adapt to reality. Applying Klein's notion of death to film suggests that cinematic death is only the beginning of a story.

Religious themes are being appropriated by popular cultural material. I have argued this shift is problematic in at least two ways. First, religious themes tend to reinforce phallogentric mythic structures. Chris Deacy's treatment of Christian themes in *American Beauty* and the metaphoric association of Rebecca with creation myths that align woman with nature and man with reason and order, illustrate this point. The use of religious imagery fails to challenge the limits of hegemonic discourse; instead, it only reaffirms the barriers already in place. Secondly, such imagery maintains its gender hierarchy, aligning women with nature (Rebecca) or marking them as the cause of contemporary social issues (Carolyn).

The process of integration signals another death, or near death, that must occur for subjects to emerge within the terms of sociality. Integration entails the constitutive devastation of the subject. The potential loss of the good object that occurs as ambivalence subsides, and the merging of good objects and bad objects takes place in both the interior and exterior worlds, risks the coherence of identity.

Risking the coherence of identity in order to open the possibility of resignification is an overlapping theme in Kleinian psychoanalysis and Butler's feminist poststructuralism. In the films, Rebecca and Carolyn risk the coherence of gender identity to negotiate a place outside of the system of exchange. And Lester and the new Mrs. de Winter find themselves in situations that risk their psychological coherence in order to assist the onset of the depressive position. Finally, if narratives are understood to operate through constellations, as does *American Beauty*, rather than through binary structures, such as good or bad, the integrative process is encouraged.

CONCLUSION

EMANCIPATORY DISCOURSES

It has been my goal in this project to demonstrate that hegemonic, oppressive power structures are not timeless, immutable, or natural; and that there is emancipatory potential in the narratives that shape and inform people's lives. Freedom from oppressive structures begins with "the recognition that there is nothing that is not social and historical – indeed, that everything is "in the last analysis' political" (Jameson 1981, 20). That is to say, narratives of oppression and of resistance are embedded in all discourses. I have argued that attending to Kleinian themes in narratives is an effort to locate, make visible, and put into discourse a form of resistance to phallogentric subjectivization. Phallogentricism secures its hegemony through iterative performances, which also function to naturalize and de-historicize it. Performativity theory posits that subjectivization is not over-determining and that agency exists in the power to choose among

conventions and sets of conventions. Thus, by identifying and putting Kleinian themes into discourse new conventions are created. Socially and politically, this means that agents have new discourses from which to choose. Additionally, there are also psychological implications for discourses that promote Kleinian concepts. Cultural images that promote integration as well as images that allow individuals to project their anxieties encourage internal cohesion, which benefits the social body. Cohesion, in Klein's system, means that feelings of hatred and destructive impulses are mitigated by the capacity to love and feel fear *for* the wellbeing of others.

From a Kleinian perspective, cultural narratives are projected and introjected by individuals. That is to say, her psychoanalytic methodology recognizes the reciprocal relationship between the construction of the terms of sociality and construction of the self. Klein's theory of infantile development and its roots in the adult world help to understand the complexity of cultural images and narratives, because it does not interpret them simplistically or reduce them to binary representations such as good/bad. Klein's concept of the death drive explains why violent narratives should not be dismissed solely for their content. From a Kleinian perspective, Rebecca's death does not have to be interpreted as endorsing phallocentrism. Her narrative death signifies interpretative potential, because death has meaning. Moreover, idealized images and narratives, which do not address the human capacity for aggression, negate cultural representations of the infant's violent interior world, and, therefore, fail to help individuals work

through their anxieties. In this situation, culture's potential to assist the process of integration is never realized.

Essential to my argument is the contention that the performative repetition of the Oedipal complex obscures other, potentially emancipatory themes which also exist as cultural material such as those described by Klein. For Freud, analytic work reveals the history of the individual from fragments of the past:

But just as the archeologist builds up the walls of the building from the foundations that have remained standing, determines the number and position of the columns from depressions in the floor and reconstructs the mural decorations and paintings from the remains found in the debris, so does the analyst proceed when he draws his inferences from the fragments of memories, from the associations and from the behaviour of the subject of analysis... All of the essentials are preserved; even things that seem completely forgotten are present somehow and somewhere and have merely been buried and made inaccessible to the subject (quoted in Klein EG, 178).

Although I agree with Freud's assertion that analysis brings to surface the forgotten and hidden parts of the self, and by extension that cultural analysis sheds light on collective histories, I disagree with the priority assigned to the Oedipal complex.

I have suggested that the ideas in this thesis are "a modest proposal". When I began this project, my goal was to theorize a method of cultural analysis that rejected Lacan's influential body of work. The limits for feminism and for women inherent in Lacan's theories are insurmountable; signification, meaning in language, is structured by the phallus. And, although Lacan does not permanently anchor the phallus to man/penis, it is a connection he does not undermine.

However, to think about culture, especially in the context of the academic study of culture, outside of the limits and terms set by Lacan does not extend cultural studies and does not collapse mythic structures. Interpreting cultural material, such as films, from a Kleinian perspective alone does not sufficiently shake the foundations of the myths that structure culture.

Butler's feminist poststructuralism works within the constraints of the social organization described by Lacan in order to subvert its hegemony. She theorizes zones within the symbolic economy that can be pried open to allow for citations that do not repeat exactly the conventions from which they draw, thereby allowing a de-centered subject to emerge. This insightful theory denudes spaces within culture that can be positively and productively transgressed. Searching for an example of the already said in culture that can act as a citable convention for socio-political transformation, Butler turns to Antigone. Butler argues that Antigone, whose story concludes the Oedipal drama, exceeds the limits of intelligibility and promises an unprecedented future (Butler 2000, 82) because she "fails to produce heterosexual closure for that drama, and this may intimate the direction for a psychoanalytic theory that takes Antigone as its point of departure" (2000, 76).

I suggest that it would be productive to look for citable conventions outside of a story and theory in which gender disparity is inherent in psychodynamics. While matricide may seem like an unlikely alternative, Klein's theory of infantile development is intelligible in a cultural context. Oedipus is so deeply inscribed in

contemporary Western culture due to its perpetual performative repetition in cultural media and in academic analysis. This creates a paradox: in order to displace the primacy of the Oedipal complex and dislodge the foundations of its mythic status, it is kept in discourse. However critical the discourses about Oedipus may be, they continue to sustain its performative repetition and therefore support, perhaps unwillingly, its hegemony. If it is true, as Jameson has argued, that the “world comes to us in the shape of stories”, then it is time for new stories. Put another way, if the “doer is constructed in the deed”, as Butler has argued, then people need to perform new deeds. My proposal is that, utilized together, Kleinian psychoanalysis and Butler’s feminist poststructuralism can deconstruct and (re)present phallogentric themes in cultural media and thereby locate the emancipatory potential of the *already said*.

I have developed a theoretical method that deconstructs and (re)presents phallogentric themes in cultural narratives. This method, I argue, is an analytical strategy that displaces the primacy of the mythic structures of the Oedipal narrative in contemporary Western culture because it attends to other means of subjectivization and highlights sites of resignification. The analysis in the thesis accomplishes three related tasks: it identifies areas in discourse that promote images of integration and wholeness; it reveals the performative nature and historical contingency of phallogentric discourses in cultural media; and it allows for the emergence of de-centered subjects

Gender disparity does not find its origin in religious practices, but they have certainly done their part to help maintain it. As religious narratives work their way out of sacred texts and institutions and into popular culture and the popular imagination, they must be deconstructed to locate and analyze their negative influences. Though this kind of work will not change religious institutions – I don't think there will be radical shift to a positive embrace of the feminine by these institutions. I do however believe that a contribution of this sort helps to create gaps, spaces, and pull apart complex social phenomena, which is a step towards new, different understandings of human culture.

NOTES

Introduction

1. I describe Klein's theory of the subject as "(non)theory" only to highlight that Klein's goal was not to theorize subjectivization.

Chapter One

2. These terms are used by Dinnerstein (1976) to describe the impact gender exclusion in women's lives.
3. For an overview of feminist religious studies see Christ and Plaskow (1979); Daly (1985[1973]), (1985[1968]); Goldenberg (1979); Plaskow and Christ (1989).

Chapter Two

4. The play technique, developed by Klein, is central to her work with children. Klein not only provided toys for the children to play with, she interpreted their actions to them while they played (1991, 35-53). The importance of play, further developed by Winnicott, is discussed in Chapter Four of this text.
5. Klein understood there to be a relationship between the individual and the social. She wrote, "A group - whether large or small - consists of individuals in a relationship to one another; and therefore the understanding of personality is the foundation for the understanding of social life" (EG, 247).
6. The Law of the Father is phrase that describes the process of subjectivization based on the individual's acceptance of the primacy of the phallus in the signifying chain.
7. Ragland-Sullivan explains Lacan's formulation of desire, "One by one, each person internalizes a structure of "law" based on the necessity of turning away from the mother as the sole source of satisfaction. Such a *pere-version* gives rise to a specificity of desire whose logic is internal to itself" (1995, 11-2).
8. *The Writings of Melanie Klein, Vol. III, Envy and Gratitude, and Other Works* will be indicated by EG.
9. Klein's concept of envy and gratitude will be further developed in Chapter Six of this text.
10. *The Writings of Melanie Klein, Vol. I, Love, Guilt, and Reparation, and Other Works* will be indicated by LGR.
11. Klein discusses the case of Ruth Kjar, described by Karin Michaelis, as an example of an infantile anxiety situation that has not been resolved. The art works help Ruth to repair her guilt as she restores the mother (1991, 90-4).
12. Clarke (2001) contends that Klein's concept of splitting may help to explain the psychical mechanisms that allow for discrimination, such as racism, classism, and sexism.

Chapter Three

13. This introduction to Butler is not intended to be a substantive overview of poststructuralist theory. For further of poststructuralist thought discussion see, Belsey (1994[1980]); Bratlinger (1990); Hutcheon (1999[1988]); Huyssen (1986); McRobbie (1994); Norris (1991); Poster (1989); and Weedon (1987). For criticism of the poststructuralist method see Benhabib (1991); and Jameson (1991).
14. For a discussion of postcolonial theory see Stam and Shohat (1994).
15. Althusser argued that the most effective ISAs were the family, religion, and education. These institutions have effectively and seamlessly recruited subjects. Althusser's argument draws from Lacan to posit that interpellation operates below conscious awareness of the symbolic register, at the level of the imaginary.
16. This is my organization of Butler's theoretical program.
17. Butler critiques Klein's theory of melancholia and its relation to manic-depressive states (1997a, 213). Butler contends that Klein's analysis falls short of its initial promise because it relies too heavily on intentionality.
18. Balbus (2005, 42-49) argues that Butler fails to fully understand gender in an object relations framework and thus dismisses Butler's body of work. He feels that Butler and Klein are incongruent theorists, but, he appears to be more interested in critiquing Butler than theorizing how object relations theory and performativity may work together.

Chapter Four

19. Heller (1995) borrows the term "dominant fiction" from Silverman (1992) to describe the pervasive influence of the Oedipal complex.
20. See Brickman (2003) for an excellent discussion of racism and the foundations of psychoanalysis. Also, Feher-Gurewich (2001) equates the Freudian and Lacanian concept of woman to that of the "dark continent", demonstrating that the residue of colonialism remains in psychoanalysis.
21. Anthony Giddens (1990, 1991) uses the term "ontological security" to describe the basic sense of trust that individuals must have to function in the world. Without it firmly in place individuals lose the "sense of the very reality of things and other persons" (1991, 36). Giddens develops this notion based on Winnicott's understanding of the child's process of testing reality to discern the difference between "me" and "not-me". I argue that contingency entails a risk, which, if taken, can open productive sites of discursive contestation.
22. Jonte-Pace defines the counterthesis in Freud's writings as the, "hesitant non-Oedipal speculations in which Freud analyzes death and the fantasy of immortality in association with the mother" (2001a, 2). Jonte-Pace examines the intrusion of the maternal body in Freud's texts, focusing mainly on his texts concerned with religion.

Chapter Five

23. *Rebecca* won two Academy Awards, for Best Director and Best Picture of 1940. It was nominated for eleven Awards in total.

Chapter Six

23. American beauty was nominated for eight Academy Awards. It won for Best Actor, Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Writing (for a screenplay written directly for the screen).
24. Angela Hayes does play on the family name in *Lolita, Haze*.
25. Feher-Gurewich (2001) is a lecture given at the Slought Foundation.
26. All etymological references are from *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of English Etymology*.
27. This concern is best demonstrated by Dan Quayle's comments on single and low-income households (Smith 2006). Quayle successfully re-cast the Republican Party's political agenda by taking up the Christian Right's call for a return to "family values". Quayle condemned homosexual parents and marginalizd non-Judeo-Christians, gays, lesbians, unmarried couples, divorced, and single parents. He took aim at the popular television show, *Murphy Brown*, because the title character "mocks the role of fathers", choosing to have a child on her own. Quayle succeeded in making "family values" a theme at the 1992 Republican Convention. For a larger discussion on Dan Quale, the Religious Right, and families see (Smith 2006).
28. Although women have increasing become wage earners, they are still largely responsible for unpaid domestic and child-rearing work.

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