

# **Subjectivity Without Return: Reparatively Weaving Self(s) and Other(s) on the Same Side**

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the masculine assumptions within some strands of poststructural theories of subjectivity. Through a feminist poststructuralist lens, I attempt to understand, address, and tinker with phallogocentrism as it exists in everyday language, philosophy, and human relationality. Hélène Cixous' concept of the Empire of the Selfsame – the masculine “history of phallogocentrism, history of appropriation” – guides my sexual difference theoretical framework, which connects appropriation, control, return, unity, retention and propriety to the masculine whereas deappropriation, diffusion, divisibility, and collectivity connect to the feminine ([1975] 1986, 79).

Beginning with a critique of Judith Butler's Freudian informed early works on melancholic subjectivation, I argue that its internalizing and assimilating (incorporation and and introjection) relationship to alterity indicates a masculine subtext. Rather than this interiorizing subjectivity, I conceptualize a labial subjectivity, as inspired by Derrida and Cixous' joint work *Veils* ([1998] 2001), to theorize a subjectivity of the lips – the non-boundary between self and other through which relationality emerges, which does not ingest its surroundings but weaves the surroundings and itself, outside and inside, simultaneously. Finally, I place Cixous and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in conversation through a literary analysis in order to connect the Selfsame with Sedgwick's paranoid position and labial subjectivity with the reparative position. The striking affinity between Sedgwick and Cixous facilitates a view of subjectivity no longer indebted to masculine tropes of interiority and binarization, but predicated upon non-coercive and de-appropriating openness to alterity.

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## Introduction

“Let us consider our behavior in life with others, in all the major experiences we encounter, which are the experiences of separation; the experiences, in love, of possession, of dispossession, of incorporation, and non-incorporation, the experiences of mourning, and real mourning, all these experiences which are governed by variable behaviors, economies, structures. How do we lose? How do we keep? Do we remember? Do we forget?”

-Hélène Cixous, “Extreme Fidelity,” 136

Hélène Cixous’ quote foregrounds many themes of this thesis such as mourning, loss, subjectivity, and relationality. The question of “our behavior in life with others,” specifically during “experiences of separation,” haunts the words, sentences, paragraphs, and spaces of this thesis. Mourning and loss figure predominantly in this thesis as these experiences often highlight subjectivity at its most vulnerable moments. Moreover, possession, dispossession, incorporation, and non-incorporation connect to mourning in specifically psychoanalytic ways. The crux of this thesis examines the ways that “our behavior in life with others” can be read through a gendered lens focused on the ways that prevalent theoretical (and clinical) accounts of loss index masculine assumptions.

Cixous’ quote emerges at a moment in which she attempts to delineate the traits of what she terms masculine and feminine libidinal economies. The questions she poses seek to distinguish generalizable responses to separation, loss, and love that are posited to differentiate along a symbolically gendered axis. Cixous attempts to understand subjectivity through the ways cultures and histories imbue certain (sexed) bodies with normative (gendered) attributes. Through this formulation, the traits attributed to femininity are historically, socially, politically, and economically secondary to those attributed to masculinity. For instance, her quotation delineates clusters of concepts that

loosely index and categorize masculine and feminine: separation, dispossession, and non-incorporation fasten to femininity whereas possession and incorporation fasten to masculinity.

This thesis offers a deconstructive critique of social thought of gender and sexuality focused on subjectivity in order to explore their masculine ideological assumptions. I argue that femininity is continuously, yet surreptitiously denigrated in the rhetoric of dominant philosophical thought, even in the realm of queer and feminist theory, through its metaphors, idioms, and language. At the amo(u)rphous core of this thesis is a feminist desire to further understand, address, and tinker with phallogocentrism as it exists in everyday language, philosophy, and human relationality; that is, to destigmatize femininity.

The introduction at hand serves at least three intended functions: 1) to perform and introduce my de-sedimenting feminist and deconstructive approach (or tracing of deconstruction's movement) through readings of Cixous and Derrida, 2) to identify the signifying words of entrenched masculine assumptions that I take issue with, 3) to provide a general chapter outline.

My relation to the discussed writings of Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Judith Butler as well as the often large temporal lapse between these texts is the effect and product of delayed affinities. The origin of my loves, desires, and struggles concerning the texts discussed throughout this thesis, appropriately, has been lost. I cannot remember a specific moment in which these texts took hold of me and occupied my imagination as they do now. Likewise, the ways that Cixous', Derrida's, Sedgwick's, and Butler's texts relate across time and discipline are not immediately self-

evident. Still, my affective relationships with these texts and their textual relationships enable affirmative readings of what to do with the embedded masculine assumptions that worm their way into even our (as feminists) most cherished texts.

Sexual difference functions here as the wandering analytic lens able to bring into focus the malleable traits of masculinity and femininity (although I only delineate these terms at their broadest definitions) that are attached to male and female bodies.<sup>1</sup> Masculine and feminine are not taken to be inherent traits imbuing a correspondingly sexed body, but the structuring historical-societal-political mandates differentially assigned according to the heterosexist binary of man and woman. Hélène Cixous, who informs my use of sexual difference, claims that this framework does not consider “anatomical sex or essence that determines us in anything; it is, on the contrary, the fable from which we never escape, individual and collective history, the cultural schema...” and therefore deconstructs from *within* the cultural schema ([1984] 1991a, 155). Thus, this lens lends itself to delineate the prescriptive and proscriptive influences encompassing gendered bodies provided by cultural products such as philosophy and fables. This thesis considers masculinity and femininity, and their concomitant expectations and assumptions, to be one of the foremost organizers of society.

A range of topics are examined in the following thesis chapters: philosophic texts, linguist metaphors, and cultural tropes that trace a connection between how masculine privilege functions within the ‘natural’, mundane, and cultural and academic ‘taken-for-granted.’ Generally this thesis travels from examining the masculine assumptions within

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<sup>1</sup> I do not attempt to clearly separate sex from gender as my thesis looks at how societies craft, educate, and coerce sexed bodies into ‘appropriate’ genders. Sex and gender are not causal categories, but I strategically treat them here in a normative way – that is, from the perspective of phallogocentric culture in order to further understand them and thus deconstruct them.

some poststructural theories of subjectivity to theorizing subjectivity beyond the historically valorized and symbolically masculine traits of autonomy, unity, control, and possession.

*Hélène Cixous: Cultural Phallogocentrism through gendered metaphors*

Hélène Cixous's "Castration or Decapitation" ([1976]1981) exemplifies the delayed affinity I spoke of earlier that developed after the fact, lagging behind our initial encounter. Cixous' discussion of how cultural stories, myths, and fairytales reflect and recirculate culturally extant tropes of hegemonic gender relations did not, at first, grasp my interest. Yet, examining these seemingly fictitious stories for their reflections of and effects on lived experience, I gradually realized, offers a position from which to unravel the shrouded and entwined strands of phallogocratic tendencies and mandates within the most mundane cultural texts. Fast-forward two years after my initial reading: Cixous' interests that identify and attempt to rectify deep-seated cultural norms in "Castration or Decapitation?," now more than thirty years old, suffuse every page of this thesis.

Confronted with this new method of reading such prevalent cultural texts, my perspective of these well-accepted stories underwent a change. Cixous' essay discusses the "ultimate couple" of Zeus and Hera who consult Tiresias (who was a woman for 7 years) on the question of sexual pleasure, General Sun Tse's mission to craft women soldiers some of whom are beheaded, Sleeping Beauty's "[confinement] to bed ever after," and the little clitoris of/as Little Red Riding Hood who is punished for seeking unauthorized pleasure (41-44). My naïve and privileged surprise that these stories contain misogynistic educational messages to be dispersed on a far reaching cultural level gradually transformed into serious concern at the pervasive ways in which masculine



*propriety* subsists within Western society as manifested through its cultural texts. This method requires taking seriously the elements of a culture that are often considered secondary, routine, not worthy of critique – those aspects of a culture that are seemingly so *natural* that they simply exist in their sheer obviousness, enshrined and untouchable, often in the form of symbolic and metaphoric codes.

Cixous designates the stories she analyzes as examples of phallogocentrism. Importantly, Cixous argues that phallogocentrism operates through “metaphors that organize culture,” which institute hierarchical binary oppositions such as “her moon to the masculine sun, nature to culture, concavity to masculine convexity, matter to form...” (44). What provokes the aim of this thesis is my concern that these metaphoric binaries still operate in a gendered way. As we will see, the initial object of my analysis begins with a critique of Freudian informed poststructural theories of subjectivity, such as those of Judith Butler, in order to argue that masculine assumptions remain in these queer feminist readings. In other words, I examine such theories with a hunch that some of its connecting ligaments rely upon symbolically masculine understandings. These masculine understandings are delineated and worked through the works of Cixous and Jacques Derrida.

Examining well established texts for masculine metaphors and metonyms coupled with Cixous’ concept of the empire of the Selfsame guide me methodologically and theoretically through this work. The empire (or drama) of the Selfsame [*Propre*]<sup>2</sup> identifies the main mode of history that operates through an “appropriating economy: history, as a story of phallogocentrism, hasn’t moved except to repeat itself” (Cixous and

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<sup>2</sup> In French, *propre* means clean and also forms the root for propriety, property, appropriate, appropriation.

Clément [1975] 1986, 79). This masculine Empire of the Selfsame describes a specific economy that values return, unity, self-possession, and a desire to assimilate (foreign and threatening) otherness. These general characterizations serve as the gendered, analytic lens through which I contemplate theories of subjectivity. Moreover, this approach is intimately weaved with Derridean deconstruction.

### *Deconstruction*

In this section, I simultaneously illustrate the concept of deconstruction as well as condensate specific themes that guide the following chapters. This concatenates “a lexicon of a few of the main words and semantic clusters,” as inspired by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, such as PRESENCE, APPROPRIATION, LOGOS, PATERNITY, UNITY, BORDERS, AND LOSS (2003c, 53). I condense a chain of signifiers in order to analyze how they communicate, in secret; or to further explore what is hidden and veiled “in the back room, in the shadows...[in which] these textual ‘operations’ occur” (Derrida [1967] 1981, 129).

Peggy Kamuf, a feminist poststructuralist scholar, explains that deconstruction emerges from a “de-propriating force of repetition that is the ground of possibility of meaning” (1997, 115). Repetition addresses the repeated use of letters, words, actions, and meanings that produce importance and intelligibility through the very force of their repetition. This simple statement illustrates a tenet of deconstruction that origins (and its cousin, teleology) can never be fully pure because any ‘origin’ is comprised of numerous other conditions for such an event to occur. In other words, origins institute a phantasmic moment of full self-presence that cannot exist. Thus, originality cannot be autonomous or

self-determining due to its necessary context (physical or historical) that contributes to any signifying act.

As Derrida notes, "repetition is the very moment of non-truth: the presence of what is gets lost, disperses itself, multiplies itself through mimemes, icons, phantasms, simulacra, etc" ([1967] 1981, 168). Repetition challenges the masculine Selfsame in which "the [subject goes] out into the other *in order to come back to itself*" by being open to dissemination to the other without return to its 'originary' state (Cixous and Clément [1975] 1986, 78). Repetition does not value control and unicity, but is rather amenable to otherness, which characterizes the expropriative (regarding the self) and non-appropriative (regarding the other) symbolic feminine subjectivity.

Coming back to Kamuf's quote, she claims that deconstruction is a de-propriating force that marks "the impossibility of a subject...of self-presence" (115). The fissure deconstruction speaks of does not destroy subjectivity but conversely affirms the possibility for movement, change, reflection, and relationality. Self-presence would mean a closed and bounded subject that would only keep company with itself, have an immutable identity, and surround itself with itself. Contrary to this, Kamuf explains that deconstruction does not leave unscathed the negative connections of this historical understanding of non-self-control, but "affirms the necessary dispersion...as the chance and the possibility" for meaning (115). Deconstruction, thus, is not an applicable process or methodology – Derrida writes that "[the] movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside" – but is always at work within texts ([1967] 1976, 24).

Dispersion via repetition by deconstruction can be read as *espacement* or *différance* – the spacing between deferral, difference, and fixed meaning that separates

presence from itself – that inaugurates meaning to emerge.<sup>3</sup> Repetition ensures a signifier's non-identity through its almost exhaustive and incalculable ability to be transferred to different contexts and communicate differently with its surrounding, which thus exceeds the possibility of full control. Repetition, dispersion, and possibility constitute deconstruction.

This thesis is repetitive in that it varies on the same themes that index symbolically masculine (control, appropriating, boundary making) and feminine (dispersed, depropriating, fluid) traits. This repetitive insistence takes into account different texts and examples in order to foreground “the open-ended indefiniteness of textuality” that redistributes, destabilizes, and allows meaning, understandings, alliances, tensions and, transformations that emerge through the text's simultaneous “self-deconstructing as they constitute themselves” (Spivak 1976, lxxvii, lxxviii).

### *Tracing themes through Jacques Derrida*

So I introduce in this introduction a reading of Plato through Derrida in attempts to begin from one of the beginnings of what can loosely be called Western thought to show the (p)relevance of Platonic assumptions in today's social climate. “Plato's Pharmacy” infers that the cures, remedies and poisons of a culture discussed by Plato are quite similar to those that exist today. Certain masculine loci of attention emerge in Plato such as presence, unity, control, and authenticity, which presciently connect to the more contemporary works analyzed in this thesis. These privileged masculine loci of attention

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<sup>3</sup> Derrida writes in *Specters of Marx* claims that this difference allows the possibility of human relationality: “Is not disjuncture the very possibility of the other?” ([1993] 1994, 22). Moreover, this point can be metaphorized through thinking of the indistinguishability of a palimpsested text without spaces, or the existence of an unrepeated mark that thus cannot be understood since its singularity allows no definition.

carry concomitantly feminine binary terms such as absence, separation, infirm, and imitative.<sup>4</sup> I argue that these loci of symbolic meanings and signifiers compose the ligaments, joints, and sinews of phallogocentric culture. Therefore, I identify their embeddedness and persistence as well as think towards futures in which these structural links can fall away. I connect the emergent problematics identified through “Plato’s Pharmacy” to my chapter outline. The scale of “Plato’s Pharmacy” of course differs from the scale of my thesis. However, I feel that beginning with such a sketch of Western phallogocentrism provides a starting point from which to focus on its remaining traces in current theories of subjectivity and gender.

Derrida’s “Plato’s Pharmacy” concatenates the over-arching themes of this thesis that concerns masculine assumptions within poststructural theories of subjectivity. Through a reading of Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Derrida’s essay explores the “permanence of a Platonic schema that assigns the origin and power of speech, precisely of *logos*, to the paternal position” ([1967] 1981, 76). Derrida traces an entrenched connection between the privileging of speech – *logos* – and phallogocentrism represented by the spoken (prohibitive) word of authority, gods, and kings. This paternally positioned *logos* “lives off of recognition” and “forbid[s] itself patricide” (which would in effect kill itself), all while holding the status as a “*the* chief, *the* capital, *the* good(s)” (77, 81). We are in the realm of masculine visibility, restraint, economics (“*return* or *revenue*”), consumption, accumulation, and power, all of which characterize the masculine Selfsame (82).

Writing, on the other hand, “would thus be intimately bound to the absence of the father,” a “parricidal” act, that goes against the depreciative wishes of the King who finds

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<sup>4</sup> I identify corresponding words that generally attach to masculine and feminine. In doing so, I do not wish to maintain a binary framework, but wish to perform that the terms associated femininity are vicissitudinal and therefore cannot sustain the strict differentiation of binarism.

no value for writing (77, 164). Speech connects to the patriarchal order that requires authorization and paternal engendering whereas writing circumscribes approval and any sort of *fathering* so that we find a gendered reasoning within the speech/writing opposition. There is thus an implicit assumption against femininity in the name of paternity as seen through hierarchization based upon gendered assumptions. In this way, gender asymmetry pervades every corner and crevice of society through such metaphor-chains whose connections have long since been buried, covered over, and therefore nullified as objects of analysis. Such a metaphor chain can be delineated through the myth of Theuth, the inventor of writing.

Derrida discusses a scene of *Phaedrus* about an old Egyptian god, Theuth, who “invented numbers and calculation, geometry and astronomy...and above all writing” (75). Theuth presents his inventions to “King of all Egypt,” so that his innovations could be imparted to Egypt’s citizens. Yet, when it comes to Theuth’s argument for writing – “my invention is a recipe [or poison] (*pharmakon*) for both memory and wisdom” – to which the king proclaims its “uselessness...its menace and its mischief” so that writing is thus “rejected, belittled, abandoned and disparaged” (76). The connection Derrida makes between *pharmakon* and writing relies upon their understandings as secondary, mimetic, occult, foreign, and unnatural.

Writing and *pharmakon* hold “no stable essence, no ‘proper’ characteristics, it is not, in any sense (metaphysical, physical, chemical, alchemical) of the word, a *substance*” (125-126). The figure of the writing as *pharmakos* is the “evil and the outside, the expulsion of the evil” from the city’s coherent structure, both metaphorically and

literally.<sup>5</sup> Purification serves to restore “the city’s body proper” (133). In Derrida’s topology of Western metaphysics as read through the analogous figure of Writing and the *Pharmakon*, he points out that both terms are doomed to be interpreted through *logos* – that is, interpreted through paternal judgment – which constitutes “an act of both *domination and decision*” (117).

We find that the traits of Theuth associate with the scorned sophists in that they engage in simulacra, mimetism, supplementarism, superficiality, and deception. Plato attacks sophistry for its crime of “substituting the passive, mechanical ‘by-heart’ for the active reanimation of knowledge” instituting a death/life binary that leads to, passive/active that leads to, copy/original that leads to, finally, female/male (108). A fundamental value difference emerges between truth and representations of truth (“the substitutes the breathless sign for the living voice...”) philosophers and sophists, presence and repetition, original and copy, signified and signifier, until we make our way back to man and woman (92).

Dismissing the interrelated figures of writing, the *pharmakon*, and sophists, I argue, operates through the marginal positioning of traits associated with femininity. Writing as *pharmakon* – writing as remedy and poison – must be approved by the King but is inevitably rejected because it does not display the masculinely coded traits of presence, unity, authenticity. Instead, writing and the *pharmakon* represent feminine metaphors are threateningly non-patriarchal, fluid, contaminated, and heterogenous.

The profound ambivalence traversing Theuth can be read as an effect of the wider social stigmatization of femininity. He is the son of Ra (the sun god, the Creator) as well

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<sup>5</sup> It also “represents evil both introjected [inside] and projected [outside]...alarming and calming. Sacred and accursed” (133).

as Ra's "nocturnal representative" in the sky "as the moon takes the place of the sun" (92, 89). In other words, Theuth forms the "metonymic supplement" who can act as "a substitute capable of doubling for the king, the father, the sun..." by becoming the moon (89, 90).<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Theuth is also the god of death who "records the weight of the heart-souls of the dead" (91). His impressive CV boasts his inventions of writing, moon, death, "calculation, arithmetic, and rational science... the occult sciences, astrology, and alchemy;" that is, natural and unnatural, associated with the earth as well as the heavens, and denigrated as secondary yet necessary (93). Importantly, we see that these are not inherent traits but emerge through the patriarchal prohibition as informed by wider cultural values.

From Plato to Freud to the present moment, femininity has been suspected as inauthentic, frivolous, and impressionable. Since the death-look of Medusa, the fear of women having "no essence or value of its own" has been associated with "death and nontruth" (105).<sup>7</sup> This metaphorical link between writing, superficiality, and femininity stretches to the beginnings of philosophy. The metaphoricconceptual chain of *Pharmakon*-Sophists-writing, Derrida notes, connects to "makeup, masks, simulacra," "water, ink, paint, perfumed dye," and "has no identity" (150, 152, 169). The denigration of these seemingly tangential figures index gendered prejudice and phallogocentric tendencies. Such negative connotations of writing and *pharmakon* connect through tropes of femininity: affected, unstable, mimetic, suspicious, masked, weak, contaminated. This

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<sup>6</sup> This connects with Cixous' list of binaries mentioned earlier in which the moon is feminine and sun is masculine.

<sup>7</sup> See Cixous' "Laugh of the Medusa" for one exploration of the connection between femininity and death: "Men say that there are two unrepresentable things: death and the feminine sex. That's because they need femininity to be associated with death; it's the jitters that gives them a hard-on! for themselves! They need to be afraid of us. Look at the trembling Perseuses moving back- ward toward us, clad in apotropes." ([1975] 1976, 885).



link is far from innocuous and requires attention in the philosophy we read, write, and engage with. The writing in this thesis attempts a sustained reading of how prejudice against the symbolic-trait-chain of femininity subsists and presently operates.

### *Chapter outlines*

Chapter One, “Topologies of loss/topologies of the ego: Freudian Mourning and Symbolic Masculinity,” traces the Freudian underpinnings of Judith Butler’s early works of *Gender Trouble* (1990), *Bodies that Matter* (1993), and *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). I interrogate the integral process of mourning and melancholia to Freudian concepts of subjectivity that focus on the internalizing and assimilating tropes of incorporation and introjection. Through Cixous’ concept of the Selfsame, I argue that incorporation maintains masculine assumptions that value unity (presence), appropriation (property), control, and boundary making, which are all predicated upon the primacy of the masculine retention, paranoia, and desiring autonomy from alterity. Guided by a concern that psychoanalysis’ prominence in poststructural theories of subjectivity allows masculine assumptions to persist, I show that the masculine emphasis on control is consistently unraveled by its very existence. I argue that melancholia, subjectivity, and incorporation keep the primacy of the masculine subject intact when treated as means of retention, paranoia, and achieving autonomy. Instead, I argue for a theory of subjectivity that reads incorporation not for its controlling qualities but for its promise of collectivity. I offer a view of subjectivity that does not focus on boundary-making incorporation (homogeneity, unity, authenticity) but the possibility of a subjectivity invested in experiencing alterity (unstable, improper).

Chapter Two, “Consumption and the (de)Composition of the “I”: Cixous and Derrida Towards a Labial Subjectivity,” offers an alternative to Butlerian and Freudian conceptualizations of subjectivity through a sustained reading of Cixous’ and Derrida’s writings about consumption in order to theorize a non-internalizing subjectivity, or, a labial subjectivity. I move from Derrida’s *carnophallogocentrism* that connects masculinity to Western tropes of consumption (unity, propriety, authenticity) to his concept of *demi-deuil* that does not consume the lost other in the process of mourning but instead compel a constant mourning that eschews both incorporation and introjection (unstable, fluid). I differentiate Freud’s oral phase from the sense of orality used by Cixous and Derrida in that I’m not speaking of a Freudian cannibalistic devouring but orality as a space of simultaneous unity and separation. I then move to Cixous’ characterization of the feminine libidinal economy that wishes to taste and experience otherness without assimilating it (heterogeneous). The chapter closes with conceptualizing labial subjectivity, as inspired by Derrida and Cixous’ joint work *Veils*, to theorize a subjectivity of the lips – on the non-boundary between self and other through which relationality emerges (impurity, openness, mimesis, fluidity). Filtered through the image of the silkworm, as offered to us by Derrida, the silkworm synthesizes elements from inside and outside to cover itself in order to transform into another being. The silkworm does not ingest its surroundings but transforms them and itself, outside and inside, simultaneously. This ethical practice subject position, then, emerges at the (non)borders at which the subject threatens to disappear.

Chapter Three, “Circulating Improper Relations: Fondling Restraint and Reparation in Henry James and J.J. Rousseau,” applies the arguments of the previous

two chapters to a comparative literary reading of Henry James' (as prompted by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writings about themselves. I consider James' ecstasy and Rousseau's depression as indicative of their understanding of and openness to otherness, through which I offer a reparative reading of how painful shame and loss can be reworked through pleasurable relationality. Through Sedgwick's characterization of shame as individuating and relational I illustrate how subjectivity is found on the mobius strip of self and other, inside and outside through which James' reforms a pleasurable relationship with his once tormented excretory system. Similarly, I analyze Rousseau's understanding of *amour-propre* and sympathy to discuss the ways in which one's autonomy is consistently and productively interrupted through interactions with others. I place in conversation Sedgwick and Cixous to connect the Selfsame with Sedgwick's paranoid position and labial subjectivity with the reparative position. Sedgwick's example of (p)lacing side by side recto and rectum, front and behind, flatness and depth, differing temporalities, or differing spatialities expose the interconnections and similarities of their supposed differences. Through Sedgwick's explanation of the incongruous yet coinciding terms, James' anal eroticism releases him into a more pleasurable state through the very same tunnel that begins with the lips of the mouth, which connects us back to Cixous. The striking affinity between Sedgwick and Cixous allows fruitful insight into moving towards a subjectivity no longer indebted to masculine tropes of interiority and binarization, but predicated upon non-coercive and deappropriating openness to alterity.

## Chapter One: Topologies of Loss, Topologies of the Ego: Freudian Mourning and Symbolic Masculinity

“But the free libido...served to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego...”  
-Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” 249

"The front of subjectivity, insofar as it harbors and secures the lure of unicity, of totalization, and, by this means, of conservatism and totalitarianism. It is not a question of making the subject disappear, but of giving it back to divisibility..."  
- Hélène Cixous, *First Names of No one*, 29

“Considered closely, however, Freud’s essay [*The Ego and the Id*] makes clear that there can be no ego without melancholia, that the ego’s loss is constitutive.”  
-Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 171

### 1.1 Patriarchal Templates and Subjectivation

As the patriarch of psychoanalysis, Freud’s legacy has bequeathed an eminent theory of the psyche that explores the workings of normatively functioning subjectivity as well as endeavours to understand why normative subjectivity often fails. Subjectivity, that which manifests an ego’s characteristics, has accrued great relevance in poststructural, feminist, and queer philosophy as evidenced by Judith Butler’s work that, to differing degrees, often theorizes subjectivity through Freudian concepts. Despite Freud’s vacillating reception in both popular culture and academia, his work provides a subtext for Butler’s theories of melancholic gendered subjectivity.

These prevalent theories that collocate mourning with subjectivity often use the language found in Freud’s seminal writings on the matter such as “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1922), and *The Ego and the Id* (1923). Bearing in mind the privileged role of mourning within these theories, I wish to

undertake a survey of Butler's early works of *Gender Trouble* (1990), *Bodies that Matter* (1993), and *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) as they intersect with Freud along the axis of mourning and ego-formation. More specifically, through Hélène Cixous' work on the symbolic libidinal economies of sexual difference, I examine the role of incorporation within these poststructural theories of subjectivity to argue that incorporation's theoretical insistence harbors insipid masculine assumptions. In other words, the term 'incorporation' archives a certain psychoanalytic tradition entrenched in a heterosexist culture that models subjectivity within a masculine matrix.

Freud and Butler's disparate projects connect through their insistence on the powerful role of mourning and loss in subject formation. Loss, be it the loss of a love relationship, of time, or of a fantasy is often theorized by Freud through the lens of melancholia and its operational component of incorporation. Freud writes in an early essay that incorporation is "the prototype of a process which, in the form of identification, is later to play such an important psychological part" ([1905] 2001, 198). We come to find out that the important psychological role of incorporation describes the magical event whereby a lost object becomes instituted via identification within the ego in order to assuage the loss. This concept is central to Freud's account of melancholia *and* mourning which are then central to the emergence of the ego.<sup>8</sup>

Melancholic incorporation becomes the condition of possibility for an ego and thus any sociality. Subjectivity is embedded in and constituted by sociality, which thus locates the catalyst of incorporation – the unbearable or unmournable loss of a love attachment – in the social as well. My argument that Butler's queerfeminist poststructural

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<sup>8</sup> Originally only associated with melancholia, incorporation is later theorized as constitutive of both.

accounts of subjectivity harbor masculine assumptions also, logically, concerns a broader masculine inflection of sociality. Subjects and society cannot be separated or conflated, nor are they tangential, but are bound to each other. Thus, I'm concerned that these prominent theories frameworks implicitly follow a masculine trajectory that they explicitly confront. The argument I develop here contends that the naturalized masculine trope of incorporation perpetuates the fear of otherness, contamination, heterogeneity, and non-autonomy as they are transmuted from socially mandated prohibitions into ego mandates.

I do not deny the role of mourning in the nascence of the ego, but rather I am concerned with the unwritten text of incorporation. Hélène Cixous' understanding of mourning and subjectivity that eschews Freudian psychoanalysis allows the possibility for a subjectivity not necessarily based upon the incorporative insistence on identification, return, and control, but through interactions with others that work in the name of persistence of life, overcoming, and survival. Motivating this effort is to think subjectivity against its common accounts within poststructural philosophy, feminist or otherwise, in order to question how language is entrenched in a symbolically masculine socio-historical nexus.<sup>9</sup> With this view in mind, I treat the concept of incorporation not as an inevitability but a speculative process that limits itself to the masculine acts of retention, paranoia, and homogeneity. Yet, incorporation also relies upon fantasy and 'magic.'

I'm guided by a suspicion that gender asymmetry is inscribed in the

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<sup>9</sup> I don't want to wage a battle against masculinity, but highlight the ways in which its symbolic traits still exist as 'natural.' What I want to suggest is that there are other ways to conceive of terms outside of the masculine/coercive framework.

psychoanalytic tradition that so influential to much current poststructural philosophy. My hypothesis claims that psychoanalytic knowledge production is unacknowledgedly entrenched in symbolically masculine assumptions, which I hope to show consistently fails and unravels itself. Taking incorporation as my prime example, this chapter shows that the unavowed collapse of control propels this insistence on masculine incorporation. If melancholia's operative word is incorporation, through which the ego takes possession of the lost object, then the "open wound" of melancholia cannot heal – it only amplifies the loss rather than scabbing over. The controlling intent of melancholia through incorporation consistently fails because rather than successfully controlling the loss and thus maintain ego and bodily boundaries, incorporation actually *maintains* this disjuncture. Paranoid, retentive control then becomes an effect of this cycle of failed attempts at boundary making.

First, I will introduce Hélène Cixous' work on libidinal economies to elucidate my use of symbolic masculine assumptions. With this explanation established, I will go to the work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok in order to explain my use of incorporation, as well as its 'healthy' other, introjection, to substantiate the connection between incorporation and masculinity. Next, I move to the seminal works of Freud to light a path as to how influential these works are for Judith Butler's theories of gender. As Butler concurs with Freud that melancholia initiates the ego, then my broadest claim here is to argue that if this is the case, then the masculine assumptions of melancholic incorporation become incorporated within subjectivity as well. I close the chapter with a look toward a subjectivity not indebted to this heteromascline matrix, which I will continue to develop throughout the thesis.

## 1.2 Cixous and Libinal Economy

Hélène Cixous' delineation of masculine and feminine libidinal economies argues that experiences are governed by relations to pleasure, which is revealed in one's relation to alterity ([1984] 1991a, 150). "The Author in Truth" explains that she keeps the signifiers 'masculine' and 'feminine' because in our "always cultural system" of gender, masculine and feminine carry great weight and significance (150). In other words, they act metonymically to signify an overdetermined set of attributes governed by the normative gendered understanding of sexed bodies. Thus, her use of the terms fluctuate between metaphor, metonymy, and lived experience – masculine and feminine do not describe inherent traits connected with bodies but pronounces the gendered traits socio-historico-politically associated and enforced to the 'appropriate' sexed bodies.

Embedded within a poststructuralist framework, Cixous' works argues that binary oppositions, beginning with the metaphysical mind/body dichotomy, are obversely interconnected in that they actively *depend* on their opposing term for any meaning. Therefore, masculine and feminine traits are not autonomous but rely on each other so intimately that if one ceases to exist, so does the other. This reliance however is not symmetrical. Cixous argues that the binaries operate through a violent logocentrism (which is always phallogocentric) that imprisons thought to structurally mimic the originary "couple, man/woman" (Cixous and Clément [1975] 1986, 64). Hierarchization necessarily ensues within the opposing terms, which suffuses Cixous critique of binarism that hierarchizes difference so that one term is privileged over the other. Her focus on sexual difference does not prescribe roles to the binary terms of "masculine" and "feminine" but follows the cultural logic that hierarchically separates woman and man. In a Cixousian framework, the kernel of societal organization – man/woman – is taken as a



primary point of exploration. In locating this ‘orginary’ differential, Cixous launches a *sortie* against heterosexual culture.

Sexual difference and the differing libidinal economies persist in Cixous’ writing “out of convenience,” however, she admits, in reality masculine and feminine “blend together” ([1988] 1994, 131). Therefore, Cixous’ treatment of masculine and feminine performs language’s instability while also showing how the two terms exist within each other and influence one another. It is also a linguistic game challenging direct referentiality between bodies and their normative signifier to show that lived experience exceeds cultural connotations. Thus, her theory lies *in between* reality and imagination, history and futures, bodies and expectations for those bodies. In other words, Cixous cultivates subversive potentials within culturally mediated limitations. For example, she writes of women’s language, “Woman, who has run her tongue ten thousand times seven times around her mouth before not speaking, either dies of it or knows her tongue and her mouth better than anyone,” which she then explains enables a different relationship to speaking that, after having been silenced so long, can break forth in revolutionary explosion ([1975] 1986, 95). The repression of the ‘Age of the Phallus’ either ends in death or in cultivated, long awaited overthrow.

In “Extreme Fidelity,” Cixous writes that the terms she uses are “anchor[ed in a] point somewhere in a far distant reality” ([1988] 1994, 135). Yet this far distant reality is inseparable from the cultural fabric that asymmetrically enforces masculinity and femininity. In other words, hegemonic understandings of reality shape what is understood of reality. Thus, Cixous avoids “immobile and petrifying” terms by treating them as historical-political-social products that can therefore be transformed ([1984] 1991a, 150).

By not fixing bodily or linguistic signification and through using historically repressive signifiers in a new way, Cixous's theory is suspended in flux.

Her use of masculine and feminine does not directly correlate to biological bodies but to different libidinal *positions* that have come to be assigned to those bodies. In "Coming to Writing," Cixous again expresses her qualms with language: "This is what my body teaches me: first of all, be wary of names; they are nothing but social tools, rigid concepts, little cages of meaning assigned..." ([1977] 1991b, 49). Immediately following this, "haven't you, as a wife, been the husband of your spouse," which asserts that historically gendered relational roles such as being a wife (coded as subservient) or husband (coded as provider) is not delimited to one gender. Since the names assigned to bodies are social constructs with lived effects, Cixous shows that the social prescriptions of gender can and do short-circuit so that gendered social roles are more fluid than often realized. Thus, masculine and feminine are positions between biology and the social that function not as inherent descriptions but societal prescriptions.

### ***1.3 The Selfsame and Incorporation as Masculine Narratives***

One of Cixous' early works entitled "Sorties" critiques "The Empire of the Selfsame," which she explains is the ubiquitous historical trajectory that operates through appropriation, control, repression, return, autonomy and homogeneity.<sup>10</sup> These values, she argues, are symbolically masculine traits as they socially prescribe a specific type of masculine virility that violently demarcates the boundary between the "ownself" and "that which limits it": otherness ([1975] 1986, 71). The empire of the Selfsame guards against "the fear of expropriation, of separation, of losing the attribute," all of which

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<sup>10</sup> Selfsame is translated from the French word "propre" which is also the word for clean, which is the opposite of contamination by outside entities.

express the fear of symbolically feminine characteristics such as exclusion to ownership, distracted, and unserious(80). Referencing Hegel, Cixous argues against the master-slave dialectic in which recognition of the other only serves to bolster the autonomy of the self.

In distinction to the masculine economy of the Selfsame, Cixous describes a feminine libidinal economy that “keep[s] alive the other that is confided to her, that visits her, that she can love as other,” thus marking the difference between masculine and feminine libidinal economies as the experience of pleasure when relating to otherness (94-95). It is a “taking pleasure in being boundless” away from Ego authority to a possible relationship with the other (91). Cixous’ use of sexual difference emphasizes the ways in which the masculine has “passed itself off as eternal-natural” in order to theorize the ways in which the möbius strip of gender and sex shapes all aspects of our lives and our enveloping societies (65). Critiquing the masculine, phallocentric Selfsame introduces the possibility of imagining an end to hierarchical sexual difference when the “living structures” bound to “historicocultural limits” change from the model of the Selfsame (83).

#### ***1.4 Feminine Mourning and the Selfsame’s Incorporation***

Through Cixous’ framework of sexual difference the Freudian concept of incorporation shares similar traits of the Selfsame. Incorporation can be understood as a symbolic *and* lived activity of being with other persons. Thus, incorporation (just as sexual difference) is not taken as an ahistorical fact but merely an effect of the present situation as enabled by history’s trajectory. Yet, the experience of mourning, and thus of incorporation, is differentiated along the symbolic and lived effects of sexual difference. Thus, I want to argue that the *concept* of incorporation, the Freudian centerpiece of

subjectivity, contains within it a specific speculative tradition that highlights retention and appropriation at the moment when subjectivity is claimed to emerge.

Connecting incorporation as an effect of the Selfsame, Cixous writes, “Woman, for me, is she who kills no one in herself, she who gives (herself) her own lives...” ([1977] 1991b, 50). Indeed, as opposed to responding to loss through incorporative control, Cixous urges “to take the risk of the *other*, of difference” ([1975] 1986, 79). The Selfsame and incorporation share the characteristic of phantasmatic control by bringing the other (which “menaces my-own-good”) into the self (“what is mine, hence what is good”) ([1975] 1986, 71). States, borders, hegemonic relationship structures, histories, and pedagogies, as well as their concomitant and informing ideologies, can be connected to the empire of the Selfsame due to the unquestioned assumption of privileging autonomy based on a paranoid conception of the other (other states, ethnicities, the loss of love, or the threat of *not* knowing). Cixous’ framework allows us to understand this cultural “fact” as one rooted in deeply entrenched sexism and prejudice that passes as ‘just the way things are.’

Psychoanalysis, as a discipline entrenched in the hegemonic history of phallocentrism (Cixous writes that Freud did not fabricate his observations, but merely followed “the most commonplace logic of desire” of patriarchal economy) reproduces a certain masculine economy based on opposition, struggle, and control ([1975] 1986, 79).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, incorporation is not an innocuous fact of ego formation but a theory based in a historical formation of inequitable power relations that privilege autonomous unity. I do not wish to homogenize the respective meanings of masculine and feminine.

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<sup>11</sup> For an example of this see Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) of the child’s *fort* and *da* game that allegedly produces control and reappropriation of a painful moment (pgs. 14-17).

Infinite differences exist within these two separate terms ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine,’ although these differences are not always societally recognized. Rather, my use of the terms acknowledges that one’s lived experience and different cultural-symbolic understandings of societal roles is often primarily organized according to one’s assigned gender identity according to their sexual difference.

I use sexual difference as my lens – masculinity and femininity as discursive *positions* rather than biological attributes – due to its fetishized<sup>12</sup> importance in lived experience.<sup>13</sup> This is neither a qualitative insistence on the concept of sexual difference nor an affirming adjudication, but an attempt to read hegemonic understandings of human beings as subjects to, and subjected by control who are pre- and pro-scribed by a socio-discursive framework that separate people along sex and then assigns meaning to those separating characteristics. In this way, this study is not about men or women but about the expectations that shape what it is to *act* masculine or feminine. These two positions then are not inevitable, biological, or emotional – masculine and feminine are socio-historical realities resultant of chiasmic, interconnected relationship between expectations, prejudice, and enforcement; not bodily but socio-historical formations based on the *idea* of inherent attributes of bodies.

Having outlined Cixous’ understandings of masculine and feminine libidinal economies, I now turn to a further explanation of incorporation and introjection. This clarification situates a discussion of Freud’s conceptual components of mourning and

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<sup>12</sup> I use fetishized in the Marxist sense which uses fetish to describe the mundane events of everyday life in which specific objects in the world accrue ‘magical’ significance that are produced as “natural.” Yet, the fetishized object gains importance due to a specific set of social relations. If these relations change, then the fetishized object will change: “It is nothing but the definite social relations between men themselves which assumes, here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things” (Marx [1890] 1976, 165).

<sup>13</sup> I use positions because of Klein ([1940] 1984) and Sedgwick (2003b), which will be later discussed in Chapter Three.

melancholia in order to further draw a link between these influential theories and masculinity.

### ***1.5 Incorporation and Introjection: A Clarification***

Here it is important to delineate between introjection and incorporation. The two terms have a disputed history that most often considers them more or less synonymous. The work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok attempts to differentiate and describe the two terms largely based in their etymological and historical roots. A general guideline: Although Freud did not use the term ‘incorporation’ often, it can apply to the state of melancholia whereas introjection describes the process of mourning.

Introjection, as Nicholas Rand explains in his introduction to Abraham and Torok’s *The Shell and the Kernel*, is “the process of psychic nourishment, growth, and assimilation...the continuous process of self-fashioning” (1994, 14). Sandor Ferenczi who coined the term describes introjection as “an extension of the ego,” but which has come to be understood by “his contemporaries” (of which Freud is one) as, “taking possession of the object through *incorporation*” (Ferenczi qtd. in Torok [1968] 1994, 112-113). Instead of introjection’s signification of incorporating an external object, Torok claims that introjection initiates an enlarged experience of autoeroticism, thus an enlarging of the ego through these experiences when the ego absorbs an object that therefore connects the external world with the ego (Torok [1968] 1994, 112). Therefore, introjection does not compensate for an object loss but instinctually includes within the ego all of the drives connected with a love object. It is this faculty by which the self learns and grows that leads Rand to gloss introjection as that which is “the very substance of psychic life” (Rand 1994, 101). Similarly, Derrida claims that the self is a “set of introjections” in a

preface to Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* (Derrida [1976] 1986a, xvi). Introjection is thus gradual and initiates a reorganization of psychic life.

Incorporation however is an "instantaneous and magical" occurrence that blocks the process of introjection (Torok [1968] 1994, 113). In "Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation," Abraham and Torok write that "incorporation is the refusal to acknowledge the full import of a loss," which "for some reason cannot be acknowledged as such" ([1972] 1994, 127,130). Incorporation deals directly with an object loss that cannot be processed because the ego senses it would cause a traumatic reorganization of the psychic world. Instead of processing this loss, incorporation installs the prohibited object and the desires connected to the object within the ego through "confinement, imprisonment, and (in extreme cases) entombment" (Torok [1968] 1994, 113, 132). Opposed to the undisguised process of introjection, Torok claims that incorporation "is an immensely illegal act" since it combats the objective verdict of the object's loss (114). In this way, the incorporated object hides from the ego itself. A final, tenuous distinction can now be made between the two, introjected desire terminates object-dependency whereas incorporated objects magnifies dependency while also manifesting reminders of the "encrypted" object (114). Still, as we will later see, "every incorporation has introjection as its nostalgic vocation" (Abraham and Torok [1972] 1994, 129).

### ***1.6 Freud's groundwork of subjectivity and mourning***

Freud's attempt in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) to describe and thus differentiate between mourning and melancholia differs from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), which also differs from his account in *The Ego and the Id* (1923). This

vacillation is marked by Freud's gradual revision and privileging of identificatory incorporation for the ego's emergence.

"Mourning and Melancholia" attempts to distinguish between the 'normal' process of mourning that operates through introjection and the "pathological disposition" of melancholia that operates through incorporation (Freud [1917] 1991b, 243). In this account, mourning is processually carried out by gradually withdrawing libido from the lost object. The object of mourning is a conscious entity that can be slowly overcome through introjecting the loss by slowly recalling and hypercathecting "each single one of the memories and expectations" to remove any libidinal relationship with the object (244).

Contrary to mourning's processual severance with the lost object, melancholia signals "an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object" (249). Melancholia occurs when the loss "is withdrawn from consciousness," which forestalls introjection since it is unclear what object is to be overcome (245). Instead of withdrawing libido from the object as occurs in mourning, melancholic identification with the lost object economically preserves the love associated with the object, the object 'itself,' as well as the negative feelings toward the object for having died. There is "a disturbance of self-regard" resulting in ambivalence since the lost object becomes instilled in and as the ego (244). Through this process, the ego becomes an object for itself, a topic we will discuss soon with Butler. Thus, contrary to mourning's completion, melancholia is a painful state of being. What is this "economic condition" of incorporation (254)? How does it work, control, and maintain the masculine fantasy of non-separation?



Fast-forward six years to *The Ego and the Id* in which Freud claims that identification is a constitutive character of any ego and that it functions through both mourning *and* melancholia. This observation leads Freud to write, “the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains the history of those object-choices,” which defines the ego *only* as the sum of melancholic love attachments ([1923] 1991a, 29). Instead of Freud offering the possibility of an ego severing ties with its lost objects as in “Mourning and Melancholia” the ego now does not exist before these objects are lost.<sup>14</sup> Moreover there is no longer any stable distinction between mourning and melancholia, thus no stable distinction between introjection and incorporation, thus no difference between pathology and normalcy, thus no life without loss. Freud undoes his own speculative distinction by extending the function of identification to melancholia *and* mourning. This unavowed collapse is not explicitly discussed except in passing: “At that time however [of “Mourning and Melancholia”], we did not appreciate the full significance of this process” ([1923] 1991a, 28). Despite Freud’s pithiness, it seems that this collapse signals an important shift so that all acts of mourning become identificatory, consumptive, and assimilating and in the Cixousian framework I outlined above, thus masculine.

Emblematic of my analysis of the masculine subtext of incorporation is Freud’s claim in *The Ego and the Id*: “it may be said that this transformation of an erotic object-choice into an alteration of the ego is also a method by which the ego can obtain control over the id and deepen relations with it” (30).<sup>15</sup> Thus, the fantasy of identificatory incorporation attempts to both control the lost other and the desires of the own self. In the

<sup>14</sup> See Butler (1997, 71) for a sustained exegesis of this aspect of Freud’s thought.

<sup>15</sup> The id contains the ‘uncontrollable’ and unconscious drives.

symbolic framework that I've outlined above that connects masculinity to an economy of control, homogeneity, and autonomy, then the notion of deepening a relationship *through* control, not to mention the penetrative imagery, conforms with the boundary making acts of the empire of the Selfsame. Freud's concept of internalizing an external object into the ego – either through the introjective assimilation or incorporative isolation – presents a view of subjectivity that privileges retentive and appropriative control.

Next I will move to Butler's work that engages with Freud, specifically her exegetical reading of *The Ego and the Id*, which illustrates that melancholic incorporation produces the ego. In doing so, I argue that her reliance upon Freud maintains the continuation of a symbolically masculine subject. Still, I find useful her engagement with the social nature of melancholia that asks if the limits of mournable loss shifted, so would the nature of melancholia. I transition to the next section with this syllogism: melancholia operates through a masculinely coded boundary making process, the ego comes to exist through the state of melancholia, then the ego in a Freudian framework operates in a masculine economy.

### ***1.7 Butler: Melancholy, Incorporation and foreclosed desire***

Mourning and incorporation consistently come up in Judith Butler's successive works of *Gender Trouble* (1990), *Bodies that Matter* (1993) and *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). *Gender Trouble* claims, following Abraham and Torok, incorporation operates through an act of instantaneous fantasy (Butler [1990] 1999, 86). Melancholic gender, a concept that anchors Butler's influential performativity theory, is informed by a Freudian framework that enables her to assert, "gender identification is a kind of melancholia in which the sex of the prohibited object is internalized as a prohibition"

(80). Arguing that the taboo against homosexuality prefigures the incest taboo, she claims, “the disavowal of homosexual love is preserved through the cultivation of an oppositionally defined gender identity” (88). Within the current framework of compulsory heterosexuality, the possibility of homosexual love objects is strictly prohibited and therefore the loss of this possibility is melancholically incorporated into the ego so that the love object is simultaneously preserved and radically disavowed as unthinkable and unspeakable.

Butler argues that one’s psychic interiority is effected through the prohibitions on homosexual love attachments so that stable gender expression is enacted through the melancholic incorporation of the disavowed homosexual love attachment. The loss cannot be mourned, hence its disavowal or unspeakability, because of society’s injunction that only specific attachments can be mourned. It follows in the framework of melancholia that an identification occurs with the lost other and is subsequently and magically incorporated into the ego. This incorporative identification with the disavowed homosexual love-object is then transformed into the outward expression of gender – later in *the Psychic Life of Power* Butler asserts that “to refuse a loss is to become it” (187). This refusal is seen not as optional but compulsory.

Secretly becoming what is disavowed through a hyperbolic incorporation implies fooling the ego as well. If we apply this secret identification to gender, then the social mandate against homosexuality (which is understood to be a passive, feminine position) is based on the fear of gendered otherness. As Cixous claims in *The Newly Born Woman*, “Psychoanalysis is formed on the basis of woman and has repressed (not all that successfully) the femininity of masculine sexuality,” which comments upon

psychoanalysis' observation that male homosexuality is repressed for fear of *being* a woman ([1975] 1986, 85). The question of what a woman wants haunts psychoanalysis but so does same sex pleasure. Incorporation functions then, as transmitted from social mandates, to violently cordon off (make boundaries) the self from *unpropre* desire.

Incorporation deals directly with sexual difference because of the ways it introduces the love object it cannot have into the ego. And as Butler claims, the successful resolution of the Oedipal complex occurs with a same sex identification (father for the boy, mother for the girl) that "consolidates" a specific gender identity that corresponds with a heterosexual sexual identity (1990, 75-77). Psychoanalytically speaking, a cross-sex identification would mean adopting a gender identity that would result in homosexuality. In other words, the same sex identification institutes a gender identity predicated upon the repression of homosexuality. We see then the intimate link between gender, sexuality, and the ways in which psychoanalysis observes the vilification of femininity in normative development. Incorporation thus links not only to masculinity but heterosexist masculinity.

Extending and revising *Gender Trouble* to a more corporeal address in *Bodies that Matter*, Butler focuses on Freud's statement from *The Ego and the Id*, "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but it is itself the projection of a surface" (Freud in Butler 1993, 59). The body as mediator between inside and outside influences the ego due to its sensations, perceptions, and feelings. Moreover, this ego is a *projection*, meaning that it is an illusory and imagined referent to 'reality.' In other words, bodily attachments and experiences form this projected ego. Thus our most intense early body contacts come from interacting with others of whom our libidinal

cathexis must soon be disavowed. These others, which are love objects, must be given up as objects of love.

The ego, then, which is the projection of a surface and within the framework of melancholic identification becomes what it cannot actually be. The lost love object is reinstated within the ego, it is reinstated because it can neither be mourned nor acknowledged as lost. Thus, the ego maintains a clandestine connection to the incorporated loss and secretly bound to that which it cannot love. Butler approaches this to further understand how prohibitions on homosexuality produce a gendered body.

The ego comes to project/interject/introject the pleasures and pains of bodily perceptions that are always already socially mediated so that these feelings and prohibitions become interiorized.<sup>16</sup> So, to come back to loss as Freud and Butler do, the bodily ego really comes to *matter* when loss is felt, when an aspect (bodily, sensation, pleasure, desire) of a once pleasurable connection comes to be disavowed and unthinkable. Even more, the fact that this pleasure existed must be repressed and radically argued that it *never* happened in the first place – “I never loved her, and I never lost her” (1997, 138).

*The Psychic Life of Power* examines how gender is produced in a repressive society that rigorously disavows homosexual love attachments so that mental energy is used to denigrate the self rather than the external world. Through a reading of *The Ego and the Id* in which Freud asserts “the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains the history of those object-cathexes,” Butler ponders how Freud’s interrogation of interminable mourning (i.e. melancholia) connects with a

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<sup>16</sup> This point will come up in Chapter Three with Sedgwick’s discussion of ego formation and shame that posits the interrupted connection between parent and child as simultaneously individuating *and* socializing.

society that renders some forms of love unmournable (29). Butler's deconstruction of subjectivity argues that stable genders and sexualities are produced, enforced, and maintained through the repudiation of homosexual love and identification. Yet paradigmatically, in the Freudian logic of incorporation and introjection which internalizes the lost object, "homosexuality is *not* abolished but preserved, though preserved precisely in the prohibition on homosexuality" (142).

Butler exposes the ways that mourning actually preserves the love object and the concomitant grief, love, and pain connected with the object. The political subtext here is clear when the title, *The Psychic Life of Power*, is read literally – how does power (social, political, intimate) work psychically. Or rather, how does external power become internalized *as* the ego - "it effects a melancholia that reproduces power as the psychic voice of judgement addressed to (turned upon) oneself, thus modeling reflexivity on subjection" (198). Implicit within this project is the question of what would happen if the ego experienced a melancholia not effected by the prohibition on homosexual love objects. If (socially) prohibited values are (psychically) internalized resulting in the partitioning of the ego, then what would happen if this prohibitive social discourse did not exist, which would then result in a radically different subjectivation process. If a certain type of love was suddenly allowed, then the boundaries of melancholia would change, the boundaries of subjectivity would change, and our capacities for love and hate could be directed not at ourselves but at the repressive aspects of the external world. Butler shows gender to be the effect of socially regulated incorporation.

Here, there is no recourse to melancholia - melancholia is necessary for the ego thereby producing a society of melancholics (1997, 24). No ego, sociality, life without

melancholy. For Butler, subjectivity relies on the constitutive fantasy of incorporation that relies on policing ego borders. The limits of mourning are also the limits of subjectivity. We come back to incorporative absorption, which is an absorption inflected with a threat – the ‘other’ can only be referred to through our hierarchical relationship *to* it. The ego’s constitutive otherness is denied, assimilated, and forgotten.

What troubles me here is the way that incorporation is characterized as painful, unwanted, coercive, and violent and rests upon the liberal ideology of the uncontested freedom of individuals. Subjectivity without incorporation does not exist. Yet, incorporation’s unavoidability and thus undesirability compels a necessary identification *against* the wishes of the subject. I am not in a position to refute *how* people navigate moments of loss. However, I contest the invasive masculine characteristics that so *naturally* become attached to all processes of mourning. Could these characteristics of control, autonomy, propriety, and self-mastery rather than being facts of processing loss, be projections of a phallogocentric culture that hierarchically indexes and propels specific values?

Incorporation *and* introjection function through reappropriation and through systems of return: “everything must return to the masculine,” which operates by interiorizing the threatening outside (Cixous [1976] 1981, 50). The incorporation of homosexual desire within the ego unravels the masculine emphasis on control. Despite the symbolic masculine assumptions concerning the controlling and appropriating character of incorporation, its functioning only serves to preserve and maintain that which it guards against. Thus for heterosexual males, a repudiation of feminine desire associated with being the mother is incorporated, and for heterosexual females, a

repudiation of masculine desire associated with being the father is incorporated. From this, I deduce that the prevalence of masculine theory, which works in an economy of control and return, can never fully account or control that which it argues is at its (repudiated) core.

This leads me to question if there is an alternative view. Melancholia comes to be a total theory; one that presupposes the subject. But is there another language to express subjectivity? A language not of control but of viewing subjectivity from the side of mingling with otherness? Freud is, and his notions of incorporation are, central to theory of gender which is now undecidedly influential in gender studies, feminist philosophy, and philosophy. The connotations of incorporation insist as controlling, assuaging, and silencing the unspeakable other. I do not contest the existence and theoretical value of incorporation but rather the lack of critical writing concerning its assumptions (or the fact that it operates through fantasy). As an entity that exercises unwanted external incursions into the psychic world – a symbolically masculine operation – how can this perceived violation, which is let us remember unavoidable in the current societal framework, be worked through, utilized, and crafted as a source of sustenance, pleasure, and openness? If “identification is the assimilating passion by which the ego first emerges,” can this passion of assimilation be read as an openness to alterity (Butler 2003, 13)?

### ***1.8 Conclusion: Derrida, Cixous, and Desired Impurity***

In this chapter I’ve argued that if incorporation is integral to the production of subjects, then a masculine inflection within incorporation leads to masculinely inflected theories of subjectivity. Through a Cixousian framework of sexual difference, I delineated the masculine libidinal economy that values control, autonomy, appropriation,



and return in distinction with the feminine libidinal economy that operates through experiencing, separation, giving, and openness. I extended these distinctions to Freudian psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity that inflect Judith Butler's queer feminist poststructural work in order to show the masculine assumptions within current accounts of subjectivity. I showed that the masculine emphasis on control is consistently unravelled by its very existence, which exposes the feminine characteristics within masculine culture. I've offered a view of subjectivity that does not focus on melancholic incorporation that creates boundaries but the possibility of a subjectivity invested in experiencing alterity. In the next chapter I further this argument with a discussion of Cixous and Derrida's work as it intersects with the metaphor of consumption.

## Chapter Two: Consumption and the (de)composition of the “I”: Cixous and Derrida Towards a Labial Subjectivity

“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

-The Serpent to Eve in the Garden, Genesis 3:6

“I have this need to let myself be haunted by voices coming from elsewhere that resonate through me...I master nothing, I submit to the oracles.”

- Hélène Cixous, “From the Word to Life...” 2

“There is always a remainder that cannot be read, that must remain alien. This residue can never be interrogated as the same, but must be constantly sought out anew, and must continue to be written.”

-Jacques Derrida, “...On the Limits of Digestion”

### 2.1 *Thinking Beyond Interiorization with Derrida and Cixous*

The previous chapter argued that mourning and subjectivity are closely linked within Freudian accounts that locate the masculine act of incorporation at the nascence of the ego. Through Cixous’ critique of the Empire of the Selfsame, I argued that this model of incorporation privileges the self over the other *by* using the other to re-establish the importance of the self. In this chapter, I further develop that argument by claiming that incorporation can be linked to a consumption of a specific kind; that is, consumption to control. Guided by Derrida’s assertion that “There is no possible introjection or incorporation,” I move from the binary thought of introjection *or* incorporation (as it is found in mourning/introjection vs. melancholia/incorporation) towards an understanding that impurely affirms both (which also denies their sovereignty) ([1994] 2006b, 290). I attempt to understand a subjectivity indebted not to psychoanalytic mourning that can

only speak of interiorization<sup>17</sup> but through the possibility of maintaining a subjectivity that emerges at the boundary of self and other, which I discuss as a labial subjectivity.<sup>18</sup>

In this chapter I connect the ways that consumption and orality, as this topic is weaved<sup>19</sup> through both Derrida and Cixous' works, are connected to subjectivity. Generally, this chapter delineates subjectivity based on one's relationship to inside and outside, borders and departures, as this relationship is connected to consumption and control. Beginning with Cixous' concept of mourning qua disgorgement, I shift to Derrida's discussion of carnophallogocentrism, which connects the trope of eating with that of masculine subjectivity. I then move to a close reading of Derrida's concept of *demi-deuil* [half mourning] to explicated a version of subjectivity (as it is bound to mourning) that ethically maintains the trace of the other by *non*-incorporation and non-ingestion. Next, I discuss Cixous' reading of the Garden of Eden story which delineates her understanding of the feminine and masculine relationships to pleasure, the law, and the inside in order to further understand her treatment of cultural fables as well as the relational difference between femininity and masculinity. Finally, I close with a reading of Derrida and Cixous' entwined work *Veils* in order theorize a labial subjectivity based on interconnection, taste, experience, and openness. I argue against psychoanalytic subjectivity that constantly works to solidify the ego's perimeter in order to conceptualize

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<sup>17</sup> "ever since psychoanalysis came to mark this discourse [of mourning], the image commonly used to characterize mourning is that of an interiorization" (Derrida 2001b, 159).

<sup>18</sup> A further connection to be made here, but cannot be further explored due to length constraints, is to Luce Irigaray's "This Sex Which is Not One," which celebrates female autoeroticism due to the constant touching of the vaginal lips: "she is already two-but not divisibile into one(s)" and "*she is neither one nor two*" ([1977] 1985, 24, 26).

<sup>19</sup> In "A Silkwork of One's Own," Derrida focuses on Freud's discussion in "On Femininity" of the trait of *weben* [weaving] or *fletchen* [braiding] that Freud argues guards against penis envy by *verdecken* [veiling] their 'genital defect'. ([1998] 2001a, 58-59). Derrida connects this with the cultivation of silkworms, *sericulture*, which he calls "the culture of *silkworm* qua *silkworm*" that hides wraps itself in itself (its silk secretion) in order to later emerge (89-90). This will be further discussed in the final section of this chapter.

a subjectivity found at the point in which the subject's unity is no longer fully controllable; that is a labial subjectivity through which experiencing otherness occurs not in a move to control but of dispersion. Aggregating Cixous and Derrida's work leads to a critique of psychoanalytic mourning, which modifies Freud's and Butler's foundations that were discussed in the previous chapter.

How can the (de)composition of the "I" be figured in oral, vocal, and orificed terms? I will thread Cixous' and Derrida's constant connections between taste, lips, subjectivity and mourning. However, in combing through their works for references to subjectivity and consumption I do not wish to homogenize their two philosophicoliterary oeuvres. For example, Cixous in a playful upbraiding of Derrida's claim "I am not 'against life,' but neither am I 'for life' like [you, Cixous]," to which she rebuts, "You are against death and fiercely for life. But otherwise. Dis/quietedly" (Cixous and Derrida [2004] 2005,7). This subjective distinction made by the authors themselves unravels any absolute similitude between their respective works. Life and death and thus mourning are treated differently by the two, not antagonistically but more by manner of approach. Nevertheless, their works on the economies of mourning often converge (and thus diverge) in telling ways, which I explicate in what follows.

## ***2.2 Cixous' Disgorging and Derrida's Carnophallogocentrism***

Mourning and consumption are closely linked in the works of both Cixous and Derrida. "Castration or Decapitation?", an early essay by Cixous published in English in 1981, introduces many topics that Cixous later develops at length: sexual difference, libidinal economies, her interest in varying cultures' and time periods' genesis stories, as well as the empire of the Selfsame translated in this piece as "the realm of the proper"

([1976] 1981, 50). She claims that (re)(ap)propriation dictates this proper/selfsame<sup>20</sup> *economy* and that feminine writing manifests itself in fantasy, floods, erraticism, “‘throwing up,’ ‘disgorging’...[that is linked] with a basic structure of property relations defined by mourning” (54). Cixous makes her stance clearly against psychoanalytic mourning which is masculinely framed: “This makes her writing a body that overflows, disgorges, vomiting as opposed to masculine incorporation...” (54). This economic structure of property relations as governed by libidinal subjectivation, claims Cixous, is differentiated by how one experiences loss and mourning, which as we saw in the previous chapter is often only theorized as bound to incorporative control or introjective assimilation. Already, we can see a link between subjectivity, ownership, and objects as well as, in a Marxian sense, one’s property relationship to what they produce.

Cixous goes on to argue that masculine mourning, “make[s] haste to recover the investment made in the lost object” whereas the feminine does not mourn but “loses without holding onto loss” (54). Property is described as investment, retention, and avoiding loss. Thus subjectivity as divided between masculine and feminine economies is governed by one’s relation with and to alterity as manifested through experiences of separation. Against the heterosocial hegemony of the selfsame that guards against separation, Cixous argues for an imagining of and move towards a subjectivity not of “withholding” but of “disgorging” (54). Here, as in other places in Cixous and as we will see with Derrida as well, subjectivity is figured at the limits of the mouth or a bodily orifice. Subjectivity, as realized through moments of mourning, is (de)composed of a

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<sup>20</sup> “The realm of the proper in the sense of the general cultural heterosocial establishment in which man’s reign is held to be proper...Etymologically, the “proper” is “property,” that which is not separable from me. Property is proximity, nearness...” (Cixous [1976] 1981, 50).

topological understanding of inside and outside. For Cixous, experiencing otherness through the mouth in a non- incorporative, introjective, or ingestive way evidences a feminine libidinal economy. Emphasizing release and non-withholding, Derrida also notices a historical structure based on consumption, which he likewise connects to a sexed understanding: *carno-phallogocentrism*.

Derrida identifies “cannibalistic tropes” in Western thought that promote “*carno-phallogocentr[ic]*” values that privilege nutritive assimilation via “interiorization of the phallus and the necessity of its passage through the mouth, whether it’s a matter of words or things...” ([1991] 2009; [1991] 1995a, 280).<sup>21</sup> Interiorization of a phallic entity, be it the transubstantiation of Christ or Hegel’s theorization of the spirit that “eats everything that is external and foreign,” is a symbolic act of which Derrida argues is operational for phallogocentrism’s success ([1991] 2009). The OED notes that the etymology of incorporate is “to embody, include...to form into a body” and thus attempts to make boundaries, encompass, and contain an other for the economic sake of the self.<sup>22</sup> This carnophallogocentrism is at work in the tropes of mourning that speak of incorporating the body of the other. The gendered assumptions within this psychoanalytic framework, as Derrida shows the link between phallogocentrism and symbolic carnivorousness, have been subsumed into poststructural thought that enables a history of phallogocentrism to persist.

Augmenting this argument against the assimilating consumption of subjectivity based on the incorporative model is Cixous’ work concerning the hegemonic masculine

<sup>21</sup> This characterization of cannibalism in part references Freud’s *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality* in which he writes of “cannibalistic pregenital sexual organization” when sexual pleasure is derived from the “incorporation of the object” which lays the groundwork for the faculty of identification (1905, 198).

<sup>22</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s.v. “incorporate.”

libidinal economy. The consumptive aspects of mourning are characterized by its insistence of self-return, control, and appropriation that each work in an economy of “enlarging the self”.<sup>23</sup> Again in “Castration or Decapitation?,” Cixous claims that the feminine “crosses limits: she is neither outside nor in, whereas the masculine would try to bring the outside in, if possible” in contradistinction of the interiorization of carnophallogocentrism (54). This passage serves as an overture for this chapter’s argument that “I” – subjectivity – can be understood to emerge at the liminal (limitinal /libidinal) spaces of/in the body where the inside and outside, self and other become blurred. I will continue to develop an alternative view that subjectivity is achieved at the very boundaries of its dissolution through a discussion of Derrida’s concept of *demi-deuil* or mid-mourning. First though I will gloss Freud’s writing on the oral stage in order to differentiate the two types of orality I’m speaking of here.

### **2.3 Freud’s Cannibalistic Oral Phase**

In his *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud identifies two ‘pregenital’ sexual phases: the oral and the anal. The oral phase, or “cannibalistic pregenital sexual organization,” refers to a time when food ingestion and sexual pleasure cannot be differentiated ([1905] 2001, 198). Moreover, as I mentioned in Chapter One, the “sexual aim” of oral eroticism is “the incorporation of the object” through its pleasurable ingestion (198). Later in “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud connects, at the suggestion of Karl Abraham, the melancholic’s aversion to nourishment to the oral phase in which “the ego wants to incorporate this [libidinal] object choice into itself, and...it wants to do so by devouring it” ([1917] 1991b, 250). The incorporated object is no-doubt a loved object of which

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<sup>23</sup> As Ferenczi introduces introjection, he claims it is in effect “an enlargement of the self,” that is predicated on a primary narcissism that must identify *with* something in order to then love it (Ferenczi in Derrida [1976] 1986a, xvi).

Freud speculates replaces “some pleasure which has already been experienced and is now remembered” ([1905] 2001, 181). In other words, Freud’s theory asserts that the oral phase functions to replace the mother’s absent breast wherein the lips “behave like an erogenous zone” (181). Freudian oral theories rely upon pain, lack, and missing. The autoerotic nature of the oral phase, and its example of thumb-sucking, elucidate the lips as an erotogenic node, which explains a latter interest kissing that connects back to the concomitant pleasure and nourishment of breastfeeding.

Abraham and Torok similarly connect introjection and incorporation to the mouth. A child’s empty mouth “filled” with words marks an initial step of introjection through which the a painful absence is “[channeled] through language” ([1972] 1994, 128). They remark, “this is how the literal ingestion of foods becomes introjection when viewed figuratively” (128). Incorporation differs in that “*words* fail to fill the subject’s void” so that “everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss” (129, 130). The mouth here does not ingest and process but swallows without the use of language and thus without metaphor or figure. This “animitmetaphor” does not allow ingestion but mere swallowing that maintains the loss and “perpetuates the [ego’s] dividing walls” through its radical unspeakability and thus unmournability (131, 130).

We can see here that the oral phase attempts to recreate a lost pleasurable relationship through compensatory ingestion. Freud explains the oral phase in terms of lack so that the lips become a site of pleasure only when they *devour*. This emphasis on rapid incorporation and ingestion is precisely the (Freudian) impetus that I want to argue against. Orality responds to a loss through a symbolically cannibalistic act of auto- and *autre-* consumption. Linguistically linked with death, cannibalism devours and kills the



outside object and places it within the subject. As Derrida critiques the masculinely informed *carnophallogocentrism*, I critique the limited nature of Freud's oral phase. Freud's oral phase and discussion of lips serves a profound auto-interest in that it only serves to affirm and protect the autonomous self. The flesh-eating introjective cannibalism or incorporative maintenance of a loss *via* clandestine preservatory cannibalism does not serve to build relations but to control them through interiorization. Pleasure, however, figures interestingly in this Freudian account.

Freud discusses the labial zone as erotogenically charged "skin or mucous membrane[s]...in which stimuli of a certain sort evoke a feeling of pleasure *possessing* a particular quality" ([1905] 2001, 183, italics mine). And again with, "[the] sexual aim of the infantile instinct consists in *obtaining* satisfaction by means of an *appropriate* stimulation..." (185, italics mine). The italicized words emphasize the linguistic presence of symbolic control, acquisition, accumulation, and *propri(e)*ty that each work to recompense for a lost object. Moreover, Freud's opaque wording suggests that the lips transmit pleasure but only in attempts to retain some lost connection. This prerequisite of lack and loss within a Freudian framework of mourning s(t)olidifies pleasure *only* in response to pain and *only* through interiorization.

Thus, my later argument in this chapter about labial subjectivity differs from Freud's treatment of labial pleasure in terms of how the lips function. In Freud, the lips index a forever-unattainable suck at regaining pleasure whereas through Cixous and Derrida they become sites of relationality. For Cixous and Derrida, the lips do not form the boundary through which (fantastical) cannibalistic consumption occurs but the space

of the in-between of self other that serves for connection and experience rather than incorporating control.

#### **2.4 Depropriating Phallogocentrism via *Demi-Deuil***

For Derrida, ethical subjectivity occurs in a state of constant mourning (mid-mourning, half mourning, semi-mourning, the mourning of mourning, *demi-deuil*), which is found on the borders of introjection and incorporation, self and other, appropriation and alterity ([1977] 1995b, 48, 49). *Demi-deuil*'s ethicality does not violently appropriate the lost other by killing it but always preserves it. In the interview "*Ja*, or the *faux-bond* II" Derrida calls "mourning work" the only "motive proper to me," which is that which compels him to "write or speak" ([1977] 1995b, 49). This passage is deceptive due to his nomination of proper, which does not mean genuine but the Cixousian sense of *propre* or being linked to the "erected...dead phallus" (48). Also, Derrida plays with the ineluctable influence of psychoanalysis on the conception of mourning. Claiming that mourning work is proper to oneself gathers together economy ("work"), subjectivity ("mourning"), and phallogocentrism ("proper") in a performative display that uses the vicissitudes of the historically masculine discipline of psychoanalysis for its very unravelling.

Mourning, as the only proper/*propre* catalyst of being signals the deconstruction of phallic control of subjectivity since mourning signals an irrepressible experience of alterity (49). In other words, the only proper (i.e. real, or, phallic, erect) aspect of subjectivity is the state of mourning which only fragments the subject's ego autonomy. Therefore, the proper can be understood as nothing more than a dissimulation of phantasmatic control whose unity is always estranged. If mourning is the precondition of

the ego, then *proper* masculine unity is founded upon a disavowal of internally experiencing otherness as it occurs in psychoanalytically normative mourning.<sup>24</sup>

## **2.5 Economies of Mourning: Accumulation, Growth, and Thanatopraxis**

Derrida's concept of the trace subsists within his theory of mourning insofar that the trace exists as unknowable, a secret, and often undetected. The trace, *différance*, means that mourning and assimilation can never be accomplished due to the interconnectedness of signifiers and the vast chain of meaning. Mourning and the trace mark a non-unity that exists in one signifier/ego that marks the impossibility of homogeneity due to the constitutional spacing that separates signifiers and time itself so that they are neither palimpsestic nor are they ever fully separate.<sup>25</sup> This concept can be metaphorized in the indigestibility of the other within mourning. Speaking of carnophallogentrism's connection to deconstruction, Derrida says "It would mean respect for that which cannot be eaten—respect for that in a text which cannot be assimilated" ([1991] 2009).

Addressing his dying mother in *Circumfession*, Derrida writes of the economics of mourning that "[it] capitalizes, it accumulates, it stocks up," in connection with his experiences of feeding her with a spoon ([199] 1993, 164). Mourning is viscerally bound with caring for the other through a folded-back feeding as well as through the trope of capitalist accumulation and consumption.<sup>26</sup> The mourning he feels is additive and

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<sup>24</sup> This argument is indebted to Butler's logic as employed in her theory of accomplishing normative gender in which "that which is not me" forms the core around which the subject emerges: "Becoming a 'man' in this logic requires repudiating femininity as a precondition for the heterosexualization of sexual desire and its fundamental ambivalence" (1997, 137).

<sup>25</sup> see Derrida ([1972] 1982) and "Signature Event Context" ([1971] 1988): "This force of rupture is tied to the spacing [*espacement*] that constitutes the written sign..." (9).

<sup>26</sup> This is telling of Derrida's involvements in Marxist politics as well as the political-economic subtext implicit in such a discussion of subjectivity.

growing. Carnophallogocentrism emerges in this text when he writes of “eating the other” or “loving-eating-the other,” which shows the ambivalence of consumption that paradoxically destroys in an attempt to preserve.

Continuing his rumination about feeding the mourned-for mother, which literally attempts to keep her alive, he admits in a sustained homily that she is “failing this nourishment” for which he then apologizes to her “for confessing you where you hear me no longer” and thus signaling she is no longer living (166). In the middle of this rumination a latin phrase, “*nimirum ergo memoria quasi uenter est animi*/ memory is something like a stomach for the mind,” that links the memory of the lost with mental digestion (168).<sup>27</sup> Again digestion, again a textual reference qua Latin to religious tropes. In this passage, mourning in the current economic-political-subjective context accumulates so that it does not (cannot) end due to its tie with the psychic structure of return and nourishment. Interestingly enough, despite the digestive urge of mourning and memory, in the framework of deconstruction, complete digestion cannot occur due to the constitutive necessity of the other.

Maintaining that mourning and subjectivity are intimately bound, Derrida’s open-ended conditional discussion of “*if full mourning is half mourning, what follows for the mourning of mourning?*” implies that mourning can never be completed but is a state of being ([1991] 1993, 167, italics in original). The chain of halving wholes into increasingly infinitesimal divisions blurs the boundary between any certainty and finality. This same model, I argue, applies to mourning’s location at the mouth. Eating the other, loving-eating-the other, in the (unfinished) work of mourning is at once assimilatory yet preservatory due to the impossibility of its completion. This impossibility marks the

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<sup>27</sup> Originally from *The Confessions of Augustine*.

ethical guarantee that full incorporation, introjection, or assimilation will not take place. The concept of mid-mourning insists that the other will always remain, at least partially, other.

Correspondingly, Geoffrey Bennington's accompanying text to *Circumfession* entitled *Derridabase* discusses Derrida's half-mourning relationship with Platonic metaphysics: "Derrida has not accomplished his mourning for metaphysics, that he is not keen to do so. Half-mourning, rather. And therefore *neither* incorporation *nor* introjection" ([1991] 1993, 147-148). Glossing Derrida's eschewal of complete mourning that would assimilate the lost other, Bennington highlights the ethical implications of maintaining the other by claiming that Derrida does not annul (via introjection) or crypt (via incorporation) metaphysics because he has not completed its mourning. Psychoanalysis as a metaphysical project, meaning that it is "only defined with respect to consciousness," remains important for Derrida because to successfully consume its existence would be to destroy it and therefore destroy deconstruction (144). Bennington's discussion of Derrida's "half-mourning" contains a reference to Derrida's *Glas*, *passim* or throughout.

In *Glas*, Derrida calls the psychoanalytic work of mourning *thanatopraxis* characterized as an "appropriative *coup*...a violent operation of class and classification" ([1974] 1986b, 86). This is flanked by his observation, which will soon weave us back to Cixous, "in what psychoanalysis strictly determines as such, the work-of-mourning would merely devour more quickly, in the course of a single meal, the gathered time of a Last Supper [*Cène*], a bigger bit [*mors*]" (86). Psychoanalytically healthy mourning requires the consumption of the lost other in an assimilatory move likened to the

transubstantiation of the Last Supper: idealize, eat, and excrete. The economics of this mourning are ravenous and strategic so that mourning is dutifully and processually terminated in an introjective manner. Moreover, the last supper is also a (s)cène of incorporation due to the metaphorical institution of God's body and blood within the consumer. Derrida's choice of the Last Supper signifies a recognition of metaphoric consumption's importance in hegemonic thought.

Subjectivity in this scenario is reinforced by the consumption of the other for the sake of the ego. Again, experience with alterity is transferred through assimilating the other through the mouth – the other passes through the intermediary space between bounded self and dispersed outside to be contained within the self. Mourning is a violent, appropriating punch that functions through classificatory delimitation that works through specification and reduction (through extracting nutrients) until it disappears (is excreted).

Derrida notes that mourning is temporalized into one quick meal that decreases the time of mourning while imparting the most nutrition. The "I" that this last supper feeds attempts to assimilate the lost other through introjection and incorporation. If memory is a stomach for the mind, then psychoanalytic *thanatopraxis* digests loss until it is processed and ready for its absolute excretion. Against this appropriative act, Derrida seems to propose a mode of mourning not *invested* in assimilating the loss but in maintaining the loss as an unassimilab(ia)le entity.

## ***2.6 Before the Apple: taste, transgression, and...vomit***

Here, I'd like to make the distinction between the masculine retention of consumption and the feminine experience of experiencing otherness as other without translation or assimilation. Cixous' work augments Derrida's critique of this mourning

obsessed with death and removal through her examination of formative cultural texts that show the ways in which the masculine symbolic is entrenched within modes of thought. Speaking of social power, Cixous writes, “It is not anatomical sex or essence that determines us in anything; it is, on the contrary, the fable from which we never escape, individual and collective history, the cultural schema....” ([1984] 1991a, 155). In what follows I’ll explicate Cixous’ understanding of cultural texts that often deal with taste to show the inseparability of fables and reality.

For Cixous, feminine subjectivity is found at the boundary of pleasure, which is always found in relation with something outside of the self. The inside figures prominently in Cixous’ work as a metaphor for unknown otherness – something that exists (or “is, is, is” as Cixous writes) that overrules the law of prohibition replaced by desire of tasting alterity without hierarchy ([1984] 1991a, 151). Subjectivity comes into being when experiencing the pleasure of the inside but not only for its digestion, but to vomit and experience its (re)dispersal; Cixous writes, “Every entrance into life finds itself *before the Apple*” in which the apple is always a “fruit-not-to” eat as decreed by God ([1984] 1991a, 150, 151). In a subsection of “The Author in Truth” titled “The Scene of the *Cène*,” Cixous argues that pleasure and prohibition exist simultaneously and, more than this, prohibition is invisible, arbitrary, and negative whereas the pleasure of tasting the apple is present, desirable, and positive. The apple and the interdict “do not” exist simultaneously. Moreover, these prohibitions and interdicts are always first directed towards femininity.

Taste figures prominently in this fable of libidinal economies: “The Fable [of Adam and Eve] tells us how the genesis of ‘femininity’ goes by way of the mouth,

through a certain oral pleasure, and through nonfear of the inside” ([1984] 1991a, 151). Cixous recognizes the implications of the story of the Garden of Eden: after Eve tastes from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” which can offer her God’s knowledge and pleasure, Eve is made to be “helper” of the man, made from his rib, and then blamed for tricking her husband into also eating the forbidden fruit and punished with painful childbirth and subservience to her husband.<sup>28</sup> God’s rule is threatened by Eve’s potentiality and he therefore punishes her for attempting to become equal with him. A general understanding of normative gender relations can still be found in this fable that hinges upon the woman transgressing the law that prohibits her pleasurable taste.

Feminine subjectivity, writes Cixous, is distinguished along the lines of one’s “relationship to pleasure and the law” (154). Thus, pleasure is associated with women as they “have more of a chance of gaining access to pleasure” as well as to experiencing otherness (155). This statement draws from Cixous’ understanding of how history influences one’s subjectivity. Otherness, pleasure, and subjectivity are the nexus for femininity in this Cixousian framework.

Taste and “experiencing the inside”<sup>29</sup> conjoined with the disgorgement performed by femininity as opposed to the pervasive masculine urge to “judge, diagnose, digest, name...” offers a model of subjectivity not based on internalizing incorporation but a salivary interaction that occurs at the limit of inside and outside the body (Cixous [1976] 1981, 51). To vomit and disgorge, literally “remove from the throat,” metaphorizes the expulsion of the partly digested inside of an object to be removed from the inside of the

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<sup>28</sup> See Genesis 3:16

<sup>29</sup> “We are told knowledge could begin with the mouth, the discovery of the taste of something. Knowledge and taste go together” (Cixous [1984] 1991a, 151)



body to the outside.<sup>30</sup> Thus the inside of the inside is transformed and does not return to the subject but the field of the other.

### **2.7 Labial subjectivity beyond sexual difference: “outside itself in itself”**

I will close this chapter with a discussion of Cixous’ “Savoir” and Derrida’s accompanying commentary, “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” which comprise their collaborative book *Veils*. Specifically I will speak of Cixous’ statement, “She had not realized that eyes are lips on the lips of God” that prompts Derrida’s discussion of labial phonemes as well as a critique of Freud’s theory of sexual difference ([1998] 2001a, 9). I term what I discuss here characteristics of labial subjectivity, as symbolized by the letter “v” found at the center of *savoir* [to know], which theorizes a subject position that on the one hand foregrounds the symbolic importance of lips in spoken communication and on the other hand realizes the possibilities that exist at the partial touching of the body’s lips as the boundary of bodily coherence.<sup>31</sup> I find this important because the metaphor of lips as manifest in spoken word is that which communicates, experiences, and forms the impossibility of absolute boundedness. Lips signal the impossibility of autonomous selves. The shape of the “v” sign symbolizes labial subjectivity through its simultaneously convergent and divergent morphology. The two arms separably stretch outwards yet remain connected.

“Savoir” narrates Cixous’ aftermath to myopia removal surgery in which she moves from the position of “seeing was tottering believing” to “*seeing-with-the-naked-eye*, the miracle” ([1998] 2001, 6, 9). Cixous explains how losing ‘her’ myopia, her “own

<sup>30</sup> Derrida also connects incorporation and vomit but in the form of internal vomit, “but the fantasy [of incorporation] involves eating the object (through the mouth or otherwise) in order *not* to introject it, in order to vomit it, in a way, into the inside, into the pocket of a cyst” ([1976] 1986a, xxxviii).

<sup>31</sup> Again, I emphasize that this understanding of lips has a long history in French feminism and *écriture féminine*.

foreigner,” which once caused her such uncertainty and anxiety, produces a state of mourning (“the mourning for the eye [*la deuil de l’oeuil*”] for her secret “other” that had once been her constant companion who provided now painfully obvious but then unbeknownst “bizarre benefits” (11, 12). Suddenly, the world’s veiled indeterminacy became violent clarity imposed on those who have never experienced the “suspension, desire, refusal” created by myopia (13). The “purgatory and promise” of myopia’s limbo enables Cixous, she realizes retrospectively, a unique perspective of crossing boundaries to unknown and unseen places (13). Cixous’ *thanatopraxis* for her once forceful but forever eradicated myopia results in her promise to never forget the gifts and lessons conferred by her myopic life: “If I forget thee, oh Jerusalem, may my right eye, etc<sup>32</sup>... I shall always hesitate. I shall not leave my people. I belong to the people of those who do not see” (13). Thus, Cixous’ mourning affirms the continued presence of the lost object in an ethical promise of its survival as manifest in her perception and relations with the external world.

As Derrida remarks in “A Silkworm of One’s Own”, the polyvocality of “savoir” can be broken down into the pronoun *ça* [that], the adjective *sa* [his/her], the verb *voir* [to see], and reflexive verb *s’avoir* [to have one’s self] ([1998] 2001a, 36). Moreover “v” is the pivotal grapheme and phoneme – a labial phoneme – of “savoir”. The invisible possibilities held within this word leads Derrida to write of Cixous’ writing in “Savoir”, “One thread runs through this braid, one thread she never loses, the thinnest, the V, which, sharp point downwards, runs its genius through *Savoir*” (56). The sustained

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<sup>32</sup> A reference to Psalms 137:5-6, which claims the psalm writer’s extreme devotion to the memory of Jerusalem: “[5] If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. [6] May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, □ if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.”

presence of the “v,” for Derrida, which he creates a lexicon of “v” words of *Savoir*, marks the syntagmatic and phonematic unity of Cixous’ text as well as the lips’ importance for meaning transmission.

Labial phonemes indicate that one or both lips form the sound of the spoken word units and, as Derrida notes, “v” always connects two vowels so that the “v” is both the needle and thread of Cixous’ text. Speaking the word “savoir,” phonetically /savwaʁ/, reveals that *v* bridges two vowel sounds together, without which the word would be unintelligible. *V* both disrupts and ensures continuity – it alters the consonant sounds in order to give them a different meanings. In a footnote, Derrida speaks of the impossibility of correspondingly translating each of the *v*’s into English: “For translation always fails when it gives up giving itself over to a certain alliance of lips and meaning, of palate and truth, of tongue and what it *does*, the unique poem” (101). Lips and the tongue are active agents. Labial phonemes, that is either relating to or requiring the use of the lip(s), secrete meaning at the end of the body’s limit through partial touching and shifting.<sup>33</sup> They are effects not of a boundary but of the mediation of the transfer of flowing elements moving inside and outside of the body. In other words, the lips perform a limit that permits and symbolizes the permeability of all boundaries.

A labial subjectivity is the nonboundary where ingesting, vomiting, speaking, and breathing occur as well as where self and other become blurred. Cixous’ awed statement, “she had not realized the eyes are the lips on the lips of God,” references the transferability and multifarious sensations of the lips (9). Moreover, eyesight, taste, and divine *knowledge* (still harping with the various components of “savoir”) connect here to

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<sup>33</sup> Secrete can mean both to produce and to conceal.

the “formal and phonetic motifs” of labiality which form “the same braid, but infinite” (56). This infinite similar braid always involves more than one thread. So then, labial subjectivity is actually labial subjectivities, not a single subject position but an affirmation of the braided and infinite possibilities of subjectivity.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, then, Derrida connects Cixous’ writing with the sericulture of silkworms. In a discussion of Cixous’ weaving and braiding, Derrida forays into a discussion of Freud’s sexual difference theory from “On Femininity” that claims women have learned to weave and braid and thus *veil* their sexual difference for fear of exposing their “lack of penis” (Derrida [1998]2001a, 58-59). Another example of Freud’s insistence on the feminine act of secrecy, hiding, and veiling can be found in *Three Essays* in which he writes, “[idealization by] women...partly owing to their conventional secretiveness and insincerity – is still veiled in an impenetrable obscurity” ([1905] 2001, 151). Freud claims that one of the few proper things to females is their ability to hide themselves.

Derrida follows and diverges with Freud by claiming that Cixous’ text “doubtlessly omitted deliberately, *la voile* [sail]” (56). The plural form *Voiles*, from which *Veils* is translated, obscures the linguist difference between *la voile* [sail] and *le voile* [veil]. Despite Cixous’ constant use of v words and *le voile*, Derrida claims that she hides the feminine ‘secret’ of *veils* in plain sight. In doing so, Derrida does not affirm the truth of Freud’s feminine veiling characteristics, but rather highlights how femininity survives, persists, and undermines historical repression through developing veiling techniques. Cixous’ “Savoir” *sails* without every saying so. It *sails* through polysemic

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<sup>34</sup> Again we are reminded of Irigaray: “‘She’ is indefinitely other than herself” and “*the intimacy of that silent, multiple, diffuse touch*” (28, 29).

dispersion, through pleasures not recognized by masculine culture, it *sails* on the wings of experiencing otherness.

We arrive at Derrida's account of the seemingly sexless silkworms that "projected outside what proceeded from itself...outside itself in itself and near itself" its silk that would soon envelop itself (89). The silkworm exists holistically with its environment in that it is unclear where inside and outside begins and ends. Also, just as Cixous claims "eyes are the lips on the lips of God," Derrida notes the transferability of the silkworm's orifices that connect inside with outside: "The silk-producing glands of the caterpillar can, I've just learned, be labial or salivary, but also rectal" (89). The weaving of the silkworm synthesizes elements from inside and outside to cover itself in order to transform into another being. The silkworm does not ingest its surroundings but transforms them and itself, outside and inside, simultaneously.

Labial subjectivity can work similarly by synthesizing inside and outside to adapt, transform, and coexist. Cixous writes of her and Derrida's similar early lives of stigmatization due to being French Jews in Algeria, "one can be inside without being inside, there is an inside in the inside, an outside in the inside and this goes on infinitely" ([2004] 2005, 5). Perhaps this can join back together the disparate points of this chapter that has argued for a subjectivity at the boundaries of the body. Cixous and Derrida's challenges of retentive, assimilatory, and incorporative carno-phallogocentrism lead us to a subject not subject to phallocratism. Cixous' vomiting speaks to mourning, which, if we take this to be the nascence of the ego, opposes incorporation *and* introjection in turn for an ego modeled upon non-coercive radical openness to the outside. Against Freud's claim of "the bodily ego" that sublimates to the psychic ego, I've explored the concept of labial

subjectivity that does not consume and internalize but mediates between inside and outside, self and other. Labial subjectivity does not accumulate nor is it consistent or predictable. Rather than controlling, incorporating, or introjecting, labial subjectivity emerges when the subject threatens to disappear through finding pleasure at sailing through borders.

## Chapter Three: Circulating Improper Relations: Fondling Restraint and Reparation in Henry James and J.J. Rousseau

“Undoing death’s work by willing the togetherness of one-another, infinitely charged with a ceaseless exchange of one another.”  
-Hélène Cixous, “Sorties,” 86

“The open tube that begins at the mouth ends at the anus. Paradoxical as it may seem, the gut is a tunnel that permits the exterior to run right through us.”  
-Elizabeth Wilson, “The Brain in the Gut,” 44

“Among [Melanie] Klein’s names for the reparative process is love.”  
-Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading,” 128

### 3.1 *Relating Shame*

In this chapter I expand my critique of the masculine persistence in poststructural theories of subjectivity in two directions: 1) performing a literary analysis on sections of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Confessions* and *Letter to M. D’Alembert* as well as Henry James’ *The Art of the Novel* as prompted by Sedgwick in order to further my claim that subjectivity is found on the *relational* boundary of self and other; and, 2) by connecting Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s paranoid position to the masculine Selfsame and her reparative position to feminine and labial subjectivity. My focus travels from the previous speculative exegetical reading of texts focused on consumption and orality down the metaphorical digestive tract to approach literary texts focused on shame and anal-ity.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> This chapter closes with a discussion of Sedgwick’s characterization of James’ work as filled with “the obstetric hand, the fistful bowel” in order to further my argument on the non-duality of inside and outside.

Here, I consider James' (reparative) and Rousseau's (paranoid) *rapport à soi* <sup>36</sup>over time as indicative of their understanding of and openness to otherness, through which I offer a reparative reading of how painful shame and loss can be reworked to form something “*not necessarily like any preexisting whole*” and thus signalling the open-ended possibility of, well, possibility (Sedgwick 2003b, 128).

I continue here my masculine and feminine symbolic concept chain so that here authenticity, paranoia, retention, and constipation are considered masculine whereas theatricality, reparation, relationality, and release are considered feminine. These chains are organized through far reaching cultural assumptions that privilege and work towards masculine assumptions. From Plato to Freud to Butler, as I've successively shown, there are certain connections between terms that maintain implicit gendered assumptions. Derrida's claim “These ‘metaphors’ [of phallogocentrism] must be tirelessly questioned” ([1967] 1981, 78) guides me in locating the deconstructing forces within these chains that rely on naturalized gendered tropes. I focus on the tropes of mirrors and shame in order to contest directionality, originality, or authenticity – all manifestations of the Empire of the Selfsame – of subjectivity. Similar to the previous chapter, I attempt to show that claims of authenticity paradoxically signal its very impossibility. First, I discuss the difference between Rousseau's and James' *rapport à soi* to show the intimate connection between self-relationality and other-relationality. Next, I discuss Sedgwick's understanding of shame's relational impetus as read through James' reworking of his once shameful constipation and juxtapose this to David Marshall's discussion of Rousseau's discomfort with theatricality. Rousseau's understanding that sympathy compels the self to “become” an other through identification disrupts ego *and* bodily boundaries that remove the

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<sup>36</sup> In English, “care of the self” or “relation to the self” as delineated in Foucault ([1985] 1997).



controlling connotation of Freudian identification in turn for a more reflexive and less coercive of subjectivity. The chapter closes with a discussion of Sedgwick's reparative reading as well as *fisting as écriture*, which I connect with Cixous' labial subjectivity.

### 3.2 J.J. Rousseau's and Henry James' Shame Subjectivity

In Rousseau's preface to *Lettre à M. d'Alembert sur les spectacles*<sup>37</sup> he simultaneously denigrates his present writing while nostalgically referencing the past – “To be useful, one must be charming, and my pen has lost that art...I feel that I am fallen, and one cannot sink beneath nothingness” ([1758] 1960, 6). Compare this to James' ebullient anticipation of prefacing and revising his oeuvre in *The Art of the Novel* – “Everything [referring to the breadth of his earlier work] sinks in: nothing is lost; everything abides and fertilizes its golden promise...they will begin to gleam and glitter and take form like the gold and jewels of a mine” (James in Sedgwick 2003c, 48). The self-reflexive displays of both Rousseau's apology and James' revelling are theatrical engagements with themselves, their work, and also their anticipated audience. Elements of these two excerpts highlight the main theme of this chapter: the way in which theatrical displays of and relationships with shame are formative of subjectivity. My use of theatrical is closely aligned with performance and influenced by Sedgwick: theatricality is the proscenium or “frontal space of performance” that “extends outward” from the face to the audience, which intersects the absorptive inner space hyperbolized by shame (44). Shame, as I will discuss below, corresponds with my general argument in that it serves as a bridge between self and other that dispels the hope for a masculine subject predicated upon autonomy, control, and boundary making. The act of shame

<sup>37</sup> Originally titled J.J. Rousseau / Citoyen de Genève, / à M. d'Alembert, thereby making Rousseau himself the subject of the book. Marshall excerpts a letter from Rousseau to his publisher, “Not only will you name me, but my name will be in the title and indeed will be the title” (136).

compels a mingling with alterity that blurs boundaries in ways that seek to regain a lost pleasurable connection with an other.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in “Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James’ *The Art of the Novel*” claims that shame is bound with “visibility and spectacle,” which I connect with Rousseau’s understanding of theatricality (that manifests *amour-propre* and sympathy) as discussed in David Marshall’s chapter “Rousseau and the State of Theater” to argue that each concept works to delineate identity predicated upon social relationality, which is always already theatrical (Sedgwick 2003c, 36). For Rousseau, *amour-propre* is the state of being brought about by sociality in which we are “always outside of ourselves” because of the constant quest to understand how others perceive us through comparison, imitation, jealousy, and social positioning (Rousseau in Marshall 1988, 146).<sup>38</sup> Sympathy acts not by self-scrutiny but by identification with an other and the concomitant movement of “taking [the place] of others” through which we “take on its being” (147). According to Rousseau, both of these states occur through theatricality in which one’s true being is somehow removed from itself. I will argue that Rousseau’s discomfort with one’s subjectivity being removed from its bodily confines signals a dedication to the empire of the Selfsame. In contradistinction, I claim that James’ pleasure of exploring his compacted yet-to-be excretion reveals a subjectivity not scared of being other than itself, but committed to exploring, repairing, and letting go.

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<sup>38</sup>*Propre* is the translated word for “Selfsame.” *Amour-propre* and the empire of the Selfsame [*propre*] carry a linguistic affinity that I extrapolate to assert the self reflection of *amour propre* maintains masculine tendencies.

Moreover, I will highlight the individuating *and* relational aspects of shame via theatricality. Rousseau claims that *amour-propre* and sympathy are imperfect mirrors of each other whereas Sedgwick's discussion of shame infers that shame in effect mirrors itself (inward and outward/rectum and recto). Using the mirror metaphor to explore the impossible separation of inside and outside, original and copy, subject and object, self and other, I argue that the authenticity for which Rousseau strives fails due to its requirement of autonomy that cannot be achieved because identity emerges through theatrical social relationality; authenticity requires the 'mirror' of the other for the concept of authenticity to emerge, which thereby links the two to each other. Self-reflection and identificatory sympathy necessarily bifurcate the subject. I close with a discussion of the authors' relationship (Rousseau's pleasure-shame and James' shame-pleasure) to their past works to suggest the possible reparative pleasures of reappropriated shame as shown by James. James provides a model for shame can be pleasurably used to create relational bonds. My methodology in this chapter works through juxtapositions of Rousseau and James' work so as to mirror each statement off of each other to see where the converge, interact and diverge. These juxtapositions will serve my larger goal that seeks to address how painful pasts can be reworked to confer sustenance and pleasure in the present and future.

### ***3.3 Shame: Identity Through Extroversion and Introversion***

This section works with Sedgwick's characterization that shame operates through simultaneous introversion and extroversion. Identity emerges through this double effect of shame's internal and external movement by producing individuating self-exploration and a relational impetus to reconnect with an outside entity. Sedgwick claims that the

affect of shame is a performative that works to bring about a social relation – it is a “constituting identificatory communication....a desire to reconstitute the interpersonal bridge” that has been lost (2003c, 36). Her essay on James analyzes his visit to previous works and how a pleasurable anal eroticism accompanies this revision, which linguistically manifests in language characteristic of painful intestinal obstruction (i.e. severe constipation). Sedgwick’s account of ego formation differs from Freud’s account along the axis of relation to alterity. As I discussed in the previous chapters, the Freudian ego is born in the incorporative and introjective movements of mourning that confers phasmatic unity on the self at the expense of the other. Opposed to this, Sedgwick’s affective account does not *contain* the lost other but attempts to regain the pleasurable *relation*. Shame subjectivity versus mourning subjectivity diverge at the limit of one’s commitment to ego boundaries as it is connected to bodily boundaries.

Using Sylvan Tomkins’ affect theory as well as psychological research, Sedgwick exemplifies shame through the scene of a caregiver’s face becoming unrecognizable to a child (i.e.: the cessation of a communicative smile). At this moment, shame initiates with the child’s downward look that signals the painful loss of the once joyful communication while simultaneously registering this loss into the ego; shame performs a double move with external and internal manifestations. One part of shame, then, is a relational gesture that impels the other to take sympathy and re-establish the absent connection. Importantly, Sedgwick characterizes this bearing of the self on an other as a productive state of being that moves to repair a lost pleasurable emotional connection.<sup>39</sup> This

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<sup>39</sup> See Sedgwick’s (2003b) “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think this Essay is About You” in which she discusses an alternative hermeneutics that privileges reparative rather than the almost ubiquitous paranoid reading practices. I take up this idea towards the end

ontological state of shame is important to my argument in that it is a subject position, or more accurately the emerging of the possibility of procuring a subject position, that is conditioned by a double move of introversion and extroversion which relies equally upon self and other. Opposed to Freud's incorporative melancholia that produces the ego, this view of subjectivity produces the ego *in between* the self-other relation.

Shame, argues Sedgwick, "generates and legitimates the place of identity – the question of identity – at the origin of the impulse to the performative, but does so without giving that identity space the standing of an essence," which places shame as highlighting the self's dependence on the other through acknowledging the fundamental relationality of beings (2003c, 64). Contrary to the monovalenced pain of melancholic subjectivation, shame subjectivation is painful yet sanguinely optimistic due to its action towards re-establishing the pleasurable connection. Moreover, this shame subjectivity works non-coercively by not assigning or prescribing a specific type of identity, but provides the space for a multitude of identities to emerge. The performative move delineated here is that shame moves to create something, not merely to describe or reflect an existing (or absent) entity. Thus, shame works as a placeholder, a clearing of space for identity to emerge; shame productively performs itself and thus alters its self-subject and other-object. Sedgwick claims that identity formation via shame occurs through necessary and intermittent *failed* relations with other beings. Another difference I want to note here is that these failed relations are not characterized negatively or through an internalizing trope but as necessary moments to compel subjectivity not through consuming but attempted reconnection.

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of this paper. Moreover, useful here is Freud's *fort/da* game from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that he asserts helps the child understand and control painful separation and lack of autonomy.

We are always already relational in that early survival is always dependent upon an others's care. More specifically, shame delineates the space of identity due to its "painful individuation" that works to make the subject aware of itself as subject *and* object (2003c, 37). Synthesizing psychoanalysis and Sedgwick, I argue that shame cathects the individual's body, by encouraging self-scrutiny, to produce it's ego and body morphology in a way that did not previously exist – this inward turning delineates our own individuality as marked through outward relationships with an other. Sedgwick writes that James writing about his own writing is saturated with the scents of "a cherished identity performed through a process of turning inside out," which connects with my broader argument that inside and outside are consistently permeable, in flux, and thereby a source of knowledge, pleasure, and relationality (2003c, 60). This psychic inside turning outside is compatible to Elizabeth Wilson's discussion of the external-internal digestive tube as hinted at by the epigraph quote. Indeed the nascence of any human being and thus any human sociality lies in the maintenance of a connection with the other, which, when broken, produces an inward looking pain and outward looking cry for help that places identity on the möbius strip of self and other, individual and social. This delineating and relational process is set in motion through the "visibility and spectacle" of human interaction, which will soon bring us to Rousseau's denigration yet controlled regulation of theatricality.

Here I'd like to note how Sedgwick's view navigates Freud. Freud's bodily ego subsists here in that shame exists on the boundaries of the body (downward turn, burning cheeks) that also transmits this awareness to the depths of the psyche. Yet, the bodily ego transfers to the internal ego but also in reaching outward. I'd like to flag here a point I

will develop later in this chapter – James’ use of space that places recto (frontal depthlessness) and rectum (penetrable behind of the *fond* [bottom]) on the *same incongruent plane* (Sedgwick 2003c, 51, 55). Already we see Sedgwick’s likeness to Cixous in terms of the relationship to alterity that does not presuppose a hierarchical binary. I argue later in this chapter that Cixous’ critique of the empire of the Selfsame aligns closely with Sedgwick’s work. Next, though, I will explain how Sedgwick’s theory of shame at first seems contrary to Rousseau’s philosophical oeuvre that is often seen as anti-theatrical and anti-society, but that visibility and spectacle is crucial in Rousseau’s writing.

### **3.4 Theatricality: The Unbearable Bearing Of/On the Other**

David Marshall’s “Rousseau and the State of Theater” argues for a re-evaluation of *Lettre à d’Alembert sur les spectacles* beyond its common interpretation as an anti-theatrical tract to consider *Lettre* as a piece of writing that ultimately recognizes the unavoidable ubiquity of theatricality, much less spectacle. This recognition, Marshall argues, leads Rousseau to propose a “rigorously enforced theatricality” in Geneva that values open transparency in the name of honesty and authenticity rather than the Parisian mode of theatrical masquerade (Marshall 1988, 160). Instead of arguing for the abolition of theater, then, Marshall claims that Rousseau ultimately asserts that, “the state must use theater to promote its own ideology” to compel morality under the state’s rigorous surveillance (165). The Genevans to whom *Lettre* is addressed must use theater differently than the depraved Parisians by “guaranteed theatrical exposure” through “‘policing and good morals’” (162, Rousseau in Marshall 163). Rousseau identifies a threat to society emanating from the playhouse – the actor’s extreme sympathy and the

spectators' dulled sympathy threaten to invade society at large to become other than themselves *and* "think they have no role to play in the [real life] scenes and dramas around them" (144).

Instead of theatricality's effacement, Rousseau recommends its institutionalization as a compromise. Marshall claims that Rousseau is alarmed both by "the loss of self" that actors experience when acting as well as the instituted distance from others' pains rather than concerned identification (145). The actor's "forgetting of the man" that occurs through identification with the role is the threatening aspect of theatricality, which is paradoxically what is called for in the spectator's sympathetic response (Rousseau in Marshall, 145). The only way to control this loss of an authenticity and bounded self is to control it via state repression. An unbounded self, that is a heterogenous subjectivity, is combated by more subject-boundary making attempts. Yet this attempt to symbolically-masculinely control the non-masculine consistently fails.

Theatricality, as defined by Rousseau, is "the exchange of regards, the awareness of others as beholders," which threatens to dissolve the autonomous self due to the fall from nature in which persons become self-conscious spectacles for other (Marshall, 137). Connecting back to Sedgwick's characterization as the "frontal space of performance" that extends to an audience, I speculate that theatricality (through performance) signals a relational connection that exceeds autonomous intention. For Rousseau, theatricality damningly introduces an awareness of others' looks, which immediately separates the self from itself, whereas in Sedgwick, theatricality produces the possibility for relationality as well as indexes an outward manifestation of in an inward affect.



Theatricality is thus not a homogenous concept but signals a zone of indeterminacy for how to interpret the relationships, connections, and divisions between self and other.

Negative characterizations of theatricality, I argue, signal a fear that masculine unity and control is undermined by symbolically feminine tendencies connecting to the so-called leaky body and infirm personality (Rousseau connects actors with women since they exist only for “the regard of others,” and with prostitutes, “to show oneself for money” (Rousseau in Marshall, 140, 141)). In juxtaposition to the *carnophallogocentrism* that wishes to control the act of separation through ingestion, Rousseau interestingly acknowledges the impossibility of eradicating theatricality, yet that it must be controlled and regulated for the purpose of the state (Rousseau in Marshall, 141). Thus, rather than denying its existence, Rousseau institutionalizes theatricality in attempt to bound its very unboundable tendencies.

In addition to this rereading of *Lettre*, Marshall discusses Rousseau’s ambivalent treatment of *amour-propre* (self-love) and sympathy (for the other) that are instated by theatricality. The bearing of the other on the self brings about Rousseau’s concept of *amour-propre*. *Amour-propre* becomes the organizing center of social relations that at the same time creates comparison, display, hierarchy, dishonesty, envy, and shame. Dent claims that Rousseau understands *amour-propre* as “the source of personal corruption and suffering and social evil,” which simultaneously creates a need of external recognition that secures one’s place as an equal in society (34, 35). Thus, *amour-propre* contains within it the potential for an egalitarian society but which always fails due to the comparisons and therefore hierarchical distinctions made with others. *Amour-propre* has personal and social elements that delineate the self’s existence as a self.

Rousseau locates the transitional barrier between nature and society at the gaze of the other that, in effect, makes oneself into a spectacle (internally/for the self and externally/for the other) (Marshall, 151). Theatrical consciousness and its institution of *amour-propre* is the sad fall from nature (temporally *before the apple*) where individuals existed without the contamination of the other's consideration. The presence of *amour-propre* is the loss of the autonomous self; as Rousseau worries, the theater could make one "forget himself and occupy himself with foreign objects" (Rousseau in Marshall 145).<sup>40</sup> The self is alienatingly displaced through the invasion of threatening others. Moreover, just as shame's corollary is itself, *amour-propre* also has a corollary, that of sympathy or pity.

Sympathy and *amour-propre* function as a double movement having divergent properties yet emanate from the same epicenter, theatricality. Marshall places *amour-propre* and sympathy as inseparable – "the reflection of sympathy is always in danger of becoming the reflection of amour-propre since sympathy and amour-propre appear as mirror images of each other" (151). Sympathy exists simultaneously with *amour-propre* in that sympathy is the self's experience of an other's pain as if inhabiting the other's body (the self goes to the other). This is made possible by the awareness of others through the process of *amour-propre* (the other comes into the self). Coming back to the trope of reflection, Marshall writes, "What is at issue in both of Rousseau's claims about reflection is the moment of comparison that appears to constitute both pity and *amour-propre*" (151). The mirror is a useful metaphor to use here to due to its requiring a

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<sup>40</sup> It would be interesting to take up a Sedgwickian reading of Rousseau that focuses on the exhibitionism and sexuality in his writing. The self shattering possibilities of *amour propre* as transporting one "outside of himself," "beside the self in a moment of self-forgetting (Marshall 146). Could we occupy Rousseau with the foreign object of James' fist? See Sedgwick (2003), "fisting-as-écriture" (48).

material presence to reflect back – the mirror requires something in its field of vision to transform and reflect back to the viewer or reflected. Moreover, the theatrical mirror synchronically constitutes sympathy (relations with the other) and *amour-propre* (self-relations). This mass of subjectivities occupying one another in profoundly messy way disrupts the *propre* aim of masculine subjectivity. Anal occupation, as I will discuss later, further recoils masculine subjectivity, but first I will discuss how a mirror scene in Rousseau complicates autonomous subjectivity to bring us back to Sedgwick.

### ***3.5 Identificatory Reflections, Refractive Desires***

This section focuses on the effects of comparison qua reflection, which connects back to Sedgwick's suggestion that identity is a Möbius strip in which two seemingly opposite terms cannot be separated from, or exist without, the other. By theoretically analyzing a mirror scene from Rousseau's work, I argue that the mirror exposes the difficulty of separating self from other, individual from social, and pleasure from desire. Implicit in my argument is that the mirror trope helps to explain that autonomous subjectivity unravels itself due to its initiation via relationality.

The reflective mirror/moment confuses original and copy, self and other to performatively materialize each other; the moment one steps into the mirror scene the reflection comes into being.<sup>41</sup> An anecdote from Rousseau's *Confessions* can help us explore this issue further. Rousseau depicts a scene in which his secret observation of Mademoiselle Basile is suddenly revealed when she glimpses his reflection in a mirror of which he is unaware (Rousseau [1782] 1995, 62-63). Rousseau writes that he is "outside

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<sup>41</sup> This is performative because the reflection does not exist before the introduction of the reflected. The very idea of the reflected creates the reflection, it does not exist before the mirrored image. The mirror works to produce an entity that did not exist prior to the moment.

of [him]self” at her intimate sight.<sup>42</sup> Yet, when Mme. Basile spots Rousseau, she silently directs him to place himself by her side. In this scene, the spectator quickly becomes the spectacle (and the spectacle becomes the spectator) – Rousseau the observer becomes Rousseau the observed. And in all of this, the mirror is the crux on which the spectator/spectacle and the other’s thoughts become impossible to finally determine.

Rousseau identifies Mme. Basile’s reaction and positioning, in a complex process, as being similarly filled with desire. She takes his role of spectator and observes him through the mirror, so that Rousseau also thinks that she shares his desire through her presumed identification with him. The mirror reflects his intentions just as these intentions are mirrored in his perception of her perception. Mme. Basile, then, takes Rousseau’s role and he identifies her with himself. The ricocheting mirror structure of *amour-propre* and sympathy plays with identification, projection, and symbolically *becoming* someone else. Rousseau identifies with her (sympathy) because he thinks she identifies with him (*amour-propre*). He interprets her through transporting himself in a mirror like refractory confusion.

This scene displays a performative bringing about of being. Rousseau creates a scene out of unstable circumstances by instituting a state (Mme. Basile’s desire for Rousseau) that did not exist before – he wills it to exist by his own illusions of certainty. Moreover, specularly speaking, the mirror mirrors – it creates the reflection, it creates what it says it will create out of “thin air.” The reflection is nothing in itself except for a repetition that is apparently the same as the original. In Rousseau’s mirror scene, his intention dictates the perception of what happens and who feels what.

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<sup>42</sup> Indeed in an earlier scene of voyeurism, sans mirror, Rousseau expresses a similarly orgasmic sentiment “just as I was ready to succumb to my transports, she spoke a word to me” ([1782] 1995, 152).

Ultimately, Rousseau is grappling with the question of how to exist with otherness while seeming to miss the theatricality of his own story. Sympathy and *amour-propre* are necessary for this nerve-arousing event to occur. Sympathy comes to accompany *amour-propre* as its reflective mirror image, sympathy as the outward, social expression of the inward, individuating, self-awareness heightening process of *amour-propre*. These mirror images, or at least constitutive others (one could not exist without the other), are not quite the same but very difficult to tell apart.

### ***3.6 Mirror Reflections and Rousseau's Misplaced Shame: A Case Study***

This section traces a link between theater and shame to show their productive capacities in that they sharpen one's sense of individuality while also necessitating an outward relational move to the field of the other. I revisit the mirror scene of the previous section to explore shame's centrality that functions to transmit Rousseau's desires to Mme. Basile and thereby obfuscating any clear distinction between *amour-propre* and sympathy or self and other. It seems that his sympathy is overpowered by *amour-propre* so that his heightened awareness of Mme. Basile's gaze ecstatically overpowers his autonomy.

First, coming back to Sedgwick, "shame is the affect that mantles the threshold between introversion and extroversion, between absorption and theatricality, between performativity and – performativity" (2003c, 38). Identity is the product of this (always) theatrical shame. By folding theater into the double/mirror movement of shame – sympathy, the external countenance (recto, outside) and inward isolation (rectum (to be occupied by the other), inside) – I will show that such relational preconditions work to bifurcate authenticity from being other than itself.

To reiterate, Sedgwick characterizes shame as bound with the “visibility and spectacle” of the theatrical absence of a once existing entity (2003c, 36). Juxtaposed with Rousseau’s claim concerning the *Confessions* mirror scene that, “All my stupidity could not prevent me from determining that she shared my embarrassment, and perhaps my desires, and that she was held back by a sense of shame [*retenue par une honte*]<sup>43</sup> similar to my own,” we can see the visibility and spectacle that produces the sense of shame that did not exist prior to his specular uncovering (Rousseau [1782] 1995, 63; French in Marshall 152). This is a visual and specular moment through which shame and its psychic effects emerge at the moment of his uncovering. Shame, over desire, is Rousseau’s most acutely felt affect. More importantly, he feels this shame within himself and places it in Mme. Basile as well. In Rousseau’s interactions with Mme. Basile visibility, reflection, shame and theatricality interact to shape and produce one another. But, what is Rousseau ashamed of in this situation and what does he do with this shame?

Rousseau transforms his shame into an identificatory connection between him and Mme. Basile that at once maintains the possibility of mutual desire and, precisely because of this desire, mutual restraint.<sup>44</sup> Rousseau’s and Mme. Basile’s (phantasmatic) shame-desire-restraint nexus is then creative of community and painful individuation. Rousseau is at once absorbed in his own desires and theatrical in the presence of Mme. Basile. Rousseau is at once introverted to his self-awareness under her gaze and extroverted to interpret this gaze. Insidiously though, Rousseau’s identification with Mme. Basile is

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<sup>43</sup> There is a homophonic connection between *honte* [shame] and *hanter* [to haunt].

<sup>44</sup> In a preceding voyeuristic scene with Mme. Basile, Rousseau remarks, “I sometimes saw her scarf swell up rather frequently as if in some sort of sympathy” in regards to his own irregular breathing induced by his intense infatuation with her (62). Rousseau interprets her labored breathing and as mirroring his own with the same meaning as his. Could it not be that she was also annoyed? I will further discuss this scene a few paragraphs below.

actually an identification with himself, not with her. This identification (as connected to incorporation and introjection) connects with the other only in a parasitic way in which the other is not seen at all but merely used as an extension of the self. The visibility, spectacle, and shame that fill Rousseau at being recognized in the mirror, Miller writes, “is the effect of sympathy” (152).

This effect of sympathy is the outward identificatory moment of being-in-the-other, of feeling another’s feelings, that theatricality necessitates. Moreover, this sympathy is often regarded as shared due to its specular (mirror on Mme. Basile’s mantle/Sedgwick’s mantel) relationship with amour-propre. If shame is the “threshold between introversion and extroversion,” shame is a mirror-like entity in which two comparable images are reflected to each other simultaneously, which therefore connects them; this is how the inside and outside, flatness and depth, “the smell of a cherished identity performed through a process of turning inside out” become impossible to separate (Sedgwick 2003c, 60). This all comes to exist through the shame-mirror that mantles (that is also above the mantel in the room) the possibility of relationality. The shame-mirror haunts. *La honte-miroir qui hante*.

“Theatrical (self-)consciousness” becomes unavoidable in Rousseau’s societal moment (Miller, 138). Moreover, the very theatricality as introduced by the mirror’s reflection is also performative. The shame [*honte*], Rousseau feels is performatively placed within the reflected other of Mme. Basile. This statement works to deconstruct Rousseau’s own arguments by showing his inability to distinguish between self and other, inside and outside. The authenticity that he pines for is always already lost in his

overpowering sympathetic identification (which also becomes her sympathetic identification) with Mme. Basile, which in effect swallows her.

This mirror scene is one centered in and mantled upon shame. Rousseau's rapturous self-undoing during his hiding and watching Mme. Basile transforms to the shame of his being discovered and subsequently observed. If shame is the mantle of performativity and itself, then I argue that shame is a mantle between self and other, which functions in this case as the ambivalence between desire for other and desire for an autonomous self. Shame exposes the impossibility of this. Again, this understanding of shame is similar to the melancholic subjectivity of Butler qua Freud, but with a caveat. Building upon my previous argument that subjectivity originates at the moment and place in which bodily limits threaten to become undone, shame propels the move from the self to the other thereby blurring autonomy. No longer internalization but dispersion.

But how does this shame, which is supposed to reinstate the lost connection work to disavow this connection? It seems to me that the bridled shame fails to restore the connection because these connections, for Rousseau, are phantasmatic in the first place – they are asymmetrically weighted toward sympathy, his mingling with the other is much stronger than his *amour-propre*. Indeed, Rousseau's (fear of the other's) sympathy overpowers his *amour-propre*. I assert that his shame and restraint as shown in his preface and the mirror scene show more discomfort with the other's gaze rather than his gazing on the other. This asymmetry that operates through controlling the other's gaze through while maintaining full surveillance over the other works to block any form of mutual interaction.

### ***3.7 Pleasurable (self) Relations***



Sedgwick notes that much of James' most passionate writing results from his "be[ing] in thrall to what had long been his painful, fussy, immensely productive focus on the sensations, actions and paralyses, accumulations and probings and expulsions of his own lower digestive track" (2003c, 49). James productively reconfigures his former abjection (and non-abjected bodily excess) via forming new relations with his painful past. The spatiality of outside and inside mixed with the temporal lapse between past and present introduce a scene in which nothing is fixed and everything is subject to re-evaluation and transformation. This temporal and spatial process of "recirculation described as if it could go on endlessly, only adding to the richness of ...the 'residuum,' the thing 'picked,' 'plucked'..." shows the possibility of how relationality, even to our selves, can reparatively transform shame to pleasure (58). Against, Rousseau's "I am beneath myself" and "I am no more," James 'reparents' his previous work so as to use shame to be "narratively, emotionally, and performatively productive" (Rousseau [1758] 1960, 7; Sedgwick 2003c, 44).

Finally then, we can observe James' pleasurable feelings through evocatively constipated images that cathartically manifest painful referents. James uses shame to create. His words evidence his attempts to repair the past not by disavowing those feelings, but by using them in a constructive and sustaining way. Indeed, James "extracts sustenance" from his own body, his own past, which was often hostile and painful for him. Yet, at the same time, this painful body is reworked to be a sustaining and creative force.

James' pleasures emerge from his "attempt...to love" his former, pained and shame-marked self. I do not mean to suggest any psychological reasons for James' and

Rousseau's differences, but I do want to argue that the difference between James' love and Rousseau's loathing are the differences between revolutionary politics and paralyzing cynicism. As I have shown, the individuating process of shame functions differently for Rousseau and James. Moreover, the relational aspects of shame function differently as well – Rousseau attempts absolution, from the reader for his poor writing, James attempts reparation from his own past self. The sympathy of the other, the relational goal of shame thus forms shame communities.

It seems that in all of this, one of the differences between James and Rousseau is the different levels to which they relate to *themselves*. James objectifies himself, makes his 'own' self strange. The individuating force of shame does not index a specific individual, but the self as a collection of mutable and changing individuals. Rousseau has changed from his earlier to later work but cannot separate 'himself' from himself enough to realize that things can change and that the surprise of the future is still unknown. Conversely, James objectifies himself, or at least de-subjectifies himself.

Rousseau's discomfort with others – our bearing on others and how they bear on us – ultimately becomes his bane. Yet, James shows that this is not our fate. Shame, and its referents of pleasure and theatricality, comes to be pivotal points through which something in the past is transformed, reflected, refracted to produce the possibility of a future better-yet. In the wake of pain, it is possible to "fish out every little figure and felicity, every little fact and fancy" to find sustenance through the transformative mantle of shame as creating the node from which relations are possible (2003c, 48).

### ***3.8 Reparative Reading From the Behind***

It is necessary in this final move to explicitly characterize James' writing (as she does not do so) as an example of Sedgwick's delineation of reparative reading, which is a theoretical mode that values surprise, hope, and reconstruction (Sedgwick 2003b). This concept is future oriented, not chained to the past, repressed, or confined to a certain body – surprise becomes good, the future is unwritten, and hope is enacted to piece together painful fragments to form a new, previously unimaginable assemblage. Reparative reading is a demanding gesture that removes “the terror out of error” and to disregard what might happen because the future will not necessarily follow the trajectory of the present or the past; everything is contingent (2003b 147). The final sentence of Sedgwick's “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading,” from where this term comes, states “What we can best learn from [reparative reading practices] are, perhaps, the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture – even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them” (150-151). In James' case, these hostile objects from which sustenance is extracted is figured in his once shameful relation to his constipated self.

Sedgwick's concept of reparative reading positions itself against the paranoid position, the “self-defeating strategies for *forestalling pain*,” which, she argues, has gained ubiquity in queer, feminist, and deconstructive criticism (137). “The unidirectionally future-oriented vigilance of paranoia” operates through *always knowing* the past so as to avoid future surprises so that paranoid theory can only prove its original assumption and thereby limits itself only to identifying what it already suspects.<sup>45</sup> For example, I have employed a paranoid reading of Freudian informed accounts of

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<sup>45</sup>Sedgwick exemplifies this in a discussion of Foucault's “repressive hypothesis,” which his work does not work outside of but strengthens that which he writes against by “means of displacement, multiplication, and hypostatization” (2003, 11).

subjectivity. For Sedgwick, it is not enough to know that phallocentrism exists, as I have attempted to show, but also to actively repair the injustices of phallocentrism through imagining a culture devoid of it. My aim in employing this mode of critique is to rectify this historical formation while also moving towards a theory not indebted to the phallus.

Or in other words, moving towards that does not actively rely on the phallus it rejects (through imbuing it with power by talking via making it central). Because we need feminist theory without patriarchy as its only object of concern.

Paranoid theory necessitates this connection to patriarchal phallocentrism. Reparative criticism revises the stolid temporality employed by paranoid thinking in order to enable an affinity with the “heartbeat of contingency” esteemed by queer thinking (147). The paranoid position in which “*you can never be paranoid enough*” follows the masculine empire of the Selfsame by its isolating tendencies, mistrust of others, defensiveness, obsessive visibility, and valuing self protection over interactions with others (127).

Differing from this view, reparative theory allows a way outside of this linear narrative that opens up other possibilities of knowing. James’ writing can be read as reparative because his self-understanding changes over time in a way that the painful past is reworked into a form of sustenance. Reparative theory allows for the possibility of change so, for example, the empire of the Selfsame’s phallic tower can crumble tumble rumble down because a linear understanding of historical progress can be ruptured. In other word, the empire of the Selfsame follows a limited trajectory that is not necessarily ubiquitous. What I find useful in the reparative mode is that the sense of fear, retention,

and control marked by the masculine and paranoid position is struck down. James' anus is transformed into a place of pleasure through fisting – “the centrality of an anal preoccupation in James' sense of his body, his production, and his pleasure” (2003c, 49). James' once retentive constipation, similar to Freudian incorporation, transforms into pleasurable release and openness to once-scary alterity.

In a closing gesture, I'd like to place beside each other the notion of fisting-as-*écriture* with the use of spatiality in James (Sedgwick 2003c, 48, 51). Fisting-as-*écriture* describes James' oft usage of imagery that metaphorizes the writing process through tropes of auto-fisting; “I shall be able to [plunge] my hand, my arm, in, deep and far, up to the shoulder...and fish out every little figure and felicity, every little fact and fancy that can be to my purpose” (James in Sedgwick 2003c, 48). I'd like to place this emphasis of auto-pleasure next to Sedgwick's exploration of James' desire for a linguistic spatiality of the simultaneous obverse (face of a coin) and reverse (opposite side of the face) for which Sedgwick extrapolates: “ ‘recto’ as the (depthless) frontal face [must] be understood as opening freely onto ‘rectum’ as the (penetrable) rear (51). The metaphor of a concentric, yet penetrable “engraved and fingered coin” connects with the interconnected and leaky body (51). In other words, self and other traverse a division that simultaneously maintains separability and similarity (separability and reparability), intimately connected and mutable as signaled by the coin's fingered surface.

Interconnecting recto and rectum, front and behind, flatness and depth holds implications for the labial subjectivity discussed in chapter Two. The labial subjectivity that touches itself upon its separation that also allows relations with others through its status as a non-bounding exchange-allowing boundary. If Cixous' writings can lead to a

subjectivity centered around the work and symbol of lips, as I have argued, then Sedgwick's writing about reparation via anal eroticism allies with Cixous in that they are predicated upon ever-possible mutability, pleasure, and engagement with alterity. James works towards reparation by focusing on his anus – the porous bodily (a)boundary. Through Sedgwick's explanation of the incongruous yet coinciding terms, the anal eroticism releases James into a more pleasurable state through the very same porous tunnel that begins with the lips. Placing side-by-side two opposing terms, temporalities, or spatialities exposes the interconnections and similarities of their supposed differences. Through reading Cixous and Sedgwick together, the aporias of the subject are no longer to be feared and covered over, but celebrated for the communicativity and experiences that such aporias allow and sustain.

## Conclusions: “Awakening this new us”

“Silk work – turning fabric into other fabric...Treasure scraps of silk/ Somehow the silk and shit go together – the waste products, fantasies of self sufficiency, not dependent, spinning straw into gold.”

-Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, 206

“Instead of having to choose between two sides, one having a bone to pick with the other, we would have to find out how to get by on the side of the same...”

-Jacques Derrida, “A Silkworm of One’s Own,” 61

“And now after the night, the day, you would say, where are we, where do we awaken, where do we keep watch on awakening this new us?”

-Hélène Cixous, “The Flying Manuscript,” 46

Attempting to conclude my thesis presents somewhat of an impasse. The conceptualization of subjectivity found in the preceding pages does not lend itself to be summarized, closed-off, and thus bounded. Labial subjectivity, that metonymic/ metaphoric/ idiomatic subject position indebted to Cixous, Derrida, “French Feminism,” and *écriture féminine* enjoys dispersion, play, and non-exclusion. I’d like to discuss one implication of this theory and its extrapolative plasticity, that is, its *fondness* that such a theory maintains to the non-exclusion of anality, as discussed at the end of Chapter Three, in order to illustrate its implications on sexual difference. Before doing so, I would like to express two more affinities that can be gleaned from the readings in this thesis: between Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and the work of Elizabeth Freeman, thus linking to Cixous through Sedgwick. Connecting these three feminist and queer thinkers can provide us with new understandings of bodies, pleasures, histories, futures, subversions, and revolutions.

Sedgwick discuss a “‘fond’ rhythm of reading” that linguistically connects with enthusiasm, retrospection, bottom (in French), backward, and foundations (2003c, 61, 55). This rhythm, which allows for a productive “theoretical deviance,” in the form of being slow, “clumsy,” and trailing behind, re-evaluates these traits that are often deferred for the qualities of quickness, precision, and pre-eminence (61). This theoretical deviation speaks to Elizabeth Freeman’s work on “bottom historiography,” that denotes a queer temporality “structured as an uneven transmission of receptivity rather than authority or custom, of a certain enjoyably porous relation to unpredictable futures or to new configurations of the past” (2010, 109). Fondness, receptivity, and bottomness initiate a (reparative, as acknowledged by Freeman) theoretical mode that is not interested in knowing *better*, arriving first, or paranoiac relationality. Rather, the *fondness* of bottom historiography, or bottom historiography’s *fondness*, is found in its porousness, its generosity to otherness, and its non-fear of deviating authority.

Finally, through the link I’ve drawn between Sedgwick’s reparative reading and Cixous’ feminine libidinal economy<sup>46</sup>, we can distinguish an affinity between these three thinkers in terms of how they *fondly* and ebulliently approach pain, loss, and time. Cixous writes that ‘feminine light’ is a “slow, sweet, difficult, absolutely unstoppable, painful rising that...wets and spreads apart what is dull and thick, the stolid, the volumes” ([1976] 1986, 88). This strikingly porous characterization of the feminine libidinal economy moves slowly, persistently, and foments change through seeping upwards, from the bottom up. I anachronistically read Cixous’ quote as an example of reparative reading as well as bottom historiography. The polyvalent movements, affects, and goals of

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<sup>46</sup> It would be interesting to apply a Cixous framework of libidinal economies to a critique of capitalism. Economy deals with wealth, resources, and distribution, which seem to connect back with the larger metaphorical discussion of femininity and masculinity.



‘feminine light’ function through lingering, discontent, and indomitable surges from *behind* (repression, economically, historically).

Cixous-Sedgwick-Freeman, Labial-Reparative-Bottom, seem to me to offer exciting conceptual and practical implications. Their immensely hopeful, non-coercive, playful, and non-hierarchical works empower societally disregarded subjectivities and their communities. These three thinkers enable us to, reiterating Sedgwick, “[extract] sustenance” by mining certain pleasures found amongst pain that maintains “suspense and surprise” in order to encourage the non-internalizing act of “shoot[ing] through and smash[ing] the walls” of hegemonic masculine discourse (2003b, 150; Freeman 2010, xxxiii; Cixous [1975] 1986, 96). Concomitantly, the queer temporality of each of their theories broadens present, past, and future horizons.

History, relationships, and subjectivities can then be understood as “jewels of a mine” to be used to explode “undetonated energy from past revolutions” in order to imagine futures that do not necessarily have to resemble the past (Sedgwick 2003, 48; Freeman 2011, xvi). Unrealized elements of past revolutions, metaphorized here as Cixous’ early writings that have as of present not fully resulted in eradicating phallogocentrism, are then not disavowed, but considered as part of the irreducible sedimentations of history’s violences that can be worked *through* to broach unimaginable and hopeful futures. With these affinities in place, I’d like to now return to the unfinished discussion of anality and its connection with labiality.

To connect these points I begin with Cixous’ statement, “painful rising that...wets and spreads apart what is dull and thick, the stolid, the volumes.” This statement’s image evokes both labiality (wets, spreads apart) as well as anality (painful rising, dull, thick,

stolid): simultaneous movements within the same moment. The connection between the lips and anus at the end of chapter three as imaged through the digestive tube that carries the outside through the inside further links these two concepts and bodily spaces. These boundaries of the lips and of the anus become, *au fond* [basically, at bottom], pleasurable intersections through which relational subjectivity emerge that eschew motifs of stolid internalization in turn for transformative and accretive exchange.

The silkworm's transformatie work of "turning fabric into other fabric" exposes the "[fantasy] of self-sufficiency," as inferred through the concomitance of silk and shit: the unity of these two seemingly opposite terms on the same thread (Sedgwick 1999, 206). This femininely characterized silkworm embodied by Cixous via Derrida in "A Silkwom of One's Own," let us be reminded, wraps itself in itself and from surrounding elements in order to unveil itself as something other than it was. As both Derrida and Sedgwick explain, silk worms produce silk through labial, salivary, and rectal glands. During the silkworm's transformative process the silk and shit, the waste and product, become entwined, unified, and inseparable. More than entwined, they are produced simultaneously and constitute the silk. Shit is in the silk, mucous is in the silk. Moreover, the historical association of lips with femininity and the anus with masculinity becomes undone through their location on the same planar surface. Not irreducible separation, but irreducible interconnection that exist on the same thread – the 'feminine' mucous and the 'masculine' excretion becomes 'feminine' excretion and 'masculine' mucous, which destabilize the historically hierarchy delineation between the two.

Decidedly improper, the silkworm "[questions] (in) the between (letting oneself be questioned) of same *and of* other without which nothing lives" (Cixous [1975] 1986,

86). We're now in the realm of messiness, impurity, *impropriety* in which the Selfsame can find no home. When I said in Chapter One that Cixous' theory is a theory in flux, defined as "continuous exchange," I also meant that hers is a theory of nonsides, nonboundaries. Her delineation of masculine and feminine are not exclusive but "blend together" ([1988] 1994, 131). Bottom-labial-reparative subjectivities place silkworms, femininity, masculinity, labiality, anality on the same side.<sup>47</sup>

Through the dispersed holistic metaphor of the digestive tract 'beginning' with the lips and 'ending' with the anus, we can then imagine relationality as an unending process of exchange of inside and outside. Perhaps then, the silk worm's labial-anal-salivary spindlings, each mixing, coloring, affecting each other provides a relational model of transformation through interconnection. Or, to connect back to the larger point of non binarism, non hierarchy, non opposition, non violence, non struggle: the caress of polys(syt)emic presences *on the same side*.

One of the hopes I have for this thesis is its imagining of relationality, both with ourselves and with others, unchained from binarism, hierarchy, opposition, violence, and struggle. This of course holds implications for the framework of sexual difference that I have employed here; a move beyond, or beside, sexual difference; not to dismantle difference(s) but to resituate them in a non-hierarchical relationship. Rather than having a bone to pick with one another, and thus remaining forever in debt to Adam's rib in the garden of Eden, as Derrida references in the above epigraph, oppositional distinctions would be rethought as being on the same side.

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<sup>47</sup> Derrida exemplifies this in *H.C. for Life, That is to Say...*, "It seems at first that for her [Cixous]...there is only one side and not two, and this side is life. Death, which she knows and understands as well as anyone, is never denied, certainly; it haunts and blows everything away, you could verify it with every word, but it is not a side, it is a nonside" ([2000] 2006a, 36).

On the same side. This fondness in lingering makes it hard to conclude. A final invocation by Cixous seems fitting, this time addressed to a deceased Derrida: “And now after the night, the day, you would say, where are we, where do we awaken, where do we keep watch on awakening this new us?” The temporal displacement (night and day) and the spatial displacement (where are we?) comes with a promise of collectivity, “we” (2006, 46). Another polysemy: the breathless, “we,” *oui*, yes.<sup>48</sup> A collective, breathless, affirmative look forward to a transformative awakening on a new (*nous/we*) horizon without reserve, control, separation, borders, or end. On the same side.

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<sup>48</sup> “What is feminine affirms:...and yes I said yes I will Yes, says Molly (in her rapture), carrying *Ulysses* with her in the direction of a new writing; I said yes, I will Yes” (Cixous and Clément [1975] 1986, 85).

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