

The Smiling Feminist

An inquiry into the possibilities for current 'psychoanalytic feminism'

Foreword

“In the study of gender (like sexuality and race) it is inherently impossible for any individual to do unbiased research. What, then, is to be done?” asks Anne Fausto-Sterling, Professor of Biology and Gender Studies, in the introduction to her book *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men* (1985). “We could call for a ban on all research into sex differences. But that would leave questions of genuine social and scientific interest unanswered.” What to do, then? “We ought to expect that individual researchers will articulate –both to themselves and publicly- exactly where they stand, what they think, and, most importantly, what they *feel* deep down in their guts about the complex of personal and social issues that relate to their area of research¹”.

So, I compiled a foreword.

One day, a friend of mine quoted one of his witty university lecturers: ‘The one who is not a Marxist at twenty, has no heart. The one, who is still a Marxist at thirty, has no brain.’ I am twenty-six, and drawn to psychoanalytical theories which, in ‘Marxist’ fashion, reject the ‘bourgeois’, rational individual. Perhaps the fascination lies in ‘history’: I grew up in Sweden, a notably long-time social democracy where all political party leaders –with the exception of the Christian Party leader- are today pronounced feminists, supporting gender quotas (‘positive discrimination’) and other legislative action to promote gender equality. I have a Finnish mother a Dutch father (which means that I will be an ‘immigrant’ in every country, perhaps predestined to crime and unemployment?), and a fraternal twin-sister. My father died after an eighteen year battle with brain cancer when I was twenty-three. On many an occasion, I have known that no amount of either good-will or ‘rationality’ can mainstream otherness, or reform the irreversible, and that ‘who I am’ has been shaped by my ‘situation’.

At the time of writing this foreword, I am reading V. S. Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River* (1979, Swedish translation by Else Lundgren). On page 140, an African fellow is recounting his first encounter with bureaucratic London:

For the first time in my life, I was filled with a colonial rage. And it was not just a rage against London, or England; it was a rage against a people who had condescended to become a kind of exotic stunt...I had never felt so at one with my, and your, ancestral land, and so far away from it...I thought that I, in the cruellest thinkable way, was informed about how I was placed in the eyes of the world. And I hated it.²

I have often felt just this about being a female member of the species. It has been as if other people’s version of my ‘femininity’ has ‘taken over’ all other aspects of ‘me’ –and I couldn’t stand it. I used to hate ‘being a woman’. I wanted ways out of the structure; ‘Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays’, so to speak, and when I was introduced to French ‘Philosophers of Difference’ Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous during my Bachelor years, they seemed to give voice to something that I had ‘always known’... So I started loving ‘being a woman’.

Later, I understood that such a tender account of the metaphysics of ‘Woman’ does not really help to change society and the ‘rules’ by which we become ‘women’ and ‘men’. I needed, again, a better way of thinking about gender, and the reproduction of gender... In *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (1989), Nancy Chodorow writes about beginning to delineate the origins of her “concern for psychoanalysis-in-itself” as starting when

[w]e are hooked, have fallen intellectually in love. This passionate attachment (and psychoanalysis tells us that all passionate attachments are ambivalent) seems to come first from Freud. The intensity in his own writing, the tortured conflicts as well as the often sweeping brilliance that both his texts and his subtexts exhibit, seem to draw (at least some) readers in emotionally.³

¹ Fausto-Sterling, A. “The Biological Connection: An Introduction”, *Myths of Gender*... Page 10

² Naipaul, V. S. “Part Two: The New Area”, *A Bend in the River*. Page 140-1

³ Chodorow, N. “Introduction”, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*... Page 8

Psychoanalytic theories, it now seems to me, can bring together an account of individual agency (for I know, too, that I have been, and am, an agent in my own life) with an appreciation of ‘inhibitions’, if you will; of the intense difficulty of *change*; of that very agency. Wonderful. Finally: We need a way of understanding the ‘invisibility’, or what seems to be a universally accepted ‘naturalness’ of gender characteristics –when one in three women on the pill is chronically depressed⁴; cystitis and urinary infections in young women has increased significantly because anal sex between young heterosexual couples is becoming normalized and no-one seems to worry about it; when meerkat males on TV ‘documentaries’ are said to be ‘desperate for a date’ and city pigeons engage in ‘gang rapes’ (as if human gender features applied to all the animal kingdom); when all you need to say is ‘according to the latest scientific report...’ (followed by just about any stereotyped, uncritical extension of the status-quo and ‘universal truth’ of biologically determined gender relations) and the audience is all ears. As one of the ‘new’ women in power said: ‘The day that I see as many half-stupid and ignorant women as I already do men in the board room, *then* we are equal’. “To deny that a mistake has been made when its results are chaos visible and tangible on all sides, that is irresponsibility⁵”, wrote Germaine Greer in 1970. Somehow, surely, we can change that.

Writing this thesis has been a fantastic and terrifying endeavor. One of the many Swedish ‘feminist survival manuals’ (there is a huge contemporary market for such books in Sweden) said: ‘You don’t have to have read forty books before you can say, peep.’ It took me a while to take that in. It is difficult to break certain thought patterns. But, like Juliet Mitchell said: The past is never definite –we just think that it is. What we must aim to do, is just constantly deconstruct it, and replace it with a newer version.

I remember once in my teens reading a strange text. Badly translated from the Swedish, it read approximately, ‘death is the end for the image-maker... Therefore, it is every human’s mission to die to oneself’.

I am trying (to deconstruct), I am trying. And this text is my trying to shape my own feminist discourse; trying to be a smiling feminist.

“Since ‘the best cure / for heart break / is laughing’ / I’ve thrown open, nearly cracked the jaw / for some twenty years now. / Cackled the cheeks into big bumps / blazing of lust for life...⁶”

Majken Johansson, poet

⁴ Greer, G. “Sex”, *The Female Eunuch*. Page 54

⁵ Ibid., “Summary”, page 23

⁶ Johansson, M. Quoted in Hertzberg, F. “Majken Johansson”. See ‘Bibliography and References’

To my mother

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Foreword

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Introduction

History starts with the Oedipus complex, or rather with its overcoming and the inauguration of structured language that accompanies it; that is to say it starts with patriarchal civilization, the 'Greeks', within which the girl is supposed to learn the meaning of her femininity, as the boy of his masculinity.⁷ *Juliet Mitchell*

History, and this thesis, starts with our patriarchal civilization. 'Patriarchy', here, means that specific structure within which each of us comes to understand ourselves as women and men, with 'feminine' and 'masculine' sexualities. 'Patriarchy', then, holds a set of rules dictating the *meanings* attached to the two genders; their appropriate roles and positions and their respective 'value'. 'Patriarchy' is an awkward, sometimes bluntly universalizing notion. Here, I have taken it to mean 'the law of the Father' or of 'the Phallus', prescribing that the 'phallic one' is the 'powerful one'. *Psychoanalysis* is a method of investigating this specific structure. *Feminism*, to me, deals with ways of getting 'out' of it. To combine these two notions in 'psychoanalytic feminism' –as I have done in the title of this text- means, then, to analyse the psychic mechanisms by which sexuality is shaped and regulated, and then form applicable political strategies based on the acquired understanding of the workings of the human mind. Today, 'feminists' come in various shapes –collectively called the 'Third Wave'; after the first wave of suffragettes and then the 'Second Wave' during the 1960's and 70's- and as far as possible, they disagree on almost everything. Some think that women should have babies because of their wonderful nurturing qualities; others think that women should go out to do business with sharpened elbows and mow down the men. Some propose legal-based action, such as 'positive discrimination'; some propose individualist (rather than collectivist) self-fulfilment. There is, in other words, no unified feminist understanding of the 'nature of femininity'; nor is there a unified understanding of a 'feminist goal' –and, of course; no unified understanding of the political action required taking us there. Yet, (by virtue of being '-ism's'), 'feminisms' tend to declare universality: They have something to say about all women and all men. We have a problem.

The 1960's saw a revival of psychoanalytic theory with French thinker Jacques Lacan (discussed in Chapter Two). He proposed the idea that 'the Woman does not exist', which may have sparked the 'Philosophy of Difference', or 'Ethics of Sexual Difference' and '*Écriture Féminine*'; feminist theory based on the concept that

⁷ Mitchell, J. "The Pre-Oedipal Mother and the Oedipal Father". *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*... Page 110

the patriarchal structure is in essence ‘phallo-centric’ and does not hold sufficient room for women at all. These ‘Feminists of Difference’ wanted to break up the structure that defined them –by showing that women, in fact, do not fit in the ‘masculine’ patterns, or in being assigned the role of the ‘Other’ to the ‘modern man’; the ‘Man of Reason’. Thought too, they said, has been ‘masculinized’; validated according to a dichotomized ‘one-to-zero’ structure. This structure, they said, is alien to women. Luce Irigaray, once a student of Lacan, wrote that the female sex represents to men “the horror of nothing to see”⁸. In “This Sex Which is Not One” (1977, 1985), she proposes that women are ‘tactile’ in their sexuality –as in the two ‘touching lips’. Touch, further, (unlike ‘the visual’, which requires a ‘seer’ and a ‘seen’) does not differentiate between active and passive; self and other... The ‘Woman’ – with a capital ‘W’- then, epitomizes that which is outside of the ‘one-to-zero’ structure; always much more, never bound by that logic. The ‘Woman’, rather, can be a “disruptive excess... [where] linear reading is no longer possible”⁹, said Irigaray. “Woman must learn to defend her desire, especially through speech...”¹⁰ This resounds in the works of Hélène Cixous, who wrote according to her own logics; using her ‘feminine language’. Poetic and often with punning poignancy, Cixous set out to displace the ‘Phallus’ as the centre of all discourse. In *The Newly Born Woman* (1975), she wrote:

The secret of her beauty, kept for him: She has the perfection of something finished. Or not begun. However, she is breathing. Just enough life –and not too much. Then he will kiss her. So that when she opens her eyes she will see only him; Him in place of everything, all-him.¹¹

Psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (discussed in Chapter Three) while not calling herself ‘feminist’, joined in to express specific feminine ‘dimensions’ with the power to disrupt patriarchal civilization. To her, the human subject is a ‘subject-in-crisis’ –and the maternal body (the ‘two-in-one’, and opposed to the ‘sexed’ bodies, ‘Woman’ and ‘Mother’) can be a model for inter-subjective relations. For while the mother is not ‘really’ the subject or agent of her pregnancy or birth; she does not cease to be primarily a speaking subject. –And so we have beautiful theories on the ‘true’ nature of femininity which, if only thus grasped and allowed its rightful place in society, would subvert the hierarchical ladder placing women always ‘underneath’... But,

⁸ Irigaray, L. “This Sex Which is Not One”. Page 26

⁹ Irigaray, L. “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine”, *The Continental Philosophy Reader*. Page 419-20

¹⁰ Irigaray, L. “This Sex Which is Not One”. Page 33

¹¹ Cixous, H. “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays”, *The Newly Born Woman*. Page 66

what do we do with the women (of flesh and blood) who do not recognize themselves here; who do not feel that their logic is altogether that different from ‘the Man’s’, for instance? Are they not ‘really’ women?

Judith Butler –whose voice echoes throughout this thesis- has committed herself to deconstructing gender. To her, any specificities appearing to stem from one’s biological sex are, at a closer look, just as culturally instituted as one’s social ‘gender’. There is, then, no ‘feminine writing’; nothing specifically ‘feminine’ –for what was so called, already belonged to a system that, in a Cartesian dualist way, dichotomizes humanity into ‘either-man-or-woman’, either masculine or feminine... Yet “‘if everything is discourse, what about the body?’... ‘If the subject is constructed, then who is doing the constructing?’¹²” –Someone, surely, must be the subject of feminism: ‘There must be ‘women’ somewhere, within the ‘politics of gender’.

Bulimia and anorexia, stress, depression and getting burnt-out trying to combine a career and staying the head of the household: These things are happening to women today. Women are subject to ‘trafficking’. Women are prostituted. Men, on the other hand, are perceived as frantically sexual (to the extent that men attending a course for ‘first time fathers’ are advised to begin to gently caress their babies’ mothers quickly after birth, since letting her decide when she is ready to have sex again is “the most stupid thing you can do. There will never be a perfect occasion...¹³” “As if I walked around with the hard-on as a pounding bomb in my pants and a newborn baby was just a temporary distraction in between the horny fits”, notes the author of this particular instance.) Are men really like this? What is there that makes leaders of ‘daddy courses’ think that recent parents of the male sex mostly care about rolling around in the haystack? And is ‘illness’ the only option for free women? “We need to explain and understand the tenacity of people’s commitment to our social organization of gender and sex”, says psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow (discussed in Chapter Three), as well as how it is that

people often cannot change even when they want to; why a ‘liberated’ man still has difficulty parenting equally or being completely happy about his successful, independent, liberated wife; or why a feminist woman might find it hard to be attracted to a non-macho, non-traditionally masculine man just because he’s ‘nice’ and egalitarian...¹⁴

¹² Butler, J. “Introduction”, *Bodies That Matter...* Page 6

¹³ Mendel-Enk, S. “Kapitel III”, *Med Uppenbar Känsla för Stil...* Page 120-1

¹⁴ Chodorow, N. “Femininity, Feminism and Freud”. *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Page 171

Psychoanalysis, claims Chodorow, helps us here, because it shows that we also live ‘our past in the present’. Psychoanalytic theory is descriptive –not prescriptive– of the formation of sexual identity; it analyses the particular rules that ‘must’ be followed if we are to turn out in the way that we are expected to turn out, showing that we as people are both ‘thinking agents’ while, in a sense, instable and unpredictable. It is, then, a theory of human nature with “positive, liberatory implications, a theory of people as active and creative¹⁵” (in Chodorow’s words).

Inter faeces et urinam nascimur, ‘we are born between faeces and urine’, said St. Augustine (charmingly). We are also born prematurely, that is; before we are physically able to tackle the world. Thus, we all need a period of prolonged dependence on another human being. This, says psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell, “offers the ground plan for hysteria¹⁶”. In Chapter Three, I will examine Mitchell’s recent claim that ‘hysteria’ must be ‘reclaimed’ as a central aspect of the human experience; of how we live our lives, how we act and respond to certain situations, and how we can both come to understand, and ‘liberate’ ourselves from difficulties that we might have, trying to be satisfied with our lives, ourselves.

I begin this thesis with a collection of gathered goods. The first chapter builds up a verbal picture of the current ‘gender situation’. I have chosen four areas: Sex; conceptions of masculinity, and femininity; and liberalist ideology in the way that it is implemented in Western everyday lives. My texts here is by no means complete (and there is much more to be said about all of my chosen topics) but serves as an overview of the complexities faced by today’s feminists. The second chapter attempts to somewhat organize the chaotic impression of that build-up to implementing psychoanalytic methods of investigation. For this chapter, I have focussed on texts by Sigmund Freud, and, for the part dealing with Jacques Lacan; I have used Juliet Mitchell’s and Judith Butler’s clarifying discussions (as Lacan himself wrote rather obscurely, to show how ‘incomprehensibly’ the mind might work). After “Gender and its Discontents”, I move on to look at its possibilities. Here, I have picked out theorizing on three areas of interest to me; parenting, melancholy and hysteria –so as to search for ideas that could help lead to a ‘breaking out’ of what so far has seemed an inevitable set-up. For feminism, to me, is about women and men of flesh and blood; about exposing the current ‘gender system’ and mainstreaming

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Mitchell, J. “Hysteria and Psychoanalysis”. *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 21

the exposure (through education; by means of legislative action; ‘feminism by example’; ‘management by gut-feeling?’). That, then, is where this thesis is heading.

1. The Build-Up

It is easy to conclude that there are differences between women and men today; that they do different things, earn different amounts of money and so forth. That I am a feminist is due to my considering that there are differences between the genders, which are based in oppression. I have to tell about these differences in order to fight the oppression, but there is always the risk that I reinforce the differences instead.¹⁷ *Ulrika Lorentzi, author*

“I hesitated long about writing a book on the woman¹⁸”, said Simone de Beauvoir in the introduction to her *The Second Sex* (1949). “It is a sensitive subject, especially for women, and it is not new...And the colossal rubbish that has been copiously hatched during the latest century does not seem to have solved the problem.¹⁹” The problem, of course, is about ‘the nature of women’. De Beauvoir shows us what is at stake: “What is a woman? ‘*Tota mulier in utero*; she is a womb’ says one. But authorities explain that some women ‘are not women’, although they do have a womb like the others²⁰”. Through the ages, anthropologists, biologists, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists and any layman on the street have presented various theories on just what it is that womanhood entails (and that is usually only a short step from prescribing suitable behaviour or policies). The issue, still, is twofold in that it is both metaphysical (‘what is femininity/masculinity/humanness?’) and ethical (‘how ought we to live/interact?’). In order to first find out about the differences between women and men today, one can look at the United Nations website, Statistics Department. There, one finds that women (in opposition to men) live longer, go less to school, are illiterate and unemployed to a greater extent, score much lower on adult economic and political activity rates and have a world average of approximately seventy-four percent of men’s wages²¹. Women’s share of “administrative and managerial workers²²” is around twenty-seven percent worldwide. Previous feminist writings have emphasized that “one is not born a woman, but becomes one²³” and that ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ have been conceptualized in oppositional dichotomies

¹⁷ Lorentzi, U. “Fast I Skruvstället”. Bang, *Bang om Biologism: Hjärmsläpp*. Page 39

¹⁸ de Beauvoir, S. “Inledning”, *Det Andra Könet*. Page 9

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ www.un.org See “Bibliography and References”

²² Ibid.

²³ de Beauvoir, S. “Kvinnans Utveckling: Barndomen”, *Det Andra Könet*. Page 162

such as “activity/passivity, sun/moon, culture/nature... head/heart, intelligible/palpable, logos/pathos²⁴” (guess which one is which); thus stressing the societal, structural and lingual; acquired or *learnt* aspects of sexual identity formation. By making everyday observations, one can then additionally deduce that a woman’s bodily appearance is more important than what she says or does (for instance in that ‘the thing to do’ when ladies’ magazines suggest that you ‘indulge’ in some ‘luxurious treat’ is to take care of the *body*, and in that police files report what rape victims –as opposed to rapists- were *wearing* at the time of the crime: “She wore a short black dress, an orange see-through top, shoes and bra plus panties²⁵”. When Angela Merkel became Germany’s first woman Chancellor, her appearance was the only thing recorded in my local newspaper; “Merkel, dressed in a black suit and with an amber ornament in a golden necklace, sat with one hand on top on the other on the table while the Members of Parliament stood up to tribute her²⁶”). Further everyday observations show that renaissance painters in museums almost never have feminine names; that the most successful females on TV today represent unrealistic beauty ideals, and so on; there are plenty of differences between women and men. In Chapter Two, “Gender and Its Discontents”, I will show how feminists can investigate gender and its hierarchical structure by reference to an unconscious ‘law of the father’ to which it is supposed that all human beings adhere. Feminine or masculine identity is there seen to be a symbolic feature shaped through a specific relationship with a cultural order prescribing that the ‘phallic one’ is the ‘powerful one’. But first, I want to present a framework for that discussion. Starting with the very essential issue of sex, I will examine sexual acts and what entices them. This part of the chapter is dedicated to theorizing sexual acts between a women and men; what causes excitement, connection and climax, and their implications for establishing feminine and masculine sexual identity. After that, comes a brief analysis of what ‘manliness’ entails in our society; attempting to reveal the problematic masculine ideal that patriarchy is ‘built’ on. The third part of this chapter attempts to survey what seems to be a ‘crisis’ in feminist discourse; looking to review the contemporary answers to the question of ‘what women want’... And the chapter ends with a critique of the limits of liberalist ‘equal rights’ based strategies to promote gender justice, plus a final enquiry into the ethical and political aspects of ‘being a woman’;

²⁴ Cixous, H. “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays”, *The Newly Born Woman*. Page 63

²⁵ DB 1695-96 *Södertälje Tingsrätt*. Quoted in Wennstam, K. “Porn Star”, *Flickan och Skulden*... Page 13

²⁶ “Merkel Vald Till Förbundskansler”. *Göteborgs-Posten* See “Bibliography and References”

summoning the grounds for my argument that psychoanalytical theories are necessary in a feminist understanding of patriarchy. For since the suffragettes around the beginning of the previous century and the ‘Second Wave’ feminists in the 1960’s and 70’s, we have stepped somewhat away from the age-old ideas that women were not ‘fit’ to engage in politics, academia and anything not specifically tied to taking care of husbands, elderly and babies –yet women are still not ‘satisfied’. ‘What has gone wrong?’ If we are all free and equal, why do we not *feel* free and equal? Is there something particular about being a female –about *perceiving* oneself as a female- that is being overlooked by the ‘men and women: Alike before the law’ sentiment that is a part of our society today?

1.1 Women, Men & Sex

Men tend to be visual creatures, coming alive at the mere sight of a bare breast. Women are more aural and tactile. They need to hear and to feel a man to get excited.²⁷ *Lou Paget, ‘sexpert’*

Normality is an imaginary, fabricated line, like the equator, to which we have to refer to make our categories.²⁸ *Juliet Mitchell*

Not entirely unexpectedly, a research study²⁹ that I read about shows that a woman’s sexual lust for her man lessens when she is dissatisfied with the work distribution in the household, that is; when her efforts go without compensation. But the men, the report continues, in such ‘traditional’ homes, are the men who are the most satisfied with their sex-lives. “What a head-on collision!³⁰” writes the commentator. Indeed, such contradictory views do create an odd picture: The matter of men, women and sex is a complicated one. Yet people continue to have sex, and to want to have sex. Future generations, speculates Michel Foucault in his *The History of Sexuality, Volume One* (1978), “will be surprised at the eagerness with which we went about pretending to rouse from its slumber a sexuality which everything –our discourses, our customs, our institutions, our regulations, our knowledges- was busy producing in the light of day and broadcasting to noisy accompaniment³¹”. The desire for sex is a desire to ‘discover’ it, ‘liberate’ it, ‘truthfully formulate’ it; and it is through sex that “each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility”. We read lust,

²⁷ www.healthatoz.com See “Bibliography and References”

²⁸ Mitchell, J. ”The Hysterical Woman or Hysteria Feminized”, *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 195

²⁹ Ahrne, G and Roman, C. *Hemmet, Barnen och Makten.* (1997) Quoted in Sjögren, J. *Ordination: Vardagsfeminism...* Page 54

³⁰ Sjögren, J. *Ordination: Vardagsfeminism...* Page 54

³¹ Foucault, M. ”Right of Death and Power over Life”, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One.* Page 158

loathing, arousal, satisfaction, disappointment, orgasm, pain, the 'normal' and the 'perverse'...

When Germaine Greer (*The Female Eunuch*, 1970) looked at slang concerning sex, she noted that all the emphasis is placed on "the *poking* element...all acts are performed upon the passive female: The names for the penis are all *tool* names³²". If the female is passive, then the active sexual participant seems to be male. "There is an enduring myth about male sexuality", analyses criminal reporter Katarina Wennstam (2002) in a book about girls, guilt and rape; and that is

namely that *all* men in certain given situations can't contain themselves, can't not grope women, take without asking, rape. This is a generally applicable 'truth'. This, women must 'know' and behave according to. If the woman takes risks, in spite of 'knowing' that it could mean that the man thinks that she wants something, then she can blame herself.³³

'Rape' means "a crime where the victim is forced into sexual activity, in particular sexual penetration, against his or her own will³⁴". Rape, a United Nations' website tells us, is the world's most reported crime, despite that many "victims tend, more than for any other crime, not to report their victimization to the police³⁵". Remarkable rape cases in the media often reflect situations where it is 'unclear' whether the raped had really shown that she (I take it that most, but not all, rape victims are female, and most perpetrators male) was unwilling to have intercourse, or whether she had lured the rapist and thus 'must have' had herself to blame. Rape has been a crime for a very long time. As the Tenth Commandment says, "Do not covet your neighbour's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else your neighbour owns³⁶", so rape in the West was seen as a breach of entry, or theft of property of the husband or father of the raped. (Inter-marital rape is now a crime in fifty-six³⁷ of the 192 states recognized by the United Nations.) A Swedish boy aged 15-16 (2002) had this view on rape and responsibility:

If she is drinking then it's not rape. She's made her choice by getting drunk. She can blame herself. She doesn't care if she's drinking; she's not taking responsibility for herself. When a girl is drunk you can sort of take her phone or something 'cause she deserves it. I despise drunken girls.³⁸

³² Greer, G. "Sex", *The Female Eunuch*. Page 42

³³ Wennstam, K. "Porn Star", *Flickan och Skulden...* Page 19

³⁴ www.wikipedia.com. See "Bibliography and References"

³⁵ www.un.org. See "Bibliography and References"

³⁶ Exodus 20:17, *the Bible*.

³⁷ Dempsey, J. "A Human Rights Scandal". See "Bibliography and References"

³⁸ Boy, 15-16 years old. Quoted in Wennstam, K. "Vakna din Hora", *Flickan och Skulden...* Page 30-31

There seems, that is, to be a difference between rape and rape, depending on who the victim is. “Was she a well-behaved woman? Clear as daylight. Was she bad, in the sense that our society still condemns girls who have many sexual relations? Or drunk?³⁹” If the girl was drunk, or not a virgin, then it not as clear whether it was in fact rape, writes Wennstam. She continues: “But never have I read a résumé of a man’s partners or sexual experiences in a rape verdict, despite that it is actually his actions that could be criminal⁴⁰”.

So far, then, there seems to exist a wide-spread notion of sexual interaction between adults as involving (1) an unequal division of labour (where the roles correspond to gender), (2) an unequal division of responsibility (lain mostly on the female part), (3) an idea that unwanted sexual activity is ‘wrong’ (in that rape is ‘the most reported crime’) and (4) stigmatic shame (in that rape victims ‘tend not to report their victimization’ to the police.) Ambiguity, so far in the analysis, comes into play when the notions of responsibility and shame appear to question whether the sexual activity was ‘wrong or right’; there seems to exist a set of behaviours which assume either that women have something which legitimates ignoring their desires, or that men have something which legitimates their ignoring the desires of others. (*Desire* is a complicated thing, subject to much theorizing. Here, I use the word in the ‘common’ sense; in Chapter Two it will be dealt with through the parameters of psychoanalytic theory.) It seems that the man, in this imagery, can sometimes and with respect to his sexual drive, be *exempt* from that civil code which prescribes that sex be between *consenting* adults (‘biology made him do it?’). In other words: The man’s sexual drive is ‘unstoppable’, and ‘everybody knows this’. The woman is ‘thus’ responsible for the man’s reaction to her sexiness, which she controls (by means of appropriating her location, company and attire). “Sex”, says Michel Foucault, “is placed by power in a binary system: Licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden...Power prescribes an ‘order’ for sex that operates at the same time as a form of intelligibility: Sex is to be deciphered on the basis of its relation to the law.⁴¹” (The ‘law’ is created by language and the acts of discourse which maintain power’s hold on sex, and “the pure form of power resides in the function of the legislator⁴²”. Who is this ‘legislator’?)

³⁹ Wennstam, K. ”Traktens Luder”, *Flickan och Skulden...* Page 45

⁴⁰ Ibid. “”De Kallade Henne Fladderfitta”, Page 65

⁴¹ Foucault, M. ”The Deployment of Sexuality”, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One*. Page 83

⁴² Ibid.

Talking about sexual education at schools, feminist anthological co-writer Linna Johansson, (2000) recounts how her teacher taught the basics of sexual activity:

So we got to know a little more about boys' erections and how children are made. 'When it feels really good', [the teacher] said, 'well, then the boy ejects the sperm. Then it's important to protect yourself so that you don't get pregnant'. The teacher never mentioned clitoris or how we got orgasms. ⁴³

"Woman's erogenous zones", claims Luce Irigaray (1985) when analysing the state of affairs, "never amount to anything...or a hole-envelope that serves to sheathe and massage the penis in intercourse⁴⁴". There seems, in other words, to be a lack of references to women as sexual *subjects*. ("Women's bodies mean sex, while at the same time the sexual subject in our culture is male.⁴⁵") Lack of informative education about one's genitals can present problems within adult sexual life, writes psychotherapist Harriet Goldhor Lerner (1976, 1988). When children grow up, they learn that 'boys have a penis and girls a vagina', she writes, noting that it is only lately that words such as clitoris, vulva and labia have come to figure in dictionaries where defining the female genitals. (Consider briefly how ladies' underwear is sewn: Frequently, the extra padding is placed so as to protect the vaginal entrance when, really; the area that would require added softness is further up to the front...) Goldhor Lerner argues that

[s]uch an incomplete, undifferentiated and anatomically incorrect image of women's anatomy has its most damaging effects...when the girl explores her clitoris as the most important source of sexual stimulus and satisfaction. /.../

Having important aspects of oneself [evaded or] described as unsuitable in relationship to one's own sex can not only lead to conflicts and inhibitions, but also to an impairment of cognitive and intellectual abilities.⁴⁶

But despite being "only a more or less obliging prop for the enactment of man's fantasies⁴⁷", in Irigaray's words, women can certainly find pleasure in that role. But such pleasure, Irigaray continues, "is above all a masochistic prostitution of her body to a desire that is not her own⁴⁸". To finally understand and describe women's own perception of their desire and satisfaction, Shere Hite (1967, 2003) conducted a

⁴³ Johansson, L. "Vi Fick Veta Saker om Sex". In Skugge, Olsson, Zilg. *Fittstim*. Page 17

⁴⁴ Irigaray, L. "This Sex Which Is Not One", page 23

⁴⁵ Hirdman, A. "Mirrored Masculinity?" in *NIKK Magasin: Sexualization of Public Space*, page 10

⁴⁶ Goldhor Lerner, H. "Föräldrars Missvisande Benämningar på Kvinnliga Könsorgan", *Kvinnor och Psykoterapi*. Page 48-9, 59

⁴⁷ Irigaray, L. "This Sex Which is Not One", page 25

⁴⁸ Ibid.

survey. She found that “72% of women did not regularly have orgasm during coitus, yet 93% could reach orgasm easily and pleurably with self-stimulation that was dissimilar to the stimulation received during coitus⁴⁹”. It seems that many women do not reach orgasm vaginally, despite that the vagina appears to be the most common reference to female genitalia. And “trying to force women’s bodies to adapt so they have orgasm during coitus ‘like a man does’ distorts female sexual identity (and pressures them to fake orgasm)⁵⁰” writes Hite. Others, like Dr. M. I. Murdoch, who conducts research field tests on drugs such as Viagra, do not agree. “Testosterone”, says Murdoch “is the most commonly used drug for the treatment of sexual dysfunction in women...Extremely low doses, one-tenth of the dose that males take is all that is necessary for its positive effects on women⁵¹”. Here, women’s sexual satisfaction seems to depend on a male hormone. (The condition Female Sexual Dysfunction (FSD), according to Hite⁵², was invented by pharmaceutical companies.) So far in the analysis, then, what we know about the general consensus on women’s pleasure is that (1) most women can reach an orgasm, (2) most women’s orgasms are private and clitoral (in that the incentive required is ‘self-stimulation’ and ‘dissimilar to that during coitus’) and (3) women who do not orgasm vaginally can do so by becoming more like men (obtaining testosterone). We also know that some women may experience lust in ‘objectification’. What we do not know is how *else* women experience sexual arousal.

Pornography (lit. ‘Writing about prostitutes’) is “the representation of the human body or human sexual behaviour with the goal of sexual arousal⁵³”. In an interview with *anti-porn* activist Majja Carlsson, reporter Hanna Nordin asked what was bad about porn. “The imagery in porn stages the subordination of the feminine. It is obvious that woman’s pleasure is not what is important. Her body is used instead of her using it. And the consequences are that the oppression of women is maintained, for example as sexual violence against women⁵⁴”, explains Carlsson. When further asked how one can know whether porn is a *cause* of rape and abuse of women or a *reflection* of the prevailing social order, she replies that it is difficult to tell, but that porn must be seen as both a product and an enforcement method of the

⁴⁹ www.hite-research.com. See “Bibliography and References”

⁵⁰ Hite, Shere. “The Truth About Women and Sex”. See “Bibliography and References”

⁵¹ Murdoch, M. I. “A Medical Treatment Era Begins”. See “Bibliography and References”

⁵² Hite, Shere. “The Truth About Women and Sex”. See “Bibliography and References”

⁵³ www.wikipedia.com. See “Bibliography and References”

⁵⁴ Carlsson, M. in Nordin, H. “Intervju med Porraktivist”. See “Bibliography and References”

reigning structure. ‘Can there be good porn and what would it then look like?’ Carlsson does not know, but she thinks that the depiction of the actors is what is important, and adds that “porn is made for men, and that is why it looks the way it looks⁵⁵”. Under the headline ‘Quotations from the backsides of common Swedish porn films’, Linna Johansson (2000) cites: “How much should a little 18 year old go through? Five sixty year old men, four Afro-Negroes, six iron hard toughies. Anally! Sadomasochism! Mouth cascades! The mini-girl Sandy is back!⁵⁶”. ‘Porn is made for men.’ Lynne Segal, Professor of Psychology and Gender Studies at the University of Sydney, however, maintains that men too suffer in the modern field of pornography.

With its focus on the size of the penis, on technique and the capacity to perform endlessly, pornography contributes to performance anxiety which itself helps foster pornography by facing men with impossible demands. Instead of satisfying men... [pornography] exploits male sexual frustrations and...helps create for men a phallic reign of terror⁵⁷.

“If three men have sex with one woman, then the men rule⁵⁸”, says Pelle Ullholm, youth sex advisor. He continues: “If three women have sex with one man, the man still rules, because men own sexuality. The space for sexual action is larger for men than for women⁵⁹”. Where separation and segregation occurs, a hierarchical relationship is formed –and this relation of power is a condition for rape, for example, Ullholm argues. “The division is very clear when you meet young guys. Some think that they have more in common with male turtles than with the girls in their class. They can think that their behaviour is more similar to that of male lions than their girlfriends.⁶⁰” We have, then, a situation where the interaction between women and men seems based on the supposition that men and women are ultimately different and where women appear sexually ambiguous, or passive; and men, or their penises, very active indeed.

1.2. Building Altars, Waging Wars

Since man is norm in society, he does not need to be described. We learn to become men by learning to not be like women.⁶¹ *Jesper Fundberg, ethnologist*

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Johansson, L. ”Vi Fick Veta Saker om Sex”. In Skugge, Olsson, Zilg. *Fittstim*. Page 22

⁵⁷ Segal, L. in Knudsen, S. V. & Sørensen, A. D. ”Youth, Gender and Pornography”. In *NIKK Magasin: Sexualization of Public Space*, page 6

⁵⁸ Ullholm, P. In ”Sex som Kitt Mellan Män”, *Göteborgs-Posten*. See ”Bibliography and References”

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Fundberg, J. in Mendel-Enk, S. ”Kapitel III”, *Med Uppenbar Känsla för Stil...* Page 77

That we are chemically free from mythology, imageless, scientific –that is the myth of our time.⁶²
Anita Goldman, journalist and scholar

I read about a research project where hospital staffs were asked to comment on the characteristics of newborn babies. All babies “weighed as much, were as tall and as healthy. The girls were considered fragile, shorter and less awake. The boys were considered heavier, taller, stronger⁶³”. A “myth”, says Claude Lévi-Strauss in the article “The Structural Study of Myth” (1955), “always refers to events alleged to have taken place long ago. But what gives the myth an operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless...⁶⁴”. In myths, on the one hand, anything could happen; there need be no logic and no continuity. But on the other hand, writes Lévi-Strauss, myths collected in different regions seem to hold astounding similarities. ‘How can we explain that?’

Once upon a time, the first man was created and since he was lonely, there was need for a ‘wife-of-man⁶⁵’; a woman. The man was Adam. Adam was ‘born’ by a father and he himself also gave ‘birth’, to his wife. Adam was to name everything that was created, for “the named is always inferior to the name-giver. [That which] the man names...he is also made lord of⁶⁶”. (“The naming”, says Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter* (1993), “is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm⁶⁷”). Adam names his wife Eve (Hebrew; *Havah*) –a name linked to a word meaning she-snake (Arabic; *Hayyah*⁶⁸). Later, a snake induces the step from ignorance to knowledge –innocence to sin- and Eve is blamed. “The biblical author knows the connections...” writes scholar Anita Goldman in a book on women in the Hebrew Bible (1988), explaining that the snake is “an ancient and compound symbol of the union between feminine power, wisdom and sexuality...The wisdom that the woman so keenly seeks [by eating the apple] is knowledge of mankind’s oldest mystery: Sexuality⁶⁹” (or should we call it ‘seduction?’). Goldman sees the biblical myths as a response to, or break with a previous culture dominated by female deities. Goddesses like Mesopotamian *Nidada*

⁶² Goldman, A. “Kvinnor Mellan Himmel och Jord”, *Våra Bibliska Mödrar*. Page 14

⁶³ Mendel-Enk, S. “Kapitel III”, *Med Uppenbar Känsla för Stil...* Page 67

⁶⁴ Lévi-Strauss, C. “The Structural Study of Myth”. In Kearney, R & Rainwater, M. *The Continental Philosophy Reader*. Page 309

⁶⁵ www.wikipedia.com. See “Bibliography and References”

⁶⁶ Goldman, A. “Till Din Man Ska Din Åtrå Vara, och Han Ska Råda Över Dig”, *Våra Bibliska Mödrar*. Page 33

⁶⁷ Butler, J. ”Introduction”. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. Page 8

⁶⁸ Ibid. Page 35

⁶⁹ Ibid. Page 35-6

also went under the name “the Great Snake of the Sky⁷⁰”. *Ishtar*⁷¹ was goddess of fertility, sexuality; guardian of prostitutes, crops, wars and battles, and often depicted naked or on a throne with snakes. (She was sometimes also associated with beer⁷².) Goldman believes that the raw strength required by newer, nomadic peoples contributed to the shift between biblical and earlier myths. “Woman was the central figure in the fertility cult, and therefore she must be fought where her power had been the strongest⁷³”, she claims. Thus were childbirth and the earth cursed, and thus should husbands rule over wives’ sexual lives⁷⁴. Throughout much of the biblical story, Goldman shows, the women are not born and do not have family trees, but “just exist, quite suddenly, when [the men] ‘take’ a woman⁷⁵”. They also do not bear daughters, or die. (Instead of having their death recorded, they disappear from the text.) Further, they do not receive divine ‘signs’ or form divine ‘unions’. The women live for their husbands and die for their sons. (“What one is expected to be, one is trained in and eventually gets good at.⁷⁶”)

When it comes to mechanisms of knowledge and power centring on sexuality, argues Foucault, some practices became apparent in the beginning of the eighteenth century after having developed throughout the Judeo-Christian era in the West. (“The feminine body was analysed...as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality; whereby it was...placed in the family space...and the life of children⁷⁷”, he writes. Further mechanisms regarded taking a morally pedagogical stance to children’s sexuality; placing procreative behaviour within matrimony, and pathologizing the perverse.) For Foucault, ‘juridical’ systems of power *produce* the subjects that they then *represent*. The subjects are “formed, defined and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures⁷⁸” (as Judith Butler explains Foucault in *Gender Trouble... (1990)*). That is; by ‘offering’ *choice* (that actions may be withdrawn and apologized for), ‘society’s’ control, limitation and prohibition of certain behaviours forms the individuals that it wants to characterize. (Power, in other words, is both juridical and productive, if this analysis holds.) Which, then, are our ‘structural requirements’ for manliness –‘what is a man?’ Journalist Stephan

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ www.wikipedia.com. See “Bibliography and References”

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Goldman, A. “Till Din Man Ska Din Åtrå Vara, och Han Ska Råda Över Dig”, *Våra Bibliska Mödrar*. Page 37

⁷⁴ Genesis 3:16-17, the *Bible*.

⁷⁵ Goldman, A. “Se, Herren Har Gjort Mig Ofruktsam”, *Våra Bibliska Mödrar*. Page 42

⁷⁶ Anna Wahl. Quoted in Ernsjö Rappe, T. & Sjögren, J. “Bit Ihop – Bryt Ihop”, *Diagnos: Duktig...*Page 25

⁷⁷ Foucault, M. “The Deployment of Sexuality”, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One*. Page 104

⁷⁸ Butler, J. “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire”. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Page 4

Mendel-Enk sees a paradox there: “The highest of all and the lowest of all...In the same way as all men are perceived as potential geniuses, they are perceived as potential lunatics⁷⁹”. (Is this why men are sometimes and with regard to their sexual drive, ‘exempt’ from the ‘civil code’; as ‘lunatics’, they are not really accountable? Is the alternative explanation that male biology determines men’s behaviour? –The most vulgar way of trying to escape the effects of social and moral influences on the human mind, said John Stuart Mill 150 years ago, “is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences⁸⁰”.) When men commit crimes, continues Mendel-Enk,

The [biological] sex is always more important than the act itself. Nobody thinks that anything girls do will constitute a danger to anyone but themselves, perhaps. On the other hand, every male lapse is a sign of the great, dangerous darkness that all men are assumed to carry inside... [We are all] scared to death of what could happen if you deny a man anything.⁸¹

“Women should not tease men if they don’t want anything”, summarizes Wennstam (in her book on rape), given that if they are then “subjected to assault, they are considered co-liable...since men ‘are like that’⁸²”. Researcher Anja Hirdman has looked at the public image world, in order to try to understand masculine sexuality, noting a contradictory construction form there too:

How can we understand the tabooing of the depiction of semi-masturbatory men in public images –a convention which is widely accepted in representations of the female- while *at the same time* ideas about male sexuality as pleasure oriented and un-problematic is generally accepted?⁸³

Perhaps a clue to answering Hirdman’s dilemma lies in an analysis of male subjectivity in relation to ‘modernity’. “A purely natural way of life, animalistic and vegetative, has always constituted the absolute threat to the process of civilization⁸⁴”, asserted Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1944). Modern man must create a rational and calculating ‘I’ while letting the irrational part die, in order to win over all ‘other’ authorities (nature, God, tradition...) and become his own law. (“In the struggle between control and desire, he lets control triumph. So he devotes himself to self-preservation by self-denial⁸⁵”, argues literary critic Nina

⁷⁹ Mendel-Enk, S. “Kapitel II”, *Med Uppenbar Känsla för Stil...* Page 53

⁸⁰ Stuart Mill, J. in Fausto-Sterling, A. “Hormones and Aggression: An Explanation of Power?” *Myths of Gender...* Page 123

⁸¹ Mendel-Enk, S. “Kapitel II”, *Med Uppenbar Känsla för Stil...* Page 54, 57

⁸² Wennstam, K. “Porn Star”, *Flickan och Skulden...* Page 21

⁸³ Hirdman, A. “Mirrored Masculinity?” in *NIKK Magasin: Sexualization of Public Space*, page 11

⁸⁴ Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T. in Björk, N. “På Resa med det Moderna Jaget”, *Sireners Sång...* Page 26

⁸⁵ Björk, N. “På Resa med det Moderna Jaget”, *Sireners Sång: Tankar Kring Modernitet och Kön*. Page 22

Björk in a book on modernity and gender (1999).) We have, so to speak, a man fighting to ‘overcome himself’. The highest man is the most cultivated man; the man whose sole-standing consciousness has most transcended his bodily needs. “Religion? But a nostalgic memory from times past. Love? But an instinct in the reproductive service of the species. Nature? But an insensitive mechanics.⁸⁶” This, according to Björk, led to an idealization of the artificial, or a retreat to existential angst: “Since an animal can never diverge from its normal manners... [and] must follow its unchangeable behaviour...the *abnormal* became a sign of the specifically human⁸⁷”. A ‘human’ is a modern man. The ‘abnormal’ is that which is not tied to the evolutionary functions of the species –for instance metaphysical enquiries and composing operas. As these were the commandments for *masculinity*, so *femininity* came to stand for “precisely the qualities that the man doesn’t want to know of in himself⁸⁸”. Gender Research scholar Jørgen Lorentzen condenses the instructions: “You can never be absolutely certain whether you are sufficiently masculine, or are about to fall into the dangerous category of unmanliness⁸⁹”. It seems as though modern man’s relation to woman is to fight to be that which she is not. (I will look into what that might be in the next part, “Confessions of a Womb”). And what about man’s relation to *other* manifestations of manliness?

At the end of the nineteenth century, two new notions came up: ‘Feminism’ and ‘homosexuality’. Modern man, from then on, had to

profile his manliness in two directions: Against feminists who wanted to take his human/manly privileges away from him, and against perverse creatures within his own sex, who through their sexuality made manly comradeship –so widespread at boarding schools, at universities, at bachelor’s clubs and at work- into mined land⁹⁰.

“Classic, unyielding macho attributes such as lumberjack shirts, fat moustaches and tight jeans”, says Mendel-Enk, “have been gay fashion for decades⁹¹”. (Are homosexual men macho? If not; what do gay ‘fashions’ tell us about male subjectivity, masculine sexuality, and man’s relation to others?) “The man”, says Björk, “stands for the conditions of modern life, and the woman revokes these conditions... The man is reality and the woman is the way out”. Man, in other

⁸⁶ Ibid., “Lånad Kvinnlighet”. *Sireners Sång: Tankar Kring Modernitet och Kön*. Page 171

⁸⁷ Ibid., page 172-3

⁸⁸ Mendel-Enk, S. “Kapitel III”, *Med Uppenbar Känsla för Stil...* Page 82

⁸⁹ Lorentzen, J. “Looking at Men through Literature”. *NIKK Magasin: Sexualization of Public Space*, page 15

⁹⁰ Björk, N. “Lånad Kvinnlighet”, *Sireners Sång: Tankar Kring Modernitet och Kön*. Page 168

⁹¹ Mendel-Enk, S. “Kapitel II”, *Med Uppenbar Känsla för Stil...* Page 43

words, *creates* his subjectivity in a way that woman does not. A man, in this imagery, can *stage* 'femininity' too, if he does not feel comfortable in the manliness prescribed. ('Everybody' loves a man who can 'talk about his feelings', who 'helps out' with the housework –he is 'benevolent' and 'mature'.) He can choose to move 'outside' of the parameters (to the place of 'woman') –because he remains 'reality' (he does it consciously). A man, in other words, can choose to step out of an oppressive, powerful position, and speak from the margins, from the perspective of 'the feminine' and so revolutionize the patriarchal structure: Man himself can be an alternative to today's power centre. (It seems that the concept of 'man' indeed is 'culture' in opposition to 'nature'; 'logos' to 'pathos'...)

So far in the analysis, the 'myth of man' says that he is 'primary, potent and superior'. As such, he is destined for great deeds. But sometimes, while the potency prevails, primacy seems to turn 'primal' in nature (rather than being, say, a 'mark of subjectivity', as I have interpreted it) –and this is accepted, why? Is man superior irrespective of his actions; is the 'superiority of man' resistant to scrutiny? Is the respect for the struggle of the self-made man, for his solitude position in agony at the gates of Heaven (civilization) so great that we 'understand' if the protest is violent?

So far in the analysis, then, it seems that if we accept that our society and culture are patriarchal, and if we at the same time accept a Foucaultian notion of power structures, then it seems as if it were imperative to *keep* the dual prospect on the might of men in order to uphold the 'patriarchal structure'... There needs to be some 'wild beasts' for the 'excellent men' to figure, for the rational (masculine) 'I' to be sustained as the socially superior. For if the social structure would not accept the threat of dread among the powerful, the powerful would lose its position. Men would then be as 'harmless' and 'pointless' as the middle-ground between the 'highest of them all' and the 'lowest of them all'.

1.3. Confessions of a Womb

Toys for boys: Rambos, Robocops, Ninjas, Batmen, monsters, machine guns, pistols, tanks, cars, motorcycles, trucks, planes, spaceships.
Toys for girls: Barbies, Heidis, ironing boards, kitchens, blenders, washing machines, televisions, babies, cribs, baby bottles, lipstick, curlers, makeup kits, mirrors.⁹² *Eduardo Galeano, political analyst*

⁹² Galeano, E. "The Students", *Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World*. Page 13

We may safely assert that the knowledge that men can acquire of women, even as they have been and are, without reference to what they might be, is wretchedly imperfect and superficial and will always be so until women themselves have told all that they have to tell.⁹³ *John Stuart Mill*

In the 20th anniversary of her *the Female Eunuch* (1970, 1990), Germaine Greer wrote that women now have the “freedom to speak but no voice⁹⁴”. In an article entitled “Second and Third Wave Feminists Clash over the Future” (2005), *Women’s E-news* correspondent Jennifer Friedlin quotes 25-year-old Kalpana Krishnamurthy, co-director of the *Third Wave Foundation* (a New York based organization that supports women between the ages of fifteen and thirty): “I think that the impact of the feminist movement was in helping women to achieve a *voice*. Now, we are articulating that voice in a multiplicity of ways⁹⁵”. Representatives of ‘Second Wave’ feminists had articulated a concern about the lack of movement or collectivist action, and the current climate where feminism has become a dirty word. “In addition to the emergence of a more ‘me-oriented’ culture, the emphasis on ‘family values’ and the media’s growing interest in stories about careerist women who regret not having had children have relegated feminism to the backburner.⁹⁶” –There seems to be disagreements as to what the different feminist voices are articulating, and thus confusion as to what, really, ‘feminism’ is. ‘What do women really want?’

Women in the West were finally publicly recognized as able to have political opinions between 1893 (women get to vote in New Zealand) and 1984 [*sic*] (women get to vote in Liechtenstein)⁹⁷. Before that, the body and its reproductive functions were seen to put a right stop to any mental aptitude applicable to public activity. A woman’s body made her function domestic, and her place the home. Women engaging in public activity became equivalent to their denying their essence, or obstructing it by ‘trying to be like men’. Today women do engage in decision making and such public activities, but not everything is ‘fine’. The most common diagnoses for new sick-listed, for instance, are severe stress, depression or being burnt out. And “women’s share of the amount of sick-listed has increased successively and

⁹³ Stuart Mill, J. Quoted in Greer. “Summary”, *The Female Eunuch*. Page 15

⁹⁴ Greer, G. “Foreword to the Paladin 21st Anniversary Edition”, *The Female Eunuch*. Page 11

⁹⁵ Krishnamurthy, K. in Friedlin, J. “Second and Third Wave Feminists Clash over the Future”. See “Bibliography and References”

⁹⁶ Friedlin, J. “Second and Third Wave Feminists Clash over the Future”. See “Bibliography and References”

⁹⁷ www.ipu.org. See “Bibliography and References”

substantially... [As] the problems are the greatest in the public sector⁹⁸”. It is as though some women want to remind us that their 21st Century *vita activa* is still ‘feminine’ in some way –and that forgetting the significance of this insight is the cause of their ongoing dissatisfaction. ‘It is time to reify femininity’. “The Devil has been abolished, but God lives –and her name is Womb⁹⁹” says Nina Björk (1996) ironically. She calls the ideology behind it ‘womb-feminism’ –and she does not like it:

The kind of feminism that now lives in the public debate is a disarmed variation, where ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ admittedly exist as perspectives on what is discussed, but where these perspectives are seen as unchangeably given by nature –a nature that should steer culture. Such a feminism can change neither the roles and positions of women nor of men. Such a feminism is harmless –and precisely therefore, so loved.¹⁰⁰

In an interview on gender differences, Annica Dahlström, Professor at the Institute for Anatomy and Cell Biology at Göteborg University, follows this outlook. Women have “a larger number of nerve connections between the brain halves...which is good for leaders...They can add something extra, another aspect¹⁰¹”. Femininity, then, ‘should’ be recognized as something inherent to women and something very good. (To say that ‘it is natural’ is the same as saying that ‘it is good, it is supposed to be that way’. ‘Nature’ also claims universality.) There seems to be something that women have in their bodies, which is threatened by the societal emancipation that formally equals men and women. Therefore this thing should be revitalized, reevaluated; achieving the position it *deserves*. (“Femininity is in danger.’ One encourages us to be women, remain women and become women¹⁰²”, as Simone de Beauvoir said sixty years ago.) When sentiments interpreting gender differences by reference to science, nature or biology are not explicitly named ‘feminist’ (read; ‘womb-feminist’), they are often presented as that area where feminists have ‘gone wrong’ or ‘gone too far’. The argument is that women *do*

devote more time to care than men. They take care of children, their families; they work in the health care sector and so forth... Women’s ‘relations interest’ is a biological difference that feminists do not dare to see. Feminists want to force women into men’s gauge instead and thus become femininity’s grave-digger.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Ernsjö Rappe, T. & Sjögren, J. ”En Handbok för Sjukligt Duktiga Flickor. Varför då?”, *Diagnos: Duktig...* Page 9

⁹⁹ Björk, N. ”Moderskap och Modernitet”, *Under det Rosa Täcket*. Page 94

¹⁰⁰ Björk, N. ”Jakten på Hjärnan”, *Under det Rosa Täcket*. Page 39

¹⁰¹ Dahlström, A. in Lorentzi, U. ”Hjärnor och Politik”, Bang, *Bang om Biologism: Hjärnsläpp*, page 89

¹⁰² De Beauvoir, S. ”Inledning”, *Det Andra Könet*. Page 9

¹⁰³ Kurtén Lindberg, B. Svenska Dagbladet (1998). Quoted in Lorentzi, U. ”Fast i Skruvstället”, Bang, *Bang om Biologism: Hjärnsläpp*. Page 44-5

There is, in other words, a logic which legitimizes a status-quo by deducting sincerity from certain actions. (This is kind of like saying that ‘women do not like money, because they choose low-paid work’.) However, this logic seems to work mainly when the sincerity intended to be proven has already been established as the only option of characteristic. ‘Femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ seem to be two such well-established characteristics. Femininity and masculinity, further, appear to be applicable to many animals other than humans as well, as shown in the study around the biology of a particular beetle¹⁰⁴: A sweet-water swimming beetle leaves its eggs on the back of the male after mating, and it is the male who nurses and carries the eggs until they are hatched after two-three weeks. It was long presumed that the carrier was the female, but in 1899, biologist Florence W. Slater was able to show what was really going on. The beetle, she writes, is “clearly annoyed” by the weight of the eggs and when he is attacked by a predator; he “submissively takes the blows and seems to prefer death over the indignity of carrying and protecting the eggs¹⁰⁵”. (Is this because he lacks the essential ‘relations interest’?) In a report on science and gender (1998, 2002), I read about a group of chimpanzees (whose DNA structure is up to ninety-eight percent identical to that of humans¹⁰⁶) by the Ivory Coast. It had been studied for seventeen years; clearly mapping the four dominant males. Yet, when the team of investigators decided to examine the kinship patterns, it turned out that only two of the dominant males had produced any offspring at all, and that more than half of all babies were not related to *any* of the males in the group. What had gone unnoticed for seventeen years was that the females, when at most fertile, would go for long walks and come back pregnant¹⁰⁷. (What sort of males the females went to see is a mystery.) It seems, then, that what is ‘masculine’ cannot mean ‘nurturing’, and that ‘feminine’ must mean ‘she whose sexual life is controlled by a dominant male’. It also seems that both of these presumptions were mistaken.

“The male’s aggressiveness”, some say, “which has given him power and access to females, has steered evolution. That is why men strive for power, are unfaithful and rape –evolution has favoured that type of men¹⁰⁸”. Woman’s “desire to take care of children”, other say, “is what has allowed us to at all survive until

¹⁰⁴ Fausto-Sterling. ”Myten om den Objektivita Forskaren”. Quoted in Bang, *Bang om Biologism: Hjärnsläpp*. Page 29-30

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ www.wikipedia.com. See “Bibliography and References”

¹⁰⁷ Westerlund, U. ”Inledning”. Bang, *Bang om Biologism: Hjärnsläpp*. Page 9

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Page 11

today¹⁰⁹”. One’s sex, in other words, determines one’s gender, and gender relations in societal structures are, by proxy, a ‘natural state of affairs’. But if a state of affairs is ‘natural’, then why should one have to step in forcefully to preserve it? One designs a ‘nature’ that is in ‘danger’ and so “one wants to save civilization. From what? From change? Darwin is probably turning in his grave¹¹⁰”. Or as Nina Björk said: “A feminist must not love ‘femininity’ in order to thus ‘up-grade’ a patriarchal devaluation of it, for then we demand that someone must love that which is a part of the oppression: That woman shall be feminine.¹¹¹” For if femininity is something natural, then “the distinction between different women must simply be a question of to what degree these different women understand their own nature...If the True Woman exists, then not only does the False Woman exist...but also the Truer Woman and even the Truest Woman¹¹²”. (We can guess who this ‘truest woman’ is – the listener, the carer; the true haven from the cruel world outside. And we can guess how most women feel about that –just like whopping failures. “When the essential feminine is finally articulated, and what we have been calling ‘women’ cannot see themselves in its terms, what then are we to conclude? That these women are deluded, or that they are not women at all?¹¹³”) “Sex”, says Judith Butler (1993), “is not simply what one has, or a static description of what is: It will be one of the norms by which the ‘one’ becomes viable at all...‘Gender’ emerges...as the term which absorbs and displaces ‘sex’...¹¹⁴” For Butler, then, that which is called ‘natural’ assumes its value at the same time as it assumes its social character –when ‘sex’ becomes ‘gender’. And thus, perhaps

‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender...There is no recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings; hence, sex could not qualify as a prediscursive anatomical facticity. Indeed, sex, per definition, will be shown to have been gender all along.¹¹⁵

(“Of forty-eight chromosomes only one is different: On this difference we base a complete separation of male and female...¹¹⁶” Greer complains.) So far in the analysis, then, we have a situation where it seems that there is little continuity as to

¹⁰⁹ Dahlström, A. in Lorentzi, U. ”Hjärnor och Politik”, Bang, *Bang om Biologism: Hjärnsläpp*, page 89

¹¹⁰ Wikander, U. ”Myten om den Naturliga Skillnaden”. Bang, *Bang om Biologism: Hjärnsläpp*. Page 118

¹¹¹ Björk, N. ”Ett Försvar”, *Under det Rosa Tacket*. Page 235

¹¹² *Ibid.*, page 239-40

¹¹³ Butler, J. ”Variations on Sex and Gender...”. *Feminism as Critique*. Benhabib, S. & Cornell, D. (eds.) Page 142

¹¹⁴ Butler, J. ”Introduction”, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’*. Page 2, 5

¹¹⁵ Butler, J. ”Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire”, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Page 11-12

¹¹⁶ Greer, G. ”Gender”, *The Female Eunuch*. Page 34

what ‘being a woman’ means to women. Some demand a ‘freedom to be feminine’ – or an ‘upgrading of the feminine’. It seems, however, that this ‘femininity’ is something which has been constructed as part of a system that functions by way of placing ‘femininity’ low on the hierarchical ladder. (Perhaps an alternative formulation is to demand a ‘freedom not to devalue every field one enters because one is a woman?’ “Still today”, writes Björk, “women have an annoying tendency to lower the status of every activity [that they engage in]¹¹⁷”. Still, there is the same need to define how gender really is constructed –what it really *means* to be a ‘woman’.) For the commandments of patriarchy dictate that women are never ‘better than’ or even ‘as good/capable as’ men, and denying those commandments –denying our culture– does not seem, to me, to be efficient when it is that cultural structure that one wants to change. (In other words: To want to change the structure that puts women ‘below’ men should not mean to say that the structure does not exist, because it does. In my view, a discourse that *recognizes* the impediments placed on women will be far better off in the task of removing those impediments. That is why Dahlström, quoted in the beginning of this part of the chapter, can be said to be counter-productive when she later suggests that one should “tell women that they are better than men in many respects, so that they dare to be a bit cheeky¹¹⁸”. –She misses the point, in my opinion.) Other feminist voices demand a freedom from static identities –demanding, in a way, to be ‘individuals’ before they are ‘women’, as in Nancy Cott’s definition of women as those who “can’t avoid being women, whatever they do¹¹⁹”. (Note this in opposition to ‘manliness’ as being something which requires persistent re-creation.) But this poses problems too, for someone must be the subject of feminist discourse. So, who are ‘women’? If women’s ‘wombs’ are what group them –what does it then mean to say that ‘sex’ is ‘gender’: How does one understand the connection between ‘the womb’ and the lived experience of being a woman? What part do one’s biological features play in one’s perceived identity?

(And what about those differences between women’s and men’s brains? It seems that the idea that the splenium, (the back part of the Corpus Callosum, through which “most... communication between regions in different halves of the brain are

¹¹⁷ Björk, N. “Emma Bovarys Läsning”, *Sireners Sång: Tankar kring Modernitet och Kön*. Page 143

¹¹⁸ Dahlström, A. in Lorentzi, U. “Hjärnor och Politik”, *Bang, Bang om Biologism: Hjärnsläpp*, page 95

¹¹⁹ Cott, N. in Ahmed, L. “Introduction”, *Women and Gender in Islam*. Page 7

carried¹²⁰), is broader in women comes from one study published in the magazine *Science* (1982), where only fourteen subjects had been examined; five women and nine men. Twenty research projects have since “failed to repeat the measurements¹²¹” – and we can thus assume that the first result was faulty. In 1997, further, the *New Scientist*'s Gail Vines reported that

Pioneering work on mice suggests that a mother's genes play the dominant role in the development of the parts of her offspring's brains that are responsible for intelligence. The father's genes, on the other hand, may shape...the parts of their brains that influence emotional make-up. Safe to say, it won't just be the textbooks that suffer a major shake-up if the astonishing new findings hold true for humans.¹²²

Note Vines' big 'if' –‘If the findings hold true for humans’. Now, why is there suddenly *doubt* as to whether ‘natural’ laws apply to humans? Could it be because these particular findings negate the societal understanding of what is feminine and what is masculine?)

1.4. Authenticity in the Garden of Eden

Woman has a dream of submission, man a dream of alienation, but the inauthentic benefits no one. Both blame each other for the woe drawn from falling for the easily gained temptations. What woman and man hate in each other is the rumbling fiasco of their own cowardly dishonesty.¹²³
Simone de Beauvoir

Not a single one of our actions, while it creates the human we want to be, does not also create an image of the human as we feel that she should be. To choose to be this or that at the same time means that one recognizes the value of what one chooses, for one never chooses something bad.¹²⁴
Jean-Paul Sartre

That all humans are born free and equal is an idea that most people in the liberal-capitalist world live by. It is an ‘agreement’ that we all have made; it is a part of our social understanding of what it is, or what it should be to be a human. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), philosopher of the Enlightenment, proposed the notion of the ‘categorical imperative’, saying that we should act as if the maxim of our actions would become a universal law, and to treat people never as means but as ends in themselves. ‘Treat others as you would desire for them to treat you.’ In the West, the idea was politicized by the liberalist movement, where John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

¹²⁰ www.wikipedia.com. See “Bibliography and References”

¹²¹ Hamberg, K. ”Åsikter och Vetande”. Bang, *Bang om Biologism: Hjärnsläpp*. Page 60

¹²² Vines, G. ”Where Did You Get Your Brains?” (3 May 1997). *The New Scientist*. See “Bibliography and References”

¹²³ de Beauvoir, S. “Avslutning”, *Det Andra Könet*. Page 440

¹²⁴ Sartre, J-P. *Existentialism är en Humanism*. Page 14

was the ‘first’ man to famously introduce the additional concept that also women were a part of the civilized society. (Frenchwoman Olympe de Gauges had already presented that hypothesis in 1791¹²⁵, but she was quickly beheaded. English Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication on the Rights of Woman* in 1792¹²⁶, and is sometimes called the ‘founder of liberalism’ in place of John Stuart Mill, who wrote *On the Subjection of Women* in 1869¹²⁷.) The United Nations articulated the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948¹²⁸ –and despite numerous breakages, most governments and citizens alike would argue that the commandments incorporate a just view on the rights of individual humans and interactions between them. “Personhood, autonomy, rights, dignity, self-respect: These are the terms of the liberal Enlightenment¹²⁹”, writes Martha Nussbaum, Professor of Law and Ethics at Chicago University in her *Sex and Social Justice* (1999). This liberalism (as do humanisms and individualisms) points to the fundamentally human ability to rationally determine what is right and how one wants to live one’s life, affirming the dignity and rights of everyone. In other words: People can believe, say or do what they want –as long as they do not infringe on anybody else’s right to the same freedom. The ideal government should ensure that no agent has arbitrary power over any other. But there are problems.

There is a classic feminist sentiment that ‘the private is political’, meaning that how separate individuals conduct their lives is part of a system that defines and categorizes us (for instance; ‘middle-aged, Caucasian, protestant male’), thus overlooking how ‘minorities’ (‘alternatives’) along with their conduct are stigmatized, and providing unequal opportunity to the ‘freedom’ that is then merely formal. (For example, if a working woman and man are living together as a couple and the woman does more than half of the housework, then this is seen as being part of a system of thought where it is supposed that women ‘should do’ more than half of the housework, or that they ‘like’ doing it. Similarly, when little girls are raised in pink rooms with Barbie-dolls, then that is also seen as reinforcing a systematic norm, affecting the individual’s conduct in the public space –thus ‘political’, even though it is ‘private’, family business.) The relevance of the idea that ‘the private is political’ is exemplified when looking at choices that seem to make individuals less autonomous, free or rational. How should one think about that? The task for feminists is to ask

¹²⁵ de Gauges, O. “The Rights of Women”. See “Bibliography and References”

¹²⁶ www.wikipedia.com. See “Bibliography and References”

¹²⁷ www.wikipedia.com. See “Bibliography and References”

¹²⁸ www.un.org. See “Bibliography and References”

¹²⁹ Nussbaum, M. “The Feminist Critique of Liberalism”, *Sex and Social Justice*, page 56

which the *conditions* of autonomy and freedom are (and to establish a system where these can be utilized). Now, liberalist feminists claim that the conditions for autonomy are embedded in our very humanness; the conditions for freedom, further, have been enforced by national laws (such as granting both women and men the right to vote) and international declarations (such as the declaration of Human Rights). But since statistics show that women *as a group* are poorer and less powerful than men –something in this framework must be either faulty or malfunctioning. One asks, then, whether the supposed authenticity of women’s and men’s choices perhaps is false. (Or, is there is something that women have in common and which predestines them to desire not to be autonomous?)

In *Sex and Social Justice*, Martha Nussbaum discusses these issues. For her, the problem is that society is not liberal enough. For what the individualism of her degree purports is just that “the food given to A does not arrive in the stomach of B¹³⁰” –and had we stressed this ‘experientially true fact’ sufficiently, then the needs and desires of every individual would be sufficiently stressed as well. Lack of individualism is thus the reason to why ‘gender inequality’ still exists while ‘sex inequality’ has been legally abolished. “We must respect and promote the liberty of choice, and... the equal worth of persons as choosers.¹³¹” If we are to respect and promote the equal worth of persons as choosers, then we must also assume that the choices people make are authentic. And when no-one is discriminated against by reference to their sex, it seems that women –as individuals constituting a group– choose jobs with lower wages. And then, the ‘gender inequality’ that we wanted to talk about becomes a women’s only issue, as seen in the following quote (from an internet article):

‘Women prevent promotion themselves.’ Through girly behaviour, women deprive themselves of a chance on a good career...That women stay behind men in their careers is well known, despite the fact that women have just as much talent and ambition as men...Women must thus learn to put themselves more in the foreground...and dare to take risks.¹³²

It seems, in other words, that some needs or desires should not be stressed and that there is not much choice of action when the desired outcome is vocational prowess. It seems that, in this imagery, there exist certain choices of conduct which lead to power, fame, fortune et cetera, and it is by making these choices that men reach, and

¹³⁰ Nussbaum, M. “The Feminist Critique of Liberalism”, *Sex and Social Justice*. Page 62

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, page 57

¹³² www.monsterboard.nl. See “Bibliography and References”

have reached ‘the top’. Women will ‘emancipate themselves’ by adopting similar tactics. (Ideas such as this –we might call it ‘Thatcher feminism’- often figure in popular ‘girl power’ culture, where it is frequently suggested that girls be more ‘assertive’, ‘demand’ respect, ‘take up space’, ‘refuse’ anal sex and so forth. A girl’s being equal-to-the-boy is, in other words, her own responsibility.) While *entering* the field of ‘administrative and managerial workers’ (where women are under-represented) is getting ‘easier’, it seems that women can still not ‘avoid being women’. A psychotherapist (interviewed in a handbook for over-ambitious and burnt-out young women) explains:

On the way up in an organization [there is] often a demand for sameness, while the woman who has reached the top of an organization notices how the demands change and a sort of difference-demand appears; you should provide something specifically feminine! ... -If you succeed, you are atypical of your sort –and good. If you fail, you are a typical woman and representative of your sex.¹³³

We have, then, a situation where the result is, as Björk (1999) puts it, that the “culturally active woman –yet again- appears as something not desirable¹³⁴”:

If she no longer want to stay in this her original position...if she approaches the centre: Then she is called a man, a feminist. And as such she is said to only rub the present order the right way...When the woman moves away from her [position] she gives confirmation to the power...¹³⁵

The power that the woman confirms is, according to Björk’s analysis, the power that men have in our society: While men can idealize femininity; strive to represent it, or play with it, women cannot do the same with neither femininity nor masculinity. (Take, for example, the popularity of ‘drag’ and ‘gay’ culture; ‘men being women’ is acceptable and appreciated. But “does one laugh at a naked girl, hunchbacked and with a Hitler-moustache¹³⁶”?) That women ‘approaching the centre’ are called ‘men’ – feminists- is to say that while the conditions for reaching power are set, and women are encouraged to adopt similar tactics, the women who do so are really only doing what the oppressive structure ordains. (When women aim only for a redistribution of power, “leaving intact the power structure itself, then they are resubjecting themselves, deliberately or not, to a phallocratic order¹³⁷”, said Irigaray about the matter.) It would be ‘better’, as Björk’s analysis of the state of affairs goes, if

¹³³ Ernsjö Rappe, T. and Sjögren, J. ”Bit Ihop –Bryt Ihop”, *Diagnos: Duktig...* Page 24

¹³⁴ Björk, N. ”Lånad Kvinnlighet”, *Sireners Sång: Tanker Kring Modernitet och Kön*. Page 210

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, page 209

¹³⁶ McManus, P. “Kan Man Vara Rolig Om Man Är Tjej?”, Skugge, Olsson, Zilg, *Fittstim*. Page 104

¹³⁷ Irigaray, L. ”The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine”. *The Irigaray Reader*. Whitford, M. (ed), page 128

femininity would remain in the margins; would remain something which could constitute an *alternative*. In other words: “It seems that merely men can boldly exceed the gender limits... ‘The feminine’ can only function in a radical way if *men* make it theirs...” As we can see, the system does not quite work. Despite a liberal, legislated ‘sex equality’, it appears that ideas of gender characteristics are still acknowledged, and that while men can appropriate aspects of ‘femininity’ to break up the organization of modernity, oppressive distinctions between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, unfair hierarchies and so forth, it still appears that ‘inferiority’ (or ‘the unimprovable’) is something intrinsically linked with women. Women can try to emancipate themselves, but they will never quite be men. (“Whatever women do, it is wrong and they are laden with guilt¹³⁸” writes one feminist assessing her experience of being pregnant: Her pregnancy is ‘normal’ and she should not ‘burden society’ by not working –but she should also ‘rest’ for the baby’s sake *and* ‘exercise’ to make sure that her body looks good soon again. Daphne van Ouwkerk (*InHolland Hogeschool*, 2003) notes that the characteristics of women’s speech originate in the idea that “women are not really concerned [lit. *begaan*] with the ‘big issues’ in this world¹³⁹”. Women talk about their role as “woman, friend and mother, [while men’s stories are] much more exiting, they are about danger, conflict and victory¹⁴⁰”. –That ‘danger, conflict and victory’ are not part of women’s roles must be something so apt and appropriate that it does not need explaining or analysis. “It is important that women, as newcomers [on the job market] present themselves somewhat ‘manlier’ and show clearly what they are good at¹⁴¹” is van Ouwkerk’s solution to gender inequality at work.)

When one supposes, then, that people can be authentic in their choices, one is also supposing either that people’s mode of existence is beyond images, beyond preconceptions of who they and others are; or that there is an essence which predicts the nature of their ‘deep inner self’. If one, instead, acknowledges that women and men have internalized a myriad of ideas about who they are, how they should behave and interact with other people, then it is not strange that women have little faith in

¹³⁸ Hamberg, K. & Forssén, A. ”Hormoner och Positioner”. Bang, *Bang om Biologism: Hjärnsläpp*. Page 172

¹³⁹ Ibid. ”Onderzoek Verschillen in Taal M/V”, *Gender in Vergadering...* Page 16

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ouwkerk, D. van. ”Samenvatting”. *Gender in Vergadering...* Page 1

themselves; it is not strange that liberalist feminism has fallen short, or that 'biologism' has reappeared declaring itself 'feminist'. As Hélène Cixous (1975) said:

We have internalized this fear of the dark. Women haven't had eyes for themselves. They haven't gone exploring in their house. Their sex still frightens them. Their bodies, which they haven't dared enjoy, have been colonized. Woman is disgusted by woman and fears her. They have committed the greatest crime against women: Insidiously and violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense power against themselves, to do the male's dirty work.¹⁴²

"Women who fancy that they manipulate the world by pussy power and gentle cajolery are fools. It is slavery to have to adopt such tactics¹⁴³", wrote Germaine Greer in 1970. For, as we have seen, what is particular about the 'sex struggle' (as opposed to a 'class' or 'race' struggle) is that both men and women 'degrade' women. "Homo homini lupus¹⁴⁴"; man is a wolf to man, wrote Sigmund Freud (*Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930)). For Freud, the *threat* of the violence that one wolf can inflict on another becomes equivalent to the threat of loss of love in the mind –and avoiding that is the reason for ideal cultural demands, such as 'love thy enemy'. "*Credo quia absurdum* ('I believe it because it is absurd')¹⁴⁵". "It would be enough to make half the world break out laughing, if it were not still going on¹⁴⁶", as Cixous, furthering the quote above, so cleverly pointed out. We leave this 'build-up' chapter, then, with a sense of chaotic discontinuity and confused anxiety around the concepts of sex, gender, the lived experiences of women and men, and the interactions between women and men... And so we enter the world of psychoanalytic methods of investigation.

2. Gender and Its Discontents

The Corner-Stones of Psycho-Analytic Theory. –The assumption that there are unconscious mental processes, the recognition of the theory of resistance and repression, the appreciation of the importance of sexuality and the Oedipus complex- these constitute the principal subject-matter of psychoanalysis and the foundations of its theory.¹⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud

In setting out to analyse the "operations of ideology and the laws of the human order¹⁴⁸", Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) realized that that ideology and that law are

¹⁴² Cixous, H. "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays", *The Newly Born Woman*. Page 68

¹⁴³ Greer, G. "Revolution", *The Female Eunuch*. Page 368

¹⁴⁴ Freud, S. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Page 61

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, page 60

¹⁴⁶ Cixous, H. "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays", *The Newly Born Woman*. Page 68

¹⁴⁷ Freud, S. "Two Encyclopaedia Articles". Quoted in Mitchell, J. "The Feminists", *Psychoanalysis and Feminism...* Page 343

¹⁴⁸ Mitchell, J. "Introduction", *Psychoanalysis and Feminism...* Page XIV

patriarchal. 'Patriarchy', in Juliet Mitchell's (Lacanian) terminology, means the 'law of the Father' –and it is “the operation of this law within the life of the individual boy and girl¹⁴⁹” that Freud's work can help us understand. For rather than categorizing persons in a Western type way, into oppositional stereotypes of black and white, sane and mad, woman and man, psychoanalytic theory attempts to analyse the patriarchal ideology itself. That is, it is about “the material reality of ideas both within, and of, man's history¹⁵⁰”. Which ideas do we all abide by? How are they constructed, and reconstructed? What steers the formation of selfhood; how is it that we come to call ourselves 'women' and 'men', with 'feminine' and 'masculine' characteristics? This chapter shows the psychoanalytic investigation of the laws of patriarchal civilization. I start by introducing those 'corner-stones' of the theory itself, so as to –very roughly- outline a psychoanalytic account of the formation of sexual identity. Following this introduction, I will bring in some thoughts by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981). Although I focus on Freudian theory, the influential Lacan has some interesting theories on the 'nature' of femininity, which are useful for this thesis' account of how 'womanhood' is shaped through societal and unconscious rules. Lastly, before I move on to discuss 'gender and its possibilities' in Chapter Three, I will introduce a psychoanalytic account of feminine specificity in sexual satisfaction.

2.1. The Unconscious, Libido and the Role of Sexuality

Perhaps the most revolutionary concept introduced by psychoanalysis is the postulation of the *unconscious*. Freud came to acknowledge, through various methods of investigation, that the mind must be something dynamic and consisting of two mental forces, a 'life-drive' ('Eros') and a 'death drive', operating sometimes in harmony and sometimes in opposition with one another. The unconscious was found to consist of instinctual desires and wishes, systematically designed with “no negation, no doubt, no degrees of certainty¹⁵¹”; as these are only initiated by the work of a 'censorship' between a person's unconscious and conscious mental life. The unconscious wishes were additionally seen to be mostly of narcissistic or destructive nature, unlike the conscious elements which are concerned with an adaptation to

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Freud, S. "The Unconscious", *On Metapsychology*. Page 190

social reality. Traumatic experiences can be repressed to the unconscious, where they cannot be known or handled but may show disturbing physical effects. In this way, the root, or *cause* of some of our reactions will seem inexplicable, involuntary or, for instance, embarrassing to us. (It is on this ground that we talk of ‘Freudian slips’: In some situations, we say or do exactly that which we know we should not –and we did not mean to either. These symptomatic ‘slips’ are all we can see of the unconscious in a ‘personal’ sense. But “systematizing [the] manifestations offers subjective knowledge¹⁵²”. And postulating the existence of an unconscious is necessary, according to psychoanalytic theory, since “nothing else would explain what [Freud] observed –and he certainly tried every [other theory that] anyone could think of, first.¹⁵³”) There is thus a ‘conflict of being’ for everyone... And so, there can be no real distinction between what is ‘normal’ and what is ‘abnormal’ –for ‘normality’ (along with a notion of a ‘unified self’; a ‘consistent’ identity et cetera) is but “the effort we must make on our entry into human society¹⁵⁴”. That is; who we ‘are’ (read; ‘become’) is steered by our relation to the laws regarding who we should be. (Freud named the instinctual part of the mind the ‘id’. This, along with a moralizing, critical part named the ‘superego’ –soon to be laid out- belongs in the unconscious realm of the mind. The organized, realistic and conscious part is called the ‘ego¹⁵⁵’.)

Neurosis is a ‘conflict’ between the ego and the superego; say an (unconscious) refusal to adapt and comply with social rules; or the ‘failure’ of the effort *not* to ‘act out’ wishes or desires that are socially unacceptable. In other words; neurosis can be signified as a repression of traumatic events; where the ‘process of repression’ means that the thought connected to something ‘unacceptable’ is “pushed down into the unconscious where it is transformed and where it remains – until re-evoked, or until it breaks out (as a symptom), or until it is analysed¹⁵⁶”. In short: A neurotic is aware that something is wrong, but cannot ‘reach’ the cause and thus not change the situation. Neurosis “investigates internal processes of personality and self-concepts (unconscious conflicts)¹⁵⁷”, and it is through systematizing the symptoms that a neurotic can make sense of these processes of personality and self-concepts. (The symptom, then, is the ‘price’ of the protest... *Psychosis*, which I will

¹⁵² Mitchell, J. “Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*... Page 6

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Mitchell, J. “Sexuality”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*... Page 17

¹⁵⁵ Freud, S. “The Ego and the Id”, *On Metapsychology*. Page 339-380

¹⁵⁶ Mitchell, J. “Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*... Page 7

¹⁵⁷ Winkler, M. & Palme, G. “What is Neurosis?” See “Bibliography and References”

not discuss here, is the full refusal, or rejection of the, so to speak, symbolic ‘name of the Father’; of identity. The psychotic does not ‘know that something is wrong’, for she has denied totally the laws by which identity formation takes place.)

It is imperative to note that accepting the notion of an ‘unconscious’ aspect of oneself does *not* mean that to say that this is a “deep, mysterious place, whose presence, in mystical fashion, accounts for all the unknown¹⁵⁸”; on the contrary; it is knowable and it is normal. For what it contains is “normal thought, [just] utterly transformed by its own laws¹⁵⁹”.

The *libido* is a kind of creative ‘love energy’; a ‘life-drive’. Libido is –importantly– sexual in nature; it *is* sexuality¹⁶⁰. Libidinal forces are directed either inwards as ego-libido or narcissism; or outward into the world as object-libido. (This distinction, Freud argues, is a necessary hypothesis derived from studies of neurotic and psychotic processes¹⁶¹.) For Freud, every individual is equipped with a primary narcissism showing itself as a need to be with the mother. The baby perceives the mother as *a part of itself* and it is not until a later point that the essential separation between the two is realized. Thus, what looks like an object-love is actually narcissistic –a symbiotic bond of identification: ‘I *am* the other’. Sexuality, then, includes modes of identification, or rather; identity appropriation. A subject will both form its own sexual character by means of internalizing attributes of others (or what is so perceived), and likewise define its ‘object-choice’ in adult life.

2.2. The Oedipus Complex and the Castration Complex

The Oedipus Complex regards a developmental stage where a child’s desire is turned to the parent of the opposite sex and it starts to identify with the parent of the same sex. (Before this complex, both girls and boys have pretty much the same ‘attitude’, that is; the mother is the primary object for love, but perceived ‘narcissistically’, as described above.) The Oedipus complex represents a ‘state of affairs’ which, according to the cultural demands of patriarchy, has to be ‘represented’ because it is the “family drama of any primary constellation of figures within which the child must

¹⁵⁸ Mitchell, J. “Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism...* Page 6

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Mitchell, J. “Sexuality”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism...* Page 20

¹⁶¹ Freud, S. “On Narcissism: An Introduction”, *On Metapsychology*. Page 70

find its place¹⁶²”. It is not the actual family situation that is here referred to, but an *idea* of ‘the family’; that is; it is about what is expected to happen in man’s general cultural history. (And that, of course, is that the boy will one day become the head of his own family, and the girl will one day become somebody’s wife and somebody’s mother. The oedipal question that must be answered is thus, ‘am I a woman or a man?’.) A boy’s resolution of the Oedipus complex entails that he “gives up his *mother* as object, but identifies with his *father*¹⁶³”. But during this difficult process, which includes destructive, unacceptable desires, the boy might feel envy towards his father (for possessing the mother) and “secretly wish to kill him¹⁶⁴”. The *guilt* that this causes prompts the boy to internalize the father’s ‘law’; his metaphorical ‘*no*’. A girl’s resolution to the same complex is different. To the girl, the ‘father’ must become the ‘loved one’:

She makes a shift from mother-love to father-love only because she has to, and then with pain and protest. She has to, because she is without the phallus. No phallus, no power –except those winning ways of getting one.¹⁶⁵

Those ‘winning ways’ are the ways by which the girl makes herself *loveable*; she has to exploit ‘her passive instinctual impulses’ –that is, the passive aims of her sexual drive, in order to transfer her attentions from her mother to her father. By wanting his phallus, his power, she will turn to want, by analogy, his ‘baby’ (and it might later steer her choice of boyfriend towards someone who is ‘like her father’): “Thus she becomes a little woman. This transference from mother to father is the girl’s ‘positive’ Oedipus complex¹⁶⁶”. Through the work of the Castration Complex; “in boys, anxiety about the penis –in girls, envy for the penis¹⁶⁷”, the superego is then formed. The superego in a boy stipulates that he “*must* be like his father, but not *too* like him –i.e. he must not wish to take his place with the mother¹⁶⁸”. The ‘penis’, here, signifies a ‘totem’; a revered principle to which sexual beings form a relation. This relation will then be more or less problematic and come to form “the nucleus of the superego¹⁶⁹”. ‘Castration’ means the separation or *division* which for Freud is the mark of sexual difference. The castration complex is thus an *internalization of a*

¹⁶² Mitchell, J. “The Oedipus Complex”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism...* Page 63

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, page 71

¹⁶⁴ Blackburn, S. *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Page 268

¹⁶⁵ Mitchell, J. “The Castration Complex”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. Page 96

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, page 96-7

¹⁶⁷ Freud, S. “On Narcissism: An Introduction”, *On Metapsychology*. Page 86

¹⁶⁸ Mitchell, J. “The Oedipus Complex”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism...* Page 71

¹⁶⁹ Strachey, J. Editor’s note on Freud, S. “Mourning and Melancholia”, *On Metapsychology*, page 250

patriarchal law, where the girl will *desire* a ‘penis’ (or anything that is a representative of the same ‘totem’; a baby, money, gifts and so forth) and the boy will struggle to *represent* ‘it’. Through this arrangement –the formation of the superego either by (for boys) identifying with the ‘father’ and thus accepting *temporary* ‘castration’ at the promise of better things to come, or (for girls) accepting ‘castration’ *all in all* and thus, since being castrated means not having power, keep desiring it- our cultural demands are reinforced while allowing girls and boys to become ‘acceptable’ citizens. Castration “–or the threat thereof- is, so to speak, the high point of the psychological fear of loss and hence of danger¹⁷⁰”. It is the superego, through moralizing (read; threatening with loss of love) over the ego, which keeps us ‘acceptable’; that is; within our gendered parameters. But there are problems: Accepting ‘castration’ is not easy (for anyone; whether girl or boy), and girls’ complexes are often not ‘resolved’ in that way that produces the acceptable, patriarchal women. For a girl to accept castration as a characteristic of her sex, she must *repress* other and previous ideas of ‘who she is as female’. This means “not only acknowledging the lack of the phallus, but, out of disappointment, abandoning the inferior clitoris as a source of sexual satisfaction¹⁷¹”. (It is in this context that ‘penis-envy’ comes in; the repressed ideas that surround the “failure of acceptance [of castration]¹⁷²”. Note that in and of itself, the *body* “neither indicates nor initiates anything¹⁷³”, for the constitution of a subject is mainly historical and symbolic. Also, though some girls may wish to own actual penises, this cannot be the full meaning of the castration complex. For such a stance on ‘penis-envy’ would require that little girls have a privileged relationship to an understanding of the body (in that a girl seeing a boy’s naughty bits immediately realizes it is bigger and better) and “clearly such inequity in girls’ and boys’ access to meaning is untenable¹⁷⁴”. In other words, we should grasp Freud’s ‘penis’ as an indicator of *differentiation* (like the binding could differentiate a pile of printed paper from a book) rather than an authentic inflatable limb.)

2.3. Jacques Lacan: The Mirror Stage, the Paternal Metaphor and “the Woman does not exist”

¹⁷⁰ Mitchell, J. “The Castration Complex”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*... Page 77

¹⁷¹ Ibid., page 96

¹⁷² Ibid., page 98

¹⁷³ Mitchell, J. (ed) “Introduction 1”, *Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne: Feminine Sexuality*, page 17

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan sought to better Freudian theory by help of progress in the field of linguistics. Lacan proposed that the unconscious is structured like a language; a notion implying the idea that every new individual is born into a structure of meanings which have already been defined by an 'other'. Subjectivity -and so inevitably sexual identity- is constructed through a series of stages, one being the Mirror Stage. This signifies the time when the child realizes that it is different from and other than the mother. The "subject forms an image of itself by identifying with others' perception of it¹⁷⁵"; in other words: The conceptualization of a 'self' is only created through being mirrored back to itself. In that the 'I' is created through a division; that is, an inside experience being signified exclusively by an outside medium, the 'I' is doomed to be shifting and unstable. (Imagine a child in its mother's arms in front of a mirror learning to say: *That is me, I am that other* over there. "The mother does not mirror the child to itself; she grants an image *to* the child, which her presence instantly deflects."¹⁷⁶) The mother seems to offer a unity, but this process of referring fractures it.) Subjectivity, then, is located in the structures of language, collectively called 'the Symbolic'. This 'symbolic' dimension incorporates a series of injunctions that secure the borders of one's acquired gender "through the threat of psychosis, abjection, psychic unlivability¹⁷⁷", (which is to say that the 'symbolic' is that which designates 'normality'), and must be disconnected and alienated from the 'real'. It is in this alienation that '*desire*' lies. 'Desire' comes into being only when there is difference and separation. This difference signifies a lack of being -for which the phallus, as we shall see, comes to stand as substitute. 'Desire' is mostly focused on regaining the unity (with the mother) from before difference was installed through language. ("Speech emerges only upon the condition of dissatisfaction... The subject speaks only to displace desire onto the metonymic substitutes for that irretrievable pleasure."¹⁷⁸) So, this pleasurable, 'incestuous' unity was only ever discovered *through language*; that is, the 'lost unity is discovered through losing it'. And the desire to regain it will never be fulfilled; that would be impossible... ('Desire', then, is a process in *excess* -expressed through the term *jouissance*- always almost tipping over, overflowing. The Latin phrase *post coitum omne animal tristis est* shows the idea that after intercourse (and orgasm, presumably) comes

¹⁷⁵ Mitchell, J. (ed) "Introduction 1", *Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne: Feminine Sexuality*, page 4

¹⁷⁶ Rose, J. (ed) "Introduction II", *Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne: Feminine Sexuality*, page 30

¹⁷⁷ Butler, J. "Introduction", *Bodies that Matter...* Page 14-15

¹⁷⁸ Butler, J. "Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix", *Gender Trouble...* Page 55

a feeling of sadness, of having lost something beyond yourself, something greater. It is this kind of feeling, of being ‘hopelessly wanting’, that I think Lacan describes.)

Where Freud emphasized the penis in his hypothesis on the castration complex, Lacan talked about a Paternal Metaphor in the symbolic sphere of language. This is a phallus *without referent*. This phallus represents a *necessarily missing object* of desire, determining “where a person can be placed in relation to his or her desire¹⁷⁹”. In other words, an empty phallus (imagine a totally covered totem. Lifting the veil would uncover nothing. Still, it is a totem worshipped by way of a gentlemen’s agreement) comes to break and contrast an ‘original feminine’ and is therefore the organizing principle of the symbolic structure. Now, our greatest desire –as mentioned above- is regaining the lost unity with the mother. In connection with language being in the sphere of symbolism (as opposed to ‘the real world’), the concept ‘mother’ (and thus also ‘woman’) becomes a fantastic symbol. Feminine specificity is here “predicated directly onto the concept of an unmediated and unproblematic relation to origin¹⁸⁰”. Women, so to speak, come to –in the symbolic sphere- ‘be’ ‘the Phallus’; the paradoxical position of the ‘object of desire’. For “the masculine subject who ‘has’ the Phallus requires this Other to confirm and, hence, be the Phallus in its ‘extended’ sense¹⁸¹”. This is the ‘Phallus of the Mother’ (or ‘*m(Other)*’, as we could write it; playing with words and letters in a Lacanian manner) which does not ‘exist’, but is necessary to set in ‘desire’. For Lacan, this is why ‘woman’ is the ultimate fantasy. And he said: ‘The Woman does not exist’, by way of showing that belief in dogmatic essentials of femininity or masculinity is a fraud. (In other words, all meaning resides in language: Therefore, what we name ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ has no ‘real essence’ of its own, but get all their weight only in the symbolic sphere.) So, women, or –‘the Woman’-, is conceptualized both as a promise of recovering the oceanic feelings of pre-individuated ‘unity’, and as a necessary guarantee and reflection of the masculine subject position. As Judith Butler (1990) explains:

Women must become...precisely what men are not and, in their very lack, establish the essential function of men. Hence, ‘being’ the Phallus is always a ‘being for’ a masculine subject who seeks to reconfirm and augment his identity through the recognition of that ‘being for’... To *be* the Phallus is

¹⁷⁹ Mitchell, J. “Introduction I”, *Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne: Feminine Sexuality*, page 24

¹⁸⁰ Rose, J. (ed) “Introduction II”, *Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne: Feminine Sexuality*, page 54

¹⁸¹ Butler, J. “Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix”. *Gender Trouble...* Page 56

to be signified by the paternal law, to be both its object and its instrument and...the 'sign' and promise of its power.¹⁸²

To summarize: The idea of the unconscious points to a fundamental division of psychic life and “therefore challenges any form of empiricism based on what is there to be observed.¹⁸³” That is –again- genitals in themselves do not tell us anything about psychosexuality. The superego is the internalization of a paternal law –in other words, an acceptance and reinforcement of patriarchy. Every human being is born into a structure of symbols and meaning in which subjectivity is necessarily unstable, as subjectivity can only come about through the language of *others* which per definition is alienating; and the *desire of others*. That desire in turn comes about through the alienating difference that is installed via the structure itself. Sexuality belongs to this same structure and can by implication not be an innate or biological quality of a person, but works as a choice of two paths only (femininity and masculinity) out of which you must choose one –and others will show you which one. (Refusal or failure to internalize and comply with the –for each gender prescribed- rules may lead to neurosis, perversion, psychosis...) What steers this choice is the law of phallic primacy (the paternal metaphor); which shows its play on sexual subjectivity through the castration complex. There can only be one mark of sexual identity and this mark *has to* be the phallus. This is because (1) sexual difference needs to be installed through the experience of a separation; a loss, lacking or divide, which is perceived as real but which can only be conceptualized imaginarily. This separation is a condition for desire to arise, and (2) the loss needs to be conceptualized as ‘phallic’ or else we would end up with a theory binding femininity and masculinity to biology. –For was birth (the ‘actual’ bereavement of unity with the mother), for instance, upheld as *the* mark of severance, then that theory would require the mother as already constituted *as a woman* –and by implication tie any political debate about gender issues to various ideas on how fallopian tubes, cervixes or milk glands make women naturally suitable for some professions rather than others, and so forth.

2.4. Women and Sexual Satisfaction

¹⁸² Ibid., page 58

¹⁸³ Rose, J. “Femininity and its Discontents”, *Ethics: A Feminist Reader*. Page 251

Women regard themselves as having been damaged in infancy, as having been undeservedly cut short of something and unfairly treated; and the embitterment of so many daughters against their mother derives, ultimately, from the reproach against her for having brought them into the world as women instead of men.¹⁸⁴ *Sigmund Freud*

Among the good deeds for which Plato thanked the gods, was the first that they made him a free man and not a slave, the second that he was created a man and not a woman.¹⁸⁵ *Simone de Beauvoir*

Freud knew how difficult it is to become a woman, happy within patriarchal society. Women have to make themselves something which is loved rather than to go out and find 'objects' to love themselves. Woman has 'nothing' special of her own, so to speak –and to compensate, she makes “her whole body into a proud substitute. She has to develop her threatened narcissism in order to make herself loved and adored¹⁸⁶”. (“It is men who like to play dolls¹⁸⁷”, said Cixous punningly.) Women are thus ‘told’ to ‘be beautiful’ from all sides. As we saw in the text on the Oedipus complex and the Castration Complex, a girl must abandon her clitoris as a source of sexual satisfaction, in order to become a truly patriarchal woman. (This is simply because if she does not, she will have no desire for penile penetration, and society cannot ‘go on’.) This transference is supposed to happen when the girl realizes her inferiority –that is, when she realizes that she is ‘like her mother’, who turns out not to have the phallus- and replaces the mother as love-object in favour of the father. After the recognition that the girl is thus ‘castrated’, she has three courses open to her, only one of which leads to ‘normality’ (‘normality’ meaning that the girl becomes a woman who orgasms vaginally together with a man, having successfully explored the ‘passive aims’ of her sexuality. When she accepts her castration, clitoral masturbation is usually totally renounced, as she does not want to be reminded of her ‘humiliation’). The first of the other two courses occurs if the sensation of being ‘lacking’ causes such a scar on the girl’s narcissism that the hostility she feels towards her mother makes her turn away from women and womanhood altogether, in which case, “debasement and despising women, as men do, she is liable to become inhibited and neurotic¹⁸⁸”. The second course is to “refuse to abandon the pleasures of her clitoris¹⁸⁹”, in which case she stays in a pre-Oedipal phase. Now, the Oedipus, firstly,

¹⁸⁴ Freud, S. “Some Character-Types Met With in Psycho-Analytic Work”. Quoted in Mitchell, J. “The Castration Complex”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*... Page 97

¹⁸⁵ de Beauvoir, S. “Inledning”, *Det Andra Könet*. Page 18

¹⁸⁶ Mitchell, J. “The Pre-Oedipal Mother and the Oedipal Father”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*... Page 116

¹⁸⁷ Cixous, H. “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays”, *The Newly Born Woman*. Page 66

¹⁸⁸ Mitchell, J. “The Castration Complex”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*... page 96

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

is *never* “utterly or entirely disposed of¹⁹⁰”. Secondly, the transference from the clitoris to the vagina often fails to work. As this is the case, and as “the path to womanhood seems to offer few social attractions, many women hanker back to their clitoridal days¹⁹¹”. There seems to be no way out –a girl must either go on wanting to possess the phallus, or deny that there is any difference between having one and not having one (thus ‘denying’ that our culture is patriarchal), or accepting the situation and its “psychical consequences of inferiority¹⁹²”.

“Patriarchy and written history are twins.¹⁹³” Can we conceptualize a ‘before’, so as to foray an ‘escape from patriarchy’? “Greek culture, or the making of a man, stood in the way of analytical discovery of an earlier layer of civilization –the Minoan-Mycenaean pre-Oedipal phase so crucial for femininity¹⁹⁴”, says Mitchell. We cannot know much about such a civilization, she continues; apart from that its overturn was probably a massive defeat for ‘women’, who since have to ‘unlearn’ a lot. That is; all the pre-Oedipal (read; pre-written history; pre-Ancient Greece) values must be abandoned or thoroughly repositioned and repressed to the unconscious –and through this process a girl will understand our days’ maxim that she is the inferior one; that such is her feminine place in the world. Her attachment must be completely displaced from the mother onto the father –but “as with all displacements, what has been displaced remains highly vocal¹⁹⁵”. In other words, when the patriarchal laws are adopted, the ideals and rules of ‘matriarchal mother-worship’ have to be denied, but they shine through all the time –for so works the unconscious: In repression, the ego withdraws its energy and interest from the “ideas attached to sexual impulses that are unacceptable¹⁹⁶”; but the Minoan-Mycenaean pre-Oedipal culture will fiercely be wanting to ‘come out’ just in proportion to how greatly it has been repressed. Freud said that there can be no direct division between passive and active aims in boys and girls, as individual variations much outweigh sex distinctions¹⁹⁷, but the ‘rules’ say that women must explore their passive aims, and men their active ones. Today, however, women ‘should’ actively pursue careers and sexual satisfaction plus happily

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., page 89

¹⁹¹ Ibid., page 86

¹⁹² Ibid., page 99

¹⁹³ Mitchell, J. “Conclusion: Where Did it All Start?”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism...* Page 365

¹⁹⁴ Mitchell, J. “The Pre-Oedipal Mother and the Oedipal Father”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism...* Page 109

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., page 110

¹⁹⁶ Mitchell, J. “Germaine Greer and Freud’s Female Eunuch”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism...* Page 344

¹⁹⁷ Mitchell, J. “The Pre-Oedipal Mother and the Oedipal Father”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism...* Page 115

combine that with being ‘good’, attentive partners and mothers. The ‘family’ situation has thus changed. But the ‘family’ (consisting of a father, a mother and a child) is one of the founding principles of patriarchy. In our society, the Oedipus complex “(which is about the exchange relationships and taboos necessary for society,) is *expressed* within the specific context of the nuclear family¹⁹⁸”. In other words; patriarchy ‘started’ as a way of organizing the interrelations between people through making sure that sexual rules were followed. One such sexual rule is the prohibition on incest –for society does not function when direct family members breed. Yet at the same time; one’s sister, mother, father and brother are the ones one is supposed to love the most. A system of exchange ‘forms’ an acceptable way for this love to exist –while ‘repressing’ the unacceptable ways. It is “the structural relationship *between* families, that constitutes the elementary form of human society; that distinguishes human societies from primate groups”, that is; some legally established form of exchange and a distinction between illegitimate and legitimate relationships has to be established for a society to exist. Now considering the reality of family situations in the West today (where the nuclear father-mother-child is no longer predominant), we are left with a big question mark: Is ‘passivity’ as part of the definition of femininity –and by analogy, the contradictions leading to today’s women’s difficulty to adopt the only role acceptable for them to play- inevitable for society to exist? Does ‘woman’ have to remain the ‘lesser’; the ‘other’? Is it at all possible to conceptualize a society where the system of exchange, structure of the family and definition of femininity are not patriarchal? ‘Where do we go from here?’
For,

[t]hat is all I had to say about femininity. It is certainly incomplete and fragmented and does not always sound friendly... If you want to know more about femininity, inquire from your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information.¹⁹⁹ *Sigmund Freud*

3. Gender and Its Possibilities

The myth in our biblical story of creation seems to express this our desire to liberate ourselves from our mother: The man is born by God, an idealized father figure... Woman is born from the man’s body. If this myth expresses man’s victory over his mother and over the woman, who thereby

¹⁹⁸ Mitchell, J. “Conclusion: The Oedipus Complex and Patriarchal Society”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*... Page 377

¹⁹⁹ Freud, S. “Femininity”, New Introductory Lectures. Quoted in Mitchell, J. “The Marks of Womanhood”, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*... Page 119

becomes his own child, then it also presents a kind of solution to the woman... She chooses to belong to a man, to be created *for* him... instead of extending her 'bonding' with the mother.²⁰⁰
Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, psychoanalyst

In the previous chapter, I looked into possible answers to some of the questions raised in Chapter One. The psychoanalytic theories presented there show just how it is that despite equal rights, our culture is still patriarchal. We do not seem to control our own lives in the most fundamental sense, and so notions about autonomy, will, choice, responsibility and rationality are radically undermined. ("We do not know our own centres; in fact, we probably do not have a centre at all.²⁰¹") Subjectivity is *constructed*, and at that, with great difficulty and alienation; yet with and through others: "There is no such thing as a single human being, pure and simple, unmixed with other human beings. Each personality is a world in himself, a company of many... We are members of one another²⁰²". Each human being is equipped with a sexuality; a 'life drive'; a libido; and psychoanalytic theories show that its 'objects' are 'random' and that passionate attachments are ambivalent –indeed, "almost any object can have erotic significance²⁰³". Women and men, further, come to belong to different categories by means of their relationship to a specific 'totem', which they are said to either 'have' or 'want/be'. This 'totem' has to be something which the *man* has, for "women have no 'natural' attraction to men; this attraction must be created²⁰⁴". (The attraction is created through the Oedipus Complex, since that is a "theory of the reproduction of male dominance²⁰⁵".) We see, then, how it is that women can find pleasure in being a 'prop for the enactment of man's fantasies', but also how it is that most women find it difficult to 'explore their passivity' and orgasm vaginally. (Some theorists even say that vaginal orgasms are non-existent²⁰⁶!) It is difficult, if not impossible, to become a happy woman in patriarchy, psychoanalysis tells us. As for the question of 'what women want', we understand that women simply 'want' (as they must somehow make up for the emptiness of being the gender without the phallus). By affirming an unconscious as part of one's identity, psychoanalytic theories can moreover tackle how it is that patriarchal structures can

²⁰⁰ Chasseguet-Smirgel, J. Quoted in Goldhor-Lerner, H. "Avundsjukans Uppkomst och Nedvärderingen av Kvinnor". *Kvinnor och Psykoterapi*. Page 38

²⁰¹ Chodorow, N. "Toward a Relational Individualism..." *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Page 154

²⁰² Rivière, Joan. Quoted in Chodorow, N. "Toward a Relational Individualism..." *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Page 158

²⁰³ Chodorow, N. "Feminism, Femininity and Freud", *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Page 168-9

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, page 169-70

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, page 172

often seem ‘natural’ in a culture; how the internal mechanisms of the socio-cultural organization of gender and sexuality are shaped and sustained, and so they confirm the early feminist argument that the ‘private is political’²⁰⁷.

In this chapter, I want to further a psychoanalytic investigation of how gender relations are re-created. I want to address the role of parenting for the enforcement of patriarchal structures, as well as theorizing around melancholy and hysteria, in an attempt to turn the concept of ‘gender’ towards feminist agency for the last chapter of this thesis. Which mechanisms can one hypothesize in order to create a feminist ethos? Is a kind of ‘unity’ among women necessary to create effective action?

3.1. In the Name of the Father, the Son and...

If there is something right in Beauvoir’s claim that one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification.²⁰⁸ *Judith Butler*

Real female innovation (in whatever field) will only come about when maternity, female creation and the link between them is better understood.²⁰⁹ *Julia Kristeva*

“Women and their bodies are the symbolic-cultural site upon which human societies inscript their moral order²¹⁰”, says Seyla Benhabib (2002), Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at Yale University. Her argument is that women as mothers become mediators between culture and nature, as they preside over the functions of birth, and death. The vulnerability and helplessness that humans feel here generate “emotions of intense ambivalence toward females²¹¹”. Girl children must both differentiate themselves from and identify themselves with their mother in order to become women –and will have to settle with such emotions of intense ambivalence towards themselves. The dilemma that befalls the girl, explains Goldhor Lerner (1988), is that

she is confronted with an internalized image of the mother that includes aspects of the evil, omnipotent and destructive mother. To avoid such a frightening identification, many girls/women retreat to experiencing themselves as... safely helpless. This self-image, as the therewith associated

²⁰⁷ Ibid., page 177

²⁰⁸ Butler, J. “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire”, *Gender Trouble...* Page 43

²⁰⁹ Kristeva, J. Quoted in Oliver, K. “Kristeva and Feminism”. See “Bibliography and References”

²¹⁰ Benhabib, S. “Multiculturalism and Gendered Citizenship”, *The Claims of Culture*. Page 84

²¹¹ Ibid.

idealization of men, often hides its own opposite: An experience of oneself as destructive and castrating, especially in relation to men...²¹²

(Women's later fear of their own destructivity becomes stronger by cultural demands such as stereotypical lessons of playing dumb, pretending that the man is in charge, et cetera. These cultural demands, continues Goldhor Lerner, are just "paradoxical warnings for how dangerous and destructive the 'weaker sex' would be if men and women would simply be themselves²¹³".) 'An evil, omnipotent and destructive mother'. A mother who punishes and rewards, who directs when and where feeding will take place –and the rest of the day, appears self-sufficient, all-powerful. It is the mother who (in Isaac D. Balbus's words, 1987) "becomes the recipient of the unconscious hostility that accumulates in children of both sexes as the result of [the] inescapably painful separation. The mother who is loved is also necessarily hated²¹⁴". (The separation, as we saw in the previous chapter, occurs when the child realizes that it is different from the mother. Separation and division, recall Lacan, is the painful condition for 'desire' to take place; and desire is a condition for human relations.) The mother is the first woman we encounter –but also the first representative of 'the world'; and it must be she who is punished for having 'betrayed our love' (by turning out to be different from us). The mother becomes, in a way, intolerable; and this is the basis for the subsequent affirmation of the authority of the father; of all men. To psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow (1978), the contemporary reproduction of mothering occurs through social, structurally induced psychological processes: "It is neither a product of biology nor of intentional role-training...women, as mothers, produce daughters with mothering capacities and the desire to mother²¹⁵". The feelings, fantasies and ways of behaving of parents communicate views about sexuality and possibly, continues Chodorow, about the relative value of female and male genitals.

As we have seen throughout this thesis, boys are taught to be masculine more consciously than girls are taught to be feminine ('boys don't cry'; 'come on; be a man'; boys 'cannot' wear skirts or anything pink –girls can wear 'boys' clothes': "Girls and women 'are', while boys and men 'do'...feminine identity is

²¹² Goldhor Lerner, H. "Inre Förbud mot Kvinnors Vrede", *Kvinnor och Psykoterapi*. Page 77

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Balbus, I. D. "Disciplining Women...", *Feminism as Critique*. Page 112

²¹⁵ Chodorow, N. "Introduction", *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Page 7

‘ascribed’ and masculine identity ‘achieved’²¹⁶.”). As posited by Chodorow, boys will appropriate those specific components of the masculinity –perceived in their father– that they fear will be otherwise used against them (and thus he creates his superego), but do not as much identify with him as a person: “Fathers, though they relate to their own children, do so in order to create ‘independence’²¹⁷.” In other words; while the mother is a boy’s primary care-taker, ‘masculinity’ is idealized to him. And masculinity becomes an issue to him only as he begins to experience himself in a family situation where he is parented by a woman. The boy then has to repress all qualities which he sees as feminine inside himself, and learns to reject and devalue women and whatever it is that he finds ‘feminine’ in the (social) world. (Boys thus construct and define their own masculinity largely in negative terms.) “Given that masculinity is so elusive”, argues Chodorow, “it becomes important for masculine identity that certain social activities are defined as masculine and superior, and that women are believed unable to do many of the things defined as socially important²¹⁸”. The man, however, has not forgotten his dread of the omnipotent mother, and must develop mechanisms to deal with his consequent dread of women. Keeping in mind that the omnipotent mother not merely punishes but also rewards, a man will both fear and feel attracted to women. So men “create folk legends, beliefs, and poems that ward off the dread by externalizing and objectifying... they deny dread at the expense of a realistic view of women. On the one hand, they glorify and adore... on the other, they disparage...²¹⁹” And this scenario intensifies, Chodorow argues, the more the mother is (solely) responsible for up-bringing: “Cross-culturally, the more father-absence (or absence of adult men), in the family, the more severe are conflicts about masculinity and fear of women²²⁰”.

Like violent behaviour, male narcissism, pride and phobia toward mature women –other indications of compulsive assertion of masculinity– seem to be prevalent in societies in which boys spend their earlier years exclusively or predominantly with women...²²¹

It seems, argues Chodorow (1989) further, that the case is not that there is work that is specifically men’s, but that the work that men do takes them away from women

²¹⁶ Chodorow, N. “Being and Doing: A Cross-Cultural Examination of the Socialization of Males and Females”, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Page 33

²¹⁷ Chodorow, N. “The Sexual Sociology of Adult Life”, *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Page 179

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, page 182

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, discussing Karen Horney. Page 183

²²⁰ Chodorow, N. “Afterword : Women’s Mothering and Women’s Liberation”, *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Page 213

²²¹ Chodorow, N. “Being and Doing: A Cross-Cultural Examination of the Socialization of Males and Females”, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Page 40

and children. Thus the training that boys receive may not be preparatory or indicative of their adult roles: “It may reflect the fact that one prevalent societal organization groups women, girls and boys in opposition to adult men²²²”. (Think of how public toilets are arranged: Frequently women, children and the handicapped go one way, and men the other. Usually, further, the men’s room is to the right hand side. And right is better than left: ‘You are my right hand’ we compliment close friends and kin; ‘Jesus sat on the right side of God in Heaven’; in Hebrew, the word for strong and knowledgeable has the same root as the word for right²²³ and in English, of course, ‘right’ is also the opposite of ‘wrong’.) Chodorow adds that although the characteristics that are named feminine and masculine respectively may alter, indeed be interchangeable cross-culturally; what is labelled ‘feminine’ is always devalued. Unsurprisingly, then, modes of parenting are intertwined with social structure, and we are left with what appears to be a situation where women as mothers are perceived as (problematically) very powerful indeed. In Balbus’s words, they come to stand for a kind of absolute, “dangerous other that must be tamed lest it destroy us²²⁴”. (Recall Lacan’s ‘Phallus of the m(Other)’ –that which does not exist, but which must be believed to exist..) So the conflict continues: Powerful, yes; authority, no. An example (from a feminist journal) clarifies:

When the mother...decided that a youth could not go out a night, authority would have consisted in the son or daughter voluntarily following the demand of not going out. In the instant that the mother saw it necessary to lock the door and illuminate the power...they were no longer women of authority, but women exerting power... To be [such a] mother broke with the cultural expectations of how a female should go about with her child.²²⁵

A mother should symbolise love; care and closeness... ‘Authority’ in this case means producing obedience without exerting power, and a mother, claims the article, can not do this. Mothers can handle power, and the symbolism of power, but they are not authorities –the father is. For the child, then, there can, in Chodorow’s words, be “too much of mother²²⁶”.

Within the parameters of a power structure such as this, it seems difficult both to theorize ‘the mother’ from any other perspective than the child’s – and also, to make attempts at moving from ‘oikos to ethos’ (as Guenther would say).

²²² Ibid., page 28

²²³ Goldman, A. ”Skaffa Mig Barn, Eljest Dör Jag”. *Våra Bibliska Mödrar*. Page 74

²²⁴ Balbus, I. D. “Disciplining Women...”, *Feminism as Critique*. Page 114

²²⁵ Hennem, N. “Kjælighet, Autoritet og Makt”. In *NIKK Magasin: Kön och Våld*. Page 7

²²⁶ Chodorow, N. “The Sexual Sociology of Adult Life”, *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Page 177

For “to be born”, Dr. Lisa Guenther writes in the introduction of her *The Gift of the Other...* (2005) “is, in a sense, to forget being born”. Guenther hypothesises self-conception as one being ‘young and grown’, not born but self-made; “or springing autochthonous from the ground...But this forgetting of birth would also erase –or at the very least distort- the very condition of birth: Namely, a woman who bears me and *gives* birth to me²²⁷”. ‘What would it mean to know oneself as other than a young and grown woman or man?’

To know oneself as a child –and as the child of parents who also feel themselves as ‘young and grown’- would be already to pass beyond childhood, towards a different understanding of birth, time and ethics. If to forget birth is to feel oneself as the ‘young and grown’ origin of one’s existence, then to remember the givenness of birth is both to feel oneself as the child of an Other, and also to feel oneself as *other than a child*: As a self who, more than ‘young and grown’, is both dependent and responsible for Others...²²⁸

By understanding birth as something both ‘given to me’, and ‘giving me’, Guenther points out that there is an aspect to ‘my life’ which is ‘me, but not mine’: It is rather “the trace of this generous gift of the Other²²⁹” –a gift which, argues Guenther, implies the imperative of responsibility. For remembering the ‘givenness of birth’ both disrupts one’s sovereignty as an ‘ego’, as well as commits one to “a responsibility which is prior to the origin of this sovereignty. I have always already been called to responsibility, because there is always already an Other who is there before me, demanding a response...²³⁰”. So, the ‘other’s’ relation to ‘me’ is understood as a kind of reciprocity-before-individuality (recall Joan Rivière at the beginning of the chapter; ‘we are members of one another’). ‘Maternity’ then becomes an ethical imperative for the child (for ‘me’), suggesting that ‘I’ (female or male) “bear the stranger *as if* she were already under my skin, gestating in my own flesh²³¹”. (Immanuel Kant might have agreed: Individuals, he said, “may be judged to influence one another merely by their coexistence in the state of nature...Hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another²³²”.) But how, asks Guenther, does this imperative resound differently for a woman capable of birth giving in a biological, as well as ethical

²²⁷ Guenther, L. “Introduction”. *The Gift of the Other: Birth, Time and Ethics in Levinas and Feminism*. Page 2

²²⁸ Ibid., page 3

²²⁹ Ibid., page 4

²³⁰ Ibid., page 6

²³¹ Ibid., page 8

²³² Kant, I. in Kristeva, J. “Might not Universality be...Our Own Foreignness?”, *French Women Philosophers...* Page 221-2

sense? If ‘maternity’ can be said to be a universal ethical obligation, what is left of the ‘literal’ maternal body? Where is the ‘literal’ woman?

3.2. Mother Medusa

In which ghetto was I penned up during your wars and your revolutions? I want to fight. What is my name? I want to change life. Who is this ‘I’? Where is my place? I am looking. I search everywhere. I read, I ask. I begin to speak.²³³ *Hélène Cixous*.

In fact ‘femininity’ is a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself...The fact remains that this masquerade requires an *effort* on her part for which she is not compensated.²³⁴ *Luce Irigaray*

Under the heading “Women and Sexual Satisfaction”, I briefly addressed the notion of a ‘before written history’. As ‘history begins with patriarchy’, feminist philosophers have sought to conceptualize this ‘pre-historic space’ for something capable of implying ways out of that structure which denounces women as the lacking ‘other’. As we saw in the text on Jacques Lacan, women come to ‘be the Phallus’. “How does a woman ‘appear’ to be the Phallus, the lack that embodies and affirms the Phallus?” asks Butler (1990), continuing that “[a]ccording to Lacan, this is done through masquerade, the effect of melancholy that is essential to the feminine position as such²³⁵”. ‘Masquerade; the effect of melancholy.’ Melancholy, says Freud in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) differs from the act of mourning a conscious loss of a person (or any object) in that it seems to involve dealing with *unconscious* losses. Where ‘mourning’ requires a replacement of the libido (a love which used to be directed at the object in question but now has no ‘place’) and an amount of time when the “outside world has become poor and empty²³⁶”, in melancholy, it is the melancholic herself who has become ‘poor and empty’. That is to say that when a depressed person unashamed talks about her own uselessness, Freud argues that the words used seem to refer to “someone whom the patient loves or has loved or should love²³⁷”. So: An imagined or actual ‘disappointment’ by that ‘someone’ becomes internalized (that is, a ‘fracture’ in an object-love ‘breaks out’ narcissistically) and overcasts the person herself –the person experiences herself as an object. Now, the

²³³ Cixous, H. “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays”, *the Newly Born Woman*. Page 71

²³⁴ Irigaray, L. “the Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine”. Page 130-1

²³⁵ Butler, J. “Prohibition, Psychoanalysis and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix”, *Gender Trouble...* Page 59

²³⁶ Freud, S. “Mourning and Melancholia”, *On Metapsychology*, page 254

²³⁷ *Ibid.* Page 257

path to ‘normality’ (and we should remember that the line between ‘normal’ and ‘not-normal’ is very thin) insists on an acceptance of the laws of our culture (the patriarchal ‘law of the Father’), and failure to do so entails a kind of refusal (conscious or unconscious) to accept these laws. In melancholy, then, there must be a kind of ‘refusal’ that is *appropriated*—and which, by that appropriation, functions as a loyal preservation as well. Butler develops this:

Dominated through appropriation, every refusal fails, and the refuser becomes part of the very identity of the refused, indeed, becomes the psychic refuse of the refused. The loss of the object is never absolute because it is redistributed within a psychic/corporeal boundary that expands to incorporate that loss.²³⁸

If we look at the situation of women (who, according to the ‘law of the Father’ must ‘explore the passive aims of their sexuality’ and, so to speak, ‘objectify themselves’ along with having less opportunity to act out any unacceptable wishes and desires that they might have; thus creating a situation where they must ‘settle’ with a neurotic symptom), we can begin to see how it is that melancholy is ‘essential to the feminine position as such’. (Perhaps women of flesh and blood have internalized a ‘structural refusal’, of love, of a reciprocal subject position?)

“The masquerade”, says Luce Irigaray, “is what women do...in order to participate in man’s desire, but at the cost of giving up their own²³⁹”. Her ethics propose that women make this masquerade theirs—for if the ‘split’ nature of ‘the subject’ implies that the structure wherein it figures is not stable, then we can play around and make up our own rules... So if women deliberately mimic stereotypically ‘feminine’ roles, they would become a “disruptive excess²⁴⁰” in the ‘structure’, and thus constantly displace the ‘Phallus’ as the centre of discourse. Feminine ‘difference’, for Irigaray, thus creates meaning in the *gaps* between the ‘symbolic’ and the ‘real’, since *closing* the gap (‘regaining the lost unity’) is impossible. (Consider a waiter, for instance (as Jean-Paul Sartre’s character in *Nausea*), who is using all the correct moves and gestures of ‘waiters’: As he is ‘playing a waiter’, women can consciously and loudly ‘play women’ so as to expose and break up the ‘defining structure’. But how do I ‘play’ a ‘non-patriarchal woman’? Does such a notion have

²³⁸ Butler, J. “Prohibition, Psychoanalysis and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix”, *Gender Trouble...* Page 64

²³⁹ Irigaray, L. quoted in Butler, J. “Prohibition, Psychoanalysis and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix”, *Gender Trouble...* Page 60

²⁴⁰ Irigaray, L. “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine”. In *The Continental Philosophy Reader*. Kearney, R. & Rainwater, M. (eds) Page 419

any meaning, now?) Yet if feminine masquerade is the only and very definition of femininity, as appears to be Irigaray's case in point, is the 'real woman underneath' then 'masculine'? Unless one wants to follow such an argument (in which case one would have to posit that all 'libido' is essentially 'masculine' or that all "gender ontology is reducible to the play of appearances²⁴¹"; thus disregarding the material body totally), one might see the concept of a 'feminine masquerade' as suggesting that there is something 'hidden', 'beyond' or *pre* this 'cover-up' system, but nevertheless oozing into it...

Another French philosopher, Julia Kristeva, has used notions of melancholy, and its effect, masquerade, to theorize the formation of the subject. Following Lacan, Kristeva accrues the 'symbolic' as incorporating a 'law of the father'; giving 'meaning' and the possibility of reference in language. Yet she draws on a kind of 'pre-historic space', to fully account for signification –for showing how it is that the symbolic structure can have importance for our lives as people. This 'semiotic', as she calls it, is bodily drives as they 'discharge' into signification. That is: The logic of signification, according to Kristeva, is operating within the materiality of the body, and the only way that words can give 'life' *meaning*, is through their 'semiotic' content. (So, where the 'symbolic' produces social subjects –as we have seen in previous chapters- the 'semiotic' expresses a 'bodily' source of 'power' which can disrupt or break through the 'symbolic'.) As the 'semiotic' is not located in the paternal structures, Kristeva identifies it as a different regulation, a 'maternal law', if you will, from 'before' separation is installed and the (patriarchal) subject is formed (before Freud's Oedipus, before Lacan's 'Mirror Stage'). To Kristeva, then, the 'semiotic' dimension is occasioned by the 'primary' maternal body. As Butler clarifies: "The maternal body' designates...that *jouissance* which precedes desire and the subject/object dichotomy that desire presupposes²⁴²". Now, as we saw in the chapter on Lacan, desire is mainly directed at 'recovering' the lost unity with the mother, but that was impossible as the 'real' is alienated from the 'symbolic'. Kristeva, rather than denouncing the possibility at the start, proposes that the 'semiotic' has the "potential to disrupt, subvert and displace the paternal law²⁴³" –for it is a 'dimension' in structured language which expresses an original libidinal multiplicity within the very terms of culture. (Hélène Cixous has made ethical remarks from a similar viewpoint,

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Butler, J. "The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva", *Revaluing French Feminism...* Page 165

²⁴³ Butler, J. "The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva", *Revaluing French Feminism...* Page 163

asking each individual to find a “location within oneself of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual, the non-exclusion of difference or of a sex... the multiplication of the effects of desire’s inscription on every part of the body and the other body²⁴⁴.”) *Poetic* language (such as Cixous’s?), argues Kristeva, can ‘recover’ the maternal body –and, of course, the experience of motherhood and pregnancy itself can also feature elements of disruption, subversion or displacement of the patriarchal structure. The ‘semiotic’ represents a kind of feminine ‘genius’ perhaps; the indefinable mystery of human existence...

We have here, then, two proposals of how to break out of the oppressed, patriarchal place for women: Break up the underlying structure itself by showing that you can be ‘too much ~~the~~ Woman’; that you are ‘flowing through’, ‘jumping between’ or just ‘expanding’ the ‘signifiers’ that determine our sexual identity; or posit a pre-discursive dimension of non-differentiation, vivid in experiences of pregnancy and poetic language. In both cases, I believe, the ‘feminine’ is the key, or at least; a dichotomy of ‘feminine-and-masculine’ is the key. For if sexual identity is culturally constructed, then there cannot be any sexuality which is pre-discursive –so to say that there is something *feminine* which can break through, or break apart, the ‘structure’ becomes tantamount to eradicating (or at least postponing) what I would like to think is the feminist task (in Judith Butler’s words): “Rethinking subversive possibilities for sexuality and identity within the terms of power itself²⁴⁵”. (“The feminine is ‘always’ the outside, and the outside is ‘always’ ‘the feminine’²⁴⁶”. Was it not these binding definitions that we wanted to get rid of?) For, again, whether the ‘feminine’ is positioned as the ‘authentic’ (as in Kristeva’s pre-structural ‘semiotic’) or the ‘superficial’ (as in Irigaray’s masquerade); it is in every case already subordinate, already ‘castrated’; already *cultural*. Important and attractive as ‘philosophies of difference’ might be, I think that we must conclude that they are not useful for feminist purposes... But how, then, can one allow for a ‘real’ advent of individual subjects?

3.3. The Premature Subject

If binary restrictions are to be overcome in experience, they must meet their dissolution in the creation of new cultural forms... [for] there is no meaningful reference to a ‘human reality’ outside the

²⁴⁴ Cixous, H. “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays”, *The Newly Born Woman*. Page 85

²⁴⁵ Butler, J. “Irigaray/Plato”, *Bodies that Matter...* page 40

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, page 48

terms of culture. The political program for overcoming binary restrictions ought to be concerned, then, with cultural innovation rather than myths of transcendence.²⁴⁷ *Judith Butler.*

For psychoanalysts the ‘past’ is never definite –it is the patient who initially thinks it is definite. Any psychoanalyst aims only at a constant deconstruction of the past and a replacement with a new version.²⁴⁸ *Juliet Mitchell*

“One is one’s gender”, writes Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble...* (1990) “to the extent that one is not the other gender²⁴⁹”. To Butler, this is a formulation that both presupposes and reinforces the binary pair of ‘woman’ versus ‘man’ in a ‘heterosexual matrix’ (as she calls it). There are only two genders, and one must belong to one of them. The phallus, as we have seen, comes to mark the difference between them (perhaps partly originally because it is so easily distinguishable in the neonate?). Yet, using the phallus as the exclusive denominator only makes sense if there are just two genders; the ‘have’s’ and the ‘haven’t’s’... Using Freud’s theories on the mechanisms of internalization seen in melancholy, Butler finds that gender identity is formed mainly by virtue of prohibition on homosexuality (as opposed to proponents of oedipal theories, where the prohibition on incest comes ‘first’). For the melancholic answer to “the loss of the same-sex object is to incorporate and, indeed, to *become* that object²⁵⁰” means, to Butler, that when the little girl must give up her mother as her love-object, then “the disavowed homosexual love is preserved through the cultivation of an oppositionally defined gender identity²⁵¹” –and heterosexual melancholy itself is thus culturally instituted and maintained as the price of stable, binary gender identities. Confusing *desire* with actual body parts (‘literal’ vaginas and penises), Butler argues, is a symptom of heterosexual melancholy. (Note this is relation to the description of pornography in Chapter One, where it seemed that the ‘physics’ and ‘visualization’ of sex mattered the most.) This is, of course, not to say that ‘no-one’ could be ‘truly’ heterosexual, but rather to deconstruct the seemingly ‘natural’ way in which we come to think of ourselves as ‘women’ and ‘men’ with ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ characteristics. “Anyone can love a woman and/or a man... [but] one of these desires ‘should’ be repressed²⁵²”, as Juliet Mitchell says in *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria and the Effects of Sibling Relations on the Human*

²⁴⁷ Butler, J. “Variations on Sex and Gender...” *Feminism as Critique*. Benhabib, S. & Cornell, D. (eds.). Page 137

²⁴⁸ Mitchell, J. “Hysteria, Memory and Trauma”. *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 295

²⁴⁹ Butler, J. “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire”, *Gender Trouble...* page 30

²⁵⁰ Ibid., “Prohibition, Psychoanalysis and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix”, *Gender Trouble...* Page 81

²⁵¹ Ibid., page 88

²⁵² Mitchell, J. “Dora: A Fragment of a Case of Hysteria in a Female”, *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 60

Condition (2000). This long and telling title is followed by a psychoanalyst and feminist's account of the importance of lateral relationships (as opposed to 'vertical', such as with emphasizing the relationship between parent and child); showing how the sense of displacement that a subject feels at the dawn of correlation with someone who is 'like oneself' can produce a hysterical response.

We can all be hysterical, says Mitchell. "The structures of our experience are the same whether they are 'normal' or hysterical, and only the exaggerations of the latter will throw the former's moderation into relief.²⁵³" Those exaggerations include "excessive display of emotion, self-dramatization, emotional lability, ingratiating, need for attention, unlikeability, insincerity and self-deception"²⁵⁴, seductiveness, accident-proclivity, envy... The hysteric, Mitchell argues, feels 'catastrophically displaced', possibly non-existent, because there is another who is thought to be standing in his place. Some catastrophe in the present is experienced as traumatic (and this catastrophe could be 'anything', for "one person's distress is another person's trauma²⁵⁵"), and it breaches the person's defences. "In coping with the present experience, the person regresses to a catastrophic state, an infantile or childhood situation²⁵⁶", where that 'situation' assimilates the primal experience of helplessness at birth and in infancy: If there is no-one to hear the newborn's cries, it might die –there is thus an experience of possible death puncturing the psychic, protective 'shield'. There is too much perception, too much consciousness, and not enough representation, or symbolization in the hysteric. (That is to say that the trauma in the present (which induces the regression to the past) becomes a *presentation* –not a representation- of 'literal death', so to speak, and must be warded off with force. For example, a sibling being born comes to signify one's possible replacement –one's 'death'. A parent leaving the room, or 'abandoning the family' by taking a strange lover, for instance, can come to mean the same thing: The subject feels that it has no 'identity', but the question is rather of the subject's 'position'. Thus, there is no distinction between a 'literal absence' and a perceived absence –the hysteric does not have a symbol, a memory of the parent 'being there' even when he is not; nor a memory of itself as a subject, when an unbearable displacement comes about.) The hysteric, then, becomes hysteric because

²⁵³ Ibid., "Dora: A Fragment of a Case of Hysteria in a Female", *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 98

²⁵⁴ Ibid., "Hysteria", *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 14

²⁵⁵ Ibid., page 41

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

there seems to be something intolerable around that threatens his unique existence, something that prevents him from being who he is. He mistakes this preventing him from being who he is as preventing him from getting what he wants...²⁵⁷

It is this confusion that disposes the hysteric to a number of hysterical responses. The subject is felt to be empty (the trauma being like a ‘gaping wound’ –‘emptying’ the subject) and must be ‘filled’ desperately. Perhaps the person will mimetically identify with someone else, a chosen ‘love-object’, in order to receive acclaim for himself autoerotically/narcissistically; perhaps the person lies both to others and himself (lying not being so much “a matter of telling it like it isn’t, it is rather the position it occupies in asserting the very being of the liar²⁵⁸”); in any case, because there is a feeling of being ‘empty’, there must be an overinsistent, overassertive ego (or else the subject might ‘really disappear’). This ego must find a ‘place’ (“What is my position in this scenario?²⁵⁹”) –but the hysteric believes that he must ‘get what he wants’. Now, firstly, concepts of loss, death and trauma are, as we have seen, crucial to the onset of hysteria. Secondly, since ‘identity’ seems to be ‘missing’ (the subject feels ‘empty’), mimicry comes in as a way of asserting the subject (“Look, you can love me too –I am so like the object²⁶⁰”). Yet there are, of course, problems with such identifications. For the identification has come about where there was a perceived threat of survival of the subject, and the object-choice is thus both loved and hated. That hatred can generate an unconscious sense of guilt, but “a subject suffering from an unconscious sense of guilt does not feel guilty; instead he feels ill. It is, then, necessary to stay ill so as not ever to feel guilty...²⁶¹” (and I will develop this below). Thirdly, *the hysteric sexualizes trauma*.

“The hysteric does not remember”, says Mitchell. Where there has been a shock, there is a change of focus, so that the feeling that caused the breakage (of the psychic, protective ‘shield’) can be forgotten and “with memory blasted, the shock can be sexualized. The shock becomes an end in itself...[The] hysterical sexual movements is the body surviving the shock, the psychical experience of shock must itself be made to sustain sufficient survival²⁶²”. What the hysteric is always trying to

²⁵⁷ Ibid., “Sigmund Freud: A Fragment of a Case of Hysteria in a Male”, *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 46-7

²⁵⁸ Ibid., “The Hysterical Lie”, *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 277

²⁵⁹ Ibid., “Hysteria: From Catastrophe to Trauma”, *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 329

²⁶⁰ Butler, J. “Prohibition, Psychoanalysis and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix”, *Gender Trouble...* Page 79

²⁶¹ Mitchell, J. “Sexuality, Death and Reproduction”, *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 148

²⁶² Mitchell, J. “Sexuality, Death and Reproduction”, *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 140-1

do, then, is “to ‘control’ the ultimate uncontrollability of death²⁶³” (by way of confusedly sexualizing the ‘death-drive’). To summarize, so far: A traumatic experience in the present makes the subject feel so gravely displaced that he is almost non-existent, and he feels that he cannot ‘get what he wants’. This not-getting-what-one-wants becomes sexualized; associated with illicit sexual pleasure and death. (Juliet Mitchell has used ‘Don Juan’ as an example of this; a compulsive seductiveness where the ‘end’ is, so to speak, the jealousy among the many women and an assertion of the Don’s ‘illicit’ autoeroticism, in that he acts out what he wishes was the case. Don Juan promises marriage to all of his women –yet his sexuality is far from any recognition of the significance of reproduction, where birth, of course, represents the ‘other end’ of death.) The ultimate, hysterical sexuality attached to death is ‘war sexuality’; rape. Rape, as we saw in Chapter One, is today’s most reported (as well as unreported?) crime.

What, then, is the ‘cure’ to hysteria? As we have seen, the hysteric *mimics* when he cannot ‘find’ his own identity –identifying himself with what seems to be the right thing in order to get ‘love’; recognition. The hysterics of Freud’s day would ‘converse’ their hysteria to a symptom in the body (say, become involuntarily mute; mimicking the ‘mutilated’ mate, ‘mute’ in death; as was the case with some hysterical responses of veterans of the first World War). Today’s hysterics, however, have imitated a different mode: They have gone to “deploying the sexual story as the main manifestation of their condition...With the talking cure and the story, the sexuality moved from the body into language²⁶⁴”. (Note this in relation to Foucault’s notion that we are ‘so eager to broadcast our sexuality to noisy accompaniment’, quoted in Chapter One.) This means that hysteria can be difficult to ‘detect’, but more so; difficult to ‘cure’ –for honesty is an ethical imperative (perhaps ‘Don Juan-ism’ is perceived as such too, as a ‘modern’ reinvention of patriarchal subjects?). For Mitchell, as I have understood her, there is only one mission, and that is a resolution of the terror of loss. For when the nuclear family disintegrates, the child must become a child-without-parent. Since “[f]or the hysteric, *all* losses are deaths²⁶⁵”; he must come to understand the difference between something that is gone forever, and something that can return. “Without [the] concept of the loss of oneself to another there can only be unsymbolizable absence/emptiness...It is the loss of the self to the

²⁶³ Ibid., “Sigmund Freud: A Fragment of a Case of Hysteria in a Male”. *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 55

²⁶⁴ Ibid., “Dora: A Fragment of a Case of Hysteria in a Female”, *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 94-5

²⁶⁵ Ibid., “Emptiness and Possession”, *Mad Men and Medusas..* Page 211

other in all its terror that the hysteric has to experience if he is to overcome his hysteria.²⁶⁶ This entails taking in the knowledge that the world goes on without one and a process of mourning; both for oneself, and for the other...

Displacement, as argued by Mitchell, is, then, the conditional trauma of hysteria. Paradoxically, hysterical sexuality is associated with the 'death-drive' instead of the 'life-drive', while the subject tries to reconfirm its (valuable) position. Overcoming the trauma means to 'die to oneself'; to accept (fully mourn) one's mortality. Now, girls and boys are, in our society, placed in different positions –yet anyone can experience displacement, and it is "one's horizontal, not one's vertical relations, that both threaten and confirm one"²⁶⁷. (Perhaps here we could see an explanation to the sometimes fierce disagreements among feminists?) Hysterical responses are not gendered, nor are drives; "nor premature birth, nor the resulting human dependency in which the all-important object is bound to be loved and hated"²⁶⁸. Human reality is, in this deconstructed version, not 'naturally' gendered: We are all prone to the very same condition; helpless demand for love, and recognition of our individual uniqueness and a 'place' in our context. Judith Butler, in the conclusion of her *Gender Trouble*; "From Parody to Politics", claims that

[t]he foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interest to be elaborated and, subsequently, political action to be taken. My argument is that there need not be a 'doer behind the deed', but that the 'doer' is variably constructed in and through the deed...It is...the discursively variable construction of each in and through the other...²⁶⁹

If Butler is right, as I want to think, then *politics* can be a practice 'in finitum'; a kind of 'necessarily unfinished' ethos. As such, it could incorporate Mitchell's understanding of a 'constant deconstruction of the past', which has been shown not to be definite in any way ("there are no memories *from* childhood, but *of* childhood"²⁷⁰); "to remember is always to discover, never to recover"²⁷¹) and replacing it with 'newer versions' in the present. For it is important, says Mitchell, to recognize hysteria

²⁶⁶ Ibid., "Trauma". *Mad Men and Medusas*... Page 312

²⁶⁷ Ibid., page 319

²⁶⁸ Ibid., page 322

²⁶⁹ Butler, J. "Conclusion: From Parody to Politics", *Gender Trouble*... Page 181

²⁷⁰ Mitchell, J. "Trauma", *Mad Men and Medusas*... Page 283

²⁷¹ Ibid., page 315

“before it is normalized not as a momentary reaction, but as the way in which we predominantly live²⁷²”.

4. The Break-Out

Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.²⁷³
Ludwig Wittgenstein

The most important thing is to train your mind so that you will not be duped. Practice thinking critically and asking questions. Passive acceptance is a dangerous habit. Question everything.²⁷⁴
Noam Chomsky

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free.²⁷⁵ *Michel Foucault*

For this last, concluding chapter, ambitiously entitled “the Break-Out”, I want to first present and sketchily discuss some ‘rights-based’ feminist strategies undertaken by the government in Sweden (as well as look into further, similarly situated possibilities). There is, I believe, great potential for ‘actual’ equality when law-makers recognize that culture incorporates systems of power that can sometimes be difficult to notice but that nevertheless influence not only our social or economical contexts, but also how we think of ourselves and our individual capabilities to lead the lives that we want to live. Lastly, before I settle to conclude this inquiry into the possibilities for current ‘psychoanalytic feminism’, I will move one step up and out; from “the self to the world” and look at a proposition of employing a “set of practices described as technologies of the self through which a form of self-understanding and a self-problematizing is created²⁷⁶” (as Sylvia Pritsch put it).

4.1. Suggestions

In 1999, Sweden passed a legislation that both criminalized the buying of sex and decriminalized the selling of sex.

Swedish political science studies show that having more women in parliament [Riksdagen] changes politics decisively. What the new prostitution law demonstrates could be described as follows: That

²⁷² Ibid., “Where Has All the Hysteria Gone?”, *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 133

²⁷³ Wittgenstein, L. www.wikipedia.com. See “Bibliography and References”

²⁷⁴ Chomsky, N. Quoted in Harris, M. “Power and Powerlessness”. See Bibliography and References

²⁷⁵ Foucault, M. Quoted in O’Grady, H. “An Ethics of the Self”, *Feminism and the Final Foucault*, page 93

²⁷⁶ Pritsch, S. “Inventing Images, Constructing Standpoints: Feminist Strategies of the Technology of the Self”, *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Page 118

when women finally achieve real political power they use it to create the taboos that we actually need: For example that no man can ‘buy’ a woman... As women storm into the political arena, something extremely interesting occurs: What has been seen as ‘natural’ –such as prostitution- is suddenly being questioned.²⁷⁷

As of 31 March, 2006, women in parliament in Sweden made up 45, 3%. (The United States of America is at 15, 2% and the Netherlands 36, 7%²⁷⁸. Note this briefly in relation to recent media reports on American insistence that the Afghani and Iraqi governments include at least one-fourth women. “It still seems to me”, says Iris Marion Young in an article on “the Rhetoric of Women’s Rights in the War on Terrorism”, that “the focus on women under the Taliban smacked of self-righteousness and...conveniently deflected attention from more intractable and mundane problems of gender based [power structures] in...the enlightened West”²⁷⁹.) The ‘gender issue’, then, is not a ‘women’s issue’, but *politics* involving the entirety of society and culture. ‘The private is political’. This is just as true for child rearing, as shown in Swedish laws on parental leave: “Every child means 480 days of paid parental leave, 240 days for each parent. Of these days, 60 cannot be transferred to the other parent²⁸⁰” (these 60 days are called, roughly, ‘daddy months’). It is the state and not the employer that pays parents on leave, out of the taxpayer’s money. (There is also flexibility as to when to take out the 480 days, and homosexual couples as well as adoptive parents have the same right as biological parents.²⁸¹ A well-known feminist, Nina Björk –quoted in Chapter One- has recently proposed that the ‘daddy months’ be extended to half of the 480 days; plus putting a ban on placing children in public child care institutions before the age of two. This, to me, sounds great –but what if the parents are abusive: Perhaps some children would be ‘better off’ in child care centres? These are issues that must be analysed in depth.) In 2005, further, Swedish rape laws were expanded²⁸². What now constitutes ‘rape’ must not necessarily denote a threat to the victim’s life and health, and ‘rape is rape’ also when the victim has been *unable* to consent (been sleeping, drunk, drugged, ill or wounded). There is debate about the law’s focus on the victim’s behaviour, rather than the behaviour of the perpetrator –as this is seen to have stemmed from a lack of a cultural analysis with sufficient emphasis on power structures...

²⁷⁷ Boëthius, Maria-Pia. “The End of Prostitution in Sweden?” See Bibliography and References

²⁷⁸ www.un.org. See “Bibliography and References”

²⁷⁹ Young, I. M. “The Rhetoric of Women’s Rights in the War on Terrorism”. See Bibliography and References

²⁸⁰ Sjögren, J. “Jakten på den Jämställda Barnfamiljen”, *Ordination: Vardagsfeminism...* Page 59

²⁸¹ Hultman, K. “Mothers, fathers and Gender Equality in Sweden”. See Bibliography and References

²⁸² Balkmar, D. “Mäns Våld i Danmark och Sverige”. In *NIKK Magasin*, No. 2, 2005, page 23

Since April 2005, there is a feminist political party (*Feministiskt Initiativ*) in Sweden, now preparing for the coming elections. Among their more remarkable proposals is to allow for “all people to take a first name without it being steered by sex²⁸³”; a six-hour working day with retained salary; an inquiry into the reasons for the increased number of people sick-listed during longer periods (from a gender perspective); an evaluation of different types of work, so as to establish ‘equal pay for equivalent work’ and thus eliminate the gender gap in salaries; mandatory education on issues of gender, sexuality and race for all professions dealing with refugees and immigrants, as well as all of those who represent Sweden in international contexts. The issue of naming is, to me, by far the most interesting proposition. Children can already bear their mother’s last name instead of ‘the name of the Father’ (thus establishing that identity and belonging need not originate in, or link explicitly to, paternal ancestry), but what would an already-gendered *first* name entail for identity formation of a person of the ‘other’ gender? (Gender ambiguous nicknames do not count here, of course.) Perhaps a girl could be called Elliot, Isaac or Richard (a few names that spring to mind). But would not a boy named Lisa, Juliet or Rebecca be bullied at school? (‘Boys must be manly’: No skirts or dresses, either.) What would happen, after a few hypothetical generations of gender ambiguous naming (recalling here Butler’s notion that ‘naming is at once the setting of a boundary and the repeated inculcation of a norm’, as seen in Chapter One)? How would sexual identity formation take place; according to which ‘laws’ would we shape our *selves* in relation to one another? However the ‘future’ turns out, I am sure that it will be interesting.

“Everything is corrupt” writes Mariana Valverde in “Experience and Truth Telling in a Post-Humanist World” (2004), yet “by the same token, everything is available and usable and transformable...²⁸⁴”. For the Ancient Greeks, she says,

[t]he ethical truth about persons lay in the evolving interactions between people –pedagogical interactions, friendship interactions, kin interactions, polis-based interactions. To be ethical was to cultivate a certain critical attitude with which to live and to keep questioning the world and oneself while living- not to follow a particular rule or to be in possession of any particular knowledge.²⁸⁵

Philosophy for the Greeks, it seems, involved an engaging of one’s present; a stance and a mind-set of continuous reflection. (“It is a concrete attitude and a determinate

²⁸³ www.feministisktinitiativ.se. See “Bibliography and References”

²⁸⁴ Valverde, M. “Experience and Truth Telling in a Post-Humanist World”, *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Page 77

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, page 87

lifestyle, which engages the whole of existence...²⁸⁶) ‘Philo-sophia’ means ‘love of wisdom’. What ‘wisdom’ means is less straight-forward. “Wisdom’s residence”, however, “is never out *there*; if wisdom comes into view at all, its site of emergence will be *here*”. (‘Here in the present’ perchance; combining the temporal with the ‘geographical’.) For theorists of the ‘final Foucault’, politics and ethics can be conceptualized in terms of a critical, creative ethos such as described above. The self is formed discursively, then, through certain practices inspired by the ancients, which Foucault refers to as “‘aesthetics of existence’, ‘practices’ or ‘care’ of the self, and ‘practices of freedom’...²⁸⁷”. This, to me, sounds like the reconciliation of therapeutically ‘telling one’s sexual story’ and discovering (not ‘recovering’) one’s past in the present. Perhaps, then, ‘wisdom’ is the overcoming of hysteria? For what else is there, to “stand as the representation of birth, as castration stands as the representation of death”?

Is this, in fact, creativity? Accepting the possibility of castration amounts to accepting the inevitability of the death of the subject; accepting the possibility of creation amounts to accepting the death of the ego of the author...²⁸⁸

Perhaps, then, what Juliet Mitchell –in the quote above- is implicitly suggesting amounts to a Foucaultian ‘philosophy as a way of life’, where the *contents* of the intellectual stance will vary, while becoming perpetually ‘anti-fascist’ (in that hysterical responses to displacement is part of the human condition, and overcoming the ‘terror of loss’ involves mourning one’s own fate as much as that of others). Feminist activism need then not be committed to essentialist ‘truths’ about ‘the Woman’ but, rather, free itself from academic elitism, from religious or economic particularities, from ‘differences’ between the one who builds her life in the peculiarity of working as a nurse and the one who builds her life in the peculiarity of working as a janitor...

(And how could we mainstream this possibility? In *Norway*, there is a long established tradition of requiring an ‘examen philosophicum’ of one semester, as preparatory for university studies. There is now also a proposition of introducing philosophy in school. “The motto is that philosophy should not be taught, but practiced...

²⁸⁶ Hadot, P. (1995) Quoted in McWorther, L. “Practicing Practicing”, *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Page 143

²⁸⁷ Taylor, D. and Vintges, K. “Introduction: Engaging the Present”, *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Page 3

²⁸⁸ Mitchell, J. “The Hysterical Woman or Hysteria Feminized”, *Mad Men and Medusas...* Page 201

Philosophy is like physical exercise –it is necessary to practice regularly to get results.²⁸⁹)

4.3. Conclusion: Burning the Phoenix

On the street. A photo in my bag made me miss my father, who had died. I was contemplating memory, sadness, recovery and something else perhaps. –Smile! said a stranger as I passed. –Why, I stopped to ask; for I am missing my dead father. By asking me to smile when I am not (I ruthlessly contended) you are asking me to deny slash reject my current mental experience. Please don't do that.

I walked off, less pretty than when smiling.

Nothing is as fast as the transformation from cool chic to bloody bitch.

Throughout this thesis, I have looked at conceptions of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ in search of their ‘essence’. It appears, now, that womanhood and manhood are systematically established to function within a system –a familial system, perhaps, where a form of exchange between ‘households’ in the early days of humanity came to shape who the men and the women ‘must’ *become* for society to continue. It seems, to me, that Judith Butler’s total deconstruction of gendered identity can put the final nail into the coffin: Gender characteristics do not stem from biological sex. *Psychoanalysis*, further, is a useful and fascinating investigative tool for analysing any society; indeed; any aspect of society –from literature to friendship, to legal-based action. Through such analysis, we can formulate new strategies too, and we might be able to create newer versions of our present and of our future. ‘Psychoanalytic feminism’, then, is as current as ever, and will remain so.

‘Nothing is as fast as the transformation from cool chic to bloody bitch.’ We can understand *why* it is that women are often denied subjectivity in ways such as described above –but how should one best tackle it? In our everyday lives, how does one steer the personal towards the structural? I believe that a winning strategy lies in those Foucaultian Greeks from the first part of this chapter. Ask, reflect: ‘How do you mean?’ By posing this question to others as well as to oneself, reflection becomes a necessary step. (Such that being told to ‘go and talk about clothes’, as I was, in actuality, only a few weeks back, the reply ‘how do you mean’ will prompt a presumption, or theory, which can then be discussed or dismissed.) For as there are surely differences between women and men, there are also differences among

²⁸⁹ Dvergsdal, A. ”Filosofi inn i Barneskolen”. *Dagbladet*. See ”Bibliography and References”

women, and between tall people and short people, as well as between those who listen to rock music and those who listen to classical music.

Afterword

“Why is it that there are always these problems and misunderstandings between men and women?” asks Mma Precious Ramotswe, fictional Botswana private detective (Alexander McCall Smith, 2002). The text continues:

Surely it would have been better if God had made only one sort of person, and the children had come by some other means, with the rain perhaps.

She thought about this as she started the van and began to drive away. But if there were only one sort of person, would this person be more like a man than a woman? The answer was obvious, thought Mma Ramotswe. One hardly even had to think about it.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ McCall Smith, A. *The Kalahari Typing School for Men*. Page 203-4

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- (3) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woman> (“The Build-Up: Building Altars, Waging Wars”, page 14)
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- (8) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Subjection_of_Women (“The Build-Up: Authenticity in the Garden of Eden”, page 24)
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