

Bracha Ettinger's Theory of the Matrix

Contexts and Commentary

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to provide a systematic critical reading of the theory of matrix and metramorphosis proposed by artist and theorist Bracha Ettinger, in order to establish the implications of this proposition. There is a growing literature surrounding Ettinger's work, but only a small number of studies directly approach her theoretical formulations, and even fewer in the mode of a systematic critique.

In an opening overview of the emergence and development of the theory of the matrix, Ettinger's theoretical methodology is analysed in some detail. This analysis reveals, among other things, that this theory is implicated in psychoanalysis in such a way that refuses its division into distinct and competing orthodoxies. This thesis aims to take seriously that positioning by opening and examining a series of critical spaces between the theory of the matrix and related but divergent approaches to a number of key issues that identify the limits of psychoanalysis.

After the Overview, the thesis is divided into three chapters that represent sites that inform the limits of the psychoanalytic field, two from without—the feminine and aesthetics—and two from within—the unconscious and transference. Chapter 1 considers Ettinger's theory alongside Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, and approaches the feminine from the angle of the limitations imposed upon subjectivity by the representation of intra-uterine life as undifferentiated and as such divorced from all subjectivising potential. Chapter 2 approaches the limitations at play in the negotiation of art and aesthetics by psychoanalysis, looking specifically at the work of Marion Milner as an exemplary psychoanalytic attempt to account for artistic creativity through archaic relationality. Ettinger's own writing on art will appear partly as a critique of the limits of Milner's attempt, but will also present an example of a singular solution to the position of art beyond the limits of psychoanalysis. Chapter 3 considers the unconscious and transference as the sites which can most specifically reflect the relationship of the theory of the matrix to the limits of psychoanalysis. An examination of Jean Laplanche's rigorous re-foundation of the psychoanalytic field alongside Félix Guattari's insistence upon the irrelevance of disciplinary fidelity, situates Ettinger's theory as related, but assimilable to neither position. A final consideration of transference explores the concrete limits of the analytical relationship, and the nature of its relation to a non-analytical exterior. Ettinger's work on this area in particular seeks to position the work of art as an extra-psychoanalytical means of reconfiguring the clinical field.

Together, these chapters produce the theory of the matrix as an inter-theoretical assemblage that puts at risk the comfortable demarcation lines of psychoanalytical orthodoxy, and which, especially in its most recent articulations, insists upon a re-examination and reconfiguration of the various limits that constitute the dynamic and heterogeneous field of psychoanalysis.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AHO (2005) 'The Art-and-healing Oeuvre: Metramorphic Relinquishment of the Soul-Spirit to the Spirit of the Cosmos,' in C. de Zegher and H. Teicher (eds.), *3 X Abstraction*, (New York: Yale), 199-231.
- ATST (2000) 'Art as the Transport-Station of Trauma,' in *Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger: Artworking 1985-1999*, (Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 2000), 91-115.
- BTMB (1994) 'The becoming threshold of matrixial borderlines', in G. Robertson *et al.* (eds.), *Travellers' Tales*, (London: Routledge), 38-62.
- FGM (2006) '*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference,' in G. Pollock (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and the Image*, (London: Routledge), 60-93.
- F/P (1997) 'The Feminine/Prenatal Weaving in Matrixial Subjectivity-as-Encounter,' in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 7 (3), 367-405.
- FW (n.d.) '*Fascinace* and the Woman-to-woman (Girl-to-m/Other) Matrixial Feminine Difference,' unpublished manuscript.
- M&M (1992) 'Matrix and Metramorphosis', in *Differences*, 4 (3), 176-208.
- MBMB (1994) 'Metramorphic Borderlinks and Matrixial Borderspace,' in John Welchman (ed.), *Rethinking Borders*, (London: Macmillan, 1996), 125-59.
- MG (1995) *The Matrixial Gaze*, (Leeds: Feminist Arts and Histories Network).
- (2001) 'The Matrixial Gaze,' in B. Massumi and C. de Zegher (eds.), *Drawing Papers 24: Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger The Eurydice Series*, (New York: The Drawing Center), 75-115.
- [To balance the wider availability of the former with the more thorough editing of the latter, references are to both versions of *The Matrixial Gaze*. Page references to the 2001 version in italics. Direct quotations from the 2001 version indicated with an asterisk.]
- MG&S (1999) 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen: other than phallic, Merleau-Ponty and the late Lacan,' in *PS: Journal of the Universities Association for Psychoanalytic Studies*, 2 (1), Summer 1999, 3-39.

- MHL (1993) *Matrix Halal(a) – Lapsus: notes on painting*, (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art).
- MSBP (1993) 'Matrix: a shift beyond the Phallus,' (Paris: BLE Atelier).
- MT (2006) 'Matrixial Trans-subjectivity,' *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23 (2-3), 218-22.
- PBS (2002) 'Plaiting a Being-in-Severality and the Primal Scene,' *Almanac of Psychoanalysis* 3, 91-109.
- RC (1996) 'The Red Cow Effect: The Metramorphosis of Hallowing the Hollow and Hollowing the Hallow,' in *Art, Criticism and Theory 2: Beautiful Translations*, 82-119.
- Reply (1997) 'Reply to Commentary,' in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 7 (3), 423-29.
- ST (2000) 'Some-Thing, Some-Event and Some-Encounter: between Sinthome and Symptom,' in *Drawing Papers 7, The Prinzhorn Collection: Traces upon the Wunderblock*, (New York NY: The Drawing Center), 61-75.
- TC (2002) 'Transcryptum,' in L. Belau and P. Ramadanovic (eds.), *Topologies of Trauma*, (New York: Other), 251-71.
- TSTB (1997) 'Trans-Subjective Transferential Borderspace,' in B. Massumi (ed.), *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, XXIV (3), 625-47.
- TWF (2000) 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine,' in *Women's Philosophy Review*, No. 25, 56-85.
- TWT (1999) 'Traumatic Wit(h)ness-Thing and Matrixial Co/in-habit(u)ating' in *Parallax*, 5 (1), 89-98.
- VH *et al.* (1991) 'Verbal Hallucinations in Psychotic Patients,' in *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences*, 28 (2), 39-49.
- WIV (1996) 'The With-In-Visible Screen,' in M. C. de Zegher (ed.) *Inside the Visible: An elliptical traverse of twentieth-century art*, (London: MIT), 89-113.
- WOA (1995) 'Woman as *Objet a* Between Phantasy and Art,' in A. Benjamin (ed.) *Complexity: Architecture/Art/Philosophy*, (London: Academy), 56-77.
- WOT (1993) 'Woman-Other-Thing: a Matrixial Touch,' in *Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger: Matrix – Borderlines*, (Oxford, Museum of Modern Art), 11-18.
- WTMG (2001) 'Wit(h)nessing Trauma and the Matrixial Gaze: From Phantasm to Trauma, from Phallic Structure to Matrixial Sphere,' *Parallax* 7(4), 89-114.
- WTT (2002) 'Weaving a Trans-subjective Tress or the Matrixial *sinthome*,' in L. Thurston (ed.), *Re-inventing the Symptom: Essays on the Final Lacan*, (New York: Other), 81-109.

Such is the case that has been made of Hölderlin and Artaud. Our intention is above all not to refute or to criticize the principle of these readings. They are legitimate, fruitful, true; here, moreover, they are admirably executed, and informed by a critical vigilance which makes us make immense progress. If, on the other hand, we seem unsure of the treatment reserved for the unique, it is not because we think, and this credit will have to be granted us, that subjective existence, the originality of the work or the singularity of the beautiful, must be protected against the violence of the concept by means of moral or aesthetic precautions. No, inversely, when we appear to regret a silence or defeat before the unique, it is because we believe in the necessity of reducing the unique, of analyzing it and decomposing it by shattering it even further.

Jacques Derrida, 'La parole soufflée'

The matrixial apparatus made itself available to me through the act of painting. Putting it "in the service" of psychoanalysis means a temporary contraction of its fluid sense into a particular channel. Thus the function of art for psychoanalysis may be to enlarge the scope of the unconscious and to question sex difference [...]. The function of psychoanalytic theory for art may be to lend its conceptual tools to exposing the existence in art of a site of yet unformed knowledge about sexuality and subjectivity, to clarify this site as a source for ideas that are awaiting signification in language, and to articulate them.

Bracha Ettinger, 'Trans-subjective Transferential Borderspace'

INTRODUCTION

The nature of Bracha Ettinger's theoretical writing is such that, while its object and its contents concern matters of the utmost urgency for feminism, psychoanalysis and aesthetics, the writing itself holds a great deal of potential for confounding the attentions of the would-be reader. Its combination of a remarkable density of theoretical terms with a rich texture of coinages and unfamiliar phraseology can be both intoxicating and frustrating, refusing a comfortable resolution into either a theory or a poetics. Although I do not wish to place too much emphasis upon a comparison of this writing with Artaud and Hölderlin, my intention in using Derrida as an epigraph is to draw attention to a text which recognises what is at stake in a conceptual approach to truly unfamiliar and potentially disturbing writing. At the opening of the thesis, I wish to note this quotation from Derrida as a means of registering the need for a particular kind of attention to the theoretical strand of Ettinger's work, an attention which may seem at odds with work that has gone before. In her essay, 'Bracha's Eurydice,' Judith Butler enquires as to the agency of the subject in an encounter with Ettinger's artwork:

So much works against this encounter, the possibility of this transmutation, since to lose the trace is to lose the connection with the matrixial space itself, and to articulate the trace through a history or a conceptual representation that is too masterful is to lose the trace again, this time through seeking to know it too fully and too well. (2004: 99)

Butler's diagnosis quite rightly reflects the conceptual restraint required for a meaningful encounter with this aspect of Ettinger's work; that without some sort of check on the aspirations of conceptual knowledge, the possibilities it opens will disappear. While this is an eminently valuable approach to one dimension of Ettinger's work, however, the work I will undertake here emerges from the view that the kind of reticence Butler describes should not be applied unilaterally; it is necessary to think further on the kind of agency called for by an encounter with Ettinger's theoretical writing. For example, to treat this writing on the same level as her artistic practice would be to fail to see the singularity of her enterprise as encompassing at least two poles of work. It would also be, moreover, to refuse her own explicit location of a theoretical and conceptual

dimension of her work. The following is from an early paper by Ettinger, and clearly posits a heterogeneous field stretching between art and theory:

The most graceful moments in the covenant between art and theory occur when theoretical elements, only directly or partly intended for particular works of art, and visual elements which refuse theory, collide. In doing so they transform the borderline between the two domains so that art is momentarily touched by theory while theory takes on a new meaning. (WOT: 11)

If the theoretical pole is neglected, and Ettinger's writing is not attributed significant conceptual weight, to me this substantially damages her project as a whole. Thus, for example, to doubt (as has a recent, anonymous peer-review of part of this project) that the matrix is a concept,¹ in spite of Ettinger's clear treatment of it as such, too easily relinquishes what is gained by attributing it conceptual status. In particular, if the matrix is seen to operate on a level closer to poetics, language-games, or perhaps even Lacanian *linguisterie*, it becomes much easier to ignore the (positive) feminist consequences of her work to supplement both the subject and the symbolic.²

SECONDARY CONTEXTS

Following from this basic positioning, one of the easiest ways to establish a broader sense of the stakes of this thesis will be to sketch a few key points regarding the textual field within which it will stand. Within the secondary texts on Ettinger's work there is an approach which will have little direct relevance here, although that is not to diminish its value in general terms: those commentators involved significantly or exclusively with her artistic practice. These will not concern me here, as the overlap with the current project is minimal. Examples of this tendency include writings by Christine Buci-Glucksmann and Rosi Huhn which operate with some reference to the theory of the matrix but do not explicitly use it within their commentaries on Ettinger's paintings. For example, Huhn (1993a, 2000) draws from Ettinger's earlier paintings (mid- to late 1980s, early 1990s) ideas of a marginal practice which catches and recycles the remnants fallen through the net of culture. She also (1996) provides some interesting examples of a broad aesthetic use of matrix and metramorphosis as general concepts, with only minimal reference to the theory. One particularly interesting text by Huhn is her 1993 paper 'The passage to the Other: Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's Aesthetic Concept of Matrix and Metramorphosis,' in which she provides a commentary on Ettinger's painting practice that discusses the concepts of matrix and

¹ Anonymous reader's report for Routledge Press, March 2006.

² The term *matrix* is subject to some variation across Ettinger's work, appearing as Matrix, matrix and occasionally *matrix*. I have used the plain, lower-case form throughout this thesis as a matter of preference, with some variations appearing in quotations.

metamorphosis at their very earliest stages of emergence into theory.³ Presented at the same time as the first appearance of ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’ (see Appendix), it shows the development of an aesthetic language drawn from Ettinger’s practice and artworks, in combination with an only-just-burgeoning conceptual framework. Buci-Glucksmann (1996, 1999, 2000), on the other hand, attempts to describe a philosophically-informed ethical aesthetics of painting after Auschwitz. In recent work, this is drawn in particular from Ettinger’s labours with the ‘non-face’ of her *Eurydice* paintings. In ‘Eurydice and her Doubles,’ Buci-Glucksmann characterises the *Eurydice* paintings as the full realisation of Ettinger’s artistic potential: ‘with the *Eurydices* she has found her site, her founding myth, and her historical and analytical motif’ (2000: 73-74). For Buci-Glucksmann, although she does hint at terms from Ettinger’s theory (ibid.: 73), her attention is very much turned towards a consideration of the *Eurydice* paintings within a broader narrative of trauma, memory, and painting ‘after Auschwitz,’ an attention which encompasses Duchamp, Deleuze and Guattari, Agamben, Kafka, Benjamin and Levi.

There are areas of commentary, however, where Ettinger’s practice and theory are taken up together, Brian Massumi’s ‘Painting: The Voice of the Grain’ being a key example of a successful engagement in this mode. This paper gives a powerful account of Ettinger’s artistic practice and the aesthetic sphere within which it operates. It incorporates fragments of her artistic writings, and is also clearly informed by a significant degree of engagement with her theoretical work (Massumi 2000: 27). Massumi articulates his reading of Ettinger’s work within a Deleuzo-Guattarian frame, but with a lightness of touch that allows its specificity to speak. He casts Ettinger’s theory within this particular philosophical framing as a hybrid of psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis (ibid.: 30), an account which is able to acknowledge the irreducible role of psychoanalysis in Ettinger’s thinking at the same time as allowing for its revolutionary nature in relation to psychoanalytic orthodoxies.

The most significant approach to Ettinger’s work, that embraces almost all of the fields it engages, and which constitutes the most compelling voice speaking in its support, can be found in a series of texts by Griselda Pollock. Her long-standing engagement with Ettinger’s work operates on a far greater and more complicated number of levels than any other commentator, and there are key elements included in her narratives that will barely be touched upon in this thesis, particularly the relation of both Ettinger’s theory and practice to a narrative of the state of humanity ‘nach Auschwitz’ (Pollock 2004: 17). This element is omitted from the discussion here not through a lack

³ At the time of writing, this paper has only been published in German, as ‘*Die Passage zum Anderen: Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger’s ästhetisches Konzept der Matrix und Metramorphose.*’ An unpublished English version is available in the Women’s Art Library (MAKE) archive, located at Goldsmiths’ College, University of London. This archive also contains a number of papers by Ettinger, as well as early exhibition leaflets and catalogues, and slides of her artwork. I have made a list of the contents of this archive available at http://www.metramorphosis.org.uk/make_archive.htm.

of concern or a reduction of its importance, but simply because I am ill-equipped to add anything to Pollock's work in this area. Because of the nature of Pollock's substantial contribution to the secondary field on Ettinger's work, it requires more detailed attention than other commentators, so I will take the liberty of outlining a few points that will be relevant for the project in question here.

Pollock's 1992 introduction to a special issue of the journal *Differences* brings together the first English-language publication of Ettinger's theoretical work with Pollock's first in-print encounter with it. At this early stage her presentation of Ettinger's work is fairly understated. One notable characteristic of this encounter in common with later articulations, however, is the placing of the theory of the matrix at the (open) end of an historical narrative. Ettinger's 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' is introduced at the end of (and to an extent outside of) this very first of such articulations, which concerns itself with a short history of feminist interventions in art history and visual culture:

To differing degrees, the collected papers [in this volume] bear witness to the "necessity" or "possibility" of psychoanalysis as the privileged theoretical means to address the issues of subjectivity, sexuality and difference, and their histories. The final paper, by the Israeli artist now based in Paris, Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, problematises psychoanalysis itself. (Pollock 1992: xii)

Four years later, this narrativising tendency is greatly enlarged: in 1996, we see Pollock's first major critical deployment of the theory of the matrix, in the truly optimistic and ambitious conception of the group exhibition *Inside the Visible*. Her main written contribution to the catalogue for this show is entitled 'Inscriptions in the Feminine,' which situates matrix and metramorphosis as 'the theories that inform this exhibition' (Pollock 1996: 84). In this paper, Pollock traces some of the key events in the troubled history of women, modernity and visual art, pausing to examine Mary Kelly's and Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytically-informed interventions in the 1970s and 1980s, in order to express the need of artists who are women, both for feminism and a theory of the feminine. After discussing Kelly and Kristeva—the latter ultimately characterised as 'bound within an imaginary that only partially conceives how to disrupt the law of subjectivity ruled by the phallus' (ibid.: 77)—Pollock turns to Ettinger. Here the theory of the matrix is deployed in some senses akin to a textual strategy:

Lichtenberg Ettinger's suggestion that there may be more than one symbol (the one being the phallus that forces us to think of sex as One and its Other, and thus in fact always and only as the One) opens up art criticism to ask: What is involved in a nonphallic, matrixial reading of an artistic text? What would be a matrixial exhibition? The matrix reveals the sexual difference at work in our forms of knowledge, interpretation, and curatorship and once acknowledged will change the politics of selection, viewing, and response. (ibid.: 81)

To some extent both this reading and the *Inside the Visible* project are very much consonant with Pollock's historical project in *Old Mistresses* (Parker & Pollock 1981), since their preoccupation is

still the concrete recovery of the feminine specificity erased by the barely-veiled masculinism and misogyny of twentieth-century artistic mythologies, which ‘produced a specifically gendered concept of the autogenetic artist’ (Pollock 1996: 68). The intended tactic in the face of this occlusion is, at this point, to challenge that erasure ‘by proposing to excavate a feminist genealogy of twentieth-century artists who are women’:

This is possible because in excavating an erased past we reenvision the prehistory of the present: the modernist moment that is the lost condition of our postmodern situation. The premise of that historical project lies in a theoretical revolution that enables us now to *see* artists and work that had been made invisible, illegible, irrelevant. (ibid.: 69)

Indeed, Pollock’s use of Ettinger’s work in this paper suggests that the positing of the matrix as a symbol offers up a tool to this historical project, a means of detecting and deciphering ‘inscriptions in the feminine’ in the face of the otherwise ‘blank page’ rendered up by ‘phallogentric culture’. This tool is offered, however, with a degree of circumspection: ‘No simple positivity awaits us—but an invitation to read for the feminine against the grain of cultural modes that render it blankness’ (ibid.: 82).

I mention *Old Mistresses* in connection to this paper for a specific reason, which emerges from a comment in Pollock’s subsequent paper ‘To Inscribe in the Feminine: A Kristevan Impossibility?’. Here there seems to be a shift away from, or decentering of, the concrete feminist genealogy of *Inside the Visible*, towards the idea that ‘It is necessary to rid feminism of the need to be driven by the refound object—old mistresses’ (1998: 111). This is stated in even stronger terms more recently, with reference to Ettinger’s ‘Weaving a Woman Artist With-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event’:

her article analyses/deconstructs the phallic paradigm at the heart of the myth of the artist to provide, in the end, an elegant solution of all feminist thinking about art and sexual difference. If, as Roszika Parker and I argued in the late 1970s [...], the term artist already performatively exiles the feminine from creativity, there is no simple way to redress the structure. To promote ‘women artists’ only draws attention to the very qualifiers of negative difference that are the condition of her particularism and hence exclusion. (Pollock 2004: 43)

Pollock’s treatment of Isak Dinesen’s short story *The Blank Page* accompanies this apparent shift, and indicates the increasing depth of her engagement with Ettinger’s work. In the earlier ‘Inscriptions in the Feminine,’ the blank page creates ‘a double image, hinged both to the blankness ascribed to female dissidence in a phallogentric text and to the possibility of meanings “otherwise” that press upon its heterogeneous surface’ (1996: 75). Later on, in ‘Abandoned at the Mouth of Hell or A Second Look that Does Not Kill,’ however, this image is now multiple, and the ‘meanings otherwise’ that press upon its surface do so ‘from behind,’ ‘to reach out and lure another kind of awed, shocked, wandering uncanny looking and response’ (Pollock 2001: 115). This, to me, presents a shift from a focus on the retrieval of something absent or lost (from culture, from

subjectivity), to a focus on the need for a ‘re-tuning’ that enables the *reception* of present but otherwise invisible or inaudible traces. In this shift, Ettinger’s work thus also shifts, away from being—more or less—a tool to be used to recover a lost object, to something that changes the subject who is looking (or listening), attuning it to the voice of an object otherwise rendered mute.

On a very basic level, one of the main factors that will distinguish this thesis from Pollock’s long-term engagement with Ettinger is the feminist project indicated above. Where many of Pollock’s engagements with Ettinger are themselves within feminist narratives or articulations, and thus bring the feminist dimension of the theory of the matrix to the fore, within the methodology of this thesis it is crucial that this feminist aspect is treated as but one dimension among others. The reason for this treatment is that, while one could not reasonably dispute that the theory of the matrix is first and foremost a feminist intervention, it is also without question that this intervention rests upon a highly complex and possibly unique theoretical methodology. A careful and thoroughgoing tracking of Ettinger’s referential material in the early stages of this project revealed that one of the most striking things about her writing, when reading across a number of texts, is not only the number, but also the diversity of the references she makes to other people, from Abraham and Torok, to Levinas, to Varela, to Winnicott, and of course to Lacan. It is not only the quantity of these references that will be of note, but the way in which they are used, not only for argument or illustration, but directly to situate and to a large extent to support Ettinger’s own theoretical work. Because of the complexity of this referential methodology, the degree of certainty Pollock typically presents in discussing Ettinger’s work—certainty concerning both its meaning and its value—will not, indeed cannot, be legible here. This is not, by any means, to suggest that the feminist nature of Ettinger’s work is any less significant than Pollock indicates. Instead, what I will undertake is a strategic bracketing in order to allow the referential mechanisms of the theory to come to the fore. To understand how this particular aspect of her writing has given rise to the thesis that will unfold here, it will be necessary to say a few words on how this project came into being.

METHODOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

This thesis was originally designed as a critical assessment of Ettinger’s work, to encompass her theoretical enterprise—with a focus on its engagement with Lacan—her artistic work, and the secondary discourse that has emerged in response to both of these. It very quickly became clear that such a project was not immediately viable, and for two main reasons. The first was quite basic, in that the questions arising from the theoretical enterprise were such that they could not be contained in one third of a thesis alone; because of such considerations the focus of the thesis narrowed to the theory of the matrix alone. The second reason was more complex, and concerned the intended emphasis on the relationship with Lacanian psychoanalysis, an emphasis which

produced some critical dynamics that put the project as a whole into question. It is essential to take account of Ettinger's complicated articulation of the theory of the matrix through already existing theoretical structures (these most obviously being Lacanian), but in attempting both to understand the Lacanian content Ettinger deploys, and to assess the deployment of it, one is often left having to manage a dissonance or conflict between Ettinger's claims for and use of the late Lacan, and the experience of reading Lacan directly or via secondary texts. If this dissonance takes place in purely dualistic terms, it becomes extremely difficult to resolve satisfactorily, Ettinger's allusive and fragmentary use of Lacan often being quite difficult to reconcile with more filial or disciplinary approaches. A text already in existence that gives a sense of this problem, while inadvertently suggesting the means I have chosen to circumvent it, is Kareen Ror Malone's commentary 'Working through the Question of the Phallus to the Other Side.' In reading Ettinger's work, Malone notes a series of divergences from the letter of Lacan that she believes require some attention. She is particularly concerned by the effects of an intersection of Lacanian thinking with other psychoanalytic schools, which leads into criticisms both of Ettinger's approach to the object, as well as her rendering of the unconscious and the subject (Malone 1997: 412-14). While I would concur with Malone in noting this as an issue, and in urging caution, my motives for doing so reflect the shift that has taken place in the methodology of the thesis, and as such do not lead to the same criticisms. That is, I will also work on these sites of divergence from Lacan, but from the opposite point of view; that such points are the *matter* of Ettinger's theory, rather than the margins. Malone's incisive Lacanian re-reading of Ettinger clearly displays, in my view, the limits of what can be gained from a Lacanian approach, even one that is sympathetic to the aims of Ettinger's project.

It is on the basis of this limitation that a major shift has taken place, in order to reach the current conception of this thesis. The problematic dynamic generated by looking exclusively at the relationship between Ettinger and Lacan not only inhibits an understanding of the nature of Ettinger's Lacanianism; the general possibility of a critical assessment of the theory of the matrix is also seriously limited. That is, one hypothesis of this revised project is that an adequate assessment of the general validity and significance of the theory of the matrix is occluded by a confrontation with Lacanian psychoanalysis. If, in approaching its inter-theoretical situation, the dominance of this Lacanian dimension is reduced and the other theoretical resources woven within Ettinger's work are allowed to come to the fore, this limiting confrontation is defused and the assessment of her work assumes a far broader significance. A dualistic focus on the relationship to Lacanian psychoanalysis not only makes the problems touched upon above almost inevitable, I subsequently realised, it is also profoundly artificial, a realisation which enabled me to make sense of the referential archive I had assembled. The work of Félix Guattari, some of which will appear in Chapter 3, was instrumental in this realisation, and in the development of a revised structure and methodology. One of the early inspirations for this methodology was a conversation between

Ettinger and Guattari that took place in 1989, on the subject of transference and on the state of psychoanalysis after Lacan (see Ettinger & Guattari 1997). From reading this conversation, I went on to re-read Guattari's *Chaosmosis* (which I had in fact started a few years earlier, and had been struck by some clear resonances with Ettinger's theory), and noted a number of shared references, most notably to Daniel Stern and Francisco Varela, but also to Duchamp. This conversation raised in my mind the possibility of an intellectual and theoretical field to which Ettinger's work had profound ties, but which was not immediately legible in any single text. A relation to such a field, it has since emerged, subtends her more overt engagement with Lacanian psychoanalysis, and can be deployed in order to demonstrate the significance of the problematics with which she is engaged, beyond Lacanian horizons. It was from this conversation, and the suggestion it made of a significant relation to other post- or non-Lacanian interlocutors, that the revised methodology of this thesis emerged.

THE THESIS

In its present form, then, this project attempts to respond to the inter-theoretical constitution of the theory of the matrix, of which the reference to and deployment of Lacan represents only one part, and to establish an extended theoretical context within which its significance may be assessed. The resulting structure operates on two levels. I will first offer an overview of the theory, which will, among other things, show some of the ways in which Ettinger gathers together other modes of thinking as a foundation and/or conceptual facilitation of the emergence of the theory of the matrix. The latter has a significant degree of internal organisation, articulation and dynamism: it is a theoretical *work*, and this work will be one of the objects of the Overview. To take up Pollock's term from 'Thinking the feminine' my interest in the Overview will lie first and foremost in the 'theorywork' side of Ettinger's 'dual project' (Pollock 2004: 17). This term is particularly attractive in its binding of theory and work, as it brings forth the idea that theory in general, and this theory in particular, is not a transcendent and homogeneous world of freely interchangeable ideas, but something that requires a substantial amount of labour. The overview given of the theory will be not so much an explication or a synthetic gloss of the theory of the matrix as an analysis of it, in Laplanche's anti-hermeneutic sense of an associative-dissociative dismantling, examining the articulations that take place at each stage of its development. No such analysis of the emergence and consolidation of its key concepts, terms and stages has been undertaken to date.

The second level is more complicated. The chapters after the Overview attempt to take seriously the breadth of references in and through which Ettinger's theory is articulated, and try to test out something of its significance within a broader psychoanalytical field. It is my view that because of this articulation the theory of the matrix occupies a disciplinary and/or theoretical space that has not yet been adequately understood, or even approached. In order to attempt such an approach, I

will stage a series of critical and theoretical spaces within which the theory of the matrix can be situated. The three chapters that make up Part II of the thesis, in which these stagings will take place, will be organised thematically, under the headings of *the feminine*, *aesthetics*, and *the unconscious and transference*. This modular organisation will also be subtended and traversed by a series of connected conceptual nodes that relate the particular theme under consideration to Ettinger's negotiation of the various schools of psychoanalytic thinking, which will in turn raise one of the central questions of the thesis: the relationship of the theory of the matrix to the diverse and heterogeneous field of psychoanalysis. Under each of these headings what will take place will not be a neutral comparative layout of the relevant arguments, but a form of reading which places Ettinger's work in a critical conversation with one or two interlocutors. On the subject of the feminine, these interlocutors will be Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, on aesthetics, Marion Milner, and on the unconscious and transference I will return to Guattari, alongside Jean Laplanche. The aim in approaching these areas in a critical manner is not a question of assessing what the theory of the matrix *does* that Milner, Laplanche *et al.*, fail to do, but rather of the possibilities the theory of the matrix opens beyond these other theoretical formulations. This question will be combined with the question of precisely *how* it is able to open those limits (as well as attending to any sacrifices that might be made in such openings). I do not wish to argue that Ettinger in any way supersedes or makes redundant any of the interlocutors approached here; the limits of their theoretical formulations are specific and rigorously constituted. My concern will be to analyse Ettinger's claims to reconfigure those limits and the fields they encircle.

The opening of these critical, conversational spaces is not straightforward, and has required the development of some particular methodological approaches. For example, between the Overview and the chapters of the second part of the thesis, there will be a difference in the approach to Ettinger's texts. In the Overview I will track the trajectory of a group of key concepts across a series of texts, whereas in the later chapters the approach will be more focussed and contained, each chapter concentrating on one or two texts by Ettinger. The motivation behind this is to understand the dynamics of Ettinger's approach to certain ideas *within* their textual horizons, attempting to avoid the production of a dis-located, meta-textual synthesis of her ideas divorced from the conceptual and theoretical environments in which they were wrought. The choice of texts for the chapters loosely follows a chronological line, starting in Chapter 1 with a text from the earliest stages of the theory, and concluding in Chapter 3 with a text that has yet to be published. The chronology that subtends the chapters will not, however, be dealt with explicitly, the developmental trajectory of the theory of the matrix being limited to the Overview.

Because the object of this thesis is the theory of the matrix, and because this theory is to be compared in each chapter to other, much larger and more variegated bodies of work, a certain mode of attention has been necessary in order to facilitate the conceptual encounters that will take

place. To make these comparisons in terms which take account of the broad sweep of these bodies of work would be impossible, as my interest in each interlocutor relates to a specific problematic or problematics emerging from the theory of the matrix; conceptual nodes that are called into question by Ettinger's theory, or which call it into question. The only appropriate approach to such nodes has been a relatively intensive, textually-anchored mode of reading, which does not seek to provide a definitive solution to the problematics raised, but rather to examine the various positionings that take place around them. This mode of reading has, naturally, resulted in a particular density of writing, in that the attention to these nodes has essentially become the object of each chapter, and the different positions under consideration are only accounted for insofar as they intersect with these objects.

The choice of *the feminine*, *aesthetics*, and *the unconscious and transference* as the thematic organisation of the second part of the thesis reflects what I consider to be the most important sites—quilting points, if you will—through which the theory of the matrix may be anchored within a larger context, and through which we may approach its relationship to psychoanalysis in general. Not only will these three themes themselves focus our attention on those dynamic sites where the various doxa of psychoanalysis are called into question, in each chapter I will approach the situation of Ettinger's theory on and around the margins of the psychoanalytic field, especially insofar as it claims a potential for the modification of its limits.

The choice of the feminine as the first thematic area was inevitable, in that 'the feminine' is a crucial term for Ettinger, the only one of the three chapter headings that is overtly and explicitly stated in the basic formulation of the theory of the matrix. Its centrality is not that of a means by which matrixiality is constructed, but rather it subtends both the problematic to which the theory is a response ('the feminine from the angle of the phallus' (WOA: 70)), and the response to it ('subjectivity from the feminine' (MG: 30)). In considering the feminine in Chapter 1, I will position the theory of the matrix in relation to particular aspects of the work of Kristeva and Irigaray, through a very specific question. I will begin from the hypothesis of a connection between the specification of birth as the absolute limit of subjectivity, and the split that resides at the heart of female subjectivity between feminine sexuality and the archaic feminine m/Other. I will also raise this question in the context of the valuable contribution made by the theory of the partial drives, especially as this is developed by Kristeva into the theory of the semiotic, of a corporeal heterogeneity at the foundation of the psychoanalytic subject. In approaching the feminine in these terms, I will deliberately avoid a reiteration of the usual questions of being or having the phallus, masquerade and supplementary jouissance. Rather, the underlying focus of the chapter will be the effects of certain configurations of the archaic object upon the limits of subjectivity and relationality. This will take the form of an examination of Ettinger's negotiation of two tendencies in psychoanalytic thinking that loosely group themselves into *drive-based* and *object relations* thinking.

This reflects an approach to the feminine not in terms of what the feminine is or is not, or even necessarily in terms of the particular articulations of it undertaken by Kristeva, Irigaray and Ettinger, but their attention to the feminine in relation to limits imposed by certain apparently neutral psychoanalytic structures.

Aesthetics, like the feminine, represents a difficult site on the margins of psychoanalytic thinking. The relationship between psychoanalysis and art is often characterised—and frequently with reference to Freud’s ‘Moses of Michelangelo’ and *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*—by the positioning of art in itself beyond its limits, and the reduction of the work of art to a proxy for the speech of the artist as an absent analysand. Aesthetics is also of critical importance for the theory of the matrix, in that it constitutes both the extra-psychoanalytical domain from which its theoretical intervention is drawn, as well as that within which (as a dimension of ‘sub-’symbolic inscription) it articulates its expansion of subjectivity. It also exists in continuity with the disciplinary considerations involved in the attention to the feminine in Chapter 1, since the psychoanalytic dimension of the aesthetics articulated in the theory of the matrix strongly tends towards a privilege in some schools of British psychoanalytical thinking of a primary relation to the archaic m/Other as the ground of creative and aesthetic experience. This connection is the basis of Chapter 2, which considers one such British psychoanalytical theorist—Marion Milner—in terms of her theorisation of a primary creativity emerging from the most archaic period of life, which she carries forward into a theory of artistic creativity. Milner’s and Ettinger’s work also has a founding commonality in that both engage to a significant degree with the transmission of modes of meaning and attention from the field of art and aesthetics into psychoanalysis, a transmission which, as I will explore, has the potential to transgress and transform its boundaries.

While the feminine and aesthetics sit together as sites that contribute to the formation of the limits of psychoanalytic thought, the unconscious and transference, on the other hand, may be considered to stand on the other side of those limits. From this central positioning, however, it will be part of my argument in Chapter 3 that the unconscious and transference are not only contained by these limits, but in a significant sense are constituted with them, and as such are highly susceptible to the effects of their modification. This question is particularly pertinent for Ettinger’s work, given its tendency to treat the limits of psychoanalysis transgressed by the theory of the matrix, and Lacan’s statement that ‘the unconscious is structured like a language,’ as coextensive. I will thus approach the idea, in this final chapter, of a significant correlation between the approach to the limits of psychoanalysis and the formulation of the nature of the unconscious, the singular positioning of the theory of the matrix in relation to those limits having a correspondingly singular effect in metapsychological terms. The choice of Laplanche and Guattari for this final chapter directly relates to this question. Laplanche’s work in particular will lay the ground by which it may be approached; his call for, and implementation of, a reflexivity concerning the nature and constitution of

psychoanalytical thinking is something with which I am profoundly sympathetic, and which I will argue has important implications for Ettinger's work. Guattari's work, as I have already indicated, shares some important resonances with the theory of the matrix, but there are also important differences between them, stemming from his schizoanalytic critique of psychoanalysis, as well as his approach to transdisciplinary methodology, that place him in an interesting position next to Laplanche's disciplinary rigour.

At the very end of the thesis, Ettinger's negotiation of the spaces of transference will provide an enactment of a developing position in relation to the margins of the *clinical* psychoanalytic field. From this it will emerge that the theory of the matrix is not just a theory of subjectivity (from/in the feminine), nor a psychoanalytically-founded aesthetics, but also, in light of some recent developments, an intervention which calls into question the fabric of psychoanalysis beyond any particular theoretical articulations.

PART ONE

The Theory

Sometimes the work of art produces seeds of theory from which, upon elaboration, art slips away.

Bracha Ettinger, 'Woman-Other-Thing'

THE THEORY OF THE MATRIX

An overview of the texts

Because I am not explicating the theory of the matrix in order then to apply it, I am to an extent freed from having to fix it into a determinate structure; I am able to avoid having to place too great an emphasis on the meaning or significance of any one part of the theory, aiming rather to allow the various fluxes, flows and cul-de-sacs of Ettinger's theory to unfold on their own terms. There will, however, be a chronological ordering placed in support of this unfolding, since it would be impossible to allow the texts to speak all at once. I will take 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' to be the first text in this narrative trajectory. This is with the following caveats: although 'Verbal Hallucinations in Psychotic Patients' could be seen to be a 'pre-matrixial' text, as it was published a year before 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' the latter appears actually to have been written in 1989 (see Appendix). I also acknowledge that the writing of *Matrix Halal(a) – Lapsus* begins in 1985, and as such pre-dates 'Matrix and Metramorphosis.' This cannot, in my view, be considered a theoretical text in its own right, offering something more like an historical document of the founding concepts and field of the theory of the matrix.⁴ I have decided to omit a detailed

⁴ In her 'Translating the Matrix: The Process of Metramorphosis in the Notebooks of Bracha Lichtenberg-Ettinger,' Carolyn Ducker attempts to chart the movement by which the theory of the matrix emerged from Ettinger's *Carnets* (later edited into *Matrix Halal(a) – Lapsus*), drawing analogies between her 'paratactic style of writing' (1994: 15) and the rhythm of the painted mark in her artwork. In this text, Ducker traces a reversal of the movement she hypothesises, retroactively casting the net of the theory of the matrix over the fragments of the *Carnets*, in order to produce them as exemplary of a 'matrixial process' of writing (ibid.: 16). Although her insights into the particularities of Ettinger's writing process are at times illuminating, and to some extent resonate with the model I am projecting onto the development of the theory, I have some reservations about the limits of her methodology. This is stated quite clearly at the beginning of 'Translating the Matrix,' in terms of an inversion: 'From the apparently solid ground of theory, I shall move towards the shifting sands of the *Carnets*, thereby retracing [Ettinger's] own journey but in reverse' (ibid.: 4).

examination of it, as the substance of its content—notes on painting—is beyond the remit of this thesis. ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis,’ then, will be the source for much of the initial explication of the theory, from which subsequent articulations will be differentiated. This approach inevitably has both advantages and disadvantages, since its style and tone as well as the systematicity of its articulation render it singular among Ettinger’s texts, and thus potentially unrepresentative. Because of this, part of the methodology employed in approaching this text will be to note some of its particularities: those areas which are retrospectively ‘missing’ from the text, those which are developed later and go on to be crucial to the theory of matrixiality, and those areas and references which are not taken forward into other texts.

Shortly after ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis,’ Ettinger published a series of papers, spanning from ‘The Becoming Threshold of Matrixial Borderlines (published in 1994, but first presented in 1992)⁵ to *The Matrixial Gaze* (published in 1995, but first presented in 1993).⁶ The texts in this period appear to form a transitional stage in the development of the theory, where particular aspects are worked out in greater detail, especially the relationship between matrix and phantasy, metramorphosis and the symbolic, the object in the sphere of the matrix, and the significance of matrixiality for creativity. Having consolidated the structure of the theory of the matrix in the last of these papers, Ettinger then moves to develop particular aspects of its relevance and impact, aspects which can be broadly grouped into three overlapping areas: aesthetics, femininity (or the doubled relationship of women to the matrix), and ethics. This structure of transition, consolidation and development will be reflected in the organisation of what follows.

It needs to be borne in mind that the narrative I will construct to account for the development of the theory of the matrix is not a ‘biography’ of Ettinger’s work. I make this point because part of the ethos of this Overview and of the thesis in general is to approach the theory of the matrix on a textual level only, an ethos which consequently foregoes the author of the theory as a source of answers. This methodology has been put in place very deliberately, as a means of negotiating some of the general difficulties inevitably presented by engaging with a theory that is the work of a living theorist, and moreover one who is still very much involved in its unfolding. That is, it has been a deliberate tactic not to make recourse to the author at particular points of difficulty, in order that any provisional solutions are reached on the basis of material that is (as much as is possible)

To me, this approach potentially elides the distance and movement between a world in which the theory of the matrix does not yet exist, and a world in which it has been explicitly formulated. A trace of this distance and movement is potentially what *Matrix Halal(a) – Lapsus* can, with a slightly more adventurous reading methodology, yield up. One place to start might be in examining the possible effects of the formulation of a theoretical paradigm (in around 1988, according to Ducker (ibid.: 14 n. 39)) upon the writing of the notebooks.

⁵ See Appendix.

⁶ See Appendix.

publicly available, and not subject to anachronistic revisions. This is, of course, a methodological artifice, and has inevitably sacrificed some of the advantages of developing a secondary account in conjunction with the author of the primary source, but it seems a necessary artifice if the theory is to be understood as a heterogeneous process of work, and not the immaculately-conceived edict of a master of the feminine.

In the first chapter of his *Lacan in Contexts*, David Macey makes a rather barbed analysis of the retroactive effects of what he terms the ‘final state’ (after an art-historical interpretation of Miller’s ‘*le dernier état de la théorie*’⁷) upon the understanding, reception and treatment of Lacan’s work among English-language scholars. In art-historical terms, usually with reference to printmaking, Macey says, ‘A final state is a definitive version arrived at by a process of reworking’. Such a state, in his view, may give rise to a misunderstanding of the work as a process, particularly in terms of what is occluded by the final state: ‘Examination of earlier states may reveal that the acids and the burin have altered the plate considerably. Details may have been altered; areas of light and shade may have been inverted. An epigraph may have been added or removed’ (Macey 1988: 11). The predication of an understanding of Lacan upon his work existing in a ‘final state,’ Macey argues, ‘requires no contextualization,’ and brings into play ‘the induced amnesia which has characterized psychoanalysis itself ever since Freud destroyed his past,’⁸ resulting in

the creation of a monolith which is rendered unnecessarily difficult of access, and [presenting] the reader with a stark choice between total acceptance and total rejection of Lacan. It has been convincingly suggested by one psychoanalyst [François Roustang] that this choice is at least in part the outcome of a transference effect whereby Lacan is so cathected that he must be followed without hesitation or rejected as a charlatan. The phantasy that the analyst is omnipotent and omniscient has certainly been often observed in transference situations, and it is not conducive to fruitful dialogue or to the formulations of objective judgements as to the value of the analyst in question. (ibid.: 24-25)

It is this tendency that I wish to resist in constructing a narrative of Ettinger’s work, aiming rather to draw out more of a sense of the shifts and flows in the articulation of the theory than a linear evolution from nascency to completion or a definitive account of its terms. This is why the initial forays into an explication of the theory of the matrix here might seem to readers already familiar with it to be rather sparse and incomplete. This bare-bones appearance is again deliberate, since I

⁷ See also Miller’s discussion of the index to the *Écrits*. The phrase ‘du dernier état de la théorie’ is translated by Bruce Fink as ‘from the latest stage of the theory’ (Lacan 2006: 851).

⁸ Macey notes that ‘On two separate occasions – in 1885 and 1907 – Freud deliberately destroyed his manuscripts, correspondence and private diaries.’ Macey further remarks that this could be considered ‘an unexpected attitude on the part of the founder of a discipline which places such emphasis on the importance of the past, on the recovery of memories. Yet Freud’s repeated gesture typifies or anticipates one of the more curious features of the psychoanalytic movement as a whole: its marked tendency to forget or repress its own history. And as psychoanalysis itself teaches us, forgetting is rarely accidental and never innocent’ (1988: 1).

aim to reflect in my own exposition something of the emergence of particular elements of the theory over time, and *matrix* and *metramorphosis* represent (in this approach at least) the basis of the theory, being the only specifically ‘matrixial’ terms to appear in *Matrix Halal(a) – Lapsus*, ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis,’ and with some caveats (as we will later see), ‘The Becoming Threshold of Matrixial Borderlines’ (hereafter ‘Becoming Threshold’).

Before beginning, a word or two on the chronology of I have used to order Ettinger’s texts. To understand the emergence of concepts she uses over time it has been necessary, particularly with the earlier texts (1989-1995), to present them in an order other than their dates of publication. This is because, from Ettinger’s extremely helpful use of footnotes and acknowledgements, it appears that in the case of these earlier texts there are considerable gaps between dates of writing/presentation and dates of publication, and because of this I have tried to steer closer to the order of writing than of publication. This reordering has its limitations, given various contradictions, issues with revision for publication and so on, and is in no way intended to be definitive, but it seems essential to be aware of the issue. Details of the presentation and publication of all the papers I have used can be found in the appendix to this thesis, together with references for the information given.

PART I

Matrixial Beginnings 1989-1992

Matrix and Metramorphosis ([1989-90] 1992)
Verbal Hallucinations in Psychotic Patients (1991)

Much of the explication of the matrix in ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’ concerns a particular configuration of the relationship between subjectivity and alterity or difference. Ettinger notes, and indeed deploys, a generalised ‘primary meaning’ of the term *matrix* as ‘womb/uterus’ (M&M: 197), but it must be stressed that this association is not its primary meaning in terms of the particular intervention she makes. For Ettinger, the matrix is first and foremost a symbol for a relationship to alterity that is able to tolerate it as such, that is, it ‘deals with the possibility of recognizing the other in his/her otherness, difference, and unknown-ness’ (ibid.: 200). This configuration of a relationship to difference is fundamentally a reconfiguration of the status of the feminine, in that the feminine is the archetype of the unknown other of subjectivity and culture, which is either assimilated or foreclosed, either way being denied any specificity. The feminine is also the site of Ettinger’s reconfigured difference, which is thus posited as a sexual difference.

'Matrix and Metramorphosis' focuses mainly on two dimensions of the matrix, as image and as symbol. As an image, the matrix is modelled upon a particular understanding of the relationship between the pregnant woman and the foetus in the late stages of pregnancy. Contrary to other conceptions of this organisation as one of undifferentiation, and therefore non-relation, Ettinger proposes that the foetus (which she terms the *I*) in the final stages of pregnancy is minimally aware of a distinction between 'itself' and the dynamic environment in which it dwells, an awareness which extends crucially to the maternal body *and* psyche. The woman (the *non-I*)⁹ on the other hand, (except within states which are subsequently reconceived as pathological) does not fully absorb the foetus in her bodily schema: it is not incorporated as an internal organ, nor is it carved out as a separate entity. The foetus is an unpredictable presence, physiologically and physically sensitive and responsive,¹⁰ Ettinger contends, as well as libidinally invested. The particular nature of the investment in the 'contact spaces' (ibid.: 200) of prenatal/intrauterine life constitutes a large part of the specificity of the matrixial relation, since it is possible that pregnancy (the site of the originary matrixial encounter) can be subjectively pathogenic—for any or all participants—if this investment is dominated by either an assimilating or a rejecting tendency. The matrix is characterised by the preservation of a space between participants in a relation, what Ettinger will later term a *matrixial borderspace*.¹¹ 'It is an invested, shared space of *I* and *not-I(s)*' (ibid.: 202). This space precedes all participants insofar as is a necessary condition of their subjective matrixial aspects: 'either multiple/plural or partial/split/fragmented but not schizophrenic' (ibid.: 198), and is a necessary condition of the plane on which the matrix in-forms subjectivity, which Ettinger terms the *matrixial stratum of subjectivisation*.

⁹ Although in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' Ettinger apparently uses *not-I* rather than *non-I*, it is clear from the excerpts from the *Carnets* printed alongside, the French term is *non-je*, indicating a possible mistranslation. For the translation as *not-I* to be more appropriate, the French would have to be, I believe, *pas-je*. I will continue to quote from this text using *not-I*—as there is no credit given for a translator—but will use the term *non-I* in my own formulations. This is supported by Pollock's preface to 1995 edition of *The Matrixial Gaze*, which states that 'theorising the feminine through the Matrix opens out a new way of thinking subject-subject relations, relations to the stranger, to the other, to that which is *non-I* and not just *not-I*.' It should be noted, however, that the same *not-I* reappears in the 2002 paper 'Weaving a Trans-subjective Tress or the Matrixial *sinthome*' (WTT: 99 ff.).

¹⁰ Joan Raphael-Leff's survey of the psychology of birth and child-bearing presents—within a framework of empirical psychological research—some very interesting points connected to the abilities of the foetus at different stages of pregnancy. She summarises research into hearing, response to maternal emotions, tactile sensitivity, discrimination and reactions, and most interestingly of all, vision and dreaming: 'Studies have revealed eye movements – both in response to his/her changing position and possibly due to dreaming as there is evidence of rapid eye movements (REM) accompanying sleep-type brain waves in fetuses. [...] Interestingly, although eye movements are difficult to detect in fetuses, it appears that mothers and their fetuses seem to exhibit dreaming brain patterns at the same time leading some researchers to speculate upon a 'telepathic' link between the pregnant woman and her unborn child.' See Raphael-Leff 1991: 129-32.

¹¹ See BTMB: 41-42, for the introduction of this term.

In spite of the importance of the images and models that ground the idea of the matrix, Ettinger emphasises that these aspects are ultimately secondary. Within her theory, its significance is given first and foremost as a symbol or concept. This symbolic status of the matrix is elaborated with great clarity in a slightly later paper, 'Woman-Other-Thing':

The womb and the pre-natal phase are the referents in the Real to which the imaginary Matrix corresponds. But as a concept, Matrix is no more — but also no less — related to the womb than the Phallus is related to the penis. That is, Matrix is a Symbolic concept. (WOT: 12)

The importance of the positing of the matrix as a symbol is something that cannot be explicated independently of Ettinger's critique of Lacan, and so I will return to it shortly. Before doing so, I will say a word or two on *metramorphosis*. This is the process Ettinger proposes as constitutive of the matrixial relation. It adds some initial detail to how the matrix may operate as a symbol, since it specifies the nature of the relation and/or process that operates via a shared 'contact space'. The phrase most often used—at least in early papers—to describe metramorphosis is 'the becoming-threshold of borderlines' (M&M: 176), and this is also expanded with the following: metramorphosis 'refers both to processes concerning borderlines, limits, margins, fringes, thresholds, and links and to transformations of the *I* and *not-I(s)* in the Matrix' (ibid.: 197). The former description is particularly useful, since *becoming* emphasises the impermanent nature of metramorphosis, which is never a fixed state and is constituted by movement and transmission between subjective elements in a matrixial relation. This process of mutual transformation necessitates the collapse of a clear delimitation of subject and object, as well as subject and subject, but also bypasses the logic by which such a collapse would be reduced to a fusion. Or, in other words, metramorphosis is the process by which the line marking the division between inside and outside, (subject and object, self and other, internal and external) is permeated without being dissolved, and without traumatic penetration.

As well as its symbolic meaning 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' introduces the matrix developmentally, as a stage preceding and impacting upon *both* the oedipal and the pre-oedipal: 'The matrixial stage is earlier than the Oedipal and pre-Oedipal stages and affects them in various ways' (ibid.: 177). It is also a symbol for those processes and aspects of subjectivity which escape, are excluded, or are not detected by mechanisms Ettinger specifies as phallic, and which I will shortly detail. Insofar as it stands as a symbol, the matrix can, in theory, rescue these excluded or fugitive phenomena from the realms of psychopathology or cultural invisibility. As a figure, metramorphosis is absolutely indispensable for Ettinger's project, as it is the vehicle through which these otherwise excluded, or—to use Lacan's term—foreclosed psychic and cultural elements may be inscribed. The need for such a vehicle is demonstrated in Ettinger's critique of certain dimensions of psychoanalytic thinking in general, and of Lacanian psychoanalysis in particular.

THE CRITIQUE OF LACAN

A Lacanian presence may be found in every one of Ettinger's texts, and from its first articulation the theory of the matrix is directly positioned in a dialogical relationship with this presence. In its direct and programmatic critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis, however, 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' is almost unique within Ettinger's theoretical oeuvre. The only comparable example of its point-by-point analysis is the 'Reply to Commentary' of 1997, where Ettinger undertakes a detailed recapitulation of her position in relation to Lacan. In this later text she emphasises that the key to understanding this relation is in how she draws out of his late work a revision of the role and scope of language in the unconscious (Reply: 425). This is something Ettinger feels her commentator, Kareen Ror Malone, to have missed: 'The difference between Malone's and my Lacanian perspective' she says, 'concerns the place of language: whereas Malone emphasizes its centrality and "the Other as the locus of the signifier," I accentuate the unconscious beyond the chains of the signifiers' (Reply: 423). As well as the critique of language, in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' Ettinger poses a series of challenges to what she conceives of as 'basic assumptions in psychoanalytic theory' (M&M: 176). These challenges can, very broadly, be grouped into three main areas. The first is the role, nature and significance of language in the unconscious, where Ettinger rejects the idea that all unconscious processes are reducible to metaphor and metonymy (metramorphosis being an alternative figure), and that castration presents the only passage to the symbolic network. The second area is that of subjective ontogenesis, where she can be seen to challenge the various psychoanalytic theses of primary narcissism, primary autism or primary undifferentiation, suggesting instead that the subject emerges from 'an already distinct and highly structured substratum,' modelled upon 'images' of the intra-uterine foetus and mother.¹² The third broad area to which 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' presents a challenge is the hegemony of the phallus in psychoanalysis. This third area has implications for the first two, since Ettinger strives to relativise the hold of the phallus (as symbol) over the structure and processes of subjectivity, as well as its ontogenesis. It also has a significance beyond the first two areas, inasmuch as the hegemony of the phallus constitutes a blockage of the appearance the feminine within both the discourse and practice of psychoanalysis. (In terms of practice, however, this does not begin to be stated explicitly until 'Becoming Threshold'—'Symbolic disavowal of matrixial elements in favour of phallic elements repeatedly occurs in analytic interpretations' (BTMB: 48)—but appears within the revision of a paragraph from 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' (M&M: 191).) It is worth being clear at this point that although in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' Ettinger differentiates several modalities of the phallus in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is the symbolic phallus that resides at the heart

¹² It is of note that 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' is the only text in which Ettinger refers to the pregnant woman as the 'mother,' developing in later papers into *mother-to-be*, *becoming-mother*, and *m/Other-to-be*.

of her critique; ‘the unique term for distinguishing the function of the signifier,’ as well as ‘the signifier of that which is lacking in the chain of signifiers’ (ibid.: 189).

THE PHALLIC (1): SUBSTITUTION AND THE DIRECT RULE OF THE PHALLUS

A great deal of attention is paid in ‘Matrix and Metamorphosis’ to the many different meanings of the term ‘phallus’ within Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, but the over-all tendency rejected is that which argues for its universality and neutrality as a symbol. In terms of the role of language in the structure and formation of the unconscious, Ettinger contests the exclusive role of the phallus as the ‘signifier of signifiers’. She rejects the idea that the *only* possible passage to the symbolic network is symbolic castration, the recognition that the subject does not and cannot possess the phallus: ‘*In the Symbolic* [...] everyone is potentially equal because everyone must lose the illusion of having the Phallus.’ (ibid.). Within Lacanian thinking, this loss effectively constitutes the universal resolution of the Oedipus complex, replacing the (lacking) body of the mother with the phallus as signifier, which thus becomes the inaugural and ultimately irreplaceable primary metaphor.

This substitutive movement is, within ‘Matrix and Metamorphosis’ the sole concrete process or structure to which the term ‘phallic’ is attributed, and is discussed first in terms of castration, and then metaphor and metonymy. The latter are, for Ettinger ‘intrinsically phallic, since they reduce chaos to *one* symbol at a time’ (ibid.: 190). Other than this concrete specification, the term ‘phallic’ appears within ‘Matrix and Metamorphosis’ to mean nothing more detailed than ‘that which is determined by the phallus,’ which is an important factor to note, as such a narrow specification is only retained in this particular text. This early conception of the phallic appears to be a formal characterisation; later articulations will extend the idea of phallic hegemony into a determination of the object in psychoanalysis, and even further into the determination of a psychoanalytic quasi-ontology (modulations of presence and absence).

Since castration is such a key term in psychoanalytic theory, with a multitude of different meanings and interpretations, I will only refer to Ettinger’s own exposition for those points most relevant to the discussion here. First of all, she notes the difference between Lacanian and Freudian uses of castration, attributing its retention as a term by Lacan to a matter of maintaining ‘a conceptual and theoretical continuity.’ In light of this almost arbitrary retention of the term, she adds, ‘Once again, a particularly phallic term is chosen to symbolize the *totality of a universal* process.’ The target of Ettinger’s critique of symbolic castration in ‘Matrix and Metamorphosis’ is substitution: the replacement of the ‘Thing’ by the signifier. The effects of this replacement in this account are

threefold: (i) the ‘total separation’ of Lacan’s three psychic registers,¹³ especially the separation of real and symbolic; (ii) the replacement of the archaic mother by the symbolic Other; (iii) the destruction of the Thing (ibid.: 190-91). In the positing of metramorphosis, Ettinger seeks to relativise the effects of castration by reconfiguring it as one among other ‘passages to the symbolic’. The elaboration of these other passages in any concrete detail, however, is only undertaken in subsequent papers, with the formulation of the matrixial object/*objet a*, as well as the uptake of the subsymbolic, which broadens the capacity of the Lacanian symbolic to take on tracings other than signification.

Castration is only the initial site of an objection to substitutive mechanisms. In metaphor and metonymy the effects of this primary substitution are determining. The initial substitution in symbolic castration is not simply a localised one-to-one exchange; it is the substitution of a homogeneous and digital world of signifying chains for the heterogeneous fullness of the real. Together, metaphor and metonymy form, within Lacan’s early thinking at least, a closed system that accounts for all unconscious processes. Metonymy is, for Lacan, ‘the properly signifying function [...] in language’ (2006: 421).¹⁴ He uses the example of ‘thirty sails’ to show the part standing for the whole, arguing that the connection between ‘ship’ and ‘sail’ is ‘nowhere but in the signifier,’ invoking a chain of signifiers in which ‘ship’ and ‘sail’ are contiguous. Their connection within the

¹³ Elizabeth Roudinesco describes Lacan’s three registers as follows: ‘Lacan included in the category of the *symbolic* all the revisions he had derived from the system of Lévi-Strauss; the Freudian unconscious was reinterpreted as the site of a mediation comparable to that operated by the signifier in the realm of language. The category of the *imaginary* included all the phenomena connected with the construction of the ego: annexation (capitulation), anticipation, illusion. [...] Lacan’s conception of the *real* not only included Freud’s definition of psychical reality [‘unconscious desire and its related fantasies’] but also an idea of morbidity, of *reste* (vestige), of *part maudite* (doomed or accursed part), borrowed without attribution from the heterological science of Bataille. From this arises a tremendous change in meaning. Where Freud saw a subjective reality based on fantasy, Lacan thought of a desiring reality excluded from all symbolization and inaccessible to all subjective thought: a black shadow or ghost beyond the reach of reason’ (1994: 216-17). It is worth noting Malcolm Bowie’s caveat that ‘The Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real are not mental forces, personifiable on the model-builder’s inner stage, but *orders* each of which serves to position the individual within a force-field that traverses him’ (1991: 91). Of the three orders, or registers, the real is the one which arguably changes the most over the course of Lacan’s seminar. The particular trajectory which Ettinger draws out of this seminar may be connected to the development of the real, from that which is entirely determined and regulated by the Symbolic order, to that which escapes the inscription of the signifier but ex-sists only as an impossibility, to that which may be approached through the *matheme*—particularly through advances in topology—as a writing that is integrally transmissible.

¹⁴ Lacan’s explanation of metaphor and metonymy borrows substantially from Roman Jakobson (see Lacan 2006: 421 n. 13). In Jakobson’s ‘Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,’ he lays out the two poles of language as functioning by similarity (in the case of metaphor) and contiguity (in the case of metonymy). Jakobson further elaborates the similarity/contiguity polarity through their positional and semantic aspects: as metaphor and metonymy form the two *poles* of speech (the exclusion of one or the other being manifest in aphasia) ‘in normal verbal behaviour both processes are continually operative’ (1956: 76).

metonym 'thirty sails' arises from a *horizontal* movement along this chain. Metaphor, on the other hand, is the means within the movement of signifiers which accounts for creativity. It is the splicing of signifying chains in a *vertical* movement:

Metaphor's creative spark does not spring forth from the juxtaposition of two images, that is, of two equally actualized signifiers. It flashes between two signifiers, one of which has replaced the other by taking the other's place in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present by virtue of its (metonymic) connection to the rest of the chain. (ibid.: 422)

Without metaphor, signification as such could not function, since the movement of metonymy alone allows no role at all for the signified. To demonstrate the work of metaphor and metonymy in the unconscious, Lacan maps them respectively onto Freud's *Verdichtung* (condensation: 'the superimposed structure of signifiers,' and *Verschiebung* (displacement: 'this transfer of signification that metonymy displays' (ibid.: 425)). Within the analytic setting, metaphor accounts for the symptom, 'in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying element' (ibid.: 431), and metonymy for the indestructibility of desire, solely constituted (for Lacan at least) by a movement along a signifying chain. To determine desire and the symptom in these terms empties the unconscious of any other possible content; if the signifier only stands in relation to other signifiers, this forms a closed system with no possible room for any other structures: 'The unconscious is neither the primordial nor the instinctual, and what it knows of the elemental is no more than the elements of the signifier' (ibid.: 434).

As I have already indicated, the substitutive operation at root of metaphor and metonymy is particularly problematic for Ettinger insofar as it sets up language as an operation whereby the Thing—the primally repressed residue of the drives or of primal phantasy that forms the unreachable core of the unconscious (see Verhaeghe 1999: 28; Laplanche & Pontalis 1967: 333-34)—is excised and replaced by the signifier, rendering any movement in the other direction, from real to symbolic, an impossibility. With such a restriction upon the structure of language and meaning, the possibilities for creativity and social change are correspondingly limited to what is possible within the confines of the signifying chains that pre-exist the subject. Even metaphor, Lacan's guarantor of the possibility of creation of meaning, is, as we have seen, simply the action of leaping from one signifying chain to another, a leap, moreover, that is based on similarity. With the addition of the matrixial process/figure of *metamorphosis* to metaphor and metonymy, the theoretical possibilities for understanding creativity begin to be vastly altered, as we will see later.

THE FORECLOSURE OF THE FEMININE

A determination of all subjective possibility by a founding act of substitution and the closed system of the signifying chain is the site of a particular critique in terms of the problematics of the feminine

and feminism. Although within the Lacanian schema every female subject must come into being through the implantation of the closed system of signifiers, there is a notorious lack of correspondence between female corporeal, imaginary and symbolic experience, and the structure of this substitution: ‘a woman must go through the same dialectic, whereas nothing seems to oblige her to do so—she must lose what she does not have’ (Lacan 2006: 723). Even more than this, within the closed system of signifiers there is no means of accounting for this lack of correspondence: ‘there is no signifier for the difference between the feminine and the universal/masculine’ (M&M: 192).¹⁵ Because of this double lack of correspondence and absence of signifiers, Ettinger locates the problematic of the feminine not as a question of hysteria (which is ultimately concerned with repression), but within the register of psychosis, which ‘is characterized by non-symbolization, by the lack of major signifiers or of a major metaphor (the metaphor of the Name of the Father)’:

For the psychotic, we might say that words do exist to describe his/her experiences, but that for one reason or another, s/he cannot get into contact with them as signifiers. The woman’s situation is worse, since whatever could describe her experience of sexual difference *cannot exist even in the Symbolic*. Only the language of the Phallus is at her (our) disposal. (ibid.: 193)

The Name-of-the-Father is the counterpart of castration within Lacanian theory. In ‘On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis,’ Lacan defines this as a metaphor, which ‘puts this Name in the place that was first symbolized by the operation of the mother’s absence’ (2006: 465), again a substitutive configuration. We are instructed that this is not the *real* father, but the father as dead, as ‘author of the Law’ (ibid.: 464). Lacan intimately links a failure to affirm the Name-of-the-Father with psychosis, through a reinterpretation of Freud’s *Verwerfung* (rejection or repudiation) as *foreclosure*. A foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father is equivalent to a failure in the originary substitution at the ground of subjectivity. This can lead to a collapse in signification and thus a departure of subjectivity: ‘a pure and simple hole may thus answer in the Other; due to the lack of the metaphoric effect, this hole will give rise to a corresponding hole in the place of phallic signification’ (ibid.: 465-66). The exclusion of the Name-of-the-Father is neither equivalent to its disappearance, nor to its repression: ‘what falls under the effect of *Verwerfung* has a completely

¹⁵ This absence is also clear in Lacan’s 1956 discussion of the difficulties of womanhood for the hysteric: ‘I should say that strictly speaking there is no symbolization of woman’s sex as such. In any case, the symbolization isn’t the same, it doesn’t have the same source or the same mode of access as the symbolization of man’s sex. And this is because the imaginary only furnishes an absence where elsewhere there is a highly prevalent symbol. [...] Where there is no symbolic material, there is an obstacle, a defect, in the way of bringing about the identification that is essential for the subject’s sexuality to be realized. This defect comes from the fact that on one point the symbolic lacks the material – for it does require material. The female sex is characterized by an absence, a void, a hole, which means that it happens to be less desirable than is the male sex for what he has that is provocative, and that an essential dissymmetry appears’ (1956: 176).

different destiny' (Lacan 1956: 12). That which is foreclosed, 'refused in the symbolic order, in the sense of *Verwerfung*, reappears in the real,' in the form of hallucination (ibid.: 13).

Ettinger's location of the feminine problematic as a matter of foreclosure and psychosis, rather than of repression and hysteria, is an important distinguishing characteristic of her work, in that it has the potential to differentiate her from others working in a similar area (Kristeva and Irigaray being the most likely candidates for such a comparison (see Pollock 2004: 35, 58)). It is also, more importantly, constitutive of the solution she proposes in the positing of the matrix. That is, the response called for by an absence (foreclosure) of a primary symbol (or master signifier) is very different to that called for by a pathological repression. This difference is attested to in the positing of the matrix as symbol in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' in that one of its functions is as a remedy to the foreclosure of the feminine.

SUPPLEMENTARY FEMININE JOUISSANCE

A factor common to almost all of Ettinger's theoretical texts is the discussion of a 'later' phase in Lacan's work (this develops in subsequent texts into a more marked distinction between 'early' and 'late' Lacan). In 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' this later phase is discussed specifically in terms of his proclamations on the feminine, and is characterised as follows: 'until the 1970s' Lacan's approach to 'woman mainly within the universe of the Phallus' characterises and processes the feminine as an absence or an impossibility; in the 1970s, however, 'Lacan hints at the possibility of recognizing feminine specificity, a feminine otherness beyond the phallic order of meaning' (M&M: 180). Ettinger of course rejects any claim as to the universality and neutrality of the phallus, and takes up this '1970s' Lacan through what is hinted in his notorious twentieth seminar, *Encore*.

In this seminar, Lacan concerns himself with the situation of the feminine in relation to the phallus. This consideration, however, is not only a question of symbolic castration or the absence of signifiers; here Lacan approaches the problem of the feminine in terms of *jouissance*. In a footnote to the English translation of *Encore* seminar, Bruce Fink gives the following account of the verb *jouir*: 'It should be kept in mind that *jouir de* means to enjoy, take advantage of, benefit from, get off on, and so on. *Jouir* also means "to come" in the sexual sense: "to reach orgasm" (Lacan 1973: 3 n. 9). In *Encore*, Lacan specifies sexual *jouissance* as phallic, that is, as finite; it is subject to the organisation of castration: 'That is clearly the essence of law – to divide up, distribute, or reattribute everything that counts as *jouissance*' (ibid.: 3). He also uses the qualification of sexual *jouissance* as phallic to foreclose the possibility of a *direct* sexual relationship: 'Named here is the point that covers the impossibility of the sexual relationship as such. *Jouissance*, qua sexual, is phallic – in other words, it is not related to the Other as such' (ibid.: 9). As well as phallic *jouissance*, however, Lacan hints at a *jouissance not* subject to the reordering and redistribution of the phallus, but one

which is subjectively impossible, as it is the infinite exception to the finitude of phallic rule (ibid., 6-10). This 'Other' jouissance, the 'jouissance of the body' is initially raised as a question of the gap in the finitude of phallic jouissance: 'For the other pole, can something be attained that would tell us how that which up until now has only been a fault (*faulle*) or gap in jouissance could be realized?' (ibid.: 8). Lacan locates the woman as the site of this gap in jouissance inasmuch as she exceeds man's enjoyment: 'Phallic jouissance is the obstacle owing to which man does not come (*n'arrive pas*), I would say, to enjoy woman's body, precisely because what he enjoys is the jouissance of the organ' (ibid.: 7). Having posited her as the site of this gap, he goes on to attribute to the woman another form of jouissance, 'beyond the phallus': 'being not-all, she has a supplementary jouissance compared to what the phallic function designates by way of jouissance' (ibid.: 73, translation modified). It is important to note the paradoxical status of this supplementary jouissance in *Encore* since, for Lacan, 'woman does not exist': 'There's no such thing as Woman, Woman with a capital *W* indicating the universal' (ibid.: 72).

In 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' Ettinger takes up this idea of supplementary jouissance and the idea of a 'beyond the phallus' dimension of the feminine. She separates out three facets of femininity in *Encore*. The first is the absence of an external definition of Woman: 'Lacan claims that nothing can be said about the woman in a general and collective way'. The second is the feminine as an effect of the signifier: 'This is a logical exigency of a theory in which the subject is phallic and in which the Symbolic addresses the Real in a one-way direction'. The third, and most significant, is the feminine as supplementary: 'the sexual difference of women is partly measured by/against the Phallus and is partly what the Phallus and the Symbolic cannot account for' (M&M: 193-4). This third facet is the one Ettinger appropriates, considering it to be 'much more open for further development' than the other two. It is the supplementary nature of this sexual difference that forms the foundation for the relationship posited between matrix and phallus, maintained even in her most recent work: 'I will not replace the Phallus by the Matrix; neither will I propose it as its opposite. Matrix is a slight shift from the Phallus, a supplementary symbolic perspective' (ibid.: 134).

This supplementary move is Ettinger's founding intervention on the feminine, which she retains throughout the development of the theory, apparently the consistent milieu within which other interventions and articulations unfold. It is crucially important to note, however, that although the theory of the matrix is first and foremost an intervention in the sphere of the feminine, and although this intervention is invariably presented in terms of its supplementarity, later papers develop a far greater degree of detail on the nature of this supplementation. That is, in this later work, Ettinger specifically differentiates the feminine of *Encore*, constituted as an exception to the domain of phallus, from the matrixial feminine, which escapes this constitution. A clear example of this differentiation is legible in the 2000 paper 'Transgressing with-in-to the Feminine':

in departing from elaboration of the *not-all* and *supplementary jouissance*, it is difficult to clarify feminine *heterogeneity* in a way that would be independent from the *all* to which it is related and from the experience to which it is *supplementary*. Only a departure which should not derive at all from the phallic structure would allow to account for hybrid feminine instances ‘*between center and absence*’ [...] and their twilight zone. I propose departing from a difference which is feminine from the outset, from a *rapport* of *borderlinking* in an originary psychical sphere that I have named matrixial. (TWF: 59)

PRIMARY SYMBIOSIS AND ORALITY

As I mentioned above, another of the ideas to which the theory of the matrix presents a substantial challenge is of the emergence of subjectivity from a stratum of undifferentiation, and this is also connected to the foundation of archaic subjective processes in the modulations of orality. Although only a moderate amount of attention is paid to this challenge in ‘Matrix and Metamorphosis,’ it will be worth touching upon as the site of an important differentiation from later work. While in later texts archaic symbiosis and orality become archetypes for the dominance of the phallus in the sphere of the pre-Oedipal, in ‘Matrix and Metamorphosis’ the differentiation of matrixiality from this sphere is made without it being qualified as phallic.

From the beginning of, and throughout the development of Ettinger’s theoretical work, she vehemently rejects the idea (which is already controversial within some strands of psychoanalytic thinking, see Klein 1946: 293, and Laplanche 1987: 72-77) that the subject emerges from a state of radical undifferentiation, that is, with no distinction between ‘self’ and object, other or world. In some psychoanalytic theories (particularly after the formulation of Freud’s second psychical topography. See Chapter 1, n. 65), this undifferentiation takes the form of primary narcissism, where the subject is supposed to emerge from a state of primary auto-cathexis.¹⁶ The state of primary narcissism is a phantastical one, since it must be constantly interrupted by internal need and external trauma: its mythical ideal archetype is intra-uterine existence, characterised as blissfully undifferentiated and need-free. Even in those psychoanalytical models which reject primary narcissism, however, we will see in Chapter 1 that intra-uterine life is more often than not characterised as a prior state of undifferentiation (see Laplanche 1970: 71), existing on the wrong side of an untraversable limit. The corollary of this is that the model for both external trauma and the painful advent of need is the event of birth, which is thus understood as a necessary, if not sufficient condition of possibility of subjectivisation.¹⁷ While she accepts that birth is an

¹⁶ See Chapter 1 for a brief account of Belà Grunberger’s derivation of primary narcissism from intra-uterine existence, as well as some of Laplanche’s objections primary narcissism in general.

¹⁷ The classic text in which birth is discussed as trauma is Otto Rank’s *The Trauma of Birth*, where Rank ultimately infers a primary role for birth trauma in both the constitution of the unconscious and creativity in general (1924: 103). See also the difference in Freud between the *Ego and the Id*, where he refers to the trauma of birth as ‘the first great anxiety-state,’ seeming to place it as an

archetypally traumatic event (VH: 46), Ettinger rejects undifferentiation as the only possible experience of intra-uterine life, initially using Laing and, as I will shortly show, Dolto, to support her opposition to the positing of birth as the absolute limit of subjectivity.

In 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' the relation of fusion/undifferentiation to archaic orality is discussed with reference to the work of Julia Kristeva on the *Chora*, whose primary meaning, Ettinger argues 'is also uterus/womb' :

Even though Kristeva chooses the term *Chora*, for her the first human contact with the other is post-natal: the oral perception is the first one and the first contact with the other/mother takes the mode of fusion. Recognition of separate others is negative/aggressive. These fusion/aggression mechanisms are typical of the symbolic and oral stage. (M&M: 198)

In locating the first contact with the Other *after* the event of birth, Kristeva begins the process of representation, and thus psychic activity as a whole, with orality. The logic of orality is that of lack and fulfilment, hunger and satiation, absence and presence, separation and fusion. Introduced in this way, it becomes the ground of representation and phantasy, installing a primary relation to the Other as something that can only be encountered as an object to be introjected or rejected. Although Ettinger unequivocally differentiates the matrixial stratum of subjectivisation from this logic, a differentiation that is sustained throughout her work, there is a particular aspect of this differentiation that is specific to 'Matrix and Metramorphosis.' In this text, Ettinger does not associate primary orality or alternations of fusion and repulsion with the phallic. Indeed, the closest association suggests a differentiation of *both* primary symbiosis and matrixiality from phallic determinations (represented by the Oedipus complex): 'For the moment, it will be sufficient to say that symbiosis and matrixial modes of subjectivity – or strata of subjectivisation – can alternate, co-exist, and modify one another. *They both modify and are modified by the Oedipal stratum*' (M&M: 199, emphasis added). The differentiation between symbiosis/orality and matrixiality in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' is made, it seems, in remarkably neutral terms, symbiosis and the alternations of fusion and rejection apparently being deployed merely as a descriptive counterpoint to the matrixial relation. In later texts, beginning with 'Becoming Threshold' this differentiation will appear in much more weighty terms.

THE 'RELIEF OF SIGNIFICATION'

In 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' a narrow structural specification of the phallic (that antedates a broadening into a determination first of the post-natal object-relation, and then apparently into a

archetype for the withdrawal of the ego in melancholia (1923a: 58), and his increasing scepticism regarding Rank's ideas in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926: 152).

quasi-ontological domain) also seems to determine Ettinger's conception of the positive effects of her theorisations. This is demonstrable via an element that appears only in the early papers 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' and the 'non-matrixial,' co-authored 'Verbal Hallucinations in Psychotic Patients' (hereafter 'Verbal Hallucinations'). This element is Françoise Dolto's distinction between body image and body schema in *L'Image Inconscient du Corps*. The former is aligned with the material 'physical-physiological-biological' body (VH: 44), and the latter with the body as experienced and thinkable. The body image, moreover, is the place where corporeality meets language, phantasy and representation. It has a constitutive role to play in the possibility of the meaning of words, which must be 'metabolized in a body image related to human relationships with meaningful others (first of all with the mother)' (ibid.: 45). Ettinger *et al.* also argue here that for the brute 'experience' of the body schema to reach the level of the body image, there must be a corresponding mediation of experience by language (ibid.).

The work done with these concepts, especially in 'Verbal Hallucinations,' is particularly interesting as it plays upon the paradoxical singularity of pregnancy as a corporeal organisation, and adds a corporeal dimension to Ettinger's early negotiation of the difficulties presented to any attempt to align prenatal existence and the symbolic. The significance of the body image/body schema axis for Ettinger *et al.* in 'Verbal Hallucinations' is that it allows them to raise the absence of a mediation of pre-natal inscriptions in the body schema of the foetus as potentially pathogenic. They emphasise the connection between a lack of symbolic mediation for experience and psychosis: 'In such a case, the subject is reduced to the level of a body schema with needs that don't connect with the body image which shapes the matching psychological level' (ibid.: 46). They put forward the normative idea of a 'healthy pregnancy' in which the body schema of the foetus undergoes 'no dramatic changes,' the only upheaval occurring with the event of birth where the foetus/infant must endure radical changes 'in the area of hearing, sight, smell, the activation of the lungs, and of the alimentary apparatus, the loss of the placenta and umbilical cord and the sense of weight, to name a few' (ibid.). This is contrasted with a potentially pathological pregnancy involving traumatic pre-natal changes to the body schema of the infant. Such changes could arise, they suggest, from 'the mother's attitude towards the fetus during pregnancy, extraordinary noise or bodily injury, diseases which harm the mother or the fetus, traumatic events such as general anesthesia of the mother or the fetus for the purpose of an operation' (ibid.: 47). Because these changes cannot, argue Ettinger *et al.*, be mediated by language, they potentially reside encapsulated within the body schema,¹⁸ later

¹⁸ Encapsulation here is my own choice of term, but the residence of unprocessed trauma in the body schema has a strong resonance with Ettinger's later work—after Abraham and Torok—on the 'crypting' of traces of trauma within unreachable layers of the psyche. In 'Transcriptum,' as we will see, she develops this within the theory of the matrix into the possibility of trans-generational processing of otherwise potentially pathogenic traumatic 'memory.'

appearing in the form of ‘verbal hallucinations,’ a phrase borrowed from Lacan’s third seminar (see Lacan 1956). These disconnected repetitions within psychotic speech, which are understood to be undigestible fragments of archaic trauma, irrupt unrecognised into the speech of the psychotic. Such fragments are not equivalent to remembering, and do not offer either emotional release or indeed anything like the same therapeutic possibilities as recollection in free association (VH: 41):

The verbal hallucinations are scars that appear on the plane of the Real because no verbal clarification was ever made, or there was never the possibility of verbal clarification which would connect the experience on the body schema level with the body image and with the language in general. (ibid.: 47)

Ettinger *et al.* propose to bring the traumatic, pathogenic trace trapped in the body schema *into* language by making clinical use of external accounts of significant events (by family members, carers and so on) (ibid.: 48). This configuration presents an early characteristic of the positive role of the matrix in Ettinger’s theory, as offering what Pollock has termed the ‘relief of signification’ (1996a: 77-78)¹⁹ to the pathological repetition of traumatic experience. To some extent the ethos of this is matched in ‘Matrix and Metamorphosis,’ in that the positing of the matrix as a symbol could be seen as an attempt to perform, on a trans-individual, cultural level, the healing of the psychotic positioning of the feminine. By unlocking otherwise pathologically encapsulated traces of intra-uterine existence and bringing them from the level of the body schema into language and signification, the matrix as a symbol potentially undoes the cultural foreclosure of the feminine: ‘the Matrix gives meaning to a real which might otherwise pass by unthinkable’ (M&M: 202).

What is not included in ‘Verbal Hallucinations,’ even by analogy, is the positing of metamorphosis, which presents a questioning of and a challenge to the very structures of meaning and signification. Even in ‘Matrix and Metamorphosis,’ however, the full implications of metamorphosis are not yet grasped, and there is something of a gap between the description of metamorphosis as a process and the symbolic intervention which posits the matrix. That is, although the hegemony of substitution—embodied in castration, metaphor and metonymy—is potentially relativised and supplemented by metamorphosis, the consequences of this relativisation for the structures of meaning and subjectivisation are not yet developed. This development takes place in subsequent papers through attention to some very archaic meaning-processes such as the pictogram, the archaic object, and primal phantasy, an attention which also constitutes an enlarged diagnosis of the nature of the phallic. It is in relation to this that the effects of the positing of metamorphosis make themselves felt, as its introduction to and modification of the field of the archaic object and the *objet*

¹⁹ See also Ettinger’s use of Pollock’s phrase in ‘Re-in/de-fuse’ (1999): ‘I called such a filter, that extracts the foreclosed beyond-the-phallus and gives it the “relief” of signification: the *matrix*, and its tool: *metamorphosis*.’

a greatly enriches the conceptual resources of the theory of the matrix. This is especially in terms of a developed theorisation of its real aspects, which will appear in terms of an increasing dominance of notions of *encounter*, ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’ having paid more attention to symbolic and imaginary elements. This enrichment prioritises phantasy as a means of allowing the traumatic real minimally to trace itself in the structure of subjectivity, beginning concretely to develop the possibility of an autopoietic emergence of meaning from corporeality upwards. This is a particularly important shift to note in that it recasts the problematic of the feminine, to which the theory of the matrix is a response, away from what might otherwise be a simple dualism of foreclosure and signification.

Other elements not yet elaborated in ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’ that become crucial to later articulations are (to name a few) the uncanny, the *sinthome*, the subsymbolic, co-poiesis, trans-subjectivity, the Borromean knot, extimacy, the notion of phantasy as instrumental in the tracing of the real within the structure of the subject, and painting as the site of the screen of phantasy, situated between subject and *objet a*. Many of these terms begin to appear in a series of papers written and presented between 1992 and 1993, and the tracing of a transitional phase of this development will be my next objective.

PART II

Transition and consolidation 1993-1995

The Becoming Threshold of Matrixial Borderlines ([1992] 1994)
 Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus (1993)
 Metramorphic Borderlinks and Matrixial Borderspace ([1993] 1996)
 Woman as *Objet a* Between Phantasy and Art ([1993] 1995)
 The Matrixial Gaze ([1993] 1995)

TRANSITION: ‘THE BECOMING THRESHOLD OF MATRIXIAL BORDERLINES’

‘Becoming Threshold’ is the text which most clearly occupies the position of an early transition that takes place within the development of the theory of the matrix. The transition—from the position articulated in ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’ to that in *The Matrixial Gaze*—takes place within two areas. The first area is the introduction of new and highly significant theoretical elements that were not included in ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis,’ most notably the uptake of Lacan’s *objet a*. The introduction and development of this particular element over a series of texts is such that to approach it adequately will require a more focussed, multi-textual account. I will, therefore, return

to it shortly. The second area of transition is the expansion and refinement of other elements not in ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis,’ but that were already present in *Matrix Halal(a) – Lapsus*, and had come up in separate conversations with Emmanuel Levinas (1993) and Edmond Jabès (1993). This area of transition, which I will approach now, makes explicit both the connection between the matrix and Hebrew mythology and etymology, as well as the particularity of its impact upon the constitutive relation (or non-relation) of subject and Other. This latter will prove a key element as it seems that, particularly with more recent developments in Ettinger’s work, many of its threads appear to be converging upon an ethics of matrixiality as a site of its most pressing importance.

MATRIXIAL ETHICS

The examination of Hebrew etymology and mythology through the lens of the matrix, and the subsequent drawing-out of a matrixial ethics, are threads that could be seen to have a long-term impact greater even than those elements which serve to facilitate the development matrixiality as a conceptual paradigm. ‘Becoming Threshold,’ in its articulation of an ethics which aligns the anticipation of a future subject, a relation to the Other that is a relation to the ‘world without me,’ and the feminine, forms the first consolidation of a current in Ettinger’s thinking that had begun to appear in *Matrix Halal(a) – Lapsus*, albeit in a fragmentary form. Although the ethical significance of the matrix is by no means absent from ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’ (‘We can recognize an unknown *not-I* in a matrixial way while he/she/it remains different, *neither assimilated nor rejected*’ (M&M: 200)), it is present without anything like the conviction of the literary and etymological analysis of ‘Becoming Threshold.’

An ethics of translation and interpretation is elaborated in ‘Becoming Threshold’ in a series of moves akin to some that have already appeared concerning the translation of Hebrew in *Matrix Halal(a) – Lapsus* (MHL: 12, 16, 23, 27, 34 and *passim*),²⁰ and will play out repeatedly in later work, from ‘Woman-Other-Thing,’ to ‘The Red Cow Effect,’ right up to (in a more general sense) the very recent ‘*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference.’ In ‘Becoming Threshold,’ Ettinger critiques the translation from Hebrew to English of God’s autological EHIE ASHER EHIE in Exodus, as ‘*I am that I am*, or *I am that is*’. She characterises this translation in the following terms:

²⁰ Of particular note in this respect are the following: ‘Tree in Hebrew or in the desert; tree in French or in the forest. It will never mean the same thing to me. It will never leave the same trace in the language, nor in painting, nor in my life. (Hebrew, to sustain me against nature.) A whole world of meaning moults in the passage from one to the other’ (MHL: 34); and ‘*Other (acher)*, *otherwise (acheret)*, *alterity (acherout)*, and *last (acharon)*, share the same root, as does *because (meàchar she)*. Not only finality, but also causality is tied to the other. Thus *beyond (achar)* and *after (later) (aharet)* — alterity of space and time’ (ibid.: 12).

I am that I am signifies an immanent being, a superposition of present and presence, an a priori subject, a tautological identity, a congruence of signifier and signified, of an identifying *I* and an identified *I*, a conjunction of centre, origin and identity, in present time and space. (BTMB: 39)

EHIE however, is not limited to *being*, she argues, also translating as '*I will become*.' From this duality of meaning, Ettinger draws out another translation of EHIE ASHER EHIE as '*I will be/ become that I will be/ become*': 'a future departure leading to another future departure with no resting point or destination' (ibid.). She sees this repetition of *becoming* as broadening God's name beyond determination by images of oneness or presence, projecting into a time of the future that is never present. This move is not merely a criticism of inaccurate translation, but an exploration of the ethical implications of the reduction of *being/ becoming* to simply *being*. Ettinger duly acknowledges the difficulties inherent in translating EHIE ASHER EHIE into European languages where being and becoming are counterposed, but argues also that 'the total abolition of becoming and future from this name is a criminal displacement' (ibid.: 40), going on to link this displacement to a foreclosure and exclusion of the feminine which re-emerges in the form of matrix and metramorphosis.

It is highly significant for Ettinger that the single appearance of EHIE ASHER EHIE in the bible is in Exodus, at the point of a meeting between God and Moses in a very particular place, 'which is a kind of *no place*':

Moses, who is already in the desert, which corresponds to a representation of a no-place fit for an emptying of identity and a rupture of historic or organic continuity, opens a distance from the desert, to meet God 'behind the desert' (or as the English text says, 'at the backside of the desert' [...]). (ibid.)

In conjunction with a manifesto for an ethics of translation that allows the feminine within language a place to speak, Ettinger draws the content of this elsewhere excluded feminine into a further ethical dimension that forms the beginning of a series of later developments, including concepts of wit(h)nessing, co-poiesis and trans-subjectivity. She triangulates the encounter of God and Moses 'behind the desert' with aspects of the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Piera Aulagnier, both of whom explore connections between the feminine and the future as alterity. Levinas (in conversation with Ettinger) takes the position that 'in the feminine there is the possibility of conceiving of *a world without me*; a world which has meaning without me' (Ettinger & Levinas 1993: 28). Aulagnier's work, on the other hand, is deployed insofar as she describes a notion of anticipation of what is *to come*, rather than of what will cease to be. This is archetypally an anticipation by the mother of the subjectivity of the infant, which offers a structure into which the infantile psyche can expand. Ettinger transposes this into a matrixial framework:

The maternal *I* is first investing in an *idealized I* of the child which gradually is transformed into a *future I* to which the *I* of the child can become. A *metramorphosis* takes place in which, while the investment of the maternal *I* is transformed from the *idealized I* to the *future I*, the *I* of the subject *becomes*, enters temporality, and gradually takes upon itself the anticipating function. (ibid.: 51)²¹

This transposition also effects, as might be expected, a shift from Aulagnier's and Levinas's positions. The function of maternal anticipation moves beyond the threshold of birth, the corollary of this shift being that 'a reference to co-existence is maintained' (ibid.: 52). In combining their accounts of anticipatory functions, within the prenatal sphere, Ettinger effectively synthesises the differences between Aulagnier's and Levinas's positions: 'The *matrix* deals with anticipations of that which is not yet, as well as that which is no more' (ibid.).

EHIE ASHER EHIE is presented to Moses in a place 'behind the desert,' and it is through a duality in the figure of Moses in relation to questions of place and vagrancy that Ettinger draws the threads of 'Becoming Threshold' towards the ethical dimension of the matrix. She reinterprets the meeting of God and Moses 'behind the desert' as being analogous to 'the position of a child turning towards its mother to discover who s/he is, and of a mother responding to his/her need by reassurance' (ibid.: 53). God, in announcing himself through EHIE ASHER EHIE puts in place an 'alliance' that goes beyond the paternalistic relation of lawgiver and subject. Ettinger sees Moses' future as bound within this naming, through its signification of 'space without centre, future without objective':

Moses will be *the wanderer* who will not attain the promised land, he will be the anticipating agent of *metramorphosis*. He will bring the people to the country but he will not enter [...]. God says to Moses: 'Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither into the land which I gave the children of Israel' [...]. (ibid.)

Contained within the name of the God of Exodus, then, Ettinger sees Moses' fate, but it is a fate that bears both the marks of the Law and of the matrixial feminine: Moses is recast as a matrixial figure 'who consciously leads the people towards a future in which he will not be.' Although the roles of future and anticipation are very briefly hinted at in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' ('The Matrix gives meaning to a Real which might otherwise pass by unthinkable, unnoticed, and unrecognized, like glimpses of the future without presence or of the anticipated *P* (202)²²), its more detailed elaboration in 'Becoming Threshold' is an important addition to this basic schema since, as well as giving a more concrete sense to the ethics of the matrixial, it strengthens the role of phantasy in the matrixial encounter. This will become even more central in papers after *The*

²¹ A similar organisation is described in 'Woman as *Objet a*' and 'The Feminine/Prenatal Weaving in Matrixial Subjectivity-as-Encounter' in relation to Wilfred Bion's *alpha*-function and its role in the formation of the subject (see WOA: 57-58; F/P: 381).

²² This passage is repeated in 'Becoming Threshold' (BTMB: 45).

Matrixial Gaze, especially those which embrace the idea of phantasy as a screen between subject and *objet a* (WIV, MG&S), as well as those which begin to expand the idea of a doubled relationship between women and the matrix (F/P, WTT, PBS).

THE PHALLIC (2): DETERMINATION OF THE OBJECT

The uptake of the *objet a* in ‘Becoming Threshold,’ which I will discuss shortly, has profound implications for Ettinger’s characterisation of the domain of the phallic. Where, concerning ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis,’ I emphasised that the epithet *phallic* was only applied in a narrow symbolic or formal sense, and was not explicitly or directly linked to an archaic symbiotic or oral phase of development, in ‘Becoming Threshold,’ the two elements are now unequivocally joined: ‘patterns known as autism or symbiosis [...] in my view are already phallic patterns’ (BTMB: 42). This shift in the explicit domain of the phallus seems to arise with a shift into the consideration of the *object* in psychoanalysis, which extends the reach of the phallus beyond signification and a solely symbolic hegemony of castration. More specifically, the retroactive effects of castration are not discussed in ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis,’ and the extension of the phallic in ‘Becoming Threshold’ concerns its determination of those objects which ‘precede’ it:

The *phallus* signifies *all and any demanded object*, the whole of the field between demand and desire. The *phallus* conditions desire [...]. Lacan claims that even the maternal object – the breasts – are a *phallus* and indeed we have to agree that inside the existing psychoanalytical paradigm, any object is phallic. (ibid.)

This trajectory in the greater elaboration of the phallic will be taken even further, onto a quasi-ontological plane, in ‘Metramorphic Borderlinks and Matrixial Borderspace’ (hereafter ‘Metramorphic Borderlinks’).

Through its emergence in connection with the object, the extension of the phallic in ‘Becoming Threshold’ coincides with its other area of transition—the development of core theoretical elements not present in ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’ or in the earlier notes on painting—which is most apparent in the articulation and subsequent uptake of the *objet a*.²³ This term is only mentioned twice in ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis,’ as equated with ‘the woman’ as a ‘lack in the realm of the Real’ (M&M: 187), and a permanently lacking ‘impossible object’ (ibid.: 188). In ‘Becoming Threshold’ Ettinger goes into greater detail, adding elements to the exploration of the *objet a* that will become crucial in later texts. These are, however, only the seeds of a movement in

²³ In ‘Becoming Threshold’ Ettinger also introduces a term implied, but not explicitly formulated in ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis,’ which will become an indispensable term thereafter. This term is the *partial-subject* (BTMB: 41), which structures into matrixiality the impossibility of its functioning for a discrete, externally-bounded subject. Combined with the notion of matrixiality as necessarily *several*, this partiality is always *shared* (MBMB: 145).

the theory of the matrix that does not fully emerge until 'Metramorphic Borderlinks' and 'Woman as *Objet a* between phantasy and art' (hereafter 'Woman as *Objet a*'). Because of this, the following account of the *objet a* in 'Becoming Threshold' will reflect this unfolding, and will open an overview of the role and use of the object and *objet a*, which forms a key component of the transition/consolidation phase in the becoming of the theory of the matrix.

TRANSITION AND CONSOLIDATION: UPTAKE OF THE OBJECT / *OBJET A*

The *objet a* in the most basic sense may be described as that which is cut from both subject and symbolic in the process of symbolic castration. As such, it has neither signifier nor image, but leaves something like a *scar* in the structure of the subject, a testament to its perpetual lack. Its (non-)being is connected, as I will indicate later, with the separation from the mother's body. Within Lacanian theory from the early to mid-sixties onwards, it is the cause of desire but also, through its constitutive lack, the guarantee of the impossibility of satisfaction. The *objet a* is first introduced into 'Becoming Threshold' in identical terms to those with which it is mentioned in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' as an impossibility, and as equated with Woman (BTMB: 57). The connection between woman and *objet a* is sustained, and indeed developed in this subsequent paper, through associations with various facets of archaic maternity. As well as this development, Ettinger also adds some explication of the *objet a* as a concept, emphasising its creation (its permanent loss) as the inevitable effect of the coming-into-being of the subject. From this necessity she draws out the absence of the *objet a* from all three registers of imaginary, symbolic, and real. Its lacking status in the real is of particular interest insofar as the real itself is lacking; as the symbolic establishes the real 'precisely as its own lack' (BTMB: 57), the lack of the *objet* in the real is doubled: it is a 'lack of a lack'. Ettinger's position on this 'lack of a lack' remains quite critical in 'Becoming Threshold': she describes it as 'a vicious circle created by defining *phallus* as equal to the *symbolic*' (BTMB: 57), the lacking *objet a* thus being exclusively 'a phallic lack'.

What 'Becoming Threshold' adds to this symbolically determined *objet a*, that is not discussed in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' is the possibility of another matrixial *perspective*. This possibility is a point at which to be quite cautious, however, as an alternate perspective is not yet the positing of a *matrixial objet a* that appears shortly after. What seems to be on offer at this point is the same *objet a* (that is, produced by the same mechanisms), only with different subjective effects in the sphere of the matrix:

The threatening, psychotic *objet a*, the frightening encounter with feminine difference and with the archaic, as they appear from a phallic perspective, may occupy a different area in a matrixial perspective. From the point of view of the *matrix* also, encounters between *objet a* and the subject can be sublimated in the Other. (BTMB: 58)

Apart from this additional perspectival opening, Ettinger's view of the *objet a* and what it offers to her project does not seem greatly shifted from the radical impossibility mentioned in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis.' In spite of this, however, there are related elements introduced to the discussion and not initially developed that are taken much further in subsequent papers. For example, in relation to the lacking status of the *objet a* in terms of imaginary specularity, Ettinger introduces the *uncanny* here for the first time as an effect of the approach of the *objet a* 'on the imaginary level'. This seeds a subsequent uptake of the *objet a* in the field of the gaze, which I will discuss presently: 'On the visual field, the *objet a* is something that lacks behind the image: a hole, an absence, a stain' (BTMB: 57).²⁴

Another significant Lacanian term used in passing in 'Becoming Threshold' and relating to the *objet a* is *extimacy*: 'The *objet a* as extimate is a notion joining the intimate to radical exteriority' (BTMB: 58). Ettinger introduces it as a means by which to understand the tragic intertwining of subject and *objet a*, an intertwining characterised both by rejection and inclusion. The subject is built around its own fundamental lack, but this lack is not incorporated, being rather preserved as the subject's most intimate destructive possibility, 'waiting inside like an encapsulated psychotic time bomb' (ibid.). Extimacy allows Ettinger retroactively to join up the subjective relation to the *objet a* with an articulation already given in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis':

A matrixial borderline is an interior limit that can also be conceived of as an exterior limit and an exterior one that can also be conceived of as an interior limit. One can picture the Matrix as a meeting place between the most intimate and the unknown, modelled on the prenatal situation. (M&M: 202)

This resonance leads, in 'Metramorphic Borderlinks,' to a conception of the matrix as 'an *extimate* zone, where the internal is becoming external, and the external, internal by virtue of the transgressive potency of the margins' (MBMB: 127). Extimacy is also raised again, in 'Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus,' and 'Woman as *Objet a*' as a key term in relation to sublimation and the *vacuole* (see p. 50, below). Later still, Ettinger extends extimacy even further, into the sphere of the ethical in 'The Red Cow Effect,' where she takes up and deploys Jacques-Alain Miller's statement that 'the register of extimacy is the register of sacrifice' (RC: 82, 107). Connecting to extimacy in that it involves the foundational inseparability of the Lacanian subject and *objet a*, is the *coupure*. 'The condition for the subject is the *coupure* (a radical cut) from the *objet a*' (BTMB: 57). This is another

²⁴ This hint is made without reference either to Freud's 'The "Uncanny",' or to a text that will later become its crucial counterpart: Lacan's *The Four Fundamental Concepts*. See the following for some early instances of this conjunction, after 'Becoming Threshold': MBMB: 143-45; MSBP: 60-61; WOA: 69; MG: 6-8.

term introduced in 'Becoming Threshold' without any real comment, but which becomes the locus for a differentiation of the *objet a* in earlier and later phases of Lacan's thinking.²⁵

THE STAGES OF THE OBJET A

There is a reference in 'Becoming Threshold' to 'Metramorphic Borderlinks,' which for me indicates the site of Ettinger's uptake of the *objet a* proper. This reference is specifically to an elaboration, in the latter text, of the emphatic statement that 'inside the existing psychoanalytical paradigm, any object is phallic' (BTMB: 42). The elaboration to which it refers forms part of a trio of texts which reconfigure the role and significance of the *objet a* within the theory of the matrix.

'Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus' is Ettinger's longest theoretical piece to date (although it has not, as yet, been published in full in anything other than the most limited of editions), and contains a large number of significant passages from both 'Metramorphic Borderlinks' and 'Woman as *Objet a*'. 'Metramorphic Borderlinks' in particular shares with 'Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus' a sustained examination of the relationship between the object, *objet a*, presence and absence, as well as the first explicit designation of early and late phases in Lacan's work.²⁶ (The sharing of these passages is also significant evidence for considering 'Metramorphic Borderlinks' to be a prior text to *The Matrixial Gaze*: of the thirty pages of the former, there are only four that reproduce nothing from 'Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus'²⁷). 'Woman as *Objet a*,' which also has a number of passages in common with the other two texts, further broadens the attention to phantasy as the site of an impossible meeting between subject and *objet a*.

The first dimension of a nexus of ideas concerning the *objet a* is the notion of its modification in Lacan's late thinking, apparently from the 1968-69 seminar onwards. In general, the idea of there being particular *phases* in Lacan's thinking is uncontroversial; most of his central terms undergo several permutations in the course of his seminar, the *objet a* being no exception (see Fink 1995: 83-97).²⁸ Its appearance in an 'early' period in Lacan's work is not easy to explicate independently of

²⁵ This differentiation will evolve even further in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen,' where Ettinger identifies *three* phases in Lacan's thinking, early, middle and late (MG&S: 17).

²⁶ Although Ettinger's discussion of the *objet a* in 'Becoming Threshold' is accompanied by the differentiation of a later phase in Lacan's work regarding the feminine, in this text she does not directly relate the *objet a* to any such differentiation.

²⁷ 'Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus' also contains passages from other papers published between 1993 and 2000. See MSBP: 1-4 and TWF: 75-76; MSBP: 50-51 and MG: 23; MSBP: 1, 4, 33, 41-42, 50 and WOT: 11-13.

²⁸ Fink's account of the *objet a* in *The Lacanian Subject* is a useful one because it admits of some of the same vicissitudes in Lacan's theory as those put forward by Ettinger. I do have some reservations, however, about his characterisation of the Thing as merely a prototype of the *objet a* (Fink 1995: 95-96).

Ettinger, however, since the first of the seminars which chart its early incarnations—*Les formations de l'inconscient* (1957-58)—has not yet been translated into English, and only appeared in French in 1998, and the second—*Le désir et son interprétation* (1958-59)—has not even been published in French. As a consequence of this, much of the (English-language) commentary on the *objet a* uses *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (hereafter *The Four Fundamental Concepts*) as its primary text, which renders the distinction within Lacan's understanding of the *objet a* at different stages of his work, upon which Ettinger plays, all but absent.²⁹

From the 1957-58 seminar *Les formations de l'inconscient*, it seems that the composite 'objet a' is not fully formulated in Lacan's work in the 1950s.³⁰ The *a* is there (the 'little other' as imaginary counterpart of the ego), which has strong resonances with aspects of the *objet a* in that it is concerned with desire and involves a residue (the residue of the movement from demand to desire, the 'beyond of desire (*l'au-delà du désir*)' (Lacan 1958: 393)), but in *Les formations*, Lacan is still referring to the lacking object as being identical to the phallus (ibid.: 378-9). The reason I make this caveat is not to correct Ettinger's characterisation of the *objet a* in the different stages of Lacan's theory, but to note the potential for confusion regarding a reference to the *a* as an object in earlier periods of Lacan's work. This also makes clear the difficulty in avoiding the 'final state' tendency described by Macey, even in a methodology committed to tracking changes over time. As Macey points out, the pull of this tendency is compounded by a similar retroaction in Miller's 'conceptual index' to the *Écrits*, another major resource for tracking the *objet a* in Lacan's work up to and including 1966, which refers to the 'concept' of the *objet a* in texts written prior to its explicit formulation.

What Ettinger draws out most strongly in terms of a chronological differentiation within the idea of the *objet a* is that in Lacan's later work it becomes the route through which the subject is constituted *not only* by the signifier. In this shift, the subject is also constituted by the 'extimate' trace of the *objet a* as an invisible but autonomous remainder of the real:

In Lacan's early theory, the *objet a* is created in the division into signifier and signified as what is dropped and slipped out of this division; it is, therefore, a psychic being without imaginary or symbolic representation in language. In his later 'theory of phantasy', Lacan overturns some of his earlier postulates. In the inverted position, unconscious subjectivity is not constituted completely by the Other in terms of language. A group of elements closely related to the network of the *real* – the Thing, *jouissance*, and the *objet a* – become contributors to unconscious subjectivity revealed by phantasy, and thus, relativise the importance of the signifying chain of Lacan's early theory. (MBMB: 138; MSBP: 53-54)

²⁹ See Thurston 1997: v-vii, for a brief account of the problematic position of the *Four Fundamental Concepts* as the first of Lacan's seminars to be translated into English.

³⁰ This is also supported to an extent by Fink (ibid.: 86).

The discussion of this singular autonomy from the signifier *within* Lacan's thinking has a profound impact upon the subsequent direction of the theory of the matrix. As is clear from the above quotation, the role of phantasy in this movement is absolutely crucial, as it will take centre stage in the formulation both of a generalised matrixial object/*objet a* and the specific matrixial gaze as *objet a*. This is, however, to move a few steps ahead. The closer and differentiated consideration of the *objet a* in 'Metramorphic Borderlinks' and 'Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus' also brings with it a reconfiguration and expansion of the phallic, an attention to Freud's "The "Uncanny"" as part of a critique of the reduction of all forms of infantile phantasy to castration, as well as the uptake of non-Lacanian modes of thinking as support for a shift in the understanding of meaning-generation, away from the unilateral imposition of the symbolic upon the real.

THE PHALLIC (3): PRESENCE / ABSENCE

Firstly, then, the further expansion of the phallic. This seems to be facilitated, in both 'Metramorphic Borderlinks' and 'Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus' by the introduction of Freud's *fort/da* game and Lacan's alignment of it with the formation of the *objet a*. This alignment allows Ettinger to extend the domain of the phallic into a much broader field, even an ontological one, in the sense that all paradigms which involve modulations of presence and absence become, by association, phallic.

Lacan's association of the *objet a* and the *fort/da* game takes place in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*. By the time of this seminar, the *a* is very firmly the *objet a*, and is presented in the formulation most widely explicated by (mostly English-language) commentators.³¹ It is still articulated in relation to the imaginary phallus and castration, there being 'a correspondence between the various forms of

³¹ In addition to Fink's account (1995: 83-97), the following secondary texts also offer interesting perspectives. In Jacques-Alain Miller's 'Extimité,' we can see an exploration of the *objet a* as extimate, as well as something of its relationship to jouissance and a Marxist reading of the *plus-de-jour* (1986: 74-48). Juan-David Nasio, in *Five Lessons on the Psychoanalytic Theory of Jacques Lacan*, gives a very detailed overview of the *objet a* (Third Lesson), and is concerned throughout with Lacan's ideal of the analyst as the *objet a* in the transference relationship (1992: 72-95, 105). Again within a more clinical framework, Dany Nobus reiterates Lacan's situation of the *objet a* as the ideal of the position of the analyst (2000: 79, 89). Slightly more introductory is Elizabeth Grosz's solid outline of the formation of the *objet a* in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, which covers its relationship to the Freudian structure of the drive, as well as something of the *objet a* of the gaze (1990: 75-80). Malcolm Bowie, on the other hand, offers a slightly misleading interpretation of the gaze, particularly in its relation to painting (Bowie 1991: 173-74), but then his over-arching concern in relation to the *objet a* seems to be the rhetorical status of Lacan's (later) theoretical formations, as well as the question of whether 'a theory cast in these terms' can 'any longer have applications' (ibid.: 165-78).

the *objet a* and the central symbolic function of the *minus-phi* [$(- \varphi)$]’ (Lacan 1964: 18),³² but its role as the cause of desire is more fully articulated, as is its position in relation to the real. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts* Lacan specifically locates the *objet a* in relation to the Freudian structure of the partial drive (as laid out in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* and schematised in ‘Instincts and Their Vicissitudes’) emphasising its reduction of the significance of the object: ‘As far as the object in the drive is concerned, let it be clear that it is, strictly speaking, of no importance. It is a matter of total indifference’ (ibid.: 168).³³ This positioning can clearly be seen in the diagram Lacan uses in Chapter 14 (ibid.: 178), which places the *a* as that which the impulse (*Drang*) encircles, but with which it has no contact:

what makes us distinguish [the satisfaction of the drive] from the mere auto-eroticism of the erogenous zone is the object that we confuse all too often with that upon which the drive closes—this object, which is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, and whose agency we know only in the form of the lost object, the *petit a*. The *objet petit a* is not the origin of the oral drive. It is not introduced as the original food, it is introduced from the fact that no food will ever satisfy the oral drive, except by circumventing the eternally lacking object. (ibid.: 179-80)

This emphasis on the *objet a* as the obstacle to satisfaction is crucial for Lacan, since in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, the *objet a* is a *something*, a nothing—without qualities—that stands in the gap between subject and real. He takes up Freud’s *fort/da* from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920: 14-17)—the throwing-away and retrieval of an object, accompanied by verbal utterances which mark its presence and absence—as an illustrative model for the formation of the *objet a*. In this context, that latter is characterised as ‘something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ’ (Lacan 1964: 103). In the discussion of the *fort/da*, Lacan aligns the reel, the object which is subjected to the repetition of presence and absence, with the *objet a* as the representative (*Repräsentanz*) of the lacking presentation (*Vorstellung*, the Mother) (ibid.: 63). Within this reading of Freud, the *fort/da* game is only secondarily one of mastering or symbolising the mother’s absence; rather, Lacan understands it as primarily ‘the repetition of the mother’s departure as cause of a *Spaltung* in the subject’ (ibid.). The reel here is not the mother, but a part of the subject that is detached in order to be thrown across the gulf, or ‘ditch,’ created around the edges of the subject by the mother’s departure. Thus, the *objet a* is that which is cut from the infant in order for it to be able to negotiate its irreversible separation from the world of objects. The *fort/da* game throws the subject across the threshold of presence and absence, its aim being ‘simply that of being the *fort* of a *da*, and the *da* of a *fort*’ (ibid.).

³² $(- \varphi)$ being the function of castration, or the lack of the imaginary phallus. For a list of the basic symbols of Lacan’s algebra, see Evans 1996: 8.

³³ I will return to the structure of the partial drive and its value within psychoanalytic thinking in Chapter 1.

I propose that the interest the subject takes in his own split is bound up with that which determines it—namely, a privileged object, which has emerged from some primal separation, from some self-mutilation induced by the very approach of the real, whose name, in our algebra, is the *objet a*. (ibid.: 83)

The *fort/da* appears in ‘Metramorphic Borderlinks’ and ‘Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus’ at the heart of a new articulation of the phallic, which maps the dichotomous opposition presence/absence onto pleasure/displeasure. This addition to the phallic also encompasses both prior formulations already discussed, within an argument for ‘a conception of the whole of the Unconscious and the *symbolic* as phallic’ (MBMB: 131-32; MSBP: 4-5). The determination—within the phallic field—of all possibility for the object by the opposition of presence and absence becomes in turn the determination of the phallic within the theory of the matrix (See Pollock 2004: 39). The presence/absence dichotomy unifies and joins the two previous formulations. Regarding a relational or ethical articulation—the phallic as determining all possibilities of encountering the other—the archaic ‘basic psychic inscriptions’ of fusion and repulsion are accounted for insofar as they ‘are always correlated *in the same way* to pleasure/displeasure and to the alternation between the presence/absence or appearance/disappearance (*fort/da*) of an object’. Regarding the first, structural articulation of the phallic in ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis,’ the presence/absence dichotomy also joins to the determination of all meaning by castration ‘as the only passageway between the *real* and the *symbolic*,’ insofar as symbolic castration relates to the presence or absence of the master signifier, the phallus: ‘all instances of lacking can be traced to *one* phallic lack’ (MBMB: 132).

THE EMERGENCE OF MEANING: FROM REAL TO SYMBOLIC

In relation to the uptake of the *objet a*, Ettinger’s emphasis on its appearance in the late Lacan as both autonomous of the signifier and as a trace of archaic corporeality in the real leads her to argue for a reconceived emergence of meaning and subjective inscription: ‘We can say that singular events in the *real* attract meanings and thus the body as a psychic event participates indirectly in the construction of subjectivity even though *a one-to-one concordance between body and language is impossible*’ (MBMB: 141; MSBP 57). As a further digression from the intricacies of the *objet a*, it will be useful to note some of the non-Lacanian thinking Ettinger enlists in ‘Metramorphic Borderlinks’ in support of this upward movement. This is highly relevant for understanding the conditions of her uptake of the *objet a*, insofar as an attention to processes of meaning-generation is one of the ways she seeks to undermine the newly-expanded domain of the phallus: ‘It seems to me that one obstacle to relativizing basic phallic assumptions is the prevailing idea that a distinct representation should correspond to each psychic event, and that the most archaic traces are already representations’ (MBMB: 134). It could thus be said that the central preoccupation of ‘Metramorphic Borderlinks’ is meaning, and also that it is a major site through which Ettinger adds concrete support to the position of metramorphosis as supplementary to metaphor and metonymy.

In order to facilitate a shift toward a different conception of meaning and memory, she takes up both the non-hierarchical emergence of meaning elaborated by Varela, and the scrutiny of the I/meaning relation in Aulagnier's *The Violence of Interpretation*. Thus, in 'Metramorphic Borderlinks' we have Ettinger's most convincing and thorough early account of the notions of connectivity and the sub-symbolic, as well as her appropriation and revision of the *pictogram* and *originary process*.

Varela: Connectionism

Briefly to sum up the significance of connectionism for Ettinger, this relates to the paradigm shift it represents in the understanding of processes of learning within cognitive science. In this 'alternative orientation,' which motivates a shifted approach to the construction of experimental cognitive systems, higher-level 'symbolic descriptions' no longer form the basis from which such systems proceed. Rather they are alternatively grounded in 'a whole army of neurallike, simple, unintelligent components,' meaning and complexity arising out of the nature of their connections rather than any innate properties (Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991: 87). The focus upon the connection between elements in a network, rather than upon the elements themselves, leads to an understanding of the emergence of meaning that has 'no need for a central processing unit to guide the entire operation' (ibid.: 88). Expanded to a systematic level, this means that the focus of connectionist approaches is the constitution of systems through the dynamic interrelationship of component elements: 'the system's connectivity becomes inseparable from its history of transformation'. Moreover, the connectivity of a system is ephemeral, 'related to the kind of task defined for the system' (ibid.: 87). Significantly for the theory of the matrix, connectivity seems to have arisen as a thesis from a particular idea of the nature of how the brain learns. Neurologically situated at a micro-level, it equates learning with 'correlated activity between neurons'. The strength of connectivity is measured, according to Varela, in relation to the tendency of neurons 'to be active together' (ibid.).

Although the term 'sub-symbolic' originates in Paul Smolensky's 'On the Proper Treatment of Connectionism,' it is first mentioned by Ettinger via Varela (MBMB: 134). It is therefore Varela, rather than Smolensky, to whom I will refer, especially as Varela gives more account of the context in which the sub-symbolic appears. It is discussed within *The Embodied Mind* as part of an account of the structural revision of cognitive science by connectionism. A corollary of its shift of focus away from discrete symbols and objects to connections is that the interpretative power of the symbolic is substantially reduced, meaning now being thinkable as 'a function of the global state of the system.'

Since this global state emerges from a network of units that are more fine grained than symbols, some researchers refer to connectionism as the "subsymbolic paradigm." [...] At the subsymbolic level, cognitive descriptions are built out of the constituents of what at a

higher level would be discrete symbols. Meaning, however, does not reside in these constituents per se; it resides in complex patterns of activity that emerge from the interactions of many such constituents. (Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991: 100)

Ettinger transposes the subsymbolic from a connectionist network to the sphere of the matrix, shifting it from Smolensky's conception of a digital, microscopic ground of the cognitive 'symbolic paradigm' (1988: 3), to a matrixial subsymbolic that would be invisible within a macro-micro analysis of the *Lacanian* symbolic (were such an analysis possible, that is). It is important to note that the symbolic within cognitive science is only analogous to the Lacanian symbolic, the former 'symbolic' standing for a system of cognitive rules or laws, higher-level cognitive functions and processes, and could be considered to constitute observable properties of a cognitive entity. The latter, by contrast, may be considered a trans-individual organisation of which the subject is a property, rather than vice versa.

Although this is less explicitly stated in later papers, it is not only the sub-symbolic that Ettinger absorbs from cognitive science, as she also aligns matrixiality with the 'bottom up' configuration of meaning represented by Varela's concept of *autopoiesis*.³⁴ 'Metramorphic Borderlinks' uses *autopoiesis* for the first time: 'Beyond the *symbolic* and beyond representation, living systems 'make sense' which is inseparable from the history of their transformation, and the transformation itself is inseparable from this making sense' (MBMB: 134). Although sympathetic to its origination of meaning in self-organisation, Ettinger adds that because of its reliance on the principle of homeostasis, *autopoiesis* is insufficient for matrixial purposes (MBMB: 157 n. 16). Because of this insufficiency she later coins the term 'co-poiesis,' which is defined as follows:

For thinking of the coemerging *I* and *non-I* in terms of the feminine/prenatal encounter, I rotate the idea of connectivity within autopoiesis toward metramorphosis in what I term co-poiesis, borderlinking to the in/out-side: to the "extimate" with-in-side and the intimate with-out-side, to the transgressive witness of *I* and *non-I*. (F/P: 401)³⁵

³⁴ Varela defines *autopoiesis* in the following terms: 'An autopoietic machine is a machine organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components that produces the components which: (i) through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and (ii) constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in the space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a network' (Maturana & Varela 1980: 78-79).

³⁵ In 'Traumatic Wit(h)ness Thing and Matrixial Co/in-habit(u)ating', the idea of co-poiesis is developed even further in the direction of a matrixial ethics: 'A non-cognitive mode of knowledge that reveals itself in such an ontogenetic witnessing-together [of the *Thing* as a traumatic event], in *wit(h)nessing* is what I call *co-poiesis* where *trans-scription* occurs' (TW'T: 91).

Aulagnier: Pictogram and Originary Process

‘Metramorphic Borderlinks’ is also the most significant paper with regard to Ettinger’s use of Aulagnier’s work. Although this is the second time Aulagnier has been mentioned, it is the first appearance of the *pictogram*, and after ‘Metramorphic Borderlinks’ this term is appropriated into the conceptual reserve of matrixial theory and re-deployed without detailing the route through which it has become absorbed (see MG: 46). In addition to the pictogram, Aulagnier also appears in ‘Metramorphic Borderlinks’ in terms of her addition of *originary* process to Freud’s primary and secondary process,³⁶ which provides another space ‘prior’ to the domination of displacement and condensation. Aulagnier’s project in *The Violence of Interpretation* has some resonance with one of the motivations behind Ettinger’s work (particularly as displayed in ‘Verbal Hallucinations’), since Aulagnier seeks to move beyond the inability of Freudian psychoanalysis to deal with the effects of psychotic discourse on the transference relationship, and on psychoanalysis as a discourse of mastery:

My long-standing debt to psychotic discourse is far from settled. It is thanks to that discourse, so often listened to, so often not understood, that I have finally lost any illusions as to the existence of a model whose application would no longer encounter ‘anomalies’ [...]. Confronted by this discourse, I have often felt that I was receiving it as *the wild interpretation made to the analyst of the non-evidence of the evident*. This experience, which is not always easy to bear, is the only one that gives the analyst the right to speak of an adventure, that of the psychotic, which, very often, he has not experienced subjectively. Indeed on one nodal point the psychotic and I find ourselves once again in a relationship of strict reciprocity: the absence of shared presuppositions makes my discourse as debatable, questionable, and deprived of all power of certainty as his may be when I listen to it. (ibid.: xxv-xxvi)

Aulagnier’s proposed solution to the questions posed by psychotic discourse is to explore the traces of that element of psychic process to which, she believes, psychotic speech has a relation. She sets out to try to understand how the inadequacies of the classical Freudian model in dealing with the effects of psychotic speech require a refiguration of ‘the various theoretical constructions that account for the constitution of the I and of the function of discourse.’ In paying attention to what the Freudian model ignores of the analyst’s response to the psychotic, the possibility opens of managing ‘to catch a glimpse of what the unthinkable “before” was that we have all shared’ (ibid.: xxviii). Very briefly, this ‘unthinkable “before”’ is subsequently posited as the ‘originary process’—both prior to and co-existing with Freud’s primary and secondary processes—its mode of

³⁶ In Alan Sheridan’s translation of Aulagnier’s *The Violence of Interpretation*, *processus originaire* is translated as ‘primal process’ (see Aulagnier 1975: xix). In order to avoid any confusion, I will remain with Ettinger’s rendering of ‘originary process’. All quotations from the Sheridan translation will be correspondingly modified.

representation being the *pictogram*, which ‘ignores word-presentation and has as its exclusive material the image of the physical thing’ (ibid.).

Ettinger takes up the pictogram from Aulagnier because it presents a mode of representation existing independently of, and operating at the same time as, higher levels of representation such as phantasy and speech. She objects, however, to the content of the pictogram insofar as it is determined by phallic oscillations of presence and absence, fusion and rejection. Aulagnier models the pictogram upon orality: ‘the originary encounter is played out, in theory, at the very moment of birth, but [...] we may shift the moment forward, situating it at the first, inaugural experience of pleasure: *the encounter between mouth and breast*’ (ibid.: 16).³⁷ This basic content of representation provokes Ettinger to posit ‘a third pictogram of *distance-in-proximity*’ (MBMB: 133). The third pictogram, which is intended to supplement the ‘two basic pictograms of *union-as-fusion* and *destructive rejection*’ (ibid.: 133) introduces the possibility of minimally representing the difference of the other within an archaic psychic register, by opening a space within what would otherwise be a sphere of undifferentiation. The register with which this additional pictogram is associated is also differentiated from Aulagnier’s originary process by the term ‘*sub*’-originary (ibid.: 135).

The co-existence and interaction (rather than mutual exclusivity and retroaction) of Aulagnier’s three processes are also taken up, insofar as they allow for a *forward* movement of material from archaic inscriptions: ‘Archaic representations of the body as psychic events do not stem in a backward movement from the symbolic discourse alone but emerge in a ‘forward’ movement from originary space toward primary space’ (ibid.: 141). This provides a model for the psychic inscription of ‘metamorphic transformations and pictograms’ without a ‘downward’ or retroactive operation of the symbolic. Together with Varela’s *autopoiesis* as a ‘bottom-up’ organisation, this adds to the resources available for thinking meaning and subjective inscription as *emergent* phenomena, rather than exclusively as effects of a transcendent formal (signifying) structure. Another element that is similarly used to enrich the possibilities offered by the later incarnation of the *objet a*, is phantasy.

OBJET A AND PHANTASY

The particular role phantasy has to play in Ettinger’s consideration of early and late formulations of the *objet a* is one of the most elusive and difficult-to-grasp aspects of her work. Although the differentiation she draws upon is often introduced as what she terms Lacan’s “‘inverted” late ‘theory of the phantasy” (MSBP: 17), we are given very little in the way of information on the

³⁷ Even more than this, Aulagnier’s whole idea of the activity of representation is based upon a model of digestion: ‘The latter may be defined as the function by which an element heterogeneous to the cellular structure is rejected or, on the other hand, transformed into a raw material that becomes homogeneous with it’ (1975: 3).

specific role and function of phantasy in this inversion, and the references she makes to Lacan's 1968-69 seminar *D'un Autre à l'autre* (hereafter *D'un Autre*) do not yield up a great deal of further information. The only text in which Ettinger approaches the question of phantasy in any detail, both in Lacan's later work and in a more general sense is 'Woman as *Objet a*'.

The consideration of phantasy as a key factor in the shifting of subjective determinants *within* Lacan also joins up with a transition I have already mentioned in the perspective of Ettinger's own work. Where in 'Verbal Hallucinations' and 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' it appeared that the aim of elaborating processes thrust outside the reach of language (both culturally and in terms of individual psychopathologies) was to offer them the 'relief of signification,' Ettinger's use of phantasy in relation to the *objet a* broadens the possibilities for a tracing, not necessarily at the cost of subjective experience, of the real: 'We may speak of a borderline contact with the loss that another has experienced, a borderline sharing of/with the other's trauma and phantasy' (WOA: 75).

'Woman as *Objet a*' opens with three specific details that shed some light on the 'inverted' nature of Lacan's late approach to phantasy, drawn from one specific passage in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*. The first is an association of phantasy with the *real*, rather than exclusively with the imaginary: the real, as Lacan says, 'stretches from the trauma to the phantasy' (WOA: 57; citing Lacan 1964: 60). The second is to situate phantasy within this spectrum as essentially concealing 'something more archaic than itself' (WOA: 57). This concealed something, thirdly, is the *objet a*, but its concealment is not straightforward. Ettinger adds slightly to the passage from which she quotes, insofar as she says that the *objet a* is 'simultaneously concealed *and revealed* by phantasy' (ibid., emphasis added). This slight addition marks much of the work undertaken in 'Woman as *Objet a*'. In a similar vein to the attention to 'bottom-up' modalities of meaning which infuse later and/or higher registers, this text looks specifically at 'upward' or 'forward' movements from very archaic instances of phantasy residing at the margins of any distinction between human and animal, psychological and corporeal: 'in this area the first transformations from biological entity to psychological entity take place'. She adds: 'These transformations create a 'map' of the body, which may not only penetrate consciousness in an *après-coup* way, but also participate in its creation. Their outcomes are expressed by the phantasy' (ibid.: 57).

Thus, Ettinger's concern in 'Woman as *Objet a*' is not only to track the possibility of an upward tracing of the real in the form of the *objet a*, but also to approach the idea that phantasy can have an archaic existence that is inextricable from this upward movement. The means by which she approaches such an understanding is through those psychoanalysts within the British school (Klein, Bion and Winnicott) who concern themselves with the possibility of psychic structures and

formations in the most archaic stage of life, in relation to which are posited the determining conditions of the experience of the object.³⁸ One particular question built within this approach is that of the various permutations of the relationship between object and loss. Ettinger explores the different modalities of object-loss and the appearance of this loss in phantasy across the ‘object-relations’ theorists to whom she refers, for example attributing to Klein a system of phantasy for which the object as absent is meaningless: it is either good or bad, but always a present object. Bion, on the other hand, allows for an idea of absence: the good breast as missing, rather than ‘bad breast present’. I will return to this negotiation in Chapter 1, exploring the idea that this comparative approach also comprises an attempt to traverse the gap between ‘object-relations’ theories and those in which the drives predominate.

If phantasy itself originates within this archaic sphere, it seems that Ettinger wishes to indicate as a consequence its primary marking in and by the real. It also seems that, although this archaic origin of phantasy is not legible as *content* at a higher level (‘since contents are elaborated by images and thoughts’ (ibid.: 60)), the phantasy which screens the *objet a* is not necessarily unrelated to it. That is, if phantasy is forged on the same corporeal plane as that from which the *objet a* is cut, the (un-)concealment of the *objet a* by phantasy would not necessarily be an arbitrary, symbolically-determined defence. Ettinger includes within her examination of various modalities of phantasy a suggestive but remarkably dense reference to Lacan, a reference that receives no further direct elucidation:

Lacan returns to Freud in order to describe the meeting which occurs in phantasy as an absent meeting: an impossible meeting with what had been lost, with what does not exist any more. Thus phantasy is a non-meeting, and the object of phantasy can only be, in a certain sense, a non-object. (ibid.: 63)

In an attempt to moderate this density, Ettinger undertakes a brief comparative mediation of it through Freud, Klein, Winnicott and Bion. She argues that in Freudian terms, Lacanian phantasy is equivalent to a screen memory. She explains it in Kleinian terms as a staging of the archaic disappearance of the part-object. In Winnicott’s terms, late Lacanian phantasy is a ‘primal creation,’ emerging as a trace of archaic relations and corporeality, but a trace from which they are absent.³⁹ And finally, in Bion’s terms—although greater attention is paid to the *objet a* here than to

³⁸ There is a strong resonance between the structure of this paper and that of the later ‘Feminine/Prenatal Weaving in Matrixial Subjectivity-as-Encounter’. Both papers apparently emerged from the same conference presentation in 1993, entitled ‘The Lacking Object from Trauma to Phantasy’ (MG: 2). See Appendix.

³⁹ See especially Winnicott’s use of the phrase ‘very late prenatal phantasy,’ in *The Family and Individual Development* (1965: 3), which is a formulation Ettinger makes good use of in support of the extension of subjective life beyond the limit of birth. See especially MSBP: 21, 22, 24; MBMB: 144 n. 42; WOA: 61.

phantasy⁴⁰—Ettinger emphasises the *objet a* as lying *behind* alpha-elements, the latter being present in phantasy and dream-thought. In developing an argument whereby phantasy can be posited as the site of a meeting between subject and archaic object/*objet a*, this would also seem to position phantasy as the site of a possible non-cognitive, non-symbolic knowledge of or meaning to archaic corpo-real existence.

SUBLIMATION OF THE OBJET A: THE POSSIBILITY OF A CULTURAL
INSCRIPTION FROM THE FEMININE

Another association with the shift in possibilities for the *objet a* is the opening this offers for the feminine, a link between woman and *objet a* having been present from the very first, from ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’ onwards. This is most usefully discussed in terms of sublimation, since Ettinger triangulates the dual connection between *objet a* and Woman, and *objet a* and sublimation to hypothesise an emergence of the feminine in culture via sublimation of the matrixial *objet a*. Indeed, the trio of related texts I mentioned at the beginning of this section converge most significantly on the subject of sublimation, and it is here that much of Ettinger’s work on the *objet a* comes together. This is particularly so regarding the function of the *objet a* in relation to the Thing, which concerns Lacan’s articulation of the *vacuole*. The prototype of the *vacuole*—the vase—appears in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (hereafter *The Ethics*), in Lacan’s discussion of the Thing (Freud’s *das Ding*) and the impossibility of creation *ex nihilo* (‘nothing is made from nothing’): the vase is proposed ‘as an object made to represent the existence of the emptiness at the center of the real that is called the Thing’ (1960: 121). Later in *The Ethics*, Lacan, again in referring to *das Ding*, attributes to a student the metaphor of the *vacuole*, but with some reservations (*ibid.*: 150). By 1969, however, ‘the anatomy of the *vacuole*’ has been appropriated to explain the relationship of sublimation to jouissance.

In *D’un Autre*, Lacan extends the *vacuole* metaphor, and adds the image of the *otolith* to demonstrate the relationship between the *objet a* and the Thing in sublimation (1969: 232). An *otolith* is ‘any of the calcareous bodies found in the inner ear of vertebrates, important as sensors of gravity and acceleration’ (OED), (having said this, Lacan refers to the *otolith* in terms of the auditory organ of an invertebrate, the water-flea).⁴¹ Located in ‘the bony cavity which forms the central portion of the labyrinth of the ear’ (OED), the *otolith* serves, as Lacan notes, both an auditory and an equilibrating function. That is, it vibrates within its cavity, ‘tickling it from within,’

⁴⁰ This lesser attention to phantasy in the case of Bion is not particularly surprising. López-Corvo indicates both a reticence on Bion’s part on the subject of phantasy in general, and a degree of scepticism regarding unconscious phantasy in particular (López-Corvo 2003: 301-02).

⁴¹ Ettinger acknowledges the use of this image in an association of the *vacuole* with ‘the space in the inner ear without which sounds cannot be produced’ (WOA: 73).

but also orients the cavity in relation to vertical and horizontal pressures (that is, in three dimensions) (1969: 232). To offer a slightly wild interpretation of the relationship between *objet a* and Thing, one might say that, not only does the stimulation of the *objet a* stimulate the Thing, the *objet a* also orients the Thing in the three dimensions of real, symbolic and imaginary. The stimulation of the Thing by the *objet a* is linked by Lacan to sublimation, to the extent that it constitutes ‘the essential merit’ of the work of art (ibid.: 233). Where in *The Ethics*, Lacan speaks of sublimation as elevating the object ‘to the dignity of the Thing’ (1960: 112), in *D’un Autre*, the Thing and sublimation are rearticulated in terms of the drives and sexuality, leading ultimately to an equivalence of Woman (insofar as she is unavailable to both men and women) and the Thing (1969: 226-27; 229-30). This is the source of Ettinger’s reference to Lacan’s presentation of ‘art as an “elevation of Woman to the level of the Thing”’ (MBMB: 140; MSBP: 49, 55).

The importance of the Thing in the Lacanian account of sublimation brings together the archaic sphere of phantasy and/or the drives with the *objet a*, and points them in the direction of artistic creativity. The non-representational participation of the *objet a* within sublimation—theorised through Ettinger’s extrusion of phantasy as an impossible meeting of subject and *objet a*—brings the association of the Woman and the *objet a* into a creative locus at the margins of cultural production:

Conceiving of a work of art as an incarnation of Woman as an absent *objet a* is clearly different to the idea of the incarnation of Woman as a present, passive commercial object given for the viewer, conceived within the prism of gender identification, since art is not a product of the *imaginary* or the *symbolic*; rather, it creates representations that filter into these domains and transform them. I would suggest that the *incarnation* of the Woman not only as a phallic *objet a* but also as a *matrixial objet a* is the effect of *sublimation*, if some aspects of sublimation can be understood as inscriptions of the *non-Oedipal* in the sub-symbolic sphere. (WOA: 73 [MSBP: 68; MBMB: 150]⁴²)

Within the phallic dimension alone it is clear that the triad of sublimation, Thing and *objet a* are still very much limited in terms of what they are able to offer to Ettinger’s feminist project. That is, although Lacan’s association of *objet a* and Woman in *D’un Autre* (as well as negatively in *Encore*, in that it ‘takes the place of the missing partner’ (Lacan 1973: 63)) ‘set the “feminine” free,’ to use Ettinger’s words (M&M: 179), it is still culturally conservative. To reclaim this liberation of the feminine, Ettinger undertakes a matrixial reconfiguration of its terms. She maintains the idea of a connection between Woman, *objet a* and Thing, but alters the way in which this connection is both formed and manifest. This is evident in the positing of ‘non-Oedipal sublimation’ (see MBMB: 125;

⁴² The same passage is reproduced almost verbatim in ‘Metramorphic Borderlinks’ and ‘Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus’; I have included the references in square brackets, however, to indicate that there are some differences, the greatest being the omission of ‘if some aspects of sublimation can be understood as inscriptions of the *non-Oedipal* in the sub-symbolic sphere’ from ‘Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus’.

WOA: 69; MG: 27/94, 44/106),⁴³ which marks the place of a non-substitutive transmission of the archaic matrixial encounter into the work of art, via the matrixial object/*objet a*.

THE MATRIXIAL OBJECT/OBJET A

The rearticulation of the phallic primarily as that which binds the object to dualistic modulations of presence and absence is another factor that compels the theorisation of an alternative objective modality. The formulation of a *specifically* matrixial object/*objet a* takes two forms. The first is that of the touch, and the second is that of the gaze. I will deal briefly with the touch first, as it appears both to precede and to enable the matrixial *objet a* of the gaze, but is not developed or deployed to the same degree.

Because of the links between the *objet a* and the structure of the drives, the positing of a matrixial *objet a* necessarily brings with it a major shift regarding the orifices of the body. I will return to this problematic in more detail in Chapter 1, but it will suffice for now to say that there is a conceptual difficulty in reconciling a structure grounded in terms of a logic of need and satisfaction (orality) with a sphere of existence where no comparable oscillations exist (intra-uterine life). In relation to this discrepancy Ettinger posits *touch* as the primary matrixial part-object: ‘The intra-uterine contact brings forth the object of touch as an object to be added to the list of psychic part-objects without its being related to bodily orifices’ (MG: 25/93). Its departure from the orifices of the body, however, is not the only reason touch emerges as the archetype for matrixial ‘objectivity’: it also suggests an important median register between activity and passivity (which will develop later in relation to Merleau-Ponty, to be considered in Chapter 2), as well as a crucial element of shareability. In the prenatal matrixial encounter, Ettinger suggests, the object of touch ‘is a feminine object shared between *I* and unrecognised *non-I*; and it indicates a position which is both passive and active: I am both touching and being touched in the same event’ (WOA: 64). What this primacy of touch in the formation of the matrixial object/*objet a* also brings, however, is a primary fragility in the stability of the *object* as a concept within the theory of the matrix. In *The Matrixial Gaze*, Ettinger gives an indication of this problematic status of the object, metramorphosis on one level being hypothesised as the vehicle for an alternative:

I have suggested that if we conceive of traces of links and relations rather than of objects, from an angle in which *the co-emerging I and non-I* is prior to the *I versus others*, a different kind of passageway suitable for links that are not taken for *objects* – that is due to particular kind[s] of processes of *transformation*, arises. (MG: 22/91)

⁴³ I will return to the question of artistic creativity and non-Oedipal sublimation in Chapter 2.

In 'Metramorphic Borderlinks' Ettinger carries this objective instability into her attention to the *objet a*, using a term that will subsequently crop up from time-to-time, but is not embraced with any real commitment until very recent work, and this is the *a-link* or *link a*. This appears to be a more matrixially-appropriate formulation of the *objet a*: 'the matrixial perspective allows us to add to the disappearance/appearance of the lacking *objet a*, the diffraction of the shareable *objet a* and conductable *a-link*' (MBMB: 151).

The gaze as objet a

In *The Matrixial Gaze*, although the focus is still very much on the *objet a*, there is a slight shift from the other texts in this transition and consolidation period, in that the central Lacanian text becomes *The Four Fundamental Concepts* rather than *D'un Autre*, and the *objet a* mostly shifts into a specific scopical register. *The Matrixial Gaze* expands upon the seeds sown in 'Becoming Threshold' of an *objet a* viewed within a matrixial perspective, sustaining a perspectival approach but in addition further developing the idea of an *objet a* constituted by metramorphic processes, 'another kind of *objet a*, a *One-less, between the several* relational kind' (MG: 22/91).⁴⁴ Because of the nature of metramorphosis as a mode of relation irreducible to distinct modulations of possession and loss, presence and absence, this gives rise to a slight peculiarity in the first articulations of a matrixial *objet a*. Although Ettinger does refer to a matrixial *objet a* on its own in *The Matrixial Gaze* (MG: 24, 28), at this early stage she also frequently uses the composite matrixial object/*objet a*. This composite presents the matrixial *objet a* in conjunction with the matrixial object of touch, forming a polarity that almost (but not quite) fills the space between the object as present, and the *objet a* as radically absent:

I refer both to a matrixial object and to a matrixial *objet a*. The term matrixial object indicates an inclination towards the pole of presence (appearing) on the presence-absence continuity, while the term matrixial *objet a* accentuates the lack, the trace of an event indicating a loss, or the empty cavity opened by desire (disappearing). (MBMB: 158 n. 31)

In *The Matrixial Gaze* as a whole, Ettinger's attention to the *objet a* focuses particularly upon the modality in which it is bound to (yet split from) the orifice of the eye: *the gaze*. I will only briefly summarise the *objet a* of the gaze here, as I have space to do justice neither to Lacan's nor Ettinger's elaborations at this point. I will consider both in more detail in Chapter 2.

⁴⁴ It is important to note that the positing of a matrixially-formed *objet a* does not obliterate the earlier idea of a matrixiality as a *perspectival* shift in the 'experience' of the *objet a*. The two aspects, it seems, are sustained in tandem, circumventing the danger that resides in a distinct form of *objet a*, of a separate, even a separatist aesthetics. The conceptually distinct matrixial *objet a* is not concretely distinct from its phallic counterpart, in the sense that both are implicated in affectivity, anxiety and desire, and as such will not necessarily be phenomenologically distinct in the sphere of manifest effects.

Some significant attention is paid in *The Four Fundamental Concepts* to the gaze as a particular modality of the *objet a*. In his 1960 ‘Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,’ Lacan had already added to the usual list of partial objects (the breast, the faeces, the imaginary phallus) ‘the phoneme, the gaze, the voice ... and the nothing’ (2006: 693). This addition is concretely developed in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, which involves the *objet a* in a theory of painting. The following statement crucially defines the gaze as an object, rather than an attribute of the subject: ‘in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture’ (Lacan 1964: 106). Bearing in mind Lacan’s positioning of the *objet a* within the structure of the drive, we can be in no doubt that this gaze is something that the subject is driven to *seek* (but will never find), this being characteristic of a split between the eye and the gaze: ‘The eye and the gaze—this is for us the split in which the drive is manifested at the level of the scopic field’ (ibid.: 73).⁴⁵

Because of the positing of touch as the primary part-object of matrixiality, this leads to a very specific characterisation of the gaze within a matrixial sphere. Ettinger draws out those aspects of the gaze as *objet a* which, in common with the part-object of touch, exceed the orifices of the body:

It is clear that the schema of the retrieval of the gaze, even if it is bound to a bodily orifice (the eye), does not correspond entirely to that of the part-objects’ cyclic arousal, which is referred to specific stimulated erogenous zones (oral, anal, etc.). It corresponds in only some respects of a phallic on/off support; in other respects it corresponds to a diffused and shared matrixial support. (MG: 27/94*)

In spite of this reconciliation with Lacan’s gaze as *objet a*, the articulation of the matrixial gaze has immediate implications for Lacan’s split scopic field. Ettinger’s articulation of the matrixial partial-object of touch, in its incompatibility with active/passive hierarchies, undermines Lacan’s schism between eye and gaze. The counterpart of the matrixial gaze is thus not the eye as such, but the *erotized aerals of the psyche*.

In terms of the *objet a* side of the matrixial object/*objet a* polarity, the emphasis is on its inscription, by metamorphosis (ibid.: 22/91), and its deflection from ‘the *drive/organ*’ to ‘a joint emergence of *relations-without-relating*’ (ibid.: 27/94). This inscribes the matrixial gaze as *objet a* as that which—since it is not *split* from the subject, as such—on its approach via the work of art, does not threaten to obliterate the subject in the same way as the Lacanian gaze. The encounter with the matrixial gaze in painting is mutually transformative: ‘I am transformed by *it* only insofar as *it* is also transformed by me’ (ibid: 47/108). The articulation of this encounter in *The Matrixial Gaze* also brings a brief

⁴⁵ The split between the eye and the gaze also informs the impossibility of an intersubjective encounter in the scopic field: ‘When, in love, I solicit a look, what is profoundly unsatisfying and always missing is that—*You never look at me from the place from which I see you*’ (Lacan 1964: 103).

hint of a reconfiguration of the temporality of memory and anamnesis, to which I will return at the very end of this thesis: ‘As matrixial, [the *objet a*] is not only a remnant, exposed in the present, of subjacent past relations-without-relating but also *a glimpse of the forever future* to be created in the now’ (ibid.: 48/109).

Because the inscription of the matrixial object/*objet a* takes place by metramorphosis within the matrixial stratum of subjectivisation, the matrixial gaze is necessarily *shared*, available only to the fragilised partial subject. As such, ‘being shared, the flickering of the matrixial gaze for one partial subject is not its exhaustion for the other, not even when one of the partial subjects totally disappears’ (ibid.: 49/110). This necessarily shared character of the matrixial object/*objet a* leads to a return, at the very end of *The Matrixial Gaze*, to a question of ethics, or more precisely, its ethical implications within an aesthetic field. This is summed up in the following statement: ‘in the phallus, there is an impossibility of sharing trauma and phantasy; in the Matrix, up to a certain extent, there is *an impossibility of not sharing them*’ (ibid.: 50/111). This formulation comes hand-in-hand with a sense of the historical specificity of both the matrixial aesthetic and its ethics (‘in our post-Duchampian era’ (ibid.), and ‘in an era of *events-without-witness*’ (ibid.: 51/111)), a specificity to which I will return at the end of the next section.

THE UNCANNY

As well as its emergence from the idea of the gaze in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, the concrete detail of the matrixial object/*objet a* in *The Matrixial Gaze* thus depends conceptually upon a series of other factors Ettinger brings together, factors that have already appeared or have begun to appear in other, earlier or contemporaneous papers: metramorphosis, the matrixial stratum of subjectivisation, the sub-symbolic, and the uncanny. This last factor is connected throughout the development of the theory of the matrix with Lacan’s comment that the gaze ‘is presented to us only in the form of a strange contingency’ (1964: 72). In fact, the uncanny makes its first appearance in ‘Becoming Threshold’ with reference to the anxiety caused by the appearance of the *objet a*, but without reference to Freud (BTMB: 57). *With* reference to Freud, however, the uncanny is of particular significance in *The Matrixial Gaze* as an external enabling factor, almost a ready-made, that Ettinger takes up as offering a conceptual expansion of possibility for unconscious psychic processes. In ‘Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus,’ the Freudian uncanny is described both in terms of a critique of the ‘phallic’ *objet a* (MSBP: 60; MBMB: 143) as well as its capacity for relativising the latter: ‘In relation to Freud’s concept of the ‘uncanny’, I try to deflect the lost object’s phallic qualities’ (MSBP: 51).

In his 1919 paper ‘The “Uncanny”,’ Freud undertakes an etymological survey of the term *unheimlich*. He especially concerns himself with the double meaning of its apparent opposite, *heimlich*, ultimately

concluding that ‘this uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed’ (Freud 1919: 148). Freud uses this etymology to suggest that the feeling of uncanniness in certain situations (in particular those affective experiences provoked by some works of art) is the effect of repression, rather than the immediate character of an event or situation (ibid.). In addition to the castration phantasy, which is originally frightening, Freud mentions another infantile phantasy with a very different primary affect:

Some would award the crown of the uncanny to the idea of being buried alive, only apparently dead. However, psychoanalysis has taught us that this terrifying fantasy is merely a variant of another, which was originally not at all frightening, but relied on a certain lasciviousness; this was the fantasy of living in the womb. (ibid.: 150)

Ettinger takes up this differentiation to suggest a different primary structure of the unconscious, one that escapes the determining structure of castration: ‘What appears to me as an unreduced, unerased difference linked to primary affects before repression, instigates these two kinds of unconscious dumps of experience’ (MG: 7-8/79). Her extrusion of a differentiation within the primary affect of that which is repressed, enables her to add an understanding of metramorphosis as a supplementary form of repression to its basic definitions (ibid.: 22/91). This development could be seen as giving rise to a conception of the matrixial stratum of subjectivisation as a metapsychological structure (as well as the developmental and symbolic structures of ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’ (M&M: 177, 197)): ‘In order to posit another kind of *objet a* [...] we must elaborate a psychic layer from which such an *objet a* may emerge and in which it may dwell’ (MG: 22/91). In support of a process in addition to repression Ettinger also notes, but does not develop, Freud’s mention of ‘primitive *beliefs* in the material *reality*’ that are ‘surmounted’ (*überwunden*) rather than repressed, aligning this ‘second class’ of uncanny experiences with ‘matrixial-repression’ (ibid.).

Although, as I say, Ettinger only notes this idea in *The Matrixial Gaze*, and does not directly return to it in other texts, the idea of ‘surmounting’ has an important affinity with how matrixiality operates within subjectivity. That is, surmounted beliefs persist beneath the beliefs that supplant them, but can be reactivated or confirmed by experience; as such, they are another source of the uncanny feeling:

we do not feel entirely secure in these new convictions; the old ones live on in us, on the look-out for confirmation. Now, as soon as something *happens* in our lives that seems to confirm these old, discarded beliefs, we experience a sense of the uncanny [...]. (Freud 1919: 154)

Freud’s discussion of surmounted beliefs in “The ‘Uncanny’” explicitly differentiates them from repressed ideas (ibid.: 155) (the latter, it must be said, encompassing the idea of intra-uterine phantasies), in that ‘primitive’ beliefs are not surmounted as a result of intra-psychical conflict.

Rather, they are surmounted through reality-testing, or, in other words by the inception of another mode of experience. Not only does this idea resonate with the structure of the matrixial stratum of subjectivisation as ‘before-as-beside,’ it also has a connection to a transition between infantile phantasy and later object-relating to be discussed in Chapter 2. This latter connection is through Freud’s association of surmounted beliefs with infantile phantasies of ‘omnipotence of thoughts, instantaneous wish-fulfilment, secret harmful forces and the return of the dead’ (ibid.: 154), which seems to anticipate the archaic phantastic modalities later theorised by the Kleinian and object-relations schools, and to which, as we have seen, Ettinger’s work on phantasy in ‘Woman as *Objet a*’ relates.⁴⁶

The alignment of ‘matrixial-repression’ with the surmounting of primitive beliefs connects to a similar element in ‘Woman as *Objet a*,’ but one that I will mention only briefly as I will give it more consideration later in the thesis: Ettinger’s notion of a *non-conscious* dimension of the psyche. In ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’ she presents a dissatisfaction with the Lacanian structure of the unconscious, seeming to suggest that a rejection of his edict that ‘the unconscious is structured like a language’ could necessitate a reconception at the level of metapsychological structure.⁴⁷ Against Lacan’s proclamation that displacement and condensation constitute the entire unconscious mechanism, she says: ‘These are in fact basic primary processes of the Unconscious, but they are not entirely exclusive. Freud also spoke of non-resolved contradictions in the Unconscious. This idea [...] suits the Matrix concept’ (M&M: 201). In ‘Woman as *Objet a*,’ with reference to the *objet a* in Lacan’s later theory, she uses the phrases ‘non-conscious zone’ and ‘non-conscious psyche’ to open up the possibility that the unconscious as a system is not co-extensive with all processes that may be designated as unconscious (WOA: 64, 67). She later elaborates:

Freud differentiates between two uses of the term unconscious: one to designate a particular system (which for Lacan corresponds to the treasure of repressed of signifiers), the other to designate a phenomenon. I use the term non-conscious to indicate this second possibility of unconscious phenomena outside the “unconscious” as a system [...]. (TSTB: 637 n. 12)

Thus, one of the effects of Ettinger’s reading of Lacan, and of the subsequent addition to the structures she draws out, is a potential need to revise or to supplement the basic structures of the

⁴⁶ A connection between infantile phantasy and the uncanny also shares some resemblances with what we shall see of Milner’s idea of ‘symbolism-as-fusion’ in Chapter 2. That is, Freud also posits the uncanny as an effect of a symbol taking on ‘the full function and significance of what it symbolizes’ (1919: 150).

⁴⁷ Laplanche and Pontalis define metapsychology as a ‘term invented by Freud to refer to the psychology of which he was the founder when it is viewed in its most theoretical dimension. Metapsychology constructs an ensemble of conceptual models which are more or less far-removed from empirical reality. Examples are the fiction of a psychical apparatus, divided up into agencies, the theory of the instincts, the hypothetical process of repression, and so on’ (1967: 249).

psyche. This question, however, has not yet taken centre stage in her work, its use being quite loose and tentative, any explication appearing mostly in footnotes. I will return to Ettinger's idea of matrixiality as a 'non-conscious dimension' of the psyche in Chapter 3.

In *The Matrixial Gaze*, the point which is reached in the trajectory of the *objet a* through the theory of the matrix is the burgeoning possibility of a theory of creativity and aesthetics built around a non-phallic, supplementary feminine. The work done on and with the *objet a* is reinforced by the uptake of other Lacanian elements that relate to creativity and sublimation, and which enrich the autonomy of the *objet a* in relation to the signifying chain. These elements are the *sinthome* and the Borromean Knot, which together echo and extend into subjective structure the possibilities for subjectivisation in excess of the signifier initially indicated by the *objet a*.

CONSOLIDATION: BEYOND THE *OBJET A*

The introduction of the Borromean knot and the *sinthome* into the conceptual reserve of the theory of the matrix builds upon the foundation laid by the idea of the *objet a* as a subjective determinant that is autonomous of the signifying chain. Lacan's late and highly elusive formulation of the *sinthome* offers both the possibility that subjectivity can (in very exceptional cases) cohere without the organising forces of the Name-of-the-Father and castration. To understand a little of the *sinthome*, it is also necessary to understand something of the Borromean knot, which makes its first appearance in Lacan's work in the unpublished seminar of 1971-72, ... *ou pire*, and emerges as a significant factor in his late topology of the subject. In the last decade of his work, Lacan began to account for the orientation of the three psychic registers through a constitutively interdependent structuration of real, symbolic and imaginary (see above, n. 13), whose 'intrication [is] completely undone if any one of its strands is severed' (Thurston 1998: 149). The effect of the unravelling of the Borromean knot is a corresponding unravelling of the subject.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ In spite of its emergence at the centre of Lacan's subjective topology, the specific role played by the Borromean knot is not at all straightforward: Luke Thurston suggests that 'it is not a metaphor [...] and thus it is not caught up in the differential weave of the symbolic order, but rather indicates the real construction of signifying chains' (1998: 146). In his paper, Thurston gives a concise account of the difficulties of the Borromean knot, taking into particular account Miller's warning to avoid reading Lacan's multiform sketchings of the Borromean knot 'as neat summaries or blueprints of psychoanalytic theory' that should be treated as 'engagements with the theoretical problems of the seminar, and as such strictly continuous with its discourse.' Avoiding such a metaphorical interpretation is necessary, in Thurston's understanding 'to prevent the elevation of topology to the impossible position of a metalanguage, a language of being' (ibid.: 143). He goes on to warn against collapsing the Borromean knot into Lacan's topological structures of the 1960s: 'From the moment of its introduction to Lacan's teaching — as part of an attempt to theorize the impossible as that which prevents *rapport* — the Borromean knot figures something beyond the logic of a model, of metaphorical representation. It emerges as a paradoxical co-incidence of the inseparable verbs in a phrase and the invisible object embodying the impossible relation it

In papers after *The Matrixial Gaze*, it becomes clear that an important enabling factor of the Borromean knot is, for Ettinger, its apparent undoing of the sovereignty of the symbolic register, and more specifically its freeing of the real from symbolic determination. This enables, in her reading of Lacan in later papers, particularly ‘Some-Thing, Some-Event and Some-Encounter’ (hereafter ‘Some-Thing’), an expansion of the operations of and movements between the three registers, away from the hierarchy ‘Symbolic determines Imaginary and Real’, where the real can permeate the imaginary and the symbolic (ST: 65). Ettinger’s later use of the *sinthome*, particularly as it leads in later papers to developments beyond the scope of Lacan’s formulation, is the key to the possibility of a (just) non-psychotic emergence and tracing of non-phallic elements of subjectivity through the creation of artworks (a creativity not equivalent to the expression of a symptom) and to the power of the matrixial paradigm as *symbologenic*. I will discuss something of this in the next section.

The notion of the *sinthome* emerges in relation to Lacan’s statement that ‘there is no such thing as a sexual relationship’ (*il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel*) (1973: 12 and *passim*), and in relation to which the idea of a supplementary *jouissance* is formulated. For Lacan, the only desire is the desire of the Other (originating in the Symbolic), which is phallic. This desire determines sexual *jouissance* as phallic; as finite and bound to the organs of the body. Because of this phallic determination of sexual *jouissance*, sexual relations are between subject and *objet a*, or ~~Woman~~ and S(A) or Φ , but not subject and subject. As we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, in *Encore*, Lacan makes a move which questions the totality of phallic sexual *jouissance*, in the positing (however ironically) of a supplementary *jouissance* of the body, ‘beyond the phallus’ (1973: 74). In *Encore*, this supplementary *jouissance* shores up the impossibility of sexual *rapport*, but in his 1976 seminar, *Le sinthome*, he explores the idea of a singular sexual *rapport* that is not necessarily a radical impossibility: that is, a sexual desire and encounter with the Other that is neither the Other of the Symbolic, nor the unspeakable Other which is the support of the *jouissance* of the body.

Now, after the path I’ve opened about the sexual *rapport*, it is not hard to suggest that when there is equivalence, there is no *rapport*. [...] At the level of the *sinthome* [...] there is no sexual equivalence—in other words there is a *rapport*. Effectively, if we say that a non-*rapport* is a function of equivalence, it is to the extent that there is no equivalence that the *rapport* is structured. There is no *rapport* except where there is *sinthome*. It is the *sinthome* which supports the other sex. (Lacan 1976b: 167-68, translation modified; 1976a: 100-101)

expresses. [...] Unlike the topological surfaces of the 1960’s, the Borromean knot — as a real *nouage* (knotting), irreducible even to its topological *mise à plat* — offers no representational equivalence to or of the subject. It is strictly identical to structure, not some metaphorical guide to it, to paraphrase a remark in *L’étourdi*’ (ibid.: 148).

The equivalence of the sexes in Lacanian theory derives from their organisation through phallic *jouissance* alone: ‘Phallic sexual *jouissance* in men and woman relates to an organ of the subject or to the other-as-object, and not to the other as an-other-*subject*; it is therefore “an obstacle to sexual rapport”’ (WIV: 98). Without the *sinthome*, sexual rapport would entail psychosis, since (according to Serge André’s reading of Lacan in ‘Otherness of the Body’) feminine *jouissance* requires as a partner ‘a being who is himself placed beyond the law of the phallus’, that is, a partner not subject to castration. This requirement follows from the status of the feminine as hole in the symbolic Other: for feminine *jouissance* to exist it would have to be ‘Other than what the unconscious says, Other than what can be named by the signifying chain organized in A by the law of the phallus and of castration’ (André 1986: 93). The *sinthome*, not mentioned by André, is that which enables the possibility of sexual rapport by placing the subject, or a dimension of the subject, *beyond* the law of the phallus.

To return to *The Matrixial Gaze*, the *sinthome* is taken up insofar as it is a theoretical fourth ring in the Borromean knot that allows it to hold together in the event of the severing described by Thurston, above. It is posited, by Lacan, in a particular relation with his idea of the (impossibility of) sexual rapport.

Lacan’s late remarks on the *sinthôme* (1975/6) point, in my mind, to the beginning of a third theoretical phase concerning “woman”/the feminine, to the potentialities of a *beyond-the-phallus* feminine dimension. The *sinthôme* paves a further path with regards both to Lacan’s early inside-the-phallus position concerning the feminine, and to his 1972/3 teachings where no possibility to speak positively of the “not” of the “not-all” seems available. (MG: 16)⁴⁹

In *The Matrixial Gaze*, the *sinthome* appears mainly as exemplary of how ‘Lacan tries again to bring together the feminine and artistic creativity and to introduce the sexual relation from the feminine side of the difference’ (ibid.: 19). Ettinger does suggest that it may be ‘deflected’ to the matrix, but this is only really developed in the next phase of her work. The discussion of the *sinthome* in *The Matrixial Gaze* reflects the culmination of the trajectory involving the *objet a*; the *sinthome* represents an explicit broadening of localised processes of subjectivisation autonomous of the signifying chain into a much larger-scale idea of subjectivisation beyond the Name-of-the-Father and symbolic castration. Crucially for the theory of the matrix as an aesthetic theory, the *sinthome* is also constitutively formed around an idea of artistic practice as the means by which symbolic and phallic hegemonies may be circumvented. Most of all, however, the *sinthome* is by (Lacanian) definition inextricable from an encounter with the feminine (sexual rapport), which is neither a

⁴⁹ Ettinger frequently (although not entirely consistently) adds a circumflex accent to the ‘o’ of *sinthome*. In line with the recently published edition of this seminar, I have not retained this accent, except where necessary in quotations.

missed encounter nor one assimilated to the terms of a masculine universal. Having associated matrixiality and the sinthome, however, Ettinger does not rest on her laurels. In texts after *The Matrixial Gaze* she expands this association, the reason being that the sinthome is, as she will later say ‘a failure of the phallic structure as such’ (ST: 61), whereas “‘woman” can’t only be defined by the failure in the phallic system’ (ibid.: 66). A reconfiguration of the sinthome from the point of view of a feminine rapport with this Other-Woman will be one of the elements discussed in the next section.

SUMMARY

As I have covered some ground in exploring the early transition and consolidation of the theory of the matrix, it will be worth summarising a few points. In presenting ‘Becoming Threshold’ as a transitional paper in the development of the matrix, two main areas have been indicated, the introduction of the *objet a* as a significant element, and a preliminary elaboration of a matrixial ethics. In tracking the articulation and use of the *objet a* in some of the key early texts subsequent to this introduction, I have discussed the following areas:

- Ettinger’s differentiation of two phases of the *objet a* in Lacan’s work;
- The explicit development of the *objet a* into an entity which contributes to the formation and ‘being’ of the subject, but which, although still ‘phallic,’ cannot be considered exhaustively determined as an effect of the signifier;
- The association of the phallic determination of the *objet a* with modalities of presence and absence (on the basis of Freud’s *fort/da*), this association subsequently taking centre stage in the definition of the phallic;
- In connection with the attribution of a later phase of the *objet a*, the development of the significance of phantasy in Lacan’s late work as the means by which the real can contribute to the structure of subjectivity.
- A developing attention to phantasy, accompanied by the appearance of connectionism and the pictogram as important means for understanding how the symbolic can be broadened to include more than the homogeneity of the signifying chain. This is particularly important for understanding how the matrix can infuse and transform, to use Ettinger’s phrase ‘the margins of culture’. It is also highly relevant for the development of the *objet a*, since, particularly in groundwork laid for a development of Varela’s *autopoiesis* into *co-poiesis*, this will lead to a reformulation of the possibilities of sublimation, and thus of the work of the artist.

The reason I have paid so much attention to detailing the passage of the *objet a* through a handful of Ettinger's early theoretical texts is because it is in her treatment of the *objet a* that my thesis as to the nature of her *theorywork* is most tangible. The development of Ettinger's perspective on the *objet a*, beginning from a view of it as a purely phallic effect tied to the substitutive action of symbolic castration, and thus to the foreclosure and impossibility of the feminine, moving through its retroactive determination of every object, to something which offers an autonomous element involved in the determination of subjectivity, still produced by symbolic castration, but irreducible to it, shows not only Ettinger's revision of Lacanian structures and thinking but also the same movement in reverse, the specific contribution of Lacanian thinking to the increasing sophistication of matrixiality. The *objet a* has thus had a profoundly significant role to play in the growth of the theory of the matrix, in that it shows not only how matrixiality is itself something which is worked-out in and through theoretical writings, but also that its object of critique—the domain of the phallic—is something that is not given in full at the inception of the theory, and develops with it.

PART III

Developments 1995-2004

Matrixial Gaze and Screen ([1995] 1999)
 Art as the Transport-Station of Trauma ([1999] 2000)
 Transgressing with-in-to the feminine ([1997] 2000)
 Transcriptum ([1999] 2002)
 Some-Thing, Some-Event and Some-Encounter (2000)
 Plaiting a Being-in-Severality and the Primal Scene (2002)
 Weaving a Trans-subjective Tress or the Matrixial *sinthome* (2002)

This next section is an attempt to trace some of the developments dependent upon the consolidation of the theory reached in *The Matrixial Gaze*. To build upon some of the points made in the introduction to this Overview, the particular nature of this presentation of Ettinger's work has arisen partly from the desire to put forward a thesis about the impact of its existence on the possibilities for thinking. Rather than arguing that the theory has developed over time because it was flawed at its inception, I am arguing that the changes Ettinger has made to her theoretical structures since 1992 reflect their truly innovative and creative nature: that is, the developments in the theory since 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' constitute new formations of thought that were impossible prior to its existence. In reiterating and returning to the theory of the matrix, Ettinger's writing methodology is constituted by a particular process of revision and development, each

change in the theory casting new light on what went before and the possibilities for what may follow.

PAINTING AND THE SCREEN OF PHANTASY

The relations between the subject of desire, the gaze that recedes but induces desire, the visual art object that is outside the subject (artist, viewer) yet is made by subjects, and the picture engraved in the eye of the subject as an impression get complicated when between the gaze outside and picture inside lies an entity both permeable *and* opaque: a screen. (WIV: 96)

We have already seen how, in her early papers ‘Woman as *Objet a*’, ‘Metramorphic Borderlinks’ and ‘Woman-Other-Thing’, Ettinger emphasises the connection between phantasy and the *objet a*, especially in her reading of Lacan’s reprioritisation of the real in his late work. In *The Matrixial Gaze* this is developed further with the introduction of the *gaze* as *objet a*, which brings with it the idea of painting as a screen. It is not until ‘The With-in-Visible Screen’ and ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen’, however, that a matrixial particularity is developed for the screen, bringing with it a reconception of the work of the artist, which has an impact across Ettinger’s three intertwined fields of aesthetics, ethics and psychoanalysis.

To extend what I have said so far of the gaze in *The Four Fundamental Concepts* in Section II (above, p. 54), the position of the painter in the discourse on gaze and screen is of a body whose gesture is ‘something in which a movement is terminated’ (Lacan 1964: 114). It is this gesture which, for Lacan, is the means by which ‘the brushstroke is applied to the canvas.’ Ettinger interprets this characterisation of the painted mark as the externalisation ‘onto the painting’s screen of vision’ of ‘an internal dialogue with the gaze on the screen of phantasm’ (MG&S: 12), an externalisation which leaves a trace of the gaze behind it. The nature of this tracing, and of the screen, is determined, she argues, by the nature of the gaze with which the painter is in dialogue. In ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen’ and ‘The With-in-Visible Screen’ (as well as, to a lesser extent, other papers in this period) the matrixial *objet a* enables the positing of painting as the externalisation of a *matrixial* screen of phantasy.

Lacan’s debt to Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and the Invisible* for the formulation of the gaze as *objet a* in *The Four Fundamental Concepts* is clear (Lacan 1964: 71-72). In returning to the gaze in recent work, however, Ettinger has called into question Lacan’s reading of Merleau-Ponty. In ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen’ she re-reads the intertwining of visible and invisible in Merleau-Ponty’s late work against Lacan’s radical splitting of the eye and the gaze, adding a third possibility in the extension of certain aspects of both. She aligns *matrixial gaze and screen* with ‘fission and segregation, exchange and intersection, transgression and transitivity’ (MG&S: 32), while retaining the screen of phantasy from Lacan’s formulation. Within Lacan’s thinking on phantasy, exemplified by the algebraic

formulation $\mathcal{S} \diamond a$, the screen is that which is situated between subject and *objet a*, both covering over and marking their separation (1964: 96). Moving from Lacan's idea of the screen, Ettinger goes through 'an interpretation closer to Merleau-Ponty's' where the screen is conceived of as a 'veil of contact,' into an idea of the matrixial screen. This is drawn directly out of the shift in horizons created by the reconception of the symbolic as broader than signification alone, in that the refiguring of the screen directly corresponds to an undermining of the hegemony of castration (ibid.: 16). This third screen, theoretically bound within the structure of the matrixial *objet a*, allows painting to function as the site of an inscription of its traces, whose borderline appearance do not necessarily promise the annihilation of the subject, as does the appearance of Lacan's formulation of the *objet a*. I will return to Ettinger's intervention between Lacan and Merleau-Ponty in Chapter 2, in terms of the implications this has for the relation of psychoanalysis and art in general.

Where, in part II of *The Matrixial Gaze*, Ettinger closes with an emphasis on the ethical character of the matrixial object/*objet a*, this is now carried over into the particular relation between artist and viewer across painting conceived of as a matrixial screen. The matrixial artist, inasmuch as s/he externalises a gesture in response to the call of the *matrixial gaze*, is the site whereby the trace of the trauma of the Other, the *non-I(s)*, is 'interwoven in painting'. The 'co-response-ability'⁵⁰ of the unknown *non-I(s)*, the viewers, of this tracing determines the possibility of a metamorphic encounter where the viewers become partialised, *fragilised* enough to share in the trauma of an event which they did not witness: 'my witnessing in a Thing-encounter permits my witnessing of the Thing-event of my non-I(s), which is in fact a witnessing without event' (ibid.: 33). The term Ettinger uses to stand in for this configuration combines witnessing and witnessing into *wit(h)nessing*, the key to the artist's role in the matrixial sphere that transgresses the line between ethics and aesthetics: 'By metamorphosis, the artist bears wit(h)ness.'

THE MATRIXIAL *SINTHOME*

A counterpart of the matrixial transformation of the screen is Ettinger's uptake of the *sinthome*, which, in a development away from Lacan's articulation brings a reconception of the line between creativity and psychosis. Although Ettinger works, from *The Matrixial Gaze* onwards, with an idea of art and artistic practice that has its roots firmly in the theory (and to some degree, it would seem, the practice)⁵¹ of psychoanalysis, it is never in the sense that psychoanalytic theory can *contain* the

⁵⁰ In 'Wit(h)nessing Trauma and The Matrixial Gaze,' Ettinger gives a Hebrew derivation for this composite term: 'A rapport of borderlinking with the Other (Other: 'acher' in Hebrew, from the root 'a.c.h.r.') would be, from the outset, a response-ability of the *I* (responseability [*siz*] – 'achraiat' in Hebrew, from the same root as 'Other') for the Other' (WTMG: 105 n. 29).

⁵¹ See Ettinger in conversation with Craigie Horsfield (2001: 42-43). This is a direction emerging in Ettinger's most recent work but concerning which, as yet, very little has been published. In the very

reality of art and artistic practice. Nowhere is this more clearly stated than in ‘Some-Thing’: having mentioned it in *The Matrixial Gaze*, in connection with the *objet a* and Lacan’s positioning of an impossible beyond-the-phallus dimension, in this paper Ettinger extends her examination of the *sinthome* and its counterpart, the Borromean knot. Here, her object is artistic creativity, and in particular its proximity to, but unequivocal differentiation from, psychopathology. She bases this differentiation upon a connected differentiation between Lacan’s *sinthome* and its French homophone, *symptom*. The latter is ‘an articulation of suffering already in the language of the Other’ (ST: 61), while the former is a ‘message of suffering’ which creates ‘another sense [...] beyond symbolic signification’ (ibid.: 63). The *sinthome* is in excess of any attempt to mend the failures of the phallic structure, it is a making-sense in the real; a material and non-symbolic unfolding of meaning: ‘By the *sinthome*, something *more* is added to the domain of *jouissance*, something I can think of as a diffracted trace-imprint of trauma-and-*jouissance*’ (ibid.: 63). In articulating the *sinthome* beyond its initial appearances in her work (MBMB: 147-49; WOA: 72; MG: 19-20/88-89, 26-27/94), Ettinger draws out a specific reading of the Borromean knot as a spatial topology, a (normative) braid of real, imaginary and symbolic as three inseparable stems:

If bodily traces of *jouissance* and trauma (in the Real), their representations (in the Imaginary), and their significance (in the Symbolic) are woven in a braid around and within each psychic event, the knowledge of the Real marks the Symbolic with its sense and its thinking, no less than the Symbolic gives meaning to the Real via signification and concepts. (ST: 65)

As I have already indicated (above, p. 58), the *sinthome* constitutes a fourth ring which holds the other three together in the event of a potentially psychotic slip in the processes of subjectivisation which ordinarily enable them to cohere. As an alternative (if exceptional) means of holding Real, Imaginary and Symbolic together that escapes the tyranny of the Name-of-the-Father,⁵² the *sinthome* offers a possibility for bringing into the realm of subjectivity traces of ‘knowledge,’ ‘written’ in the Real. This allows the work of art to be, in some instances, truly creative, a practice which has the potential to bring something to the Symbolic from outside, rather than coding the Real according to its hegemonic rule.⁵³ Ettinger—again bringing metramorphosis and the matrixial gaze as *objet a* into play—broadens the *sinthome* into the *matrixial sinthome*. This seems to be—at

recent ‘*Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference*,’ there are only two comments (FGM: 75, 84) remaining from a much larger unpublished version, in which Ettinger attempts to reconceive the aims and processes of the analytical relationship in light of matrixiality. I will return to this development at the end of Chapter 3.

⁵² See above, p. 25, for a brief outline of this term.

⁵³ This relationship between the symbolic and its outside differs considerably from Julia Kristeva’s notion of the semiotic and the symbolic, since, it is not unreasonable to suggest, for Kristeva (in *Revolution in Poetic Language* at least), that which is heterogeneous to the symbolic may only appear to subjectivity in a non-psychotic way by conforming to its laws. I discuss something of this relation in Kristeva’s work in Chapter 1, below.

least within ‘Some-Thing’—a *sinthome* that is knotted according to metamorphic processes: the matrixial *sinthome* ‘releases/creates/invents, from a feminine side, potential desires whose sense, which does not depend on the signifier, will be revealed in further encounters between old and new elements’ (ibid.: 67). Lacan articulates the *sinthome* through the writing of James Joyce, which acts as ‘a suppletion, [making] up for the failure of the knot to cohere, by reconstituting the knot as well as the place it allows the subject.’ Thurston locates this articulation as the limit of psychoanalytic thinking:

It is no accident that Lacan’s teaching remains ‘stuck’ at the point of this *sinthomatique* writing, that it is unable to progress evenly onto the rest of the series: the move from the knot of three to a symptomatic fourth corresponds to the opening of theory onto the real as non-theorizable. As the real of the symptom, *sinthome* is illegible, asemic – marking, not some logic or structure of signification, but the specific modality of a subject’s relation to jouissance. (1998: 157)

It is from this limit that Ettinger proceeds, shifting the *sinthome* from writing to visual art: ‘With what we call a *feminine sinthome* we are taking this notion beyond the work of Joyce to speak of a special kind of artworking, and beyond the art of writing and the problematic of language to speak mainly on painting and the problematics of visual art’ (ST: 67). The importance of the *sinthome* for her conception of the work of art is inasmuch as the former facilitates an understanding of the latter, that is neither the product of signification nor pure affect: it is ‘an external incarnation of the body-and-psyche in matter with representation’ (ibid.: 63). The modified *sinthome* works with the modified matrixial gaze and screen to inscribe in the work of art a *trans-subjective* tracing of the Real that is raised slightly above the level of unknowable ‘experience’.⁵⁴

[The work of art] is the unfolding into time and place of a psychic space at the borders of the Real, in a visible form or an object that though inanimate it does, like a subjective substance, *make* suffer/enjoy and *make* sense. It makes sense, it boulders, it touches, and fascinates—*it* and not the subject behind it. (ibid.)

The work of art as *sinthome* is implicated in the expansion, discussed earlier in relation to ‘Metamorphic Borderlinks,’ of the Symbolic to be able to accommodate the matrixial trace below the level of distinct representation. The *sinthome* structurally supports the undermining of metaphor and metonymy as the sole mechanisms of subjective inscription. These modes of inscription come later, as the Symbolic is ‘dethroned’, and may only return ‘by the back door on

⁵⁴ Trans-subjectivity is introduced as a term from about 1997 onwards, in explicit distinction from intersubjectivity: ‘In the gaze, the Phallus carves intersubjectivity together with a point of emergence into what is lack-to-be, so that the split of the eye from the gaze is constitutive of the subject. In the Matrix, the gaze carves trans-subjectivity in co-emerging entities in a becoming-rapport, between presence and lack to-be in severality’ (TSTB: 636). It is also a term that appears in Guattari’s final work, *Chaosmosis* (1992: 8). For more on the relationship between Ettinger and Guattari, see Chapter 3.

condition of becoming a receptive texture that is capable to leave the access to and from what I call the Event-Thing and the Encounter-Thing of the body-psyche—that affected body-psyche, denuded and lusting—open’ (ibid.). Ettinger’s reading of the Borromean knot leads her to suggest that ‘the knowledge of the Real marks the Symbolic with its sense and its thinking,’ and from this that the *sinthome* may be considered symbologenic (ibid.: 65).

As I will show in a moment, the matrixial shift of the *sinthome* in ‘Some-Thing’ moves very quickly into a conception of the matrixial *sinthome* as a *shared* *sinthome*. Before that, however, it will be necessary to understand Ettinger’s development of a *feminine* *sinthome*. The differentiation of this *sinthome* emerges as a response to the following statement from Lacan’s *Le sinthome* seminar: ‘A woman is a *sinthome* for every man. Another name must be found for whatever man is for a woman, as the *sinthome* is characterised by non-equivalence’ (1976b: 168; 1976a: 101). Ettinger diverges from Lacan at this point, the matrixial *sinthome* being approached through the question ‘what is “Woman” for a woman?’.

If a woman is a *sinthome* for every man, it is perfectly clear that there needs to be found not only another name for what becomes a “man” for a woman but also of what becomes a “woman” for a woman, because a “woman” for a woman cannot remain a radical Other as she can remain to men, or else, all women would be psychotic when coming into contact with their own difference. (ST: 66)

What Ettinger seems to be saying here is that, for it to work from a woman’s perspective, the *sinthome* must allow the subject to approach her own specificity in relation to the feminine. In an earlier paper ‘The Feminine/Prenatal Weaving in Matrixial Subjectivity-as-Encounter’, Ettinger places an emphasis on the potential doubling of the retroaction of the matrix for the woman,⁵⁵ and subsequent to this, it is possible to discern an interest in extending the theory of the matrix towards a specifically *female* sexuality. Any movement in this direction is emphatically an extension of the core of the theory, and does not undermine in any way Ettinger’s many statements to the effect that the matrix, in its originary organisation is *feminine* without being specifically about *women*. There are hints of a doubled relationship between female sexuality and matrixiality, however, as early as ‘Matrix and Metramorphosis’:

⁵⁵ ‘The Feminine/Prenatal Weaving in Matrixial Subjectivity-as-Encounter’ deals with this in terms of a matrixial *retroaction*, giving ‘sense to the early prenatal phase of this stratum, and inducing ‘new phantasies’: ‘Through identification with the sexuited mother this may reinforce feminine narcissism and facilitate awareness of a whole range of internal and external phenomena—if we have conceptual apparatus that may generate meaning for them, so that they don’t remain either foreclosed or diverted at the service of the phallus’ (F/P: 381). In later work, as I will show in Chapter 1, this trajectory in Ettinger’s thinking explicitly moves away from ideas of identification and the idea of a ‘feminine narcissism’ does not seem to be retained.

Psychoanalysis should deal with the matrixial traces in boys and girls before the Oedipal complex period and during this stage since these traces do not disintegrate. Losing the womb (of the mother) and having a womb of one's own is different from losing the womb and *not* having a womb of one's own. Awareness of having (and not having) a womb affects the elaboration of the Matrix. (M&M: 203)

After extending Lacan's projection of the *sinthome* beyond 'whatever man is for a woman' in 'Some-Thing,' Ettinger then goes on to develop this possibility in three papers, 'Plaiting a Being-in-Severality and the Primal Scene,' '*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference,' and 'Weaving a Trans-subjective Tress or the Matrixial *sinthome*'. All three involve further elaboration of Lacan's topology of the knot, the first two in combination with a brilliantly impassioned reading of the breakdown of Lol Stein in Marguerite Duras's *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*. Where Ettinger's considerations of the *sinthome* had mostly involved Lacan's *Le sinthome* seminar, in 'Weaving a Trans-subjective Tress' she also pays close attention to the (as yet unpublished) 1973-74 seminar, *Les non-dupes errent*. This attention focuses upon sexual union from the woman's point of view, and Lacan's association of this with the idea of the tress, or plait. She quotes Lacan, "The real of the Borromean knot is not a *three* but a *tress*," and goes on to elaborate:

In the tress, three strings are united, like the triple rings bound in a Borromean knot, and such a triplicity is in itself a Real—the Real of the tress that treasures a special kind of knowledge revealed not by truth but by beauty, a knowledge working not through concepts but through affects [...]. (WTT: 85)

This *affective* knowledge in the Real, however, is not enough for Ettinger, and neither (as we have seen) is Lacan's formulation of the *sinthome*, given that its marking of a failure to tie up the real, symbolic and imaginary rings is still a failure specific to the phallic sphere. 'Woman,' on the other hand, 'is not just a failure of/in the phallus'; within the matrixial dimension, she has an existence and meaning beyond her phallic non-existence: 'In a matrixial *sinthome* she is weaving and being woven by strings that are not "hers." She is plaiting her *not-I*s tresses together with her own, she trans-weaves a work of art' (ibid.: 99). The matrixial *sinthome* is thus a configuration that is truly and undeniably *trans*-subjective, *across* rather than between subjects. This is elaborated in even further detail where Ettinger multiplies the tress of three, working from the exemplary scene of encounter between Lol, Michael Richardson and Anne-Marie Stretter in *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*.

If we imagine a plaiting of RSI elements coming from three individuals in such a feminine-"impossible" linking, the strands of the Real-Symbolic-Imaginary are interlaced in the plait and not only in an intra-subjective fabric or cloth but also in a cross-subjective fabric. If the knot and the "lapsus of the knot" remain within the limits of the individual, linking or failing to link his or her different subjective dimensions[,] in a plaiting of six or nine, the borders between several individuals are transgressed. (PBS: 101-02)

MATRIXIAL AESTHETICS

It is indisputable that Ettinger's work both emerges from, and has an impact upon, the field of aesthetics.⁵⁶ Because of this, it might seem odd to place aesthetics under the heading of the *development* of the theory. An explanation for this can be given with reference to an early comment on the relationship between theory and practice in 'Woman-Other-Thing' (WOT: 11), that is subsequently expanded in 'The With-in-Visible Screen':

Theory does not exhaust painting; painting does not melt into theory. Painting produces theory and kernels that can transform it; theory does not alter painting in process; it can draw stalks out of it and translate them into its own language. While painting produces theory, theory casts light on painting in a backward projection. Yet sometimes theory seeps in and anticipates approximations of what will become a future painting—an instigation that will retroactively be revealed. Theoretical articulation of painting further differentiates the Real. The touch in painting changes the thought and goes elsewhere; the thought alters and returns to the touch. Painting and theory illuminate each other asymmetrically when adjacent, but their temporalities are different. (WIV: 92-93)

It is possible to see the solidification of a 'matrixial aesthetic' in the papers after *The Matrixial Gaze* as demonstrative of the second movement Ettinger describes here. That is, the theory of the matrix having emerged from the seeds sown in *Matrix Halal(a) – Lapsus*, the possibilities for the field of the aesthetic are enlarged, and begin to emerge as elements in a formulation of creativity and sublimation that far exceed the scope of the first phase of theoretical consolidation. The subsequent redevelopment of the field from which the theory of the matrix emerged is reflected in additions to and expansions of its conceptual frame of reference. As well as the screen of phantasy and the sinthome, there are a series of other developments in Ettinger's work within this field, developments which permeate its border with the field of ethics.

We have already seen how Ettinger develops the idea of the screen as mediating between subject and *objet a* in a matrixial direction, as well as the connection she plays upon between the *objet a* and the Thing. Both of these elements link very strongly to another conceptual axis: the sharing of trauma and transgression in the form of wit(h)nessing. In 'Art as the Transport-Station of Trauma,' Ettinger engages the theory of the matrix with Kantian aesthetics, by way of Lacan's *The Ethics* seminar. Beauty appears in *The Ethics* in the form of an untraversable limit, but a limit that blinds us to its nature as such:

⁵⁶ Ettinger emphasises this emergence in a number of places: 'I have transported the vague ideas of *matrix* and *metramorphosis* from art into psychoanalysis in order to unveil through them (become concepts) a particular stratum of opaque, trans-individual, shared-in-difference, affected mental events and phantasies bounded with the feminine-Other. In the matrixial apparatus and by metramorphic processes, this spectrum reaches *some* level of organization and we may perceive *something of it* when it arises, partially, in fits and starts, at the horizon of the space of transference' (TSTB: 633). See also WOT: 11; MBMB: 125; WIV: 92; MG&S: 4 n. 2.

The violent illumination, the glow of beauty, coincides with the moment of transgression [...]. It is in that direction that a certain relationship to a beyond of the central field is established for us, but it is also that which prevents us from seeing its true nature, that which dazzles us and separates us from its true function. (Lacan 1960: 281)

Beyond the 'blinding flash' of beauty lies death, the disappearance of the subject. Ettinger uses the theory of the matrix to traverse this limit, spilling beauty over into 'beauty inclined towards the sublime.' She sees the constitution of beauty as a limit as implicated in the same logic that cuts off the feminine from subjectivity: 'this limit is in fact the barrier of 'castration anxiety' [...] a limit that tears the individual subject – male or female – apart, both from feminine sexuality [...] and from revelations of the death drive' (ATST: 92). This linking of beauty, feminine sexuality and the death drive clarifies the aesthetics of the matrixial field as inseparable from ethics: 'the poietic-aesthetic feminine transgression vibrates between the beautiful and the Sublime but leads, at the same time, to the domain of ethics, by the operation of wit(h)nessing' (ibid.: 113). The idea of an ethics of transgression is developed in more detail in 'Transgressing with-in-to the Feminine' where Ettinger explores Lacan's reading of Sophocles's *Antigone* in *The Ethics*, leading her again to the nexus of beauty, transgression, death and the feminine. Antigone is punished by Creon, King of Thebes, for burying her disgraced brother. She is walled up in a cave, with enough food and water 'that the city may avoid any pollution': 'There she can pray to Death, the only god she honours, and perhaps that will save her life' (Sophocles 1997: 118). Where Lacan reads into Antigone's fate a transgression of the line between the separate spheres of life and death, Ettinger sees a transgression that is transformative of both limits and subject: 'Transgression with-in-to the feminine is not a jump beyond a frontier but an access to the surplus beyond, and thus, a transformation of the limits themselves with regard to my affective access to the questions of the death of the other, and the death of my other's Other' (TWF: 71). Thus, the idea of the feminine as connected with the idea of death, with non-life, is not the feminine associated with what is radically separated from life, but the feminine as a means of transmission across a transgressive threshold: 'The matrixial gaze conducts traces of *events without witness* and passes them onto witnesses who were not there, to what I have called *wit(h)nesses with-out events*' (ibid.: 77). The significance of the matrixial relation across different *temporal* zones is beautifully illustrated by Ettinger's rereading of the motivation behind Antigone's act of transgression. Lacan understands her burial of Polyneices to be motivated by the loss of a unique brother, the loss of the irreplaceable *One* (1960: 255). Ettinger, on the other hand, following Antigone's protestation that 'there is no shame in respecting those from the same womb'

(Sophocles 1997: 108),⁵⁷ suggests another facet of her rebellion: the impact of Creon's reduction of Polyneices to brute, animal flesh:⁵⁸

Non-human bestiality inflicted on my *non-I(s)* diminishes, and can also abolish, the capacity of the matrixial web for reabsorption of loss, for transference of memory and for processing mourning. Antigone's private death is less a price for her to pay [than] living through an irremediable explosion of the matrixial borderspace. (TWF: 79)

That is, part of Antigone's motivation lies in an ethical relation that precedes, but also coexists with, the ethics of the Law: the ethics of the matrixial borderspace. This ethical distinction is not reducible to Hegel's differentiation of divine law and human law in his discussion of *Antigone*, since the ethics of the matrixial is not a *natural* ethics. The difference between a matrixial ethics and an ethics handed down by the Law is not a question of nature, nor the family in opposition to culture or the *polis*. The ethics of the matrixial borderspace, in and through its tracing in the artwork, undeniably has a space of (almost-)public, cultural inscription and transmission that is denied to Hegel's sphere of the family (see Hegel 1807: 267-89).

A MATRIXIAL ETHICS OF TRANSGRESSION

It is possible to see the importance and singularity of the ethical tendency in Ettinger's work through Lacan's question of Michael and Alice Balint: 'What can introduce the recognition of others into the closed system of the object relation?' To which he immediately gives the answer 'Nothing can, and that is what is striking' (Lacan 1954: 213). In the dyadic, closed system of mother and infant, where there is the possibility of a participation in primary subjective structuring by the archaic feminine, the mother is not recognised as a separate Other. In the Lacanian model, where the Other can be recognised as such, this recognition comes at the expense of the m/Other, who is sacrificed in the process of symbolic castration. We are thus presented by Lacan with a binary of two mutually exclusive options: object-relation, or ethics. The latter is an ethics, moreover, which requires the resolution of the Oedipus complex, in his words, 'genital normalisation' (ibid.: 214), and is an ethics based on the Law: the Name-of-the-Father and the prohibition of incest. To posit a stratum within subjectivity that is *primarily* ethical—it is constituted upon a relation to the Other, and can only exist if the Other is preserved in its alterity—but is not based on the imposition of the Law, is thus a radical departure. This, however, is only to state the issue in the most abstract and general of terms. To be more specific, the configuration of ethics and aesthetics in relation to

⁵⁷ The elaboration of matrixiality makes sense of this because it allows a tracing of that which has faded from presence (that is, what might otherwise be considered a 'prior inhabitant' of the inert maternal container).

⁵⁸ 'this woman [...] when her brother fell to the slaughter, would not allow the dogs to gnaw at him nor the birds to pick at his body' (Sophocles 1997: 115-16).

matrixial elements of subjectivity is of particular substance. Because of the nature of the matrixial aesthetic as emerging from an idea of ‘*the impossibility of not sharing*’ (MG: 50/111), everything that appears within this field takes on an ethical dimension. The matrixial *objet a* is shared, the sinthome becomes shared, the Thing becomes Thing-Event, Thing Encounter and Wit(h)ness-Thing, and the crypt becomes *transcryptum*.

The role trauma and transgression have to play in matrixial theory helps to qualify this ethical dimension. The relationship to alterity (even though, by virtue of being in this relation, it is no longer *radical* alterity) in the matrixial encounter is not cosy or comforting, and is often qualified as *fragilising*. Matrixiality borders upon all those things to which subjectivity is usually counterposed: psychosis, death, the feminine, trauma, the Thing, the Other, the *objet a*. The impossible encounter with any of these elements, within Lacanian theory (as with many other theories), will annihilate the subject. Since the matrix is in proximity to all of these, at the distance of, as Ettinger is fond of saying ‘less than a hair’s breadth,’ the primary affect of the matrixial encounter is neither pleasure nor pain, being most often discussed in relation to trauma and the uncanny affect. In terms of transgression, the ethics of the matrixial encounter rests upon a transgression of paternal law. Pregnancy and the intra-uterine encounter are necessarily transgressive from the point of view of the incest prohibition, through which the m/Other-to-be will have passed (WTT: 88-90). The ethics of the matrix is in that sense an ethics of transgression, but not a transgression which results in meaningless regression or subjective unravelling. Rather,

It can even indirectly inform a model of a social bond that cannot be regulated by the phallic law but can be nourished by an ethical inclination and must therefore be reinvented for each encounter, but which, however, is inseparable from such an ethical inclination, where ethics exceeds the social only to be its guiding light. (ibid.: 91)

To close, a text I feel to be exemplary of the tendency towards a reconfiguration of ethics and aesthetics is ‘Transcryptum’ (which also has content in common with ‘Traumatic Wit(h)ness Thing and Matrixial Co/in-habit(u)ating’ and ‘Wit(h)nessing Trauma and the Matrixial Gaze’). In this text, Ettinger takes up Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok’s idea of the *crypt*, the psychic cavity in which ‘the lost object of love and narcissistic gratification’ is encapsulated (TC: 253). The crypt is related to processes of incorporation and introjection linked to mourning and melancholia, but is equivalent to neither, apparently suspending both processes for as long as it remains intact. Ettinger’s concern in discussing the crypt is that of the possibility of its intergenerational transmission and subsequent reappearance. More specifically, she wants to account for ‘eruptions of [the subject’s] crypt and its phantom in the psyche of the child, a phenomenon attested by Dina Wardi, who treated the second generation of the *Shoah*’s survivors’ (ibid.: 253).

The survivor (first generation) lives in a chronic traumatic state, where only the denial of suffering and the perseverance of amnesia and oblivion allow the continuity of psychic life.

The survivor's child (second generation) carries the weight of the unknown buried knowledge of and for the survivor while being recathected by the survivor as a carrier [...] of the survivor's lost objects and crypted phantoms. The question for such a second-generation subject is: how to come into contact and get rid of the weight of a trauma inside itself, a trauma that was not necessarily experienced, whose story was untold, and which was neither incorporated nor introjected by the survivor itself, and was not directly carried and isolated either. (ibid.: 254)

The existence of the problematic of the transgenerational trauma of the *Shoah* leads Ettinger to historicize Abraham and Torok's formulation of the crypt. It was, she argues, constructed only with reference to an era in which the innocence of the nascent subject could be assumed, a different era from the one in which we find ourselves. We are now, she suggests, in a 'post-traumatic era' (referred to earlier as an era of 'events without witness' (MG: 51/111)), where 'trauma is already in the relationships from before any "origin" of subjective or inter-subjective chronological time' (TC: 257). In such an era, she believes, the structures of the matrix are one of the few possibilities that can offer a passage away from the collapse 'of both the individual psyche and the generational filiation' (ibid.).

SUMMARY

My motivating thesis in writing this overview was a simple one: that Ettinger's theory of matrix and metamorphosis is something dynamic, that grows and develops over time, and that the series of papers she has published between 1991 and 2004 present far more than a simple reiteration of the same theory. I intended to construct a narrative around this movement, and so tried to approach her earlier texts without a preconceived idea of the structure of the theory. From the resulting account, I have drawn out the following summaries:

- Very early on in her work, Ettinger shifts her interpretation of its potential impact, from offering the 'relief of signification' to that which is otherwise foreclosed, to formulating a borderline shareability of trauma and phantasy that traces those otherwise foreclosed elements at the margins of the symbolic without imposing the violence of interpretation.
- The role of Lacan's *objet a* in the development of the theory is absolutely crucial. It is implicated in the above shift, as well as in an expansion of the possibilities for subjectivising the real that precedes her uptake of the sinthome and development of the matrixial *objet a*. The uptake of the *objet a* in this early sense is separate from the involvement of the *objet a* of the gaze; it contributes the possibility of a minimal determination of the subject, even within the

framework of Lacanian thinking, that escapes exhaustive determination by the signifier. This minimal non-significatory determination is taken up and modified according to the logic of the matrixial relation.

- The resulting matrixial *objet a* is a concept that has taken some intensive working-out to come into being, and as such might be considered as much an *effect* of the initial theorisation of the matrix as it is a central element of the matrixial paradigm. With regard to this interpretation, I would like to suggest the corollary thesis that the process by which this theory is developed is a cumulative and retroactive one, where each new development feeds back into the resources of the theory, with the effect of instigating further developments. Even if this is not granted, it is indisputable that there is a dynamic interaction between elements of the theory which are added at different times, suggesting that the components of the theory are highly interdependent for their meaning and function.
- In this respect, I have tried to indicate something of the impact of the matrixial *objet a* upon the field of aesthetics, not just in a general sense, but also in terms of what it specifically enables in terms of a matrixial aesthetics. The same could be said of Ettinger's use of the *sinthome* and the screen, both of which have broadened the possibilities for understanding the position of the artist in relation to trauma and creativity.
- An ethical dimension to the theory of the matrix that appears very early on relates specifically to questions of translation and interpretation. This is attested to most explicitly in Ettinger's concern with the indeterminacy of meaning in Hebrew, and the foreclosure of the feminine that has been perpetuated in the translations of the Bible to Greek and English, demonstrated above with reference to 'Becoming Threshold.' Less overtly, there are as a handful of references, developed more recently in 'Plaiting a Being-in-Severality in the Primal Scene,' to the dangers of an analytical interpretation of the speech of the subject in which a predetermined conceptual framework closes down too quickly the possibilities for its meaning.
- Finally, we have seen a convergence, in Ettinger's work as a whole, but particularly in more recent papers, of the different strands within the theory of the matrix upon this field of the ethical. More specifically, a radical reformulation of the possibility of an ethical response to the Other, presented in more recent papers, that is constituted without reference to Law, in transgression of the Law, even, and without the exclusion of an-other (feminine) Other. Crucially, this transgressive ethics, thanks to the theoretical structure which supports it, is not by any means a natural or pre-cultural ethics, but rather, one which is culturally inscribed through a particular bleeding of the categories of ethics and aesthetics.

In relation to this final ‘Developments’ section, some of the detail of what I have covered will find itself contextualised in the conversations that take place in the next three chapters. In particular, Ettinger’s extrusion of the question ‘what is “Woman” for a woman?’ from the Lacanian *sinthome* will implicitly be at stake in the exploration between female subjectivity and the archaic feminine in Chapter 1. Her reconfiguration of the Lacanian articulation of painting and the screen of phantasy will be further examined in Chapter 2, in the context of its effects upon the relationship between psychoanalysis and aesthetics. This examination will also coincide with some questions on the status of Ettinger’s writing as theory, a status that is rendered singularly complicated and potentially undecidable by her writing on painting. This issue will return our attention to Thurston’s situation of the *sinthome* on the extreme (if convoluted) limits of the psychoanalytic field.

EPILOGUE

Recent Developments

‘The art-and-healing *oeuvre*. Metramorphic Relinquishment of the Soul-Spirit to the
Spirit of the Cosmos’ (2005)
‘*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference’ (2006)

Since the publication of a ‘Special Section’ on Ettinger’s work in *Theory, Culture & Society* in 2004, there seems to have been an acceleration in the development of her ideas, which supports the basic hypothesis that matrixiality is very much a live and growing theory. Some of these developments have taken a mystical or cosmological turn whose effects are yet to be deciphered (See ‘The Art-and-Healing *Oeuvre*’). There are, however, three particular moves in this period that I would like to note, but will leave open at present. These are:

- (i) Recent work on post-natal repetition of the matrixial feminine, and further moves towards a matrixial theory of *femininity* or female sexuality (the trajectory from infancy to womanhood).
- (ii) The move from the *objet a* to the matrixial *link-a*. The problematic precipitating this shift has been incipient since *The Matrixial Gaze*, but is only explicitly and definitively embraced in very recent work.
- (iii) The repositioning of the theory of the matrix in relation to psychoanalytic practice.

All three of these developments are legible in Ettinger’s 2006 paper ‘*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference.’ I have presented them schematically in order to align

them with material that will appear in the chapters that will follow. In particular, a return to ‘*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference,’ within Chapters 1 and 3 will reconnect with the most sophisticated, most articulated theorisation of matrix and metramorphosis to date. The third of these moves, however, has the greatest significance of these most recent developments. The repositioning it undertakes—to which I will return in closing this thesis—constitutes a new phase of confidence within the theory of the matrix, concerning its relationship to, and implications for psychoanalysis as a clinical practice.

PART TWO

Contexts & Commentary

[The matrix as a pre-natal symbolic space] is blasphemy both in psychoanalytical traditions for which pre-birth speculations are outlawed and for feminist thought so perpetually self-policing about any claim for the meaning of [a] sexually differentiated body.

Griselda Pollock, 'Thinking the Feminine'

Freudian concepts are on the whole connected to the model provided by thermodynamics. And it is this model that one should suspect, by questioning whether it is universally adequate for the female, or even the male. [...] To remain within the thermodynamic framework would amount partly to value death over life. Further, western thought has been dominated by the physics and the mechanics of solid matter, whereas the feminine refers much more to a mechanics of fluids, which has barely been elaborated. [...] Psychoanalysis maintains that there is no feminine libido, without noticing that in the model of psychic economy which it is using, that libido cannot exist.

Luce Irigaray, 'Women's exile'

1

THE FEMININE

Heterogeneity, corporeality and the limits of subjectivity in
Ettinger, Irigaray and Kristeva

One might expect a chapter on the feminine which involves the work of three psychoanalytically-oriented 'French' theorists to engage in a substantial way with Lacan. That is not explicitly what will happen here. While one cannot dispute the significance of Lacan's work within the field of the feminine, and its implications for the work of Kristeva, Irigaray, and especially Ettinger, I wish to draw out certain non-Lacanian threads in their work. This is partly in an attempt to disperse the kind of dynamic described by Jacqueline Rose in *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, the double bind of 'how to situate oneself as a woman between the Christlike figure with its powerful and oppressive weight, and the too easy assimilation of the underside of language to an archaic femininity gone wild' (1986: 3). By approaching the feminine through an archive assembled at one remove from Lacan, I hope to avoid the too easy binaries of conformity with or opposition to his work, while still being able to discuss areas which relate to it. The other motive behind this approach is to draw upon other psychoanalytic resources—from a post- or non-Lacanian return to Freud, to British object-relations theories—that may be usefully synthesised and/or deployed in attempts to think

the feminine. Lacan's work will surface intermittently, but only in a very abstract sense, and will not be directly engaged with.

A coincidence of femininity and the extreme limits of subjectivity has been, for decades now, the place of a particular strand of feminist debate (a debate profoundly involved, as Alice Jardine's *Gynesis* shows, with the crumbling of the master narratives of Western onto-theology (Jardine 1985)). It is this focus that I aim to explore, through some of Kristeva's, Irigaray's and Ettinger's work, in order to gain an insight into how the theory of the matrix might extend the possibilities for understanding, and perhaps for reconfiguring, the coincidence of the feminine and the limits of subjectivity. Part of the motivation for approaching the feminine in this manner comes from a slightly defensive, but not all that uncommon, response to a stated interest in Ettinger's work: 'Why not Kristeva?' 'Why not Irigaray?' 'What does the matrix give us that we haven't already got in the *chora*?' The temptation, in the face of this kind of questioning, would be to respond with a defence of Ettinger's work, to lay out all the reasons why *not* Kristeva, why *not* Irigaray. That is not what I will do here, as the intention of this thesis is to examine the points at which such difficult questions arise, rather than immediately to dismiss such questions with answers. Neither will I claim anything like an exhaustive picture of Kristeva's and Irigaray's work. I will attend only to a small number of texts, which are chosen not because they are necessarily representative of their author, but because they help to articulate the connection of the feminine to the most archaic limit of subjectivity.

The impetus for the object of this chapter—the relation between subjectivity, the archaic feminine and intra-uterine life—comes from Kristeva's theory of the semiotic. This provides an indispensable starting-point by presenting a critique of the limitation of the general field of semiotics to modalities of signification, which, moreover, allows for a participation of the archaic feminine in the constitution of subjectivity, meaning and creativity. Given the role of Lacanian psychoanalytic structures in (a particular strand of Anglo-American) feminist theory from the late 1970s onwards, in which the theory of the matrix appears to both find a home and a resistance, I will also explore, to a limited extent, the idea that the theory of the semiotic can be seen as a counter-position to the (possibly early, although this is controversial)⁵⁹ Lacanian reduction of unconscious contents to signifiers and unconscious structure to the signifying chain. It is also useful that the Kristevan semiotic, in spite of its relation to the archaic feminine, has a problematic

⁵⁹ For example, Bruce Fink insists on the persistence of the structuralist Lacan into his late work: 'This characterization of unconscious thought was by no means a passing fancy of Lacan's, representative at best of his "structuralist" years. In Seminar XX, Lacan says that, in his vocabulary, "the letter designates an assemblage...[or rather] letters *make up* assemblages; not simply *designating* them, they *are* assemblages, they are to be taken as functioning as assemblages themselves" [...]. He later adds, "the unconscious is structured like the assemblages in question in set theory, which are like letters"' (1995: 20).

relation to women as subjects. As Pollock notes in 'To Inscribe in the Feminine,' Kristeva's negotiation of femininity, particularly in relation to creativity and the avant-garde ascribes to the male artist a privileged position in being able to access the revolutionary potential of the semiotic (Pollock 1998: 96). As we will shortly see, the predominant sites of female access to the semiotic are via childbirth and maternity, sites which are inconveniently barred from sublimation in signifying practices.

Part one of this chapter is in some senses a matter of groundwork, in that it is not exclusively concerned with female sexuality and subjectivity, but with matters relating to the limits of subjectivity in general. Here I explore a connection between the feminine and the historical limit of subjectivity: birth. I will approach some ideas surrounding the problematic raised by Pollock, above, and will argue that what lies behind the establishment of birth as the absolute limit of subjectivising experience is not necessarily an arbitrary exclusion, but its subjection to a phantasy that erases any possibility of subjectivising potential. I will use Kristeva's 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini' as an example of this erasure, which will also indicate some of the effects this has upon the characterisation of female sexual and corporeal experience. I will then turn to Irigaray, who will lend some polemical support to the idea of a concrete (rather than arbitrary) expulsion of the intra-uterine from the field of subjectivity, a support which, as is posited in a recent paper by Margaret Whitford, circulates around theories of primary narcissism and projective identification. I will, however, also turn to the complicity of the theory of the partial drives in this erasure. This argument will lead into an analysis of Ettinger's paper 'Woman as *Objet a*,' in which, I will claim, she undertakes a synthetic navigation of the structural and conceptual problems subtending the establishment of birth as the absolute limit of subjectivisation.

The second part of this chapter concerns itself with the implications of part one for ideas of female subjectivity and feminine sexuality. This especially relates both to Freud's doctrine of the primacy of the phallus in infantile sexuality and that of the hatred of the mother as a normative condition of subjectivity. Kristeva's labours to accommodate these two doctrines within a specific understanding of female subjectivity clearly display the limits of what is possible within a Freudian framework, which construes the only possibilities for a relation to the archaic m/Other in terms of undifferentiation or schism. I will argue that Irigaray's challenge to this restriction is taken up within Ettinger's recent work to extend the intra-uterine matrixial encounter into a theory of femininity, which potentially offers a repetition of the form of sexual difference inscribed in the originary matrixial encounter as a means of reconfiguring the path to adult female subjectivity and sexuality. This offer theoretically evades the melancholia or sadomasochism of Kristeva's accounts, thus undermining the pathologisation of femininity by psychoanalysis.

Using the Kristevan semiotic as a starting-point, I would like to examine a particular configuration of limitations and expulsions that emerge in relation to it, but which do not only concern women or female sexuality. Another factor that will be at issue is the Freudian theory of the drives, and the role this has to play in determining the negotiation of the feminine, on the one hand providing a crucial middle-ground between constructionism and biological determinism, on the other reducing sexuality and the relation to the other according to the libidinal form of the economic model, as well as a primary indifference to the functionally-disposable object. Firstly, then, a few remarks on the relation between the Freudian partial drives and sexuality.

THE PERVERSE ORIGINS OF SEXUALITY

Why should we be interested in the theory of the partial drives? As one of the most controversial aspects of the Freudian 'discovery,' it is by turns lauded as the heart of the Freudian revolution (Kristeva 1973: 28), relegated as secondary in status to the libidinal attitude to the object (Fairbairn 1941: 77), or entirely jettisoned (Bowlby 1971: 216-7).⁶⁰ I will take up the first of these tendencies because its advantages in terms of a theory of language and corporeality, drawn out from drive theory by Kristeva, will enable me to characterise the complexity of its position within the problematic I will go on to lay out. Those theories which dismiss or relativise drive theory have the disadvantage of closing the spaces it opens in the configuration of sexuality, corporeality and language (often by covering over these spaces with diffuse and often desexualised ideas of primary object-love or ethological development), and thus also closing down those spaces through which the feminine may be positioned in relation to what Kristeva terms the 'copresence of sexuality and thought' in psychoanalysis (1996b: 82).

Teresa de Lauretis points out in *The Practice of Love* that Freud relies upon perversion in order to be able to analyse sexuality into its component instincts, but that there is a tension between a desire to take the 'sexual instinct' apart, piece by piece, and to censor the perversion of this instinct such an analysis effectively presents:

it is not altogether unreasonable to think that, in setting forth his original theory of infantile sexuality, with its component instincts and polymorphous perversity, Freud felt that his reformulation of the sexual instinct must be theoretically restrained, rhetorically curbed, as it were, by the emphasis on an ideal normal development which would save the theory from itself partaking of the perversions that the first essay describes. I do not mean to suggest that this latter emphasis stems from expediency or is a merely rhetorical strategy on Freud's part. [...] I think the two emphases more likely reflect a bona fide and structural

⁶⁰ Bowlby, incidentally, not only rejects drive theory, but also the economic model of the psyche, the latter because he conceives it as extra-disciplinary and scientifically outdated (1971: 35-38). On the question of the relationship between psychoanalysis and science, see Chapter 3, part I.

ambivalence in Freud's thinking, due to the logic of the argument and its heuristic premise driving it in one direction, and to the drift of his ideological, emotional, and affective conditions pulling in a contrary direction. (1994: 15)

The analysis of infantile sexuality into its component instincts (partial drives) produces a generalised derivation of sexuality from something perverse, without a determinate or pre-determined object or aim; cruel, sadistic, cannibalistic, scopophilic, exhibitionistic and most of all, amoral. This lack of pre-determination is potentially of some value for approaches to sexuality that seek to evade heteronormative, reproductive, or biological reductionism. Indeed, de Lauretis draws out the tensions in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* to the point where she feels herself able to identify two narrative strands, two Freuds almost: one forward-looking and creative, the other backward-looking and conservative. The former is the Freud she would like to draw upon in formulating a theory of perverse desire and lesbian sexuality; it is also the Freud that appears in the first chapter of *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* (hereafter *Life and Death*), where Laplanche extracts from Freud a view of (infantile) sexuality as *constitutively* perverse: 'What, then, is perverted, since we may no longer refer to a "sexual instinct," at least in the case of the small child? What is perverted is still the instinct, but it is as a vital function that it is perverted *by* sexuality' (1970: 23). This constitutive perversion emerges from the important relation Laplanche unpacks between the sexuate body and the biological, animal, 'natural' body in the *Three Essays*. As is frequently noted, following Laplanche, this is an issue complicated by the English translation in the *Standard Edition*, which renders both *Trieb* and *Instinkt*—both deriving from terms meaning 'to push'—as *instinct*. Laplanche acknowledges their etymological similarity, but attributes a differentiation according, in part, to German usage.

Unfortunately, it has been insufficiently noted that the term *Instinkt* is used to designate something entirely different from what is described elsewhere as sexuality. *Instinkt*, in Freud's language, is a preformed behavioural pattern, whose arrangement is determined hereditarily and which is repeated according to modalities relatively adapted to a certain type of object. (ibid.: 10)

In *Life and Death*, Laplanche identifies a threefold relation between drive and instinct: analogy, difference, and derivation. The quadripartite structure of the instinct—source (*Quelle*), pressure or impetus (*Drang*), aim (*Ziel*) and object (*Objekt*)—is paralleled in its 'psychic representative,' the drive. It is *Trieb* that refers to the sexuate body, and *Instinkt* to the animal body. The two are not split from each other, as such: the former emerges as a swerve in the aim and the object of the latter. The aim is the action toward which the drive intends. The object is, quite simply, the object towards which the drive is directed. In terms of drive, rather than instinct, the object is in some senses the least significant element of the structure, since it is subordinate to the aim of the drive: 'the specificity or individuality of the object is, after all, of minimal concern; it is enough for it to possess certain *traits* which trigger the satisfying action' (ibid.: 12). The object is the element which

diverges the greatest in the transition from instinct to drive, since, for a time after the initial sexual excitation of the drive, its object disappears, bringing a state of auto-erotism (ibid.: 19). The parallelism of drive and instinct is theorised at this point in Laplanche's thinking as the result of the relative immaturity of the human infant (ibid.: 47; see also Kristeva 1996b: 32-33),⁶¹ and its initial dependence on the mother for satisfaction of every instinctual impulse. Because of this immaturity, and the consequent atrophy of instinctual response, the movement from impetus to satisfaction of instinct is marked by a substantial increase and release of libidinal energy, and thus, in the economic model an unpleasure-pleasure trajectory.

The archetypal model for the drive, for Freud, as for Laplanche and Kristeva, is the oral instinct.⁶² The appearance of the sexual process from the process of feeding is, in Laplanche's schema, due to the simultaneous stimulation of the lips when feeding, and the removal of libidinal tension (the production of pleasure) through the satisfaction of hunger. The investment in the site of satisfaction leads to a transfer of object and aim: in the case of orality, the object transfers from the milk to the breast, and the aim from satisfaction of hunger to consumption of the object: "This is a derivation which is not simply conceptual, but which we may, with Freud, relate to a real derivation: the derivation in man of drives from instincts' (ibid.: 10). This derivation, which is also a transformation, gives rise to an idea of sexuality—as irreducible to biology while at the same time not being entirely divorced from it—that is, for me, the most valuable aspect of the theory of the partial drives. Particularly in the hands of Kristeva and Laplanche, this builds human subjectivity and sexuality on a foundation that is at once materially and corporeally grounded, but which escapes any sense of biological determinism.

SEMIOTIC HETEROGENEITY

The most tempting place to begin a comparison of, or conversation between Ettinger's and Kristeva's work relating to the heterogeneity of the archaic feminine, is suggested by Ettinger herself in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' via a characterisation of the primary meaning of the *Chora* (like the matrix) as 'also uterus/womb':

Even though Kristeva chooses the term Chora, for her the first human contact with the other is post-natal: the oral perception is the first one and the first contact with the other/mother takes the mode of fusion. Recognition of separate others is

⁶¹ I should emphasise, however, that in later work Laplanche distances himself from this position: 'prematurity is not the sole explanation of how an infant becomes a human being' (1987: 97). I will discuss this later phase in his thinking in Chapter 3.

⁶² It is also, in Fairbairn's opinion, one of the two 'natural' phases in libidinal development, since in the anal phase, the object is already symbolic: 'whilst the breast and the genital organs are natural biological objects of the libidinal impulse, faeces certainly is not' (1941: 74).

negative/aggressive. These fusion/aggression mechanisms are typical of the symbolic and oral stage [...] My concept of the Matrix is, therefore, radically different from Kristeva's concept of the Chora in these aspects. (M&M: 198)

While this approach at the level of the image is understandable, I wish to begin with another tack: Kristeva's semiotic as a re-insertion of the heterogeneity of the drive into the systematicity of the linguistic turn in psychoanalysis. This is a significant dimension of Kristeva's thinking, as she is the only one of the three women approached in this chapter who unambiguously founds her theoretical work upon the theory of the drives. This has two important consequences for Ettinger's work on the feminine insofar as, by grounding her thinking in the drives, Kristeva relativises the transcendental domination of the signifier in Lacanian thinking, as well as historicising the idea of the unconscious 'structured like a language' (1996b: 42). Both of these, I believe, share some common ground with Ettinger's criticism of and attempted solution to the rigidity of the Lacanian symbolic, but will also, as I hope to show, find themselves counterposed to certain characteristics of Ettinger's theoretical intervention.

Lacan's oft-repeated phrase 'the unconscious is structured like a language' is the standard-bearer of a great deal that Kristeva and Ettinger call into question. A direct critique of Lacan or Lacanianism is not so much in evidence in Kristeva's early work (1973: 28), but in *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* (hereafter *Sense and Non-Sense*), she directly comments upon the neglect of the drives in the Lacanian unconscious:

If we harden the Lacanian line as I have traced it, we end up getting rid of what still constituted [the] Freudian dualism [...] that situates language between the conscious and unconscious while at the same time maintaining the dualist drive/conscious vision. We thus liquidate the instinctual domain as well as the primary process. This is the tendency of a certain current in French Lacanian and post-Lacanian psychoanalysis that considers the notion of the drive useless. The drive is a myth, adherents of this point of view are telling us, because we do not have access to it except through language. It is therefore useless to talk about drives; we should be content to talk about language. (Kristeva 1996b: 43)

Kristeva's more overt criticism of the Lacanian model of the unconscious and language hinges upon two factors: firstly, criticism of a reduction of the development of language in Freud after *The Interpretation of Dreams* (and as a consequence, neglect of the role of analytic practice in the development of Freud's thought); secondly, and more importantly for our considerations, the subordination, in this model, of the unconscious to consciousness, and thus the removal of both the gap between psyche and soma, and the role of language across it. The 'optimistic' model of the unconscious laid out in *The Interpretation of Dreams* is, for Kristeva 'an unconscious under the domain of consciousness' (ibid.: 38). Citing Freud's characterisation of language as 'made up of "preconscious intermediate links"', she points out that it is the preconscious that dominates the unconscious as the basis of psychoanalytic treatment: 'language constitutes an intermediate zone, an

interface between the unconscious and the conscious and allows the former to be dominated by the latter' (ibid.: 38-9). For this process to function within the treatment—for the unconscious to be influenced by language—there must, within this model of the unconscious, be a structure 'conferred on it that *resembles* the linguistic conscious, that represents a certain audible, comprehensible linguistic form':

You see now why I qualify this second model as optimistic. Because the unconscious is articulated like a language, "I" can decipher it, "I" can discover its rules; in addition, because it is situated in an intermediary position between different agencies, it will give me access to the unknowable, that is, to trauma. (ibid.: 40)

Kristeva's earliest and most thorough exposition of the semiotic in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (hereafter *Revolution*) is the foundation of this later critique of Lacanian linguistic imperialism. In elaborating what she intends by the semiotic modality of the signifying process, Kristeva begins by identifying its etymology: 'σημεῖον = distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace, figuration' (1974: 25). She suggests that the diversity of this etymology would be of little or no use, were it not for the fact that it connects to what she considers to be a 'precise modality' of the signifying process: the marking out of the body. That is, the drives are progressively arranged according to constraints placed upon the body (which is not yet a body as such), be they 'biological' (Kristeva identifies sexual difference as one such constraint) or environmental (ibid.: 29). In this archaic sphere this progressive articulation, or marking out of the drives, is the process to which Kristeva applies the term *semiotic*. It takes the form of a movement between 'charges and stases,' between a build-up of libidinal tension and its release: since the drives are constitutively heterogeneous—stasis is never fully successful—the semiotic is characterised by perpetual movement and repetition, but leading 'to no identity (not even that of the "body proper") that could be seen as the result of their functioning' (ibid.: 28).

The site Kristeva nominates as the locus of these charges and stases is infamous in relating the semiotic and the feminine: the *chora*. In *Revolution* this is glossed as 'a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated' (ibid.: 25). Kristeva's *chora* is the 'space' where the ordering (according to function, rather than law) of the drives takes place. The stases of the drives—discharges of libidinal tension—are what bind them to particular zones of the body, as we have seen with the satisfaction of hunger in the oral drive. The role of the mother in this ordering is a particular site of connection between the *chora* and the feminine. The ordering of the drives does not take place 'within' the infant as an isolated monad, but is, particularly in the case of the oral and anal drives, oriented 'around the mother's body,' which 'is therefore what mediates the symbolic law organizing social relations, and becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora*' (ibid.: 27). The semiotic *chora* is thus the liminal space

between the mute corporeality of the drives and the phonetic materiality of language, and in this space the mother antedates the Name-of-the-Father as a structuring force.

For Kristeva the semiotic, as a material substrate of language, constitutes the means, if not the method for revitalisation and change within a symbolic no longer conceived of as limited to and by the signifying chain.⁶³ The signifier, however, is far from jettisoned, remaining integral to the ability of the semiotic to emerge within signifying practice. Without its ordering presence, the reappearance of the semiotic would be a regression in to the muteness or incoherence of the pre-linguistic. Because of this position, it is not enough for Kristeva simply to add the semiotic to the symbolic; as heterogeneous realms, the passage between them requires a third term. This is provided by the notion of *thetic positionality*.

Freud is not the only facilitating voice in *Revolution*: Kristeva undertakes her own innovations through a synthesis of Freudian drive theory with, for example, Husserl's notion of the thetic and Hegel's dialectical formulation of negativity. In synthesising Freud with these and other ideas, Kristeva is able to extend the progressive organisation of psyche and soma into a post-Lacanian field, where the subject is co-extensive with the passage into language. The reason Kristeva has to return to Freud, and proceed via a passage through philosophy, rather than taking up a straightforwardly Lacanian position, is that this position enables her to reconfigure the subject's installation in language, refusing simply to reiterate the dominance of the Name-of-the-Father in Lacanian theory. Rather, she institutes Husserl's thetic as the mediator between the heterogeneous semiotic and symbolic, locating the separation and position of subject and object as having an inception that precedes castration: 'Castration puts the *finishing touches* on the process of separation that posits the subject as signifiable, which is to say, separate, always confronted by another' (ibid.: 47, emphasis added). Kristeva does not reject the roles of castration and the Oedipus complex in the constitution of the speaking subject, but rearticulates their role as consolidating, or building upon, a shift that has already taken place in the 'spatial intuition' of the thetic. Such a reconfiguration also concerns the scope and power of the signifier; she argues that the thetic phase is not equivalent to a repression of the semiotic, but is rather a *positioning* or placing of semiotic motility in the signifier, the articulation of the semiotic network being 'necessary in the system of language where it will be more or less integrated in the signifier' (ibid.: 47). That castration follows

⁶³ Kelly Oliver points out a duality of the term *symbolic* within Kristeva's thinking: 'Whereas Lacan uses the Symbolic to refer to the Symbolic order, Kristeva uses the symbolic in two senses to refer not only to the Symbolic order but also to a specifically symbolic element within the Symbolic order that she opposes to the semiotic element. The Symbolic order is the order of signification, the social realm. This realm is composed of both semiotic and symbolic elements' (1993: 10).

from this placing means that, given the likelihood of castration being a difficult or incomplete process, the semiotic persists in all language. In this respect Kristeva argues that the

completion of the Oedipal stage and the genitality it gives rise to should not repress the semiotic, for such a repression is what sets up metalanguage and the “pure signifier.” No pure signifier can effect the *Aufhebung* (in the Hegelian sense) of the semiotic without leaving a remainder. (ibid.: 51)

The positing of the semiotic—during the thetic phase—in the place of the signifier situates it as the *materiality* of signifying practice. As such, the semiotic is in a position to disrupt the stability of syntax and negation. Since castration never fully represses semiotic motility (its complete repression would effectively foreclose the symbolic function),⁶⁴ and thetic positionality faces in *both* directions: it is that which allows the separation from the object and its positing under the sign, but it is also ‘displaced toward the stages previous to its positing or within the very stases of the semiotic’ (ibid.: 67), symbolic functioning is permanently unstable (ibid.: 62). If semiotic motility is posited as the materiality of the symbolic function (that is, the signifier) it is in the resurgence of this materiality, through a corruption of syntax or negation, that the symbolic function is disrupted. Such a resurgence occurs within signifying practice (poetry, music) only when harmonised with a modality of signification. Without this check on the force of negativity, ‘the loss of the symbolic function, as seen in schizophrenia, may result’ (ibid.: 69).

Although Kristeva lays out the semiotic and the symbolic in a mutually constituting relation in *Revolution*, and is highly specific as to the means by which the semiotic may irrupt within cultural (signifying) practices, there are a number of texts written subsequently which suggest another marginal semiotic sphere that lacks the cultural inscription of her ‘signifying practices’. These sites invariably concern the feminine, and moreover the maternal body as a site that falls in-between creativity and psychosis as the typical poles of the semiotic. This culminates, in *Black Sun*, with the identification of a specifically feminine melancholia, which marks a failure to traverse successfully the terrain between the semiotic and the symbolic, a failure that seems an almost inevitable pitfall in the journey towards adult female subjectivity. The presence of such marginal (asymbolic) semiotic sites from the very earliest period in Kristeva’s work is legible in another text I would like to consider: ‘Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini’.

⁶⁴ Kristeva elaborates: ‘According to Freud, in his article on “Negation,” symbolization implies a repression of pleasure and erotic drives. But this repression is not absolute. Freud implies that complete repression (if it were possible) would stop the symbolic function’ (1974: 162).

PART I

Corporeal heterogeneity, intra-uterine undifferentiation and the excision of the archaic feminine from subjectivity

In ‘Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini,’ Kristeva presents what has become something of a notorious passage, one that will represent the point of departure for this chapter:

Cells fuse, split, and proliferate; volumes grow, tissues stretch, and body fluids change rhythm, speeding up or slowing down. Within the body, growing as a graft, indomitable, there is an other. And no one is present, within that simultaneously dual and alien space, to signify what is going on. “It happens, but I’m not there.” “I cannot realize it, but it goes on.” Motherhood’s impossible syllogism. (1975: 237)

Kristeva’s concern here is to argue that pregnancy is inaccessible to the woman-as-subject, and thus to discourse. A corresponding, if less explicit aspect of this argument is the situation of the foetus wholly within biology, a ‘graft,’ also absent from subjectivisation. She articulates from this absence a later need to be able phantasmatically to posit the mother as the subject (and master) of the gestating body, in order to ward off the ‘psychotic tendencies’ inherent in conceiving of the originating body as brute biology (ibid.: 238). From Kristeva’s inclusion of these two perspectives, we will see that the issue of the intra-uterine is double, or at least (and from the outset) cannot be reduced to a single perspective. Because of this, its positioning in relation to (or exclusion from) subjectivity has significant implications for the nature and constitution of subjectivity in general. In particular, however, the question of an intra-subjective co-existence or relation of the doubled perspectives or elements of the intra-uterine will be a key point of focus in that, in my view, it causes some difficulty for thinking the feminine, subtending the problematic mother-daughter relation explored by both Kristeva and Irigaray.

The core of Kristeva’s argument seems to rest in a conception of pregnancy as biology: something that happens automatically, a mechanistic female body in which there is no possibility of subjective participation. In this view, the subjective relation to pregnancy is simply a matter of waiting for the body—from which one is split—to finish its work. In this regard, then, Kristeva seems to posit an opposition between absolute passivity in the face of (and splitting from) the body, and total mastery of it, apparently according to a schematic where the body is an object, *either* to be incorporated by the subject, *or* expelled from it. This is further supported by her consideration of the body of the mother-to-be as a filter, ‘a thoroughfare, a threshold where “nature” confronts “culture”’ (ibid.: 238).

This becoming-a-mother, this gestation, can possibly be accounted for by means of only two discourses. There is *science*; but as an objective discourse, science is not concerned with the subject, the mother as site of her proceedings. There is *Christian theology* (especially canonical theology); but theology defines maternity only as an impossible elsewhere, a sacred beyond, a vessel of divinity, a spiritual tie with the ineffable godhead, and transcendence's ultimate support—necessarily virginal and committed to assumption. (ibid.: 237)

Why is it, according to Kristeva, that these are the only two discourses which can account for pregnancy? Why is it excluded from the human, from symbolic destiny? This exclusion figures pregnancy as reducible to the reproductive function, and thus as part of an extra-human process in which the maternal body is nothing more than a 'module,' concealing a 'cipher,' making 'the maternal body the stakes of a natural and "objective" control, independent of any individual consciousness; it inscribes both biological operations and their instinctual echoes into this necessary and hazardous *program* constituting every species' (ibid.: 241). Kristeva's argument is slightly more nuanced, however, than to claim (as Elizabeth Grosz has her do in *Sexual Subversions* (1989: 79)) that pregnancy and subjectivity are entirely disconnected. For Kristeva, the *phantasy* of the phallic mother as a 'subject of biology' is a necessary one:

To imagine that there is *someone* in that filter [the pregnant body]—such is the source of religious mystifications, the font that nourishes them: the fantasy of the so-called "Phallic" Mother. Because if, on the contrary, there were no one on this threshold, if the mother were not, that is, if she were not phallic, then every speaker would be led to conceive of its Being in relation to some void, a nothingness asymmetrically opposed to this Being, a permanent threat against, first, its mastery, and ultimately, its stability. (1975: 238)

So, rather than pregnancy being without a subject, there is a subject of pregnancy, but only on a phantasmatic asymbolic level. The woman who is pregnant occupies, for Kristeva, two positions at once, which is why 'the maternal body is the place of a splitting' (ibid.: 238): she is the subject of paternal law, a 'symbolizing, speaking subject and like all others,' and at the same time the inhabitant of a nothing, a cipher in conflict with 'symbolic destiny,' that is accordingly sealed off (ibid.: 241). Inasmuch as she is the former, the desire to become a mother is an Oedipal desire, 'without fail a desire to bear a child of the father' (ibid.: 238), in effect the demand for a penis (ibid.). In terms of the latter position, Kristeva also points to an impulse to motherhood with a 'nonsymbolic, nonpaternal causality,' that is a desire of a 'woman mother' for a phantasmatic reunion with the 'body of *her* mother': 'always the same Mother of instinctual drive, a ruler of psychosis, a subject of biology.' On this basis of this causality, Kristeva suggests that 'By giving birth, the woman enters into contact with her mother; she becomes, she is her own mother; they are the same continuity differentiating itself' (ibid.: 239). Kristeva's characterisation of the '*homosexual-maternal face*' is highly suggestive of the potential for psychosis of an irruption of the semiotic without the mediation of thetic positionality, it is 'a whirl of words, a complete absence of

meaning and seeing; it is feeling, displacement, rhythm, sound, flashes, and fantasied clinging to the maternal body as a screen against the plunge' (ibid.). The mother-daughter relation for Kristeva, at this point in her work, appears to be a protective regression to a phantasy of undifferentiation from a mythically all-powerful female entity, the phallic mother, which could be considered a non-relation insofar as relation requires difference. She thus allows for an impulse to motherhood that escapes (in a manner of speaking) paternal law, but only to reinscribe itself within a discourse of biological teleology, the continuation of the species: 'Material compulsion, spasm of a memory belonging to the species that either binds together or splits apart to perpetuate itself, series of markers with no other significance than the eternal return of the life-death biological cycle' (ibid.).

Kristeva repeatedly returns to the problematic laid out in this early formulation—particularly in *Powers of Horror*, *Tales of Love*, *Black Sun*, and *Sense and Non-Sense*—and I will consider some of her later developments further on in this chapter, particularly concerning the connected questions of infantile genitality and the separation/differentiation from the maternal body. Before this, however, I would like to turn to Irigaray and the main focus of this chapter, which has taken shape as a response to Kristeva's location of pregnancy and the intra-uterine as extra-human fields of existence. I will approach the possibility that Kristeva's treatment of these areas is inextricably linked to the drive theory she so valuably deploys in articulating the semiotic. Her positing of the 'experience' of pregnancy and intra-uterine life within a narrative of psychosis and undifferentiation is challenged by Irigaray's approach, which enfolds the expulsion of intra-uterine life from the field of subjectivity within a discourse on the cultural and philosophical dereliction of the feminine. Traces of this aspect of Irigaray's work are legible in *Speculum of the Other Woman* and *This Sex Which Is Not One*, but it appears most clearly in 'The Bodily Encounter with the Mother,' and—in a more philosophical context—*An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. On the basis of some suggestions from these latter texts, and following from a recent piece by Margaret Whitford, I will take a slightly circuitous route through ideas of primary narcissism and projective identification. This will enable me to explore the view that the idea of pregnancy as an exclusively a-subjective biological mechanism is profoundly related to the dominance of a particular phantasy of intra-uterine existence, one which wipes out and closes down an important—although not determining—resource for feminine subjectivity and sexual difference.

INTRA-UTERINE OMNIPOTENCE: NARCISSISM AND A-FUNCTIONALITY

In 'The Bodily Encounter with the Mother,' Irigaray directly approaches the absence of the intra-uterine from the domain of subjectivity. She argues that this absence is connected to *two* retrospective forms of processing the archaic feminine. The more familiar form is that of the phallic phase, where the polymorphous perversity of the partial drives is subsumed under the

primacy of the phallus (on which I will say more in Part II of this chapter) and the various dynamics of the Oedipus complex. In a less familiar vein, Irigaray also argues that the classical dynamic upon which the Oedipus complex is based—ambivalence of the son toward the father—is itself built upon and subtended by the processing of the maternal body by the partial drives, that in this earlier form of processing the mother is ‘cut up into stages, with each part of her body having to be cathected and then decathected’ (1981: 38). Although the genital drive, which retrospectively organises the other partial drives (see Laplanche & Pontalis 1967: 309), obliterates their concern with the body of the mother, and takes back from her ‘the power to give birth, to nourish, to dwell, to centre’ (Irigaray 1981: 38), this subtraction operates upon what is already a secondary organisation. With Ettinger (M&M: 198), Irigaray disputes the view that the first meaningful contact with the mother is post-natal and oral. The first bond with the mother, she argues,

took place in a primal womb, our first nourishing earth, first waters, first envelopes, where the child was *whole*, the mother *whole* through the mediation of her blood. They were bound together, albeit in an asymmetrical relationship, before any cutting, any cutting up of their bodies into fragments. (Irigaray 1981: 38-39)

Irigaray notes the invisibility of this ‘first contact’ for psychoanalysis, its tendency to reduce the appearance of the intra-uterine to psychotic regression (ibid.: 39), but also acknowledges a danger inherent in preserving it, from the point of view of language and the Name of the Father: ‘the danger of fusion, of death, of the sleep of death’ (ibid.). In spite of this danger, however, she questions the *absolute* exclusion of this contact by language, on the grounds that while it is a contingent and one-sided prohibition, it is erected as the *necessary* condition of language and sociality: in order to establish the Name of the Father as ‘the sole creator’ (ibid.: 41), she argues, the intra-uterine is sacrificed as the ‘material for the rule of a language [*langue*] which privileges the masculine genre [*le genre masculin*] to such an extent as to confuse it with the human race’ (ibid.: 39). While it is advisable to be wary of Irigaray’s dualistic rhetoric in articulating this position, it is still possible to acknowledge that she is tapping into a very significant issue; we have already seen its effects at play in Kristeva’s claim that pregnancy can only be accounted for by the discourses of science and theology. In spite of Irigaray’s rhetorical dramatisation of this problematic, her proposed solution to it is rather more modest: not a psychotic return to the womb or a mystical equation of women and childbirth, but a matter of symbolic structure and representation, a resistance to the idea that the intra-uterine is the necessary excess of language.

As well as the sexual and subjectivising consequences of this prohibition, in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (hereafter *An Ethics*), Irigaray positions the impact of a lack of representation of the foetal and the intra-uterine in a more philosophical register, and from the point of view of the female subject rather than the infant. On the basis of the female body as the primary dwelling of the infant, she argues that ‘woman represents *place* for man’ (1984: 10). This representation, in her view, is one-

sided and exclusive; it is projected from outside, and thus impairs a coincidence of place and embodied womanhood: ‘The maternal-feminine remains the *place separated from “its” place*, deprived of “its” place’ (ibid.: 11). For this ‘woman’ to become locatable, to have a place, would require an impossible contortion: ‘she would have to re-envelop herself with herself, and do so at least twice: as a woman and as a mother. Which would presuppose a change in the whole economy of space-time’ (ibid.). This doubling approaches again the question of the rift imposed for the female subject by the non-representation of the intra-uterine; the two sites of envelopment Irigaray presents here are the generalised cultural representative of place (which recalls Kristeva’s ‘cipher’), and the particular maternal locus which envelops the infant (Kristeva’s projected phantasy of the phallic mother, covering over the subjective void of the intra-uterine).

In a recent paper, ‘Irigaray and the Culture of Narcissism,’ Margaret Whitford takes up Irigaray’s attention to the intra-uterine and uses it to revise her earlier interpretation of Irigaray’s critique of Western culture. Where previously she had read a criticism of an anal ontology—‘In the ontology of the West, according to Irigaray, there are only men, and defective, castrated men (women). This corresponds to the undifferentiation of the anal fantasy’ (Whitford 2003: 31 n. 4; see also 1991: 66)—Whitford now, in addition, suggests a critique of narcissism. She detects in Irigaray’s work in *An Ethics* not only an interrogation of the radical schism between subjectivity and the prenatal, but also attributes to her the view that this schism is built upon a particular *phantasy* of intra-uterine existence. Whitford uses this interpretation to reposition Irigaray within the field of psychoanalysis, via the account of primary narcissism given by the Hungarian psychoanalyst Belà Grunberger, attempting to shift her away from the reduction to being a ‘dissident Lacanian’ (ibid.: 27), as well as providing an alternative to the more usual emphasis solely on her critique of ‘the Oedipus complex, castration and the role of the phallus’ (ibid.: 28). Whitford’s desire to reposition Irigaray in this way is similar in many ways to the motivations underlying the approach to Ettinger’s work in this thesis, in that she forges a connection between Irigaray and Grunberger as representative of Irigaray’s situation ‘within a distinctively European tradition of psychoanalysis, which stretches from Freud’s early colleagues [...] to their modern and contemporary heirs’ (ibid.). Part of the means by which this repositioning is made is a unification of Irigaray’s work on the intra-uterine and the prenatal according to a series of resonances with theories of primary narcissism and pathological projective identification, both of which are strongly connected to schools of psychoanalytic thought that diverge from a Freudian-Lacanian axis. In making this move, Whitford focuses on Grunberger’s presentation of primary narcissism as a wish to return to an idealised foetal existence. I would now like to attend to some of the key points of this area, to take up the idea that the excision of the intra-uterine from the domain of subjectivity is based not upon an absence of consideration, nor a necessary non-coincidence with the field of psychoanalysis, but rather the projection of a specific phantasy.

Laplanche and Pontalis characterise primary narcissism in the following basic terms: it is ‘an early state in which the child cathects its own self with the whole of its libido’ (1967: 337).⁶⁵ Broadly speaking, in this state there is no possibility of differentiation between infant and mother, or infant and world; as this narcissism is *primary*, any such differentiation will be the result of a secondary process. Considering Laplanche’s enthusiasm for drive theory in *Life and Death*, which requires that sexuality be founded upon a structure that involves an object, there is a degree of scepticism in the entry on primary narcissism in *The Language of Psychoanalysis* that is hardly surprising. This scepticism is partly attributed to the state of the literature: ‘The notion of primary narcissism undergoes extreme variations in sense from one author to the next,’ but is undoubtedly attributable also to a specifically theoretical criticism. This relates to the positing of primary narcissism as ‘prior even to the formation of an ego,’ the consequence of which is that ‘the distinction between auto-erotism and narcissism is eradicated’ (ibid.: 338), collapsing the path from satisfaction by a part of the body to the cathexis of the ego, and thus significantly complicating the introduction of objects into subjectivity and sexuality. In *Life and Death*, Laplanche is unequivocal regarding the futility of ‘deriving an object from an objectless state’ (1970: 19), attributing to the idea of such a state as primal ‘a major aberration in psychoanalytic thinking and perhaps, to a certain aberration in the thought of Freud himself’ (ibid.: 18).⁶⁶

In his own exploration of primary narcissism, Grunberger presents a slightly different picture to that criticised by Laplanche, although he is still mindful of the difficulty in reconciling primary narcissism and the object. Perhaps in order to solve the problem of ‘deriving an object from an objectless state,’ he posits narcissism as an autonomous psychical agency, ‘impossible to define [...] satisfactorily as long as it is pictured within the instinctual framework’ (Grunberger 1971: 6-7). This does not, however, lead him to reject the latter, rather arguing that it forms a developmental dialectic with the narcissistic framework, ultimately leading to an ideal resolution, ‘the successful synthesis of instinctual forces and narcissism within the framework of the ego, a state that is represented in the unconscious by the phallic symbol’ (ibid.: 25). In line with the account given by Laplanche and Pontalis, the state from which Grunberger derives the autonomy of narcissism is prenatal existence:

⁶⁵ It is important to note a differentiation in Freud’s usage of the term ‘primary narcissism’. It is introduced in ‘On Narcissism: An Introduction,’ but at this point in his thinking is not developed in the sense I am discussing here. It is only, as Laplanche and Pontalis point out, with the collapse of narcissism into primary autoeroticism in later papers, that the thesis of narcissism as the primary state of the infant begins to appear (1967: 337-38). Whitford also alludes to this distinction, although in terms of the shortcomings of ‘libido theory’ (and thus, by association, drive theory) (2003: 28-29).

⁶⁶ Laplanche’s criticism of the objectless state appears again in *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis* (1987: 76-81), this time alongside the counter-position that the infant is in a primal sense open to the world (ibid.: 93-95).

The fetus has often been described as existing in an elative state that constitutes a perfect homeostasis, without needs, for, since needs are satisfied automatically, they do not have to be formed as such. Given the parasitical nature of its metabolism, the fetus knows neither desire nor the satisfaction associated with the reduction of tension, only perfect equilibrium. (ibid.: 14)

He argues that within this equilibrium the fetus is omnipotent, autonomous, self-sufficient, immortal, and moreover ‘totally ignorant of the terrain in which he is growing’ (ibid.: 21). Prenatal existence itself is not, for Grunberger, continuous with primary narcissism; its translation into the latter rests upon a reformulation of Freud’s repetition-compulsion, away from the death drive (which Grunberger rejects as ‘extrascientific’ and ‘outdated’): ‘The ego repeats an action or behaviour in so far as its achievement remains incomplete or because it was thwarted in its time, a trauma that is linked to an earlier ego stage and constitutes an irreparable narcissistic wound’ (ibid.: 9-10).⁶⁷ For Grunberger, the trauma of birth—the expulsion from blissful foetal existence—is the archetypal narcissistic trauma and primary narcissism is the resulting longing to recapture this existence, thus installing the meaning of intra-uterine life only in terms of a traumatic and irreversible loss (ibid.: 10).

Although, as we have seen, there is a significant theoretical conflict between the theory of the partial drives and primary narcissism, I would like to suggest that this conflict in part resides in a shared investment in the undifferentiation of the intra-uterine, conflict arising from the position of this undifferentiation in relation to subjectivising processes. It is also my contention that, while we have seen that it has considerable advantages, Kristeva’s reliance on the theory of the drives as a source of heterogeneity in signifying practice—to account for transgression and change in language without having to invoke psychosis or mysticism—is thus implicated in an inability to think the specificity of pregnancy and intra-uterine life other than in terms of biology and/or psychosis. One source of this hypothetical implication is legible in Laplanche’s *Life and Death*:

Now the crucial point is that simultaneous with the feeding function’s achievement of satisfaction and nourishment, a sexual process begins to appear. Parallel with feeding there is a stimulation of lips and tongue by the nipple and the flow of warm milk. This stimulation is initially modeled on the function, so that between the two, it is at first barely possible to distinguish a difference. (1970: 17)

This is of interest because it locates the originary burgeoning of sexual processes in the fulfilment of function, and therefore in a very particular relation to the object, allowing no room for any other

⁶⁷ Although their conceptions of intra-uterine life and the effects of the process of birth are entirely different, there is a surprising resonance between Grunberger’s formulation of repetition-compulsion and Ettinger’s reading of a traumatically interrupted matrixial primal scene and its pathological repetition in Marguerite Duras’s *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*. See FGM: 63-66.

(non-functional) derivation of libidinal cathexis. For example, Laplanche and Pontalis's scepticism on the subject of primary narcissism, particularly when characterised as 'epitomised by life in the womb,' points to a difficulty in thinking libidinal investment in any terms other than the structure imposed by somatic function: 'it is difficult to see just *what* is supposed to be cathected in primary narcissism thus conceived' (1967: 338). In relation to phantasies of intra-uterine omnipotence and/or undifferentiation, I would like to hypothesise that the theory of the drives, while not necessarily being a direct cause or effect of such phantasies, has a heavy investment in what they inscribe. That is, because it bases sexuality in oscillations of need and satisfaction, it can only view intra-uterine life as an absence of that oscillation, and thus of the basis for sexuality, since the need for nourishment is neither felt nor articulable (in the sense of the Kristevan semiotic being the progressive articulation of the drives).⁶⁸

The problem of thinking the intra-uterine seems to extend to the economic model in general, in the sense that this determines pressure or impetus (*Drang*), and thus the drive itself by an idea of *work*:

What is called the economic view in psychoanalysis is quite precisely that of a "demand for work": if there is work, a modification in the organism, it is because ultimately there is an exigency, a force; and, as in the physical sciences, force can be defined only through the measure of a quantity of work. (Laplanche 1970: 10)

If, then, one might want to extend the idea of sexuality to include that which cannot straightforwardly be contained within an idea of functionality, Freud's economic model of the psyche—and its energetic constitution of sexuality—is something that would need to be negotiated. This is a particularly pressing need if the intention is to retain the clear advantages of drive-based theories in avoiding the twin perils of biological determinism or incorporeal idealism, neither of which are able to engage the complexities of a specifically human corporeal sexuality and sexual difference. A sense of this difficulty appears in the epigraph to this chapter, where Irigaray says that 'Psychoanalysis maintains that there is no feminine libido, without noticing that in the model of psychic economy which it is using, that libido cannot exist' (1977b: 90).

⁶⁸ Again in an empirical framework (see n. 10, above), Joan Raphael-Leff presents a range of research that would seem to go against the idea of the foetus as an inert, passive entity, living a blissful, need-free existence: 'Reviewing neonatal research findings, Chamberlaine concluded that by the second trimester of pregnancy, all human senses are operative. This indicates that the fetus is responsive to tactile, auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, vestibular (balance), gustatory (taste), thermic (heat and cold), and painful stimuli. The fetus is not only responsive, but assertive, both moving to increase his or her own comfort, and inducing changes in maternal physiology' (2001: 95). At one point, she even goes so far as to locate oral sensuality prior to feeding by the mouth: 'by twelve weeks [...] the fetus turns towards the source of pressure [on the mouth], responds with sucking movements when the lips are touched, and may insert a thumb, finger, or toe into his or her mouth. In the fourth month, swallowing reflexes are activated as amniotic fluid is ingested and excreted in preparation for future digestion' (ibid.: 96).

In spite of Laplanche's reservations about primary narcissism, then, it would seem to share with drive-based theories an investment in a view of pre-natal life as without objects and thus without differentiation or libidinal charge. Although theories of primary narcissism do contain a form of consideration of intra-uterine life, in that they do not impose birth as a limit in such a rigid way as does the functionality of drive theory, the effects of this consideration are actually quite similar. Although theories of primary narcissism embrace this objectless condition as the degree zero from which the subject is to emerge, while drive-based theories (Laplanche and Kristeva being the main representatives here) excise it from the domain of subjectivity altogether, it is plausible that the main difference between them on the subject of intra-uterine undifferentiation might lie in whether or not this phantasy is positioned as subjectivising. If we are restricted to these two poles, thinking the intra-uterine is limited to an expulsion into the field of biology (with the corresponding phantasy of an omnipotent phallic mother, in control of this biological domain), or an inclusion that sacrifices any possibility of relation or participation by the pregnant woman in any form other than a passive receptacle. As Grunberger says, the foetus is 'totally ignorant of the terrain in which it is growing' (1971: 21). This hypothesis directly relates to Pollock's statement concerning the 'outlaw' status of 'pre-birth speculations' in psychoanalytic traditions (2004: 25), but with the caveat that it is necessary to look at the whys and wherefores of this status. It is important to understand that, if the prenatal is outlawed in psychoanalytic thinking, this is not only a retroactive effect of castration, as it is frequently formulated in the most thorough and theoretically consistent terms (rather than an arbitrary prohibitive edict), terms which need to be understood if they are to be critiqued or supplemented.

In discussing Grunberger's thesis on primary narcissism, Whitford also suggests that Irigaray diagnoses within Western culture a secondary pathological narcissism, where the phantasy of an omnipotent, absolutely fulfilled intra-uterine existence remains unrenounced and is fiercely defended, with the projection of the traumatic narcissistic wound onto a cultural Other.

Since narcissism is both inevitable and essential for Grunberger (and Irigaray accepts this too), the question is then: when does it become pathological? Everyone, as an infant, has to face an early narcissistic wound – the discovery that one is not the centre of the world – and some have greater inner or outer resources than others for dealing with that discovery. Irigaray's theory takes into account the socio-cultural environment into which we are born. According to her cultural (rather than individual) analysis, we have a scenario in which the man, via representations of the masculine imaginary, projects the wound on to the woman in order to deny need and dependence, protecting – more or less successfully – his own narcissism, but leaving women without the representational wherewithal to protect theirs. (2003: 30)

It is with this understanding of cultural narcissism as pathological that the crux of Whitford's re-reading of Irigaray is truly manifest; it allows her to forge connections between Irigaray's work and other forms of social and political critique (this is the move away from a limited understanding of

Irigaray as a ‘dissident Lacanian’), pathological projective identification in effect providing a more easily translatable theory of the violent construction of the other as monstrous or sadistic.⁶⁹

Projective identification is glossed by Whitford as ‘based on the splitting of the ego and the (fantasy of the) projection of parts of the self into other people’ (ibid.: 36). She recognises that, in and of itself, this is not a pathogenic or pathological mechanism. It is only with a sustained recourse to projective identification in adult life that this splitting becomes rigidified and thus pathological: ‘Large areas of the self become unavailable, since they are located elsewhere, and this permanently-split ego is weakened’ (ibid.). A generalised, cultural form of this pathology is, in Whitford’s interpretation of Irigaray, the means by which a pathological narcissism is culturally entrenched, and the counterpart of what emerges as *masculine* narcissism is the woman onto whom the split-off narcissistic wound is projected. For example: ‘one desire has chosen to see itself as wisdom, moderation, truth, and has left the other to bear the burden of the madness it did not want to attribute to itself, recognize in itself’ (Irigaray 1981: 35).

In terms of the placing of phantasies of intra-uterine existence as need-free and/or omnipotent at or beyond the earliest limits of subjectivity, it could be argued this phantasy is narcissistically invested, and that a corollary phantasy of its traumatic opposite—the absence of a subjective relation to intra-uterine life from any perspective—is projected into the heart of female subjectivity, as we have seen in Kristeva’s split maternal subject. From Whitford’s idea that the effect of such projective identification leaves women ‘without the representational wherewithal’ to protect their own narcissistic needs, one could say that the polarisation of the field of the intra-uterine forecloses the possibility of a relation to it (phantasmatic or otherwise) that does not fall into a duality of omnipotence or a psychosis-inducing void. If this double bind is a contingent phantasmatic effect, however, rather than an essential condition of possibility of subjectivity, female subjective engagement with the intra-uterine relationship as a potential feminine psycho-corporeal specificity being its (contingently) necessary sacrifice, can it be altered?

In ‘On the Maternal Order,’ also very briefly touched upon by Whitford, Irigaray—in conversation with biologist H el ene Rouch—actively seeks to bring a revised understanding of intra-uterine life to the fore, an understanding based, it is important to note, on the placenta. She frames Rouch’s understanding of the latter’s mediating role within a direct attempt to recast what she sees as the two dominant behavioural models, the Darwinian and the Pavlovian:

⁶⁹ Jacques-Alain Miller makes a comparable (if slightly simplistic) analysis of the *jouissance* of the Other, in ‘*Extimit *,’ as an explanation of racism: ‘Racist stories are always about the way in which the Other obtains a *plus-de-jouir*: either he does not work or he does not work enough, or he is useless or a little too useful, but whatever the case may be, he is always endowed with a part of *jouissance* that he does not deserve. Thus true intolerance is the intolerance of the Other’s *jouissance*’ (1986: 80).

1. As far as *life* is concerned, we are said to be always struggling against the external environment, on the one hand, and with other living beings, on the other. Only by being stronger than these two adversaries are we able to stay alive.
2. At the level of *culture*, it seems we are brought up (whether consciously or not) to be trained in repetition, to adapt to a society's systems, and educated to do *like*, to be *like*, without any decisive innovations or discoveries of our own. (Irigaray 1987: 37)

The image of the placenta as a mediator between what would otherwise be the 'alien' and adversarial entities of the Darwinian model, or as an interruption of the Pavlovian Same, is emphasised as drawn from, and with a positive implication for, a specifically 'female corporeal identity' (ibid.: 38). In the subsequent conversation with Irigaray, Rouch directly questions the idea, within psychoanalysis, of the intra-uterine state as being one of blissful fusion between mother-to-be and foetus, which must be broken by a third term, 'whether it's called the father, law, Name of the Father, or something else,' in order to avoid the path into psychosis (ibid.: 42). She argues that fusion (which aligns with Grunberger's primary narcissism) is projected back into life *in utero* through a failure to inscribe its 'real' differentiation:

surely all that's needed is to reiterate and mark, on another level, a differentiation that already exists during pregnancy thanks to the placenta and at the moment of birth, as a result of the exit from the uterine cavity? It seems to be that the differentiation between the mother's self and the other of the child, and vice versa, is in place well before it's given meaning in and by language, and the forms it takes don't necessarily accord with those our cultural imaginary relays: loss of paradise, traumatizing expulsion or exclusion, etc. I'm not accusing these forms of the imaginary of being wrong, but of being the only ways of theorizing what exists before language. It makes one wonder about this remarkable blindness to the processes of pregnancy, and especially the particular role of the placenta, even though nowadays they're quite familiar. (ibid.: 42)

From this, we can extrapolate two important possibilities: firstly, that there may be a potential means of approaching and deploying the specificity of the prenatal that avoids both a reduction to mechanistic biology and a phantasy of undifferentiation; secondly, that the problem can be stated as what is *thinkable*, rather than what is 'true' or 'real' in any sense prior to this thinking. The question of the ability to think—or not to think—certain things and in certain ways, however, leads me toward the idea that we should not be too hasty in accepting the placental solution suggested by Rouch and Irigaray.

Indeed, there is a major criticism of Irigaray's treatment of the intra-uterine that might emerge from a matrixial direction, which would concern the nature of her solution to its foreclosure. In this view, Irigaray's approach to the problem is too much bound to the (detachable) *organs* of the intra-uterine—the womb, the placenta and the umbilical cord—and as such is heavily limited in the kind

of imaginary and symbolic representation it can achieve.⁷⁰ This anatomist's view of the intra-uterine, unlike Irigaray's phenomenologically-founded 'two-lips' image (1977a: 26-31), too readily accepts the physiological relations and limitations in operation. In speaking of envelopment by the placenta (Irigaray 1981: 40), mediation by the blood (*ibid.*: 39), and the umbilical cord as the first bond with the mother (*ibid.*: 38), this might be considered an imaginative failure regarding the non-identity of physiology and phenomenology within this 'first contact'. Whether or not intra-uterine existence is minimally available to subjective processes, to reduce its imaginary to the vocabulary of the organ is to enact the same dismembering process as that performed by the partial drives. This seems to be an issue profoundly tied to the question of mediation: Irigaray seems happy to accept the intra-uterine as a matter of *wholeness* ('where the child was *whole*, the mother was *whole*') in need of representation. The nature of this representation as mediation is clear in *An Ethics*, which returns us again to the Kristevan phantasy of the pregnant woman as an omnipotent phallic mother:

The one who offers or allows desire moves and envelops, engulfing the other. It is moreover a danger if no third term exists. Not only to serve as a limitation. The third term can occur within the one who contains as a relation of the latter to his or her own limit(s): relation to the divine, to death, to the social, to the cosmic. If a third term does not exist within and for the container, he or she becomes *all-powerful*. (1984: 12)

It is possible that, on the question of the intra-uterine, Irigaray has missed the nature and the extent of its foreclosure; by attempting to rectify the projection of undifferentiation with the counter-projection of a mediating object, this seems to be a simple replacement of absence with presence, without regard for what might reside beneath a presence/absence hierarchy (inverted or otherwise). While it is undoubtedly the case that the *theory* of the matrix can itself be considered a form of mediation of the intra-uterine (particularly in terms of the 'relief of signification' presented in its very earliest formulations), this mediation is not repeated in a triadic structure at the level of content. This is largely because, from the outset, Ettinger rejects the idea that the intra-uterine relationship may be reduced to a countable exterior of whole entities and/or organs, and specifies such a view as phallic: 'The matrixial co-emerging partial subjects can also be simultaneously seen from a phallic angle as "entire" subjects or as one another's object' (MG: 23/92). Because of this,

⁷⁰ In an article which examines Lacan's Other *jouissance* from a slightly unorthodox direction, Suzanne Barnard discusses a connection between intra-uterine life and immortality, through Lacan's alignment of the lamella, 'the part of a living being that is lost when that being is produced through the straits of sex,' (Lacan 2006: 718) and the *objet a*, the loss of the lamella marking the relationship 'between sexuality, specified in the individual, and his death' (*ibid.*: 719). Barnard emphasises that, for Lacan, the primary object is '*not* the mother herself but the placenta' (2002: 175). This treatment of the intra-uterine seems compatible with the terms of Irigaray's call for the representation of the intra-uterine in 'The Bodily Encounter with the Mother,' a compatibility which might support an argument for the limitation of those terms.

her approach to this problematic concerns not only the possibilities excluded by the primacy of functionality and intra-uterine undifferentiation, but also indirectly the formal structuring of that exclusion in terms of the *object* or its absence. In ‘Woman as *Objet a*’ she deploys a methodology of analogy and synthesis to construct a conceptual foundation in which the idea of differentiation, encounter and minimal libidinal cathexis before birth may be thinkable, while at the same time preserving a connection to the theory of the drives, but which also foregoes the projection of the object-as-organ into the prenatal.

On the question of the relationship of this problematic to feminine subjectivity and sexual difference, I would like to indicate a slight ambiguity built into Whitford’s reading of a critique of narcissism in Irigaray’s work. It is not quite clear from her paper whether she thinks that Irigaray wishes to restore to women their *own* form of narcissistic structure, or whether she wishes to undermine narcissism *in general* as the foundation of the coherence of the individual. An idea of ‘women’s narcissism’ is suggested in the following:

According to [Irigaray’s] cultural (rather than individual analysis), we have a scenario in which the man, via representations of the masculine imaginary, projects the wound onto the woman in order to deny need and dependence, protecting – more or less successfully – his own narcissism, but leaving women without the representational wherewithal to protect theirs. (Whitford 2003: 30)

On the other hand, however, an emphasis on the importance of a recognition of alterity suggests an altogether different solution to the projection of a narcissistic wound: ‘Again and again [...] Irigaray insists that the possibility of cultural growth and cultural change can only come from openness to the other’s difference’ (ibid.: 34). I think that the most useful resolution of this ambiguity is to emphasise the latter, on the grounds that what is required is not a balancing attention to something which can restore to women their own narcissism, or recourse to ideas of ‘female corporeal *identity*’—an equality of narcissism, as it were—but an attention to the *production* of subjectivity, and to the limits placed on this production by phantasies of intra-uterine omnipotence and undifferentiation. Although Ettinger herself flirts with ideas of a connection between matrixiality and feminine narcissism in ‘The Feminine/Prenatal Weaving in Matrixial Subjectivity-as-Encounter’ (F/P: 380, 391), this trajectory in her thinking is very short-lived. In ‘*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference,’ to which I will return in the second part of this chapter, she provides an alternative to a feminine narcissism or identification, whose condition of possibility is a navigation of the corporeal heterogeneity of drive theory, alongside an object the cathexis of which exceeds the post-natal limitations of the economic model.

**HETEROGENEITY AND FUNCTIONALITY: DRIVE AND OBJECT IN
'WOMAN AS *OBJET A* BETWEEN PHANTASY AND ART'**

In 'Woman as *Objet a*' Ettinger takes on the limitation presented by the theory of the drives for thinking the archaic feminine via the intra-uterine, although not necessarily for reasons as explicit as those I have begun to lay out.

In psychoanalysis, there is a general claim that the gap between theories dealing with the subject who seeks drive-satisfaction, and object-relation theories which deal with a subject who seeks relations with the object/Other, can rarely be bridged. In my view, these two tendencies can be approached by combining Lacan's later theory of the phantasy with his earlier ideas on inter-subjective relations and the Other. (WOA: 67)

Ettinger immediately locates the opening of 'Woman as *Objet a*' in the field of the body, raising as she does so the question of corporeal heterogeneity. The body with which she is concerned is not quite the same sexuate female body-imaginary often deployed by Irigaray (see 1977a: 23-33), nor Freud's 'bodily ego,' but the body in the *real*, as Ettinger will often say, the *corpo-real*. As we can see in the above quotation, she also approaches a long-running issue in psychoanalytic theory: the question of reconciling (or synthesising) drive-based and object-relations theories. This question will focus on particularly problematic aspects of both theoretical tendencies. In the case of drive theory, this is the lack of priority given to the object. In terms of drive, rather than instinct, the object is the least significant element of the structure, since it is subordinate to the aim of the drive: 'the specificity or individuality of the object is, after all, of minimal concern; it is enough for it to possess certain *traits* which trigger the satisfying action' (Laplanche 1970: 12). In terms of more relational, 'object-relations' perspectives (to include aspects of both the Kleinian and Independent traditions of British psychoanalysis),⁷¹ a prioritisation of phantasy often leads to a diminished attention to corporeality, which effects a demotion in the significance of sexuality. This diminishment and demotion is a complex issue, which I will have to leave unexplored at this point, but I will return to it in discussing Laplanche's use of sexuality to delimit the psychoanalytic field in Chapter 3. In spite of their respective problems, these tendencies are equally valuable for Ettinger's project, as she relies on advances made by both. On the one hand, Lacan's development of the

⁷¹ For more information on the 'gentlemen's agreement' signed by Melanie Klein, Anna Freud and Sylvia Payne, reached in order to resolve the series of controversies in the British Psycho-Analytical Society in the early 1940s, which divided the training of analysts into three groups, Kleinian (A group), (Anna) Freudian (B group), and Independent (middle group), see the conclusion to King and Steiner (1991: 920-31), and the introduction to Kohon (ed.) (1988: 41-45). See also Chapter 1 of Rayner (1991). For more detail on the relation of British 'Independent' psychoanalysis to Klein's work see Rayner 1991: 22-26. The work of the Independent Group is most often identified as 'object-relations' psychoanalysis (Hinshelwood 1991: 367).

register of the *real* (so heavily linked to the drives)⁷² in his late work—and especially its relation to the *objet a*—is highly instrumental for Ettinger’s ability to formulate the filtering of elements of the corporeal matrixial encounter into (a broadened conception of) subjectivity and the symbolic. On the other, she deploys Klein’s, Bion’s and Bollas’s theorisation of ‘pre-’ object relations that privilege the body and psyche of the mother insofar as they allow an archaic libidinal investment in the object that is not secondary to, or consequent upon, the fulfilment of a somatic function. At the heart of this nexus is the *objet a* which, in its peculiar status between and across subject, object, symbolic, phantasy and real, is a key conceptual treasure to be acquired for theorising the matrixial feminine (see Overview, Part II).

This nexus of conceptual problematics has some resonance with Kristeva’s project in *Revolution*: the tracing of the heterogeneous ‘real’ body—for Kristeva, the body of the drives—within subjectivity and the symbolic.⁷³ Unlike Kristeva’s early elaborations, however, it centrally involves a negotiation of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory: ‘In Lacan’s early theory, bodily singular events cannot be subjectivising, unless they pass through a cultural pre-organising system’ (WOA: 57). Ettinger attributes to his later work the position that, although still meaningless, ‘the *real* [...] contributes to and shapes subjectivity’ (ibid.). She compares Lacan’s later developments of the role of the ‘real’ body—especially in its tracing via the *objet a*—in subjectivity to Bion’s formulation of alpha-function, beta-elements, and bizarre objects. It is this comparison that forms the central strut of her attempt to bridge the gap between drive-based and object-relations theories. Bion is first introduced not in terms of a theory of the body, however, but rather in terms of an idea of the condition of possibility of thinking and/or knowledge:

For Bion, meaning becomes possible following a primary digestion by the *alpha*-function, and the encounter with reality enables the realisation from a potentiality of preconceptions.

⁷² ‘The real may be represented by the accident, the noise, the small element of reality, which is evidence that we are not dreaming. But, on the other hand, this reality is not so small, for what wakes us is the other reality hidden behind the lack of that which takes the place of representation—this, says Freud is the *Trieb*’ (Lacan 1964: 60).

⁷³ On a connection between the semiotic and the Lacanian real, see, for instance, Kristeva in conversation with Ina Lipkowitz and Andrea Loselle, where she characterises the semiotic as both real and imaginary: ‘it does seem to me that the semiotic—if one really wants to find correspondences with Lacanian ideas—corresponds to phenomena that for Lacan are in both the real and the imaginary. For him the real is a hole, a void, but I think that in a number of experiences with which psychoanalysis is concerned—most notably, the narcissistic structure, the experience of melancholia or of catastrophic suffering, and so on—the appearance of the real is not necessarily a void. It is accompanied by a number of psychic inscriptions that are of the order of the semiotic. Thus perhaps the notion of the semiotic allows us to speak of the real without simply saying that it’s an emptiness or a blank; it allows us to try to further elaborate it. In any case, it’s on the level of the imaginary that the semiotic functions best—that is, the fictional construction’ (Kristeva 1996a: 23).

Human knowledge is, to begin with, an emotional knowledge of psychic qualities, of the psychic reality of self and others. (WOA: 57)

Thinking, for Bion, is enabled primarily in the containment of the infant by the maternal object, a containment in which the raw materials of sensory perception—formulated as *beta-elements*—are processed by the mother's alpha-function, and transformed into psychically digestible alpha-elements (1962: 8). Alpha-elements form the matter of thought, in that they may be stored as memory and re-used in the formation of 'dream thoughts, conscious thoughts, unconscious waking thinking, dream formation, contact-barrier, memory and the capacity to learn from experience' (López-Corvo 2003: 25). Without the ability to undertake this process, all 'experience' would be unavailable to thought: 'Beta elements are stored but differ from alpha-elements in that they are not so much memories as undigested facts, whereas the alpha-elements have been digested by alpha-function and thus made available for thought' (Bion 1962: 7). Within Bion's thinking, the newborn infant does not have the capacity to convert beta-elements into alpha-elements. This is effectively, to begin with, provided by the mother

in the situation where the β -element, say the fear that it is dying, is projected by the infant and received by the container in such a way that it is "detoxicated", that is, modified by the container so that the infant may take it back into its own personality in a tolerable form. The operation is analogous to that performed by α -function. The infant depends on the Mother to act as its α -function. (Bion 1963: 27)

Ettinger casts this facet of Bion's work in Lacanian terms, aligning the mother's possession of alpha-function, and 'higher level of emotional and cognitive organisation' with having 'crossed the Oedipus complex more or less successfully and [having] accepted basic cultural laws and interdictions, ie [having] gone through symbolic 'castration' and overcome the temptation of incest' (WOA: 57-8). She positions the Lacanian real in relation to Bion's alpha and beta-elements and bizarre objects, and from this is able to situate the m/Other at the foundation of its processing:⁷⁴ 'The *real* is the space of phenomena, within the psyche, which do not acquire meaning *directly* via culture. This realm would contain in Bion's terms the *beta-elements*, the *bizarre objects* and to a certain extent also the (later emerging) *alpha-elements*' (ibid.: 58). Having situated parts of Bion's system in the Lacanian real, Ettinger then analogises from characteristics of Bion's work back to the parts of Lacan's work that relate to the real, most significantly the *objet a*. The analogy between Bion's system and the *objet a* is not a direct one, but rather attributes to it characteristics of alpha-elements, beta-elements and bizarre objects. Its difference from them is also emphasised: 'we have to conceive for [the *objet a*] a particular place, which [...] is also structured according to impulses that

⁷⁴ This situation has something in common with the brief appearance of the mother in the account of the semiotic *chora* in *Revolution*, except that, for Kristeva, it is the body and not the psyche of the mother that is involved in the progressive articulation of the drives (1974: 27, 241 n. 21).

relate, according to Lacan, to the bodily *orifices*' (ibid.: 59). Again, what is crucial for this analogy is the primary significance of the 'other' brought by Bion's thinking to the foundation of the subject, the elaboration of the analogised 'real' beta-elements by maternal alpha-function importing a primary relation to the m/Other and the breast that exceeds the object-indifferent 'demand for work' on which the drive rests. It would thus seem that in analogising between Bion and Lacan, one aim is to create a field that takes on the advantages of drive theory (tracing a non-linguistic corporeal heterogeneity at the heart of subjectivity) and adding to it the possibility of conceiving of an object other than in terms of its subordination to function, thus attempting to reduce a major obstacle to the exclusion of 'functionless' intra-uterine life.⁷⁵ This suggests a synthetic negotiation lying between the poles of primary narcissism and drive theory, where the idea of a non-disposable originary object is added to the heterogeneity of drive theory, thus undermining the idea that intra-uterine life is beyond consideration because it has no object.

The breaking-down of the barrier erected by a functional determination of the object is not, however, enough to bring the specificity of intra-uterine life closer to being able to participate in subjectivity, both in terms of the adult female subject, and the proto- or pre-subject of the foetus. In using Bion to add a relation to the m/Other to the heterogeneous field of the real, Ettinger has already escaped the undifferentiation of primary narcissism (particularly since Bion already occupies an interesting middle-ground between primary narcissism and drive theory (see López-Corvo 2003: 151)), but this is still very much at the level of groundwork. The removal or weakening of obstacles is, in this matter, only half of the necessary work. The other half lies in building that which had been obstructed (Irigaray's discussion with Rouch focussing more on the latter than the former, and as such perhaps missing the problems that reside in simply taking up the ready-made solution of the placenta as an object). The introduction of the matrixial relationship as the positive solution to the exclusion of the intra-uterine from subjectivity is grounded, in 'Woman as *Objet a'* upon a further negotiation of the question of object and loss, which itself depends upon the relative situation Ettinger posits between Lacan and Bion. It is not sufficient, as an alternative to an idea of intra-uterine life as omnipotent, need-free and objectless, simply to posit intra-uterine life as having an object. This is because the counterpart of the determination of the object by the structure of the drive is its determination by castration, which has a more explicit significance for the theory of the matrix than the former (see Overview p. 36). The effects of castration upon the possibilities for object-loss are as much a factor in the exclusion of intra-uterine life from subjectivity as are those of drive theory, but without the advantages brought by the latter in terms of checking the

⁷⁵ Bion's theory of the development of alpha-function also seems particularly amenable to retrospective elaborations of the intra-uterine relationship. For example, Raphael-Leff takes up the idea of the maternal container from Bion, and further says 'I am suggesting that a paradigm for this mothering process exists long before the baby is born' (Raphael-Leff 2001: 52).

homogeneous systematicity of the symbolic. In its retroactive assimilation of all that came before it by the substitution of the signifier, symbolic castration either reduces everything to its binary logic of presence and absence or excludes (forecloses) that which is irreducible to it, this latter category apparently including intra-uterine life. The reason I have paid less attention to this particular exclusion of the intra-uterine in this chapter is that, while it is more central to Ettinger's project as a whole it is less complicated than the exclusion effected by drive theory. The effects of castration must be brought into consideration, however, in that they are inseparably linked to the concept of the *objet a*, which stands in 'Woman as *Objet a*' both as the avatar of a synthesis of drive-based and relational perspectives, and, in the form of the matrixial *objet a*, as the positive offspring of this synthetic foundation.

If intra-uterine life has some form of differentiation and relationality, even a specific form of object, the question of the *loss* of this object (and not only by the traumatic caesura of birth) must be negotiated. That is, if intra-uterine life is to shift away from a reductive characterisation as need-free undifferentiation—which could be considered a perfect union with the object, the object as absolutely possessed—the object must, at least in some minimal form, be able to undergo a modality of loss. As I have indicated in the Overview, an important part of the negotiation of the *objet a* in 'Woman as *Objet a*' is phantasy, which is the site of another synthesis with elements of relational perspectives, in the form of a minimal archaic structure of phantasy (see pp. 47-50). I want to argue that the move into the consideration of the object in phantasy could be understood as adding to the discussion the question of the loss of the object. Within the structure of drive theory alone, such a loss would be difficult to conceive, since the secondary status of the object constitutes it as a means to an end, rather than something to be possessed or lost, or an end in itself. The drive is not satisfied by the *possession* of the object (See Lacan 1964: 168, 178, 180), and as such is indifferent to its loss. Within Kleinian structures (this including Bion as a post-Kleinian), as well as other relational perspectives, where the emphasis is much more on the ego and the introjection of its objects, there is more scope for the object (even as partial) being something which may be gained, lost or damaged (Klein 1935: 40-1), and thus as something to which the infant is not indifferent. These psychoanalytical tendencies also bring with them an emphasis on unconscious phantasy as the *matter* of psychic reality. Ettinger presents phantasy with reference to the 'Freudian object/Other' as the vehicle for the appearance of the lost object: 'According to Freud, the phantasy is the screen in which the substitute of the object one was afraid of losing, appears' (WOA: 61). In discussing the possession and loss of the object Ettinger thus shifts beyond the partial drive, onto a more complicated, and ultimately more articulated structure. This is necessitated by the constitutive relation between the Lacanian *objet a* and castration, in that for Lacan one 'face' of the *objet a* is as the remainder of the splitting of the subject, and the split between signifier and signified. The mobility of the object within the heterogeneous field of

phantasy is necessary for the move Ettinger also makes to reconcile Lacan's early and late work (ibid.: 63, 67)—a situation of object and *objet a*, of 'intersubjectivity' (or at least relationality)⁷⁶ and heterogeneity—as the latter does not behave as an object in terms of either drive theory (it is produced as an effect of castration) or object-relations theory (it is radically absent, a loss that appears from nothing). The *objet a* is bound to the drives—and is theoretically dependent on drive theory—but the relation is retroactive, a phantasmatic recasting of the pre-Oedipal in terms of castration.

In order to undermine the link between the *objet a* and castration, Ettinger brings forward Klein, Bion and Winnicott to argue for a radically archaic structure of phantasy, theoretically autonomous of the retroaction of castration. Particularly in the case of Klein and Bion, she emphasises a sense of an 'inborn "knowledge" about the object':⁷⁷

inborn codes included in the instinct organise from the beginning sensorial impressions. Inherent, inborn modes of experience-organisation precede the perception of external events and determine their processing as an experience. As Bion later specifies, we are born with predispositions for experience-organisation and for meaning-attributions, with the ability to create interpretations to suit our basic needs. (ibid.: 61)⁷⁸

This idea of an archaic phantasy structure is a key component of the reconfiguration of prenatal life and the intra-uterine relation. If, in combination with an object that has been analogously positioned in the *real*, this archaic phantasy structure is substituted for the higher-level phantasy to which the Lacanian *objet a* relates, this theoretically both weakens the bond between *objet a* and castration and undermines the incompatibility between drive theory and intra-uterine existence. This potentially opens the ground for another mode of relation that is neither an irremediable loss imposed by symbolic castration, nor the indifferent employment of the object by the drive, but which still retains a bond to the traumatic real encounter. As part of this move, Ettinger filters the Lacanian construction of phantasy through the terms of other analysts (Freud, Klein, Winnicott,

⁷⁶ I make this caveat in acknowledgement of Lacan's distinction between the mother-child relation and intersubjectivity 'proper,' a distinction made according to an ethical criterion: 'What makes genital love different from primary love is acceding to the reality of the other as a subject. The subject takes into account the existence of the other subject as such' (1954: 212). As I have already pointed out in the Overview, (above, p. 71), Lacan goes on to suggest that an account of this recognition of the other 'as such' is absent from object-relations theory.

⁷⁷ There is, however, a potential problem with Ettinger's use of such phylogenetically transmitted structures, in that, according to the terms of Laplanche's specification of the field of psychoanalysis (which we will see in Chapter 3), any moves which aim to include phylogenetically inherited basic structures *within* the realm of the unconscious undermine the specificity of psychoanalysis as a 'field of sexuality' (1999: 85-86).

⁷⁸ A similar possibility is put forward by Kristeva, where she hypothesises that the semiotic may be transmitted 'through the biological code or physiological "memory" and thus form the inborn bases of the symbolic function' (1974: 29).

Bion and Bollas (ibid.: 61)), in order to draw out analogies and differences between the phantasy negotiation of the presence/absence of the archaic object and the Lacanian formulation of phantasy as ‘an impossible meeting with what had been lost, with what does not exist any more’ (ibid.: 63).⁷⁹ In Ettinger’s understanding, then, if the *objet a* allows the synthesis of drive and object-relations theory—since it is bound to the orifices of the body, and thus to the partial drives—but also participates in an economy of loss, and as such relates to the object as Other, it is only if its determination by castration can be undone that it may be deployed in the service of the feminine. The analogy between *objet a* and the other, pre-Oedipal configurations of object and phantasy is one geared towards allowing for the emergence of a structure of phantasy, object-loss and even (in Ettinger’s view) ‘knowledge’ that precedes and escapes the structure of castration. This analogical assemblage thus facilitates the articulation of the matrixial *objet a*.

The feminine *matrixial objet a* is an object which resides in the same non-conscious area opened by the drive but is shareable, since it is the object of the *subjectivity-as-encounter*, created from the beginning (and also lost) as a shared object (like the *touch*) in the feminine/prenatal encounter. (ibid.: 69)

In the Overview, I mentioned the importance of the *objet a* in Lacan’s later work as a subjectivising element autonomous of the signifier. In ‘Woman as *Objet a*,’ this is presented as Lacan’s revision of his statement that ‘the unconscious is structured like a language’ (WOA: 64), which we have already seen under criticism from Kristeva, and will see under further scrutiny by Laplanche and Guattari in Chapter 3. It is at this point that we can see directly how Ettinger registers the heterogeneity of the drives as a key factor in the late development of Lacan’s theory, and a useful, if problematic, opening for the thinking of the feminine. If the heterogeneity brought by the drives to the structure of subjectivity and the symbolic through the *objet a* can be detached both from castration and its functional structure, as is attempted by the transposition of phantasy to an archaic or even an inborn psychic structure (although this has problems of its own, as we shall see in Chapter 3), this potentially provides the beginnings of an alternative to the phantasy of intra-uterine existence as blissfully need-free and/or omnipotent, and the corollary projection of an extra-subjective psychotic void as the core of the feminine. It thus extends the intervention Whitford reads into Irigaray’s critique of cultural narcissism, and potentially begins to circumvent the splitting and subjective estrangement inscribed within Kristeva’s early account of the ‘experience’ of pregnancy. Upon this elaborate theoretical labour is placed the theory of the matrix.

⁷⁹ I will return to this area in Chapter 2, with regard to Ettinger’s uptake of Merleau-Ponty as a means of thinking beyond phantasy as ‘a non-meeting’ with a ‘non-object’ (WOA: 63), in the direction of painting as the permeable screen of the matrixial encounter.

PART II

Phallic monism and the hatred of the mother

After the reconsideration of intra-uterine life as something potentially characterised by a minimal degree of differentiation, and as such able to sustain a form of relation ('without relating'), some attention needs to be paid to the possibility of its reappearance in the life of the adult female subject. Because, for example, the expulsion of pregnancy from subjectivity in 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini' is based on a *dual* 'perspective'—of the foetus as a wholly biological 'graft' and the pregnant woman as split between subjectivity and pregnancy-as-biology—the perspective of the adult, potentially pregnant, woman must also be examined. Towards the beginning of this section, I mentioned a shift in Kristeva's thinking concerning the split inherent in the subjectivity of the pregnant woman. I would now like to touch upon some of these developments in order to trace the possible effects of a reconception of intra-uterine life on the relation to and separation from the archaic feminine by the *female* subject/infant, especially in terms of the difficult (some might say impossible) movement towards adult femininity.

From the perspective of the Oedipal girl-child, the trials of the feminine travel in two directions: *backwards*, in the direction of the archaic m/Other, and *forwards* in the direction of adult, sexuate femininity. One problem Ettinger, Irigaray and Kristeva all negotiate is that of the meeting of these two movements, where feminine sexuality rejoins the archaic feminine, both phantasmatically and on a corpo-real level. A hurdle they all raise at some point is the Freudian edict that in infantile sexuality, the child—be it male or female—will only recognise one genital, the male. Although Kristeva insists in *Sense and Non-Sense* upon the specifically infantile character of this 'phallic monism,' she also adds that it is 'an infantile illusion that nevertheless remains an unconscious organizing reality of the psyche' (1996b: 97). Since the unconscious cannot recognise the specificity of female sexual difference, this constitutes for the female child both a radical split (on a subjective level) from the body of the archaic m/Other, the Minoan-Mycenaean continent (Freud 1931: 226; 1932: 119-21), and a devastating proximity to and undifferentiation from it, in the sense that this lack of recognition is equivalent to a lack of mediation (Kristeva refers to this proximity as operating on an *unmediated* 'bio-social' level (1975: 239, 241)). Within such configurations, it is impossible to think an intra-*subjective* coexistence of the archaic feminine and adult femininity, in that the archaic feminine is sacrificed as the condition of possibility of subjectivity, and this process is simply reversed in the event of childbirth, returning to the only possible mode of contact with the archaic feminine: undifferentiation. If the mother has to be renounced, hated (Freud 1932: 121-3), in order for the female child to take up position of 'normal femininity' (ibid.: 126), even for Freud this position is undermined by the birth of a child:

Under the influence of a woman's becoming a mother herself, an identification with her own mother may be revived, against which she had striven up till the time of her marriage, and this may attract all the available libido to itself, so that the compulsion to repeat reproduces an unhappy marriage between her parents. (ibid.: 133)

This recalls Kristeva's idea of a determining characteristic of pregnancy as a return to undifferentiation from the phallic mother. Her later shift away from this a-subjective undifferentiation, which I will shortly discuss, is theorised via another element of Freud's theory of sexual development, the phallic phase and the primacy of the phallus, linked to what she terms *phallic monism*: 'the notion that every human unconsciously imagines every other human being to possess a penis. The theory of phallic monism supposes an ignorance of the vagina for both sexes' (1996b: 73).

PHALLIC MONISM AND OEDIPUS²

One particular problem that arises from the theory of phallic monism is legible in a particular passage of Freud's lecture on 'Femininity,' and concerns the girl's departure from the phallic phase, in which the clitoris is 'the leading erotogenetic zone': 'with the change to femininity the clitoris should wholly or in part hand over its sensitivity, and at the same time its importance, to the vagina' (1932: 118). This handing-over coincides with, in Freud's account, a change of love-object for the girl-child, from the mother to the father. This dual change, the conclusion of the phallic phase combined with the separation from and hatred of the mother are the twin ordeals of the passage to womanhood in the Freudian account. As might be expected, Kristeva is not alone in attempting to deal with the difficulties presented by the infantile primacy of the phallus for women as subjects: all three of the thinkers in this chapter, with varying frequency, have engaged the issue of the recognition of only one genital in infantile sexuality, and the consequences this has for the relation of women to their own bodies and the bodies of their mothers. For Kristeva (1996b) and Ettinger (WOA), this is with reference to Freud's 'Infantile Genital Organization'; for Irigaray (1974), it is his lecture on 'Femininity' in the *New Introductory Lectures*.

Firstly, then, the 'Infantile Genital Organization.' This text is presented by Freud as a revision of an important aspect of his 1905 *Three Essays*, hence the parenthetical subtitle, '(an interpolation into the theory of sexuality)'. The particular aspect he seeks to amend is one dear to the hearts of many, regarding in particular its valuable contribution to drive theory: 'in childhood the combination of the component instincts and their subordination under the primacy of the genitals have been

effected only very incompletely or not at all' (Freud 1905: 199; cited in 1923b: 142).⁸⁰ Freud does not replace this genital indeterminacy with an inversion—genital determination—but rather attributes to infantile sexuality a preoccupation with *the* genital, referred to initially in the plural:

Even if a proper combination of the component instincts under the primacy of the genitals is not effected, nevertheless at the height of the course of development of infantile sexuality, interest in the genitals and in their activity acquires a dominating significance which falls little short of that reached in maturity. (1923b: 142)

Subsequent to this, Freud makes a move which, for Kristeva constitutes the heart of phallic monism, and for Ettinger, Freud's dissociation of femaleness and subjectivity:

the main characteristic of this 'infantile genital organization' is its *difference* from the final genital organization of the adult. This consists in the fact that, for both sexes, only one genital, namely the male one, comes into account. What is present, therefore, is not a primacy of the genitals, but a primacy of the *phallus*. (ibid.)

The qualification 'Unfortunately we can describe this state of things only as it affects the male child; the corresponding processes in the little girl are not known to us,' is taken up by Ettinger as evidence of Freud's erasure of femaleness from subjectivity (WOA: 71), insofar as there is no attempt to 'fill in' this gap in knowledge. Kristeva, on the other hand, refers to a similar statement concerning the Oedipus complex, from *Female Sexuality*, as *structuring* 'the girl subject': 'We have an impression here that what we have said about the Oedipus complex applies with complete strictness to the male child only' (Freud 1931: 229; cited in Kristeva 1996b: 102). She presents an innovation in *Sense and Non-Sense* which may begin to allow for corporeal difference within the phallic phase (where infantile sexuality is entirely oriented around the male genital form): 'a dissociation is structurally inscribed between the sensory and the signifying in the phallicism of the girl' (ibid.: 99). Rather than the usual account of sexual differentiation in this phase, where the infantile sexuality of the girl *is* phallic and *then* she discovers her difference through the castration complex, this difference appears in Kristeva as co-extensive with the phallicism of the girl, apparently a sexual difference that precedes castration. Because of the location, within phallic monism, of the girl's phallicism in the clitoris, this 'immediately dissociates the female subject from the phallus,' the girl apparently perceiving it as 'extraneous, radically other.' From this dissociation, there is a reactivation of the pre- or non-linguistic. Here, a specific reference is made to 'daughter-mother reduplication and Minoan-Mycenean sameness' (ibid.: 100), the archaic mother-daughter relation now beginning to form slightly more than a psychotic blank in the subjectivity of women, and to a reactivation of the semiotic (ibid.: 101). As Anne-Marie Smith glosses,

⁸⁰ This tension is coupled with the addition, in the 1924 version of the *Three Essays*, of the phallic phase to the oral and anal phases of infantile sexuality (Freud 1905: 199n. and 233).

The pre-oedipal relation with the mother's body then becomes a partially repressed layer of her sexuality, a sensory secret which Kristeva relates to memories too distant to be recalled, but which are rather hallucinated. These secret memories are the key to her survival in the strange, illusory order of the phallus. (1998: 92)

Kristeva thus accepts Freud's presentation of infantile sexuality as only recognising the male genital, even if she differentiates the male and female relation to this determination, and not only according to the structure of castration. A differentiation within the phallic phase is not, however, the only shift in her thinking. Having made this move, Kristeva then goes on to posit a secondary Oedipus complex, Oedipus², in which the desire to have a child, and the bearing of a child are both fitted into the structure of phallic monism, rather than jettisoned from it, and the woman's estrangement within the phallic paradigm is (if temporarily) assuaged (1996b: 104).

This secondary Oedipus arises as a result of the castration complex, through which, as with the boy-child, the girl renounces her desire for the mother. In Oedipus², the mother is hated, but also identified with, as is 'the preoedipal mother of Minoan-Mycenean perfumed paradises' (ibid.: 103). This is thus the site of the shift I mentioned in Kristeva's more recent work in that, built into Oedipus² and the girl's estrangement within phallic monism is a connection with the archaic m/Other that is not coextensive with the psychotic undifferentiation described in 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini'. Rather than presenting maternity as split according to homosexual-maternal and paternal-symbolic facets, in the temporary granting of 'real presence' by the birth of a 'child-phallus,' Kristeva *heals* this previously untraversable gulf, presenting maternal duality as ideally bisexual (hetero- and homosexual) *and* androgynous (masculine and feminine). This seems to be a concrete embodiment of the all-powerful phallic mother:

When the symbolic order is incarnated in real presence (the child-phallus), the woman finds in it the conjunction of her symbolic essence (phallic thinking subject) and her carnal essence (preoedipal sensuality, mother-daughter sensual duality, reduplication of female parents). As a result, achieving her bisexuality in androgyny in an Oedipus phase that is never completed and always renewed, the woman-mother may appear to be the guarantor of both the social order and the continuation of the species. (Kristeva 1996b: 104)

The splitting that was previously specific to the pregnant subject as biological *and* symbolic is thus pushed back by Kristeva into a caesura that persists throughout the life of the female subject, and constitutes a particular modality of relation to the semiotic that does not appear in *Revolution*, an 'always-present adherence in the girl to the preoedipal daughter-mother osmosis and to the code in which this osmosis occurs: sensorial exchanges and prelanguage' (ibid.: 101).

MATRICIDAL NECESSITY

Irigaray also takes up the question of the hatred of the mother, but in more critical mode than Kristeva, and points to the way in which the positing of the girl-child's hatred of the mother as necessary gives rise to a female subjectivity that is pathological from the outset. The text with which she engages at this point is Freud's 'Femininity,' which lays out very explicitly the hatred of the mother:

We will now turn our interest on to the single question of what it is that brings this powerful attachment of the girl to her mother to an end. This, as we know, is its usual fate: it is destined to make room for an attachment to her father. Here we come upon a fact which is a pointer to our further advance. This step in development does not involve only a simple change of object. The turning away from the mother is accompanied by hostility; the attachment to the mother ends in hate. (1932: 121)

In 'The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry,' Irigaray interrogates the 'need' for the girl's love object to change, for 'the girl's father [to] become her love-object' (1974: 31). She questions Freud's claims of a phase 'to which she is *biologically destined*,' which at the same time renders the girl's needs as 'less catered to by nature' (ibid.: 26). Irigaray—to return to Kristeva's idea of the maternal body as a cipher concealing the 'necessary and hazardous *program* constituting every species'—points out a series of objections to this change of object, not least Freud's deferral of an account of how this change should take place into an idea of biological destiny. While the mother is, for the boy and the man, his '*eternal object of desire*,' the lot of the girl, Irigaray argues, is to desire only to be like that object (ibid.: 32). This situation is particularly problematic, partly in terms of the girl's and the woman's relation to her own desire and *jouissance*, but especially for a subjective negotiation of questions of origin. For the male, phallic infant, the approach to the mother as the site of his origin is one of wanting to return to that origin, to 'possess the mother, get inside the mother who is the place of origin, in order to reestablish continuity with it and to see and know what happens there' (ibid.: 41). This re-entry of the mother as the site of origin is only on the condition of having a penis. Without this, the girl can only, as in Kristeva's solution to the split embodied by the pregnant woman, generically assume a repetition of the locus of origin:

the girl will herself be the place where origin is repeated, re-produced and reproduced, through this does not mean that she thereby repeats "her" original topos, "her" origin. On the contrary, she must break any contact with it, or with her, and, making one last turn, by a kind of vault—up one *more* branch of the family tree. (ibid.)

In an argument which resonates with her later idea of the maternal feminine as a 'place separated from "its" place' (Irigaray 1984: 10), Irigaray argues that the repetition of origin '*can never be turned* to woman's account as the other side of the representational coin, an "other side" of the representation of origin' (1974: 41). That is, it erases the possibility of a particular negotiation by the

girl of her own origin, since she resides within an undifferentiated feminine continuum (ibid.). This in turn could have a very specific effect on the nature and contents of the unconscious, since the primal phantasies, which in some formulations constitute the repressed nucleus of the unconscious, concern this very question of origins (see Laplanche & Pontalis 1967: 333-34). This impossibility, especially where it concerns the 'representation of origin' is, in terms of the argument of this chapter, profoundly linked to the prohibitions that emerge from the projection of undifferentiation into the domain of the prenatal. If the representation of origin is limited to a question of the emergence of difference from undifferentiation,⁸¹ that difference only arising from the intervention of a third term in relation to which the female subject is estranged, from the point of view of the latter such a differentiation seems doomed from the outset. That is, 'At least within the economy of representation that still prevails' (Irigaray 1974: 41). For the girl or the woman, if there is no representational mediation available for the specificity of her own body (Irigaray 1984: 12) as a potential site of maternity, it is no surprise that science and theology, as discourses which appeal outside themselves to a larger (or higher) truth, are the only discourses which can account for it. To be able to approach this specificity of female corporeality differently, on a concrete or singular level, Irigaray proposes a reconception of, and reconfiguration of, the mother-daughter relation:

When analytic theory says that the little girl must give up her love of and for her mother, her desire of and for her mother so as to enter into the desire of/for the father, it subordinates woman to a normative hetero-sexuality, normal in our societies, but completely pathogenic and pathological. Neither little girl nor woman must give up love for their mother. Doing so uproots them from their identity, their subjectivity. (1981: 44)

The effects of such an uprooting are given by Kristeva, although in a descriptive rather than a critical mode, and adds more concrete detail on the pathogenic potential of the hatred of the mother. The moves we have seen her making in *Sense and Non-Sense*, to reconfigure the reactivation of archaic mother-daughter relations in pregnancy and maternity, are additions to a basic paradigm laid out in an earlier text, *Black Sun*. Here, Kristeva recasts Freud's positing of the necessity of separation from the mother in semiotic terms, as the condition of possibility of subjectivity, the originary loss of the maternal object forming the sole impetus for a search for meaning in language, by which this loss is subsequently negated (1987: 43):

Matricide is our vital necessity, the sine-qua-non of our individuation, provided that it takes place under optimal circumstances and can be eroticized—whether the lost object is recovered as erotic object (as is the case for male heterosexuality or female homosexuality), or it is transposed by means of an unbelievable symbolic effort, the advent of which one can only admire, which eroticizes the *other* (the other sex, in the case of the heterosexual

⁸¹ This also relates very strongly to Laplanche's objections to primary narcissism, as well as Lacan's ethical interrogation of object-relations psychoanalysis. For more on the former see Chapter 3; for the latter, see the Overview, p. 71.

woman) or transforms cultural constructs into a “sublime” erotic object (one thinks of the cathexes, by men and women, in social bonds, intellectual and aesthetic productions, etc.). (ibid.: 27-28)

If hindered—by individual guilt or lack of tolerance within the ‘milieu’ (which I take to be a lack of environmental support for a separation from the mother)—the matricidal drive is inverted. That is, in order to protect it from destruction, the maternal object is introjected. Following this introjection, which does nothing to erase the matricidal drive itself, the subject attacks itself as the bearer of the introjected maternal object. To prevent subjective self-destruction, the hatred towards the introjected maternal object is externalised, an imaginary construction of ‘the feminine as image of death’ becoming a necessary defence against the now inverted matricidal drive, and also the condition of possibility of artistic creativity (since Kristeva’s account relates to the latter’s melancholy roots). In the event that the maternal object is introjected by a female subject, this last defence becomes impossible, as the feminine as an image of death can only become another means of self-destructing:

Indeed, how can She be that bloodthirsty Fury, since I am She (sexually and narcissistically), She is I? Consequently, the hatred I bear her is not oriented toward the outside but is locked up within myself. There is no hatred, only an implosive mood that walls itself in and kills me secretly, very slowly. (ibid.: 29)

This would seem to indicate that, for Kristeva, the only possibility for female subjectivity (other than a rather simplistic view of female homosexual object-choice as identical to male heterosexual object-choice) is the normative path of ‘the unbelievable symbolic effort’ to eroticize the masculine other, the change of object from mother to father still being, without the hypothetical Oedipus², an enigma. As we have seen, within the moves made in *Sense and Non-Sense*, the duality of paternal-symbolic and homosexual-maternal remains, but with the additional positing of an ideal femininity inhabiting *both* positions, as is seen in the ideality of maternity as both bisexual and androgynous. In *Black Sun*, Kristeva does not say that the introjection of the maternal object is a necessity for women, but does return to the idea, as seen in the homogeneous continuum of the ‘homosexual-maternal facet’ that ‘specular identification with the mother as well as the introjection of the maternal body and self are more immediate’ (ibid.: 28). This dangerous tendency is not significantly displaced in the later moves made in *Sense and Non-Sense*, since the ideal of female psychological bisexuality/androgyny is ‘like all successes [...] a phantasy’ (1996b: 105). Through the ideal but temporary state of maternity, Kristeva builds a necessary instability within the female subject. When not occupying this ideal position (if it is ever reached), the more persistent situation of female sexuality is in proximity to sadomasochism:

If it is not fixed in omnipotence, female bisexuality tends towards the trials of sadomasochism. Then, still estranged in her latent desire to have the phallus or be it (a

desire that nonetheless sustains her being a subject), the woman turns away from the desiring and phallic assumption; she renounces her psychical bisexuality and takes pleasure in a painful sensoriality, which is the carrier wave of *hysterical depressivity* before it topples into melancholia. Inversely, *hysterical indifference* may reveal an option for the phallus erected as super-ego, disgusted by clitoral pleasure, and deprived of any possible recollection of the link to the preoedipal mother. (ibid.: 104-05)

As an alternative route out of such a deadlock, where female subjectivity is fatally bound within the dilemma of an impossible symbolic effort on the one hand, and an asymbolic undifferentiation on the other, or between phallic estrangement and painfully sensorial melancholia, Ettinger's recent paper '*Fascinace* and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference' (hereafter '*Fascinace*') presents a new step in the direction of a reconception of the relationship between immature and adult femininity.

THE GIRL-TO-M/OTHER MATRIXIAL FEMININE DIFFERENCE

The foundational element of Ettinger's attempt to shift away from the kinds of problems that arise for the female subject in Kristeva's thinking is built upon what we have already approached in exploring the intra-uterine: the idea that the primary relation between the female subject and the archaic feminine Other (the m/Other) is not one of undifferentiation. Such a differentiated foundation is necessarily located elsewhere than either the functionality in which drive theory is founded (which cannot conceive of an object that it unassimilable to the infant), especially the idea that the first contact with an object is that of mouth with breast, or the undifferentiated omnipotence of primary narcissism. Although such differentiation is fairly unremarkable in the context of matrixiality, Ettinger reminds us that it is not neutral, but one that is first and foremost a difference from the feminine: 'The first corporeal-psychic connection between I and non-I occurs inside the maternal womb where every I is in linkage with the female invisible corporeality and is borderlinking to the m/Other's psychic environment' (FGM: 70). For Ettinger this primary differentiation has a particular significance when it comes to female subjectivity, in that it reconceives the sexual difference of the female child as a sexual difference 'from another female' in the first instance, '*and not from men, boys or the father*' (ibid.), which adds another possible dimension to the path from girlhood to womanhood. That is, since the primary sexual differentiation of the female subject-to-be is from a female subject (the m/Other-to-be), later questions of sexual difference, maturity and knowledge may be addressed within such a context. This, in theory, provides an alternative to the twin trials of the female subject set up in *Black Sun*, an alternative to the 'choice' between the murder of the mother and the arduous task of eroticising masculinity, or the inconsolable sadness resulting from the introjection of the maternal object. In '*Fascinace*,' through readings of Freud's 'Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria,' and Marguerite Duras's novel *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, Ettinger elaborates a scenario in which both Lol Stein and Dora seek

both to relate to and to differentiate themselves from a desirable sexual female presence. The psychosis of Lol Stein is interpreted as the effect of a failure of this attempt at relation and differentiation.

At the heart of *Fascinace* is a scene Ettinger claims as a repetition of a matrixial primal scene. In the opening passages of *The Ravishing of Lol Stein* we find an account of an enigmatic ballroom encounter between Lol Stein, her fiancé Michael Richardson, and an unknown woman:

Who was she? They later learned: Anne-Marie Stretter. Was she beautiful? How old was she? What had she, Anne-Marie Stretter, experienced that other women had missed? By what mysterious path had she arrived at what appeared to be a gay, a dazzling pessimism, a smiling indolence as light as a hint, as ashes? (Duras 1964: 6)

Lol's fiancé is compelled to approach this woman, an approach that is undertaken 'as though in real agony' (ibid.: 8), and apparently abandons Lol on the edge of the dance floor. Lol's involvement in this approach, however, and in the ensuing encounter, is clear: 'When the first dance was over, Michael Richardson had come back over to Lol, as he had always done till then. In his eyes was an imploring look, a call for help, for acquiescence. Lol had smiled at him' (ibid.: 9). What Ettinger reads into Lol's participation in this encounter is an involvement in a question of difference, Lol's own difference from the fascinating presence of an Other-woman who is clearly a mother, but who is also profoundly desirable. It is crucial that this difference is not constituted upon an exclusion, and indeed it is only with the intrusion of Lol's own mother at the end of the night—'insulting and reviling' the couple—that her suffering begins:

When her mother had reached her side and had touched her, Lol had at last let go of her grip on the table. It was only then that she had realized, vaguely, that something was drawing to a close, without knowing quite what it might be. The screen which her mother formed between them and her was her first inkling of it. (ibid.: 11-12)

A repetition of the difference from the archaic m/Other within a scenario that—insofar as it is matrixial—is a shared encounter, allows the 'girl' 'sufficient proximity to sustain the illusion of inclusion in [the mother figure's] mature elusive femininity' (FGM: 62).⁸² Because this sharing of knowledge is a repetition of the originary feminine sexual difference in the archaic matrixial encounter, it cannot be considered an identification. For Ettinger, if this possibility for a sharing of a knowledge of the feminine in an encounter with the *Woman-beneath-the-m/Other* (i.e., the sexual, desirable feminine 'enveloped inside the figure of the archaic m/Other' (ibid.: 70)) is unavailable the result is, as in Dora's case, hysteria. It seems that the mother in Kristeva's scenario is one potential

⁸² Ettinger supplies definitions of the 'girl' figure as 'any human being embodied as female,' and 'femme-fille, woman-beneath-the-girl and girl-beneath-the-woman, a daughter position' (FGM: 80).

source both of this unavailability—“The phallic mother is a screen that blurs the woman-beneath-the-mother so longed for by the girl” (ibid.: 66)—and of the devastation that takes place in the ‘case’ of Lol Stein. As in the quotation above, Lol’s mother is such a screen, interrupting the encounter with the desirable woman-m/Other, and setting in motion Lol’s eventual subjective unravelling.

It is important to note that the repetition of the differentiation from the feminine in the address to the Woman-beneath-the-m/Other is not in any sense a return to a scenario of dyadic bliss. On the contrary, Ettinger is emphatic that although the *fascinace*⁸³ of the girl is not one-way, the attention of the adult, sexuate femininity encountered ‘is not directed at the girl but outside and away from her’ (ibid.: 62). This is particularly clear in her reading of Duras. First of all, while the participation of a third term—the Lover (in this particular case a man, but not necessarily so (ibid.: 68))—is absolutely necessary to ensure the desirability of the Woman-beneath-the-m/Other, his gaze is not sought by the girl: the need ‘to be included in the gaze of fascinace of mature femininity exceeds the desire toward the man’ (ibid.: 65). Neither does this third term intervene in a dual relation, as is more often held to be the case. The object of the *fascinace* in this scenario is the encounter itself:

In the novel, there is no rejection from the scene by the Lover [...] nor by the other woman who symbolizes for [Lol] a Woman-m/Other. The Man and the Woman do not exclude Lol’s gaze. The night contains the three of them. “The man scanned the room for some sign of eternity. Lol Stein’s smile, then, was one such sign.” (ibid.: 65-66)

The dynamics of this gaze as a site of a shared transition and transformation are, however, beyond the scope of this chapter. I will return to the gaze in Chapter 2, which will focus on the difficult relationship between psychoanalysis, art and aesthetics. For now it will suffice to note the position reached by ‘*Fascinace*’ concerning the feminine, and in particular the possibilities it suggests for an *intra*-subjective connection (although one that has a trans-subjective configuration as its condition of possibility) between archaic feminine elements and a mature feminine sexuality. This intra-subjective connection in theory circumvents phallic monism by producing the difference of the girl not as founded on lack (the discovery that she, like the mother, is castrated), but an asymmetry in an encounter with a feminine Other. Because this founding asymmetry could be considered a minimal mediation (or at the very least an inscription) of the archaic m/Other, this provides an alternative route to separation, which does not involve hatred, nor radical irremediable loss, but is rather (to use Ettinger’s phrase) separation-in-jointness. The later encounter with the Woman-

⁸³ Ettinger defines *fascinace* as ‘an aesthetic event that operates in the prolongation and delaying of the time of encounter-event and allows a working-through of matrixial differentiating-in-jointness and copoiesis’ (FGM: 61). By contrast, ‘*Fascinum* is the unconscious element in the image that stops and freezes life. The gaze inside an image has such an arresting power because, as an unconscious *objet a*, it is a product of castration’ (ibid.: 60).

beneath-the-m/Other is a repetition which catches up this earlier site of differentiation and brings it into play in the formation of an adult feminine sexuality.

This recent development in Ettinger's thinking can only have been formulated, however, as a consequence of her earlier work to undermine the rule of intra-uterine omnipotence and undifferentiation as well as, of course, her efforts to reconcile the advantages and disadvantages of object-relations and drive-based theories concerning the partial object. What we have, in Ettinger's formulation of an originary relationality with-in the heterogeneous real of the intra-uterine encounter, is a theoretical structure that aims to bring corporeality and thus sexual difference into the sphere of relationality (a primary sexual difference unthinkable within the various strands of British psychoanalytic thinking to which she often refers). This undermines one side of the banishment of pregnancy to the a-subjective field of biology. In theorising a reconnection with this primary differential relationality by a body-and-psyche potentially approaching (but still different from) a participation with-in it from the point of a mature feminine sexuality, Ettinger theoretically shakes the foundations of the other side of the banishment of pregnancy, the 'it happens, but I'm not there'.

Such an absence is, of course, still very much sustainable. On the basic terms of its supplementary methodology, the theory of the matrix does not refute the limitations of drive theory or the projections of primary narcissism. Its non-oppositional approach to other 'phallic' modes of thinking positions matrixiality in a relation of 'before-as-beside,' as anterior to, but also accompanying them. This inter- and trans-theoretical positioning is not, however, something that can necessarily be taken for granted, and will be a question to which I will return again, indirectly in Chapter 2 and directly—in considering Laplanche's specification of the psychoanalytic field and Guattari's trans-disciplinary metamodelling—in Chapter 3.

TRANSITION

Disciplinary considerations

What we have seen in this chapter with regard to Ettinger's negotiation of the situation of the feminine at and beyond the limits of subjectivity represents a characteristic of her work that is quite easily obscured by its overt focus upon a critique of the phallus and castration. Subtending and, in my view, facilitating this overt critique is an approach to the relationship between different schools of psychoanalytical thinking that is deeply engaged with questions of their relative openings and blockages. The extreme poles of this engagement are Ettinger's background in object-relations and

Kleinian thinking, and her clear investment in the openings offered by the late Lacan. These poles are not divided into competing orthodoxies, but delimit a field of investigation in which the limits both of subjectivity and of psychoanalysis are called into question.

A particular undercurrent that has run throughout this chapter is the emerging notion that psychoanalytic strands of feminist theory are far broader than a reaction to, or development, of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Whitford's recent paper on Irigaray and narcissism, as well as Kristeva's 1996 paper on Freud and language both carry important suggestions for understanding the possible character of this decentring of Lacan. Although Ettinger's 'supplementary' strategy has links to Lacan's idea of supplementary feminine jouissance in *Encore*, it becomes more and more clear that this is not, as suggested by Malone's commentary, simply a *filling in* of this supplementary position, 'providing a brilliant focus and subtle theorization to the articulation of the Other position' (1997: 420). In 'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine,' Ettinger unequivocally states the imperative of 'a departure which should not derive at all from the phallic structure' (TWF: 59); on the basis of this departure, she locates the matrixial feminine as beyond the limit even of Lacan's beyond-the-phallus dimension of jouissance. This beyondness lies partly in the fact that, while Lacan's seminars, and particularly his late work, are a vital thread running throughout Ettinger's theoretical writings, the specificity of her intervention emerges just as strongly from a filtering and positioning of Lacan via other sources, often those which have developed out of the aesthetic sensibilities of the British post-Kleinian school. Where in the present chapter I have touched upon the contribution of relational psychoanalytic theories to the ability to bring the prenatal/intra-uterine sphere just within the bounds of subjectivity, in the next chapter I will look at the effect of these relational perspectives upon the difficult relationship between psychoanalysis and art. The particular contribution of these modes of psychoanalytic thinking in this area is their reconfiguration of the archaic object, which opens the possibility of a psychoanalytic theory of creativity unthinkable within the terms of the drives alone.

In her 1995 text *The Matrixial Gaze*, Ettinger explicitly carries the differences between drive-based and object-relations theories into the field of aesthetics, criticising the dominance of the object of the drive, 'while the relational dimension of the *object of playing* was pushed to the periphery' (MG: 33/98). Although Ettinger's generalised diagnosis of a dominance of psychoanalytic aesthetics by drive theory might be subject to some disagreement, particularly in light of Kleinian formulations, the effects of the differences between the various schools of psychoanalytic thinking upon the approach to art and aesthetics are indisputable. In the next chapter, I will use the work of Marion Milner to stand for both the openings and the limitations presented by relational perspectives in terms of the relationship between art, aesthetics and psychoanalysis. I will argue that the limitations in particular are the basis of Ettinger's retention of (in a modified form) a series of Lacanian

elements that relate the feminine to art and aesthetics. The two most significant of these are the *sinthome*, and the constitution of the scopical register by the configuration of gaze (as *objet a*) and screen. These retained elements are also instrumental in how Ettinger is able both to position the archaic object in relation to the work of art, and to situate artistic practice again in relation to the limits of psychoanalytic theory.

As well as Ettinger's explicit carriage of the inter-theoretical relationship of drives and object-relations theories into the field of aesthetics, there are some specific points that have arisen in this chapter that will relate to the next. For example, the framework within which Milner's formulation of primary creativity takes place strongly relates to primary narcissism. In the Overview, I interpreted Ettinger's statement from 'Matrix and Metamorphosis' that subjectivity emerges from 'an already distinct and highly structured substratum' (M&M: 176) as a direct challenge to any thesis of primary undifferentiation or primary narcissism (as defined on the basis of Freud's second psychical topography (see Laplanche & Pontalis 1967: 337-38)). Its appearance in this chapter, in connection with the establishment of birth as an untraversable limit for subjectivity and the projection onto intra-uterine life of an image of blissful undifferentiation and need-free existence is relevant for Milner's thinking insofar as her formulations of aesthetic experience and creativity emerge from the idea of a primary 'objectless' state (which is directly associated with primary narcissism (1955: 103)). This has particular consequences for how she is able to conceive of the relation between primary creativity and artistic creativity, since it gives rise to a difficulty in locating the work of art as produced on a psycho-corporeal plane. The problem of the work of art in Milner's thinking will return us to the body, but not only as a heterogeneous and disruptive force at the margins of subjectivity and meaning; in the next chapter, via Merleau-Ponty's 'Eye and Mind,' the body, and more specifically the skin, will appear as an indeterminacy that calls into question any attempts to enforce a schism between interiority and exteriority as fields of reality, an indeterminacy that cannot be disregarded in considering aesthetics and artistic practice.

The matrix in-forms the subtle, slight transformations which the I inflicts on the unknown non-I as an Other-as-a-partial-object, and participates in the particular rapport the I bears, and witnesses, toward the same unknown non-I as an other-as-a-partial-subject during the process of painting.

Bracha Ettinger, 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen'

2

AESTHETICS AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Archaic relations, creativity and the work of art in Milner and Ettinger

From a very early stage in its history, the relationship between psychoanalysis and art has been a matter both of the limits and the margins of the psychoanalytic field, a relationship articulated most notably in Freud's 'The Moses of Michelangelo,' and 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood.' In the opening of 'A Psycho-analytical Approach to Aesthetics,' Hanna Segal uses comments from both of these texts as evidence of a limitation of Freudian psychoanalysis on the subject of aesthetics, a limitation which she feels to an extent to have been surpassed by Kleinian developments (1952: 43). A key statement used by Segal as evidence of Freud's shortcomings in this area is the following, from 'The Moses of Michelangelo':

I have often observed that the subject-matter of works of art has a stronger attraction for me than their formal and technical qualities, though to the artist their value lies first and foremost in the latter. I am unable rightly to appreciate many of the methods used and the effects obtained in art. (Freud 1914: 211)

Sarah Kofman also takes up this passage in the opening chapter of *The Childhood of Art*, but in a less straightforward way than Segal. Through a 'symptomatic reading,' she questions the manifest content of many of Freud's statements on the location of aesthetics outside the psychoanalytic field. Kofman's careful readings of Freud uncover a struggle to overcome the idea of 'a "pure" aesthetics cut off from psychoanalysis and reserved for specialists,' a struggle based on what she sees as his underlying opposition both to the divorce of intellect and sensibility—a psychology of

the faculties' (Kofman 1988: 7)—and to the idea that 'to enjoy art one absolutely must not understand it, even though intelligence itself is a form of enjoyment' (ibid.: 12). In this vein, Freud's work in "The "Uncanny"" and 'Moses' operates, Kofman contends, not in terms of an application of psychoanalysis to something outside its domain, but rather in terms of 'links between the disciplines' (ibid.: 7), links which, she argues, stem from the universality of the Oedipus complex. Kofman's analysis is of note here for two main reasons. The first is its positioning of aesthetics as a question of the *margins* of psychoanalysis (that is, something which resides just within its limits, but which also connects to fields beyond those limits). The second is its emphasis on the symbolism of the Oedipus complex as the concrete foundation of the link between psychoanalysis and aesthetics, to which I will return later.

In his PhD thesis *Writing the Symptom: Lacan's Joycean Knot*,⁸⁴ Luke Thurston also discusses 'The Moses of Michelangelo,' but in a different vein to Kofman. Where Kofman treats Freud's unwillingness to surrender to the idea of a necessarily inexplicable aesthetic experience as a refusal of the metaphysical opposition of affect and representation, Thurston argues that Freud's approach both to Michelangelo's Moses and to *Hamlet* could be understood as a specific attempt to *master* the traumatic element—the 'affective disruption'—of the aesthetic experience. This attempt at mastery takes on a particular form, according to Thurston: a repetition within Freud's discourse of 'the logic of the art-work in question'. Thurston sees in Freud's detailed attention to Michelangelo's Moses a textual miming of the work of art, his 'obsessive attention to the *hand* of the statue' recapitulating Moses's mastery of 'the overwhelming affective disturbance which dislodges the Tables, loosens the grip on them and threatens (literally) to break the law' (1997: 11). This textual recapitulation, in Thurston's view, is characteristic of Freud's approach to art and aesthetics: 'The art-works which interest Freud themselves represent the reflexive *mastery of the aesthetic*, the portrayal of a law-bearing interpretive centre struggling to maintain its self-identity, its semantic consistency, in the face of affective disruption' (ibid.: 13).

Thurston's critique of Freud, in my view, does not operate in the same space as Kofman's discussion. Although he does touch on some of the same inter-disciplinary discursive questions she raises, in accounting for Freud's analytical processing of the Moses as a *subjective* response to an aesthetic experience of an object, Thurston is able to reposition the question of psychoanalysis and aesthetics in a different register. Here, what is in question is not just the location of aesthetics inside or outside the psychoanalytic field, but the ability of aesthetic experience to disturb the coherence

⁸⁴ As well as the appearance of some passages on the Borromean knot in 'Ineluctable Nodalities: On the Borromean Knot' (Thurston 1998: 145-53), parts of Thurston's thesis have also been published, in a substantially revised form, in *James Joyce and the Problem of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004), which presents much less of a focus on Lacan.

and consistency of that field, Freud himself standing as a representative of psychoanalytic Law. Following from this repositioning, the threads of Thurston's thesis converge on the late Lacanian figure of the *sinthome*, located at the very point of a disturbance in the Law: 'Lacan's last version of the subject is situated at the point where the Other fails to function, the symbolic Law cannot be sustained: the *sinthome* entails, in place of an ethic of pure desire, one of aesthetic self-invention' (1997: 116), a convergence which is significant here insofar as it joins 'The Moses of Michelangelo' to the theory of the matrix. Although Ettinger also turns to the *sinthome* (as we have seen in the Overview, and will see again in this chapter), this is in a slightly different mode to Thurston's meticulous revisiting of the passage from the early 'phonocentric' Lacan (*ibid.*: 46) to the later preoccupation with psychosis and a non-metaphorical writing as an opening onto the real. Although we will see that, like Thurston, Ettinger turns to the *sinthome* as the archetype for an artistic creativity transgressive of psychoanalytic law, she also privileges the *sinthome* as Lacan's answer to the impossibility of sexual *rapport*. As well as this difference in emphasis, her approach to aesthetics is another site where Ettinger's negotiation of different schools of psychoanalytic thinking plays out, in its attention to the partial object and a construction of aesthetics around an archaic relationality specifically relating to Kleinian and post-Kleinian aesthetic formulations. Such formulations do not map directly onto the preoccupations of the Freudian-Lacanian axis along which Kofman and Thurston situate their enquiries.

Bracketing for the moment Kofman's deconstruction of Freud's aesthetics and returning to Segal's treatment of it, *after* Freud, with the developments arising from Kleinian thinking, psychoanalysis begins to concern itself with a dimension of the aesthetic field previously marked as off-limits: creativity. In 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood,' Freud explicitly says that 'We should be most glad to give an account of the way in which artistic activity derives from the primal instincts of the mind were it not just here that our capacities fail us' (1910: 133). Here, he not only limits what it is possible to say about artistic creativity to sublimation, but also pushes the relationship between sublimation and artistic activity firmly towards the sphere of the biological, since, in his view, the tendency for sublimation is based in 'the organic foundations of character,' and as such is 'inaccessible to us along psychoanalytic lines' (*ibid.*: 136). Within a framework that is as restrictive of the object as is sublimation within the economic framework, the possibilities for accounting for creativity are indeed extremely limited.⁸⁵ If, as within this framework, sublimation

⁸⁵ This situation does not significantly improve with the move into the second topography, which necessitates a modification in the structure of sublimation. Donald Meltzer even argues that within the second topography sublimation becomes redundant, on the grounds that adult sexuality within 'structural theory' (that is, the second topography of Ego, Id and Superego), no longer constituted by the diversion of a quantity of libido from one object or aim to another, is rather formed by introjective identification. Further to this, he argues that in the shift away from the economic model, 'the affects may be given their proper place in the functioning of the ego and are no longer

merely represents a change in the object or aim of the drives,⁸⁶ this mechanism says nothing about what creative activity actually *might be*, nor about what might set artistic creativity apart from other forms of sublimatory outlet. Although the Kleinian model, especially in Segal's hands, retains a form of the economic modality of sublimation, this is subject to two modifications: firstly, Segal founds the capacity for sublimation upon the work of mourning, itself a repetition of 'the giving up of the breast' (1952: 53), rather than any social prohibition or action of the superego. Secondly, and more significantly, the involvement of sublimation in artistic creativity rests upon an earlier creative process, itself founded upon an approach to the object that exceeds the basic structure of the drives.

The differentiation in the object we have seen in Chapter 1—between a disposable means to an end, and something which may be introjected, projected, gained, lost or damaged—has an impact upon how psychoanalysis can approach aesthetics and creativity. Within Kleinian thinking, which operates upon the second of these tendencies, creativity as 'reparation' emerges from a process common to all successful development; it is an effect of the precarious trajectory away from the dependency and fragmentation of early infancy. A generalised creativity results from feelings of guilt experienced on acceptance of responsibility for damage to the loved object, an acceptance that is only reached through the secondary depressive position. Prior to this, the Kleinian primary object-relation is that of the paranoid-schizoid position, which splits the object, archetypally the breast, into extremely good (satisfying) and extremely bad (frustrating) objects, and is characterised by oscillations between omnipotence and persecution, greed and sadism (Klein 1935; 1940; 1946). In the depressive position, the infant realises that these objective extremes are in fact aspects of one loved object, which gives rise to a deep sadness and regret at the damage done to it. From this emerges the desire to repair this damage: 'all creation is really a re-creation of a once-loved and once whole but now lost and ruined object' (Segal 1952: 47; see also Klein 1929).

This, then, is what the Kleinians bring to the relation between psychoanalysis and art; the drawing of creativity itself into the domain of psychoanalytic consideration. This drawing-in, however, also brings with it some problems of its own. Following from the inclusion of creativity with the

necessarily linked with the Id and mental energy'. Because of this autonomy of affectivity, he believes, there is no need for sublimation: 'The concept of sublimation, neither as a poetical image ("refinement of memory"), nor as a mechanism of defence (linked to reaction formation and desexualisation), nor as a consequence of super-ego harshness, is no longer needed as part of our metapsychological system of notation' (Meltzer 1973: 130).

⁸⁶ Laplanche and Pontalis note Freud's failure to thoroughly resolve the concept of sublimation (Laplanche & Pontalis 1967: 433). As well as the difficulties for sublimation caused by the topographical shifts in Freud's work, they remark upon an inconsistency even within the economic model, where Freud, in formulating sublimation as a diversion of the sexual instinct, in some places describes this diversion as 'a modification of the aim' of the instinct, in others a 'modification of the aim and change of the object' (ibid.: 432).

psychoanalytic field, for example, Segal's solution to how this theory of creativity may be encompassed within an aesthetics is somewhat unsatisfactory. She accounts for affective responses to works of art through a theory of identification, appropriated from Wilhelm Dilthey's concept of *nach-erleben* (literally, 'experience after'): 'that we can understand other people from their behaviour and expression, we intuitively reconstruct their mental and emotional state, we live after them, we re-live them' (ibid.: 56). In considering the tragedy of *Oedipus Rex*, Segal describes two levels which constitute the *nach-erleben* of the 'sensitive-onlooker': the first is an identification with the author, and the second is an identification of the tragedy with the internal world of the author. These two identifications, she believes, allow the onlooker to relive the struggle of the artist to produce the work of art, attempting thus to account for an affective response via the artist's affective trajectory in destroying and then restoring the object. This is problematic because, in a move Kofman would associate with an infantile narcissism and an infatuation with the artist as a self-creator (1988: 17-22), it substitutes the psyche of the artist for the work of art as its guarantor of aesthetic value. Like Freud, Segal seems to link affect and representation through a form of *sensus communis*—the anxiety of the depressive position and the joy of restoring the object—but the form of representation she presents is far less sophisticated than the Freudian symbolism Kofman considers. In Segal's account, it is not the representation itself that has an effect on the 'sensitive onlooker,' but rather an association of that representation with its creator. Art in this sense does not seem to be symbolic, but rather a simple container for the artist's psyche. Or if it is symbolic, it is so only in the broad sense of being a substitute for something absent (the artist).

The basis of the Kleinian approach to aesthetics and creativity is itself modified by analysts such as Winnicott, Rycroft and Milner (and, partly in response to them, although with more to say about aesthetics than creativity, Christopher Bollas). This modification again concerns the nature of the archaic object and the primary relation to it. Klein qualifies the existence of primary object-relations as follows: 'I have further suggested that the relation to the first object implies its introjection and projection, and thus from the beginning object-relations are moulded by an interaction between introjection and projection, between internal and external objects and situations' (1946: 293). Winnicott and Milner, by contrast, both support the view that early ego-functioning is minimal to non-existent, and as such the means of perceiving and relating to external objects and reality are not innate, and must be developed.⁸⁷ On this basis, there is no initial differentiation between the infant and the mother, who must, particularly in Winnicott's view, prolong this initial sense of undifferentiation. That is, the (mythical) 'good enough' mother must, to begin with, adapt as closely as possible to the infant's needs, as 'unless this is so it is not possible for the infant to begin to

⁸⁷ See Hinshelwood 1991: 324-5 on innate knowledge, especially the ability 'to distinguish the self from not-self (objects)' (ibid.: 325).

develop a capacity *to experience a relationship to external reality, or even to form a conception of external reality*' (1991: 11, emphasis added). For Milner also, a too-early and too-sustained distinction between 'me' and 'not-me' has an environmental causality, and leads to a pathological splitting between 'logical' and 'creative' thinking. For both Winnicott and Milner, aesthetic and creative experiences are accounted for in direct relation to the adaptational move from undifferentiation to object-relating, and as such 'precede' the existence of distinct subjects and objects.

As with Kristeva's precedence (with caveats⁸⁸) of the symbolic by the semiotic, it is only if an aesthetic dimension is *primary* that it can operate as an 'agent' of transgression and symbolic mutation. In this respect, what the Kleinian understanding of creativity as reparation does is place both creativity and aesthetic responsiveness firmly within the frame of a world that is divided into separate subjects and objects, and where interiority and exteriority are already significantly determined (Segal 1952: 44). This is also the case for the understanding of symbol formation and the development of meaning, both of which are constitutively premised upon the loss of the object, a loss which must be acknowledged for that object to become meaningful. The limitation engendered by these two elements of the Kleinian model is that the only way they can account for dimensions of creativity and aesthetic experience that transgress the limits of subject and object is in terms of a pathological pseudo-creativity or a psychotic regression to a manic defence. The contribution of an early objectless or undifferentiated state to aesthetics, particularly in Milner's hands, is the possibility of an opening for ideas of boundary-transgression or the merging of subject and object *not* to be purely pathological. Within these approaches, the importance of ideas of an intermediate transitivity between fusion and separation also potentially offers, especially in Milner's case, a means by which both adult subjectivity and conceptual theoretical thinking may be open to interaction with, and modification by, non-cognitive, aesthetic modes of experience and creativity.

Milner's papers, 'The Role of Illusion in Symbol Formation' and 'Psychoanalysis and Art,' as well as some key passages from her most well-known text *On Not Being Able to Paint*, will introduce us to the topic of creativity and aesthetic experience as emerging specifically from an archaic negotiation of alterity, as well as a particular set of difficulties in retaining this creativity for a non-pathological

⁸⁸ The following passage makes clear Kristeva's caution regarding the existence of an archaic, originary semiotic: 'symbolization makes possible the complexity of this semiotic combinatorial systems, which only theory can isolate as "preliminary" in order to specify its functioning' (1974: 68). She adds to this conceptual caution the rider that the semiotic, 'although originally a precondition of the symbolic,' may only appear concretely, 'as the result of the transgression of the symbolic,' i.e., within signifying practices. As she goes on to say, the hypothesis of an archaic semiotic prior to the symbolic 'is only a *theoretical supposition* justified by the need for description'. And not only is this a question of priority: for the semiotic to appear in 'the complex articulation we associate with it in musical and poetic practices,' and to avoid the descent into psychosis, this appearance must be in harmonization with a signifying modality (ibid.: 151-54).

self, particularly within artistic practice. In terms of Ettinger's work, as well as briefly returning to *The Matrixial Gaze* as the first full articulation of the matrixial object/*objet a* of the gaze as an aesthetic object, I will focus in more detail upon the later 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen,' because it is—although this is not explicit in its title—an essay on painting. Even more than this, it is singular within Ettinger's oeuvre because of the attention it pays, via Merleau-Ponty, to painting's material and ontological dimensions. Although there are texts in which Ettinger does provide analyses of concrete cultural artefacts (see TWF, PBS, RC and FGM), there are no texts in which the former analysis is presented together with the kind of conceptual detail in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' on the ontology and the psychoanalytic positioning of the work of art. Although this paper does not share the same interest in Kleinian and post-Kleinian aesthetics as does *The Matrixial Gaze*, in its use of Merleau-Ponty it is a very useful text to place next to Milner's work.

Part I of this chapter will sketch out the basic aspects of Milner's and Ettinger's differing positionings of alterity in relation to primary subjectivising processes, as well as the implications of this for their basic ideas of creativity. Milner's approach to this issue is inextricable from ideas of symbolism and symbol-formation, and as such I will take account of her basic response to the orthodox Freudian position represented by Ernest Jones's 'The Theory of Symbolism'. At the end of this section, I will also touch upon a significant similarity between Ettinger and Milner, in their use of artistic practices and investigations as a means of opening their psychoanalytical thinking onto domains which lie beyond its limits.

Part II approaches how Milner and Ettinger implicate their views of primary creative subjectivisation within theories of artistic creativity. Here I will consider some of Milner's struggles with the materiality of the work of art in relation to her formulations of creativity and aesthetic experience. This will be counterposed to Ettinger's uptake of Merleau-Ponty and Lacan as an attempt to construct a non-representational tracing and transmission of the matrixial gaze in and by painting. Milner's account focuses primarily upon an idea of the work of art as a symbolic phenomenon, while at the same time criticising the 'reductionism' of psychoanalytic approaches which treat it as such. Milner's view of this reductionism relates to her privilege of the material *medium* as the site of the value of the work of art, a privilege which, I will argue, lays bare some significant difficulties inherent within Milner's formulation of creativity and its relation to artistic creativity. These difficulties appear to stem both from her derivation of the self and object-relating from a primary objectless condition, as well as a tendency toward bipartition as a theoretical means of configuring difference. At the end of Part II, I will return to the idea mentioned in Part I of an opening of psychoanalytical thinking onto that which stands beyond its limits, this time in terms of Ettinger's writing on painting. The difficulties this writing presents for the kind of theoretical schematisation undertaken within this thesis, I will argue, constitutes a major element of Ettinger's contribution to the relationship between art and psychoanalysis, and as such cannot be ignored.

This contribution, insofar as it returns us to the *sinthome*, will lead into the final part of this chapter, which will reconsider the relationship between psychoanalysis and art. Ettinger's retention of an emphasis upon drive theory and sublimation—which I will touch upon in this final section—breaches the limits of a conversation with Milner, but in so doing potentially resolves a significant problem inherent within Milner's association of creativity, regression and psychosis.

PART I

The archaic object-relation: foundations in/of alterity

It is possible to argue that in the discussion of the nature of the object across drive-based and relational psychoanalytical theories in Chapter 1, part of what is at stake is the recognition and tolerance of the alterity of, or an alterity within the object, the degree to which an object is not fused with or assimilable by the infant. Within the structure of the drive, for which the object '*is a matter of total indifference*' (Lacan 1964: 168), the idea of a recognition of the object as other is unthinkable. Within 'object-relations' perspectives the issue is even more complicated and, as I have suggested above, is far from homogeneous. In discussions in the Overview and Chapter 1, I have mentioned two contrasting interpretations of the situation regarding intersubjectivity and object-relations, both of which are negotiated in terms of a relation to otherness. The first is Lacan's statement that nothing 'can introduce the recognition of others into the closed system of the object relation' (1954: 213). The second emerges in the synthesis of object-relations and drive theories in 'Woman as *Objet a*,' where Ettinger posits the object relation as intersubjective—in "object-relation" theories the subject needs the other—ie the 'object' is the other and the emphasis is on relationships' (WOA: 63)—object and Other occasionally collapsing into the composite 'object/Other' (ibid: 67). In Ettinger's apparent opposition to Lacan concerning the possibility of an Other in the object-relation, I believe she is capitalising upon a grey area in the differentiation of otherness and the Other: that there is, within some strands of relational thinking, the possibility of a relation to the archaic object that is neither symbiotic fusion, nor the fragile omnipotence of the Kleinian paranoid-schizoid position, and in which the infant is able to experience a degree of difference from that object. The strongest example of this possibility is Bollas's idea of the transformational object as a primary 'existential knowing' of the object, as a transformative environment rather than an object representation (1987: 14). This minimal alterity, while escaping the dialectical logic within which Lacan's interrogation of the object-relation is articulated (See Overview, p. 71), at the same time clearly does not operate at the level of submission to the Name-of-the-Father and the incest prohibition. There is a significant distinction to be made between

Ettinger and Milner within this grey area, however, since for Ettinger alterity is primary and subjectivising, while for Milner it is something which must be developed or created (although ostensibly autonomous of higher levels of meaning and function). This distinction will have profound effects on their respective conceptions of artistic creativity.

MATRIXIAL SUBJECTIVITY-AS-ENCOUNTER

In the Overview, the matrix was introduced as a symbol for a particular relationship to alterity, and this constitutes the irreducible position of the other (the *non-I*) in the matrixial stratum of subjectivisation. Ettinger's term 'subjectivity-as-encounter' adds to this basic situation the most unequivocal statement of the centrality of alterity in matrixiality. 'The *late* intra-uterine encounter,' she argues 'can serve as a model for a *shareable dimension of subjectivity* in which elements that discern one another as *non-I*, without knowing each other, co-emerge and co-inhabit a joint space, without fusion and without rejection' (MG: 23/91-92). A constitutive role for alterity within subjectivity is not only an axiom of matrixiality in terms of the scenario of its formation (the originary matrixial encounter with an unknown other) but also its repetition, the latter insofar as the matrixial stratum of subjectivisation is unavailable to a single, unified self.

This primary alterity seems both to precede and to facilitate the formation of an archaic object. As discussed in the Overview, *The Matrixial Gaze* brings forward touch as the primary part-object of the archaic pre-natal dimension of subjectivity. This constitutes a very different object-relation to that founded by a primal orality, since 'it is not bound to the orifices of the body and is uncentered' (ibid.: 25/93). It also, and this is not directly discussed in *The Matrixial Gaze* but appears elsewhere (WOA: 64), escapes the active/passive duality that informs archaic orality; because the emergence of touch via 'intra-uterine contact' foregoes any sense of this part-object being actively commanded or controlled, the touch cannot be magically called into being in the same way as the archaic breast. If touch is an archaic prenatal object, it can only be experienced in terms of an alterity which is neither under omnipotent control, nor persecutory. The positing of this prenatal part-object necessarily calls for a matrixial-type relation: 'as a psychic part-object, the touch gives itself in for the elaboration of *borderline and borderlink as meaning*' (MG: 25/93).

Upon the foundation of the matrixial part-object of touch Ettinger builds a matrixial aesthetic dimension. The 'loss' of this part-object through the transformative processes of metamorphosis inscribes a matrixial *objet a*. In *The Matrixial Gaze*, this matrixial *objet a*—as a figuration of a constitutive alterity—is specifically related to the field of aesthetics through the gaze. Even in Lacan's 'phallic' formulation, the gaze presents the impossible approach of the Other to the subject: 'The gaze I encounter [...] is, not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other' (1964: 84). The phallic gaze as *objet a* is also, Ettinger believes, already disposed towards an

infiltration by the matrixial object, in that it ‘does not correspond entirely to that of the part-objects’ cyclic arousal’ (MG: 27/94*).⁸⁹ In Ettinger’s matrixial reformulation of the *objet a*, the approach of the gaze is not quite impossible, *metramorphic* inscription providing a shift in the regulation of the *objet a*, determined especially by the necessarily shared nature of the originary matrixial encounter (ibid.: 25/93). Metramorphosis thus has a crucial role to play in the inscription of the archaic alterity constitutive of matrixiality. While the matrixial part-object of touch informs a particular modality of relation to the object as other, metramorphosis adds the participation of an unknown alterity in the *processing* of archaic experience, which will be a key point of differentiation from Milner. Metramorphosis is not an internal psychic process, but one which redistributes traces between and across partial-subjects in a matrixial encounter:

Metramorphosis is a creative principle. ‘Relations-without-relating with the other – based on attuning of *distances-in-proximity* (and not on *either fusion or repulsion*) – reflecting and creating *differentiation-in-co-emergence* and accompanied by shared diffused and minimal-pleasure/displeasure *matrixial affects* of silent alertness, open a *with-in/with-out space*. They induce instances of co-emergence of meaning. (ibid.: 24/92)

This brief sketch of the archaic object-relation of the originary matrixial encounter, which unfolds via metramorphosis into the matrixial *objet a*, will show that matrixiality, in its central positioning of an unknown but subjectivising alterity, is vastly different to Milner’s negotiation of some similar (although post-natal) terrain. For Milner, the primary encounters with an unknown other comprise the founding instance of the potential for pathogenic trauma. Creative and aesthetic dimensions of psychic life emerge from this as the means by which alterity can be introduced to the infant without catastrophic consequences. These basic differences between Milner and Ettinger will have significant consequences for how they conceive of the relationships between creativity and the work of art, creativity and meaning, and psychoanalysis and aesthetics.

It is also crucial to remind ourselves, before moving on to Milner, that the primary alterity enfolded within the theory of the matrix is not neutral; it is an originary feminine (sexual) difference (MG: 6-7/79-80; F/P: 398; ST: 65). I note this at this early stage in the chapter only then to bracket it, but with the proviso that the non-neutral status of this difference informs the stakes of Ettinger’s treatment of it in relation to art and aesthetics, again preserving a link to the theory of the drives (which will reappear later in connection to sublimation):

The discussion of art in a psychoanalytic context is inseparable, to my mind, from a discussion of sexual difference, since we arrive at art through the extensions of the psyche

⁸⁹ This view of the gaze is echoed (from the other side of the eye/gaze split) by Laplanche, who in ‘The Drive and its Source-Object’ questions the relationship between the scopophilic drive and conventional ideas of the trajectory of the drive: ‘is the drive to look an excitation of the eye, is there such a thing as an ocular orgasm? Few of us would be prepared to say so’ (1999: 121).

closest to the phenomenological plane, on the edge of the corpo-real – through libido, impulse (drive) and *jouissance*. (MG&S: 5-6)

MARION MILNER: DIFFERENTIATION-THROUGH-FUSION

As I have already indicated in the introduction to this chapter, in contrast to Klein's view that 'object-relations exist from the beginning of life' (1946: 293) Milner espouses a position akin to Winnicott's, and is common to many analysts aligned with the Independent School,⁹⁰ that early ego structure—and thus object-relating—is in fact minimal, and is something that must be reached gradually, too-early ego formation being a key contributor to psychopathology (Milner 1957: 144-45 and 1955: 101-3; Winnicott 1991: 9-14).⁹¹ Milner's basic conception of the earliest stages of infancy is of an undifferentiated mother-infant fusion, in which the archaic 'object' is not an object as such, but 'a fusion of self and object': 'mouth and breast felt as fused into one' (1955: 90). This conception has a profound connection to her understanding of aesthetic experience, which conceives the 'aesthetic moment,' after Bernard Berenson, as an ecstatic union of 'spectator' and artwork, where the spectator 'ceases to be his ordinary self, and the picture or building, statue, landscape, or aesthetic actuality is no longer outside himself. The two become one entity; time and space are abolished and the spectator is possessed by one awareness' (Berenson, *Aesthetics and History*, quoted in Milner 1955: 98). The nature of this aesthetic moment specifically derives, Milner believes, from a repetition of the primary state of the human infant, undifferentiated from the breast.

It is between these two moments that Milner's work on creativity and the adaptation to the reality of the object is formulated. This process of adaptation is itself presented as a theory of symbolism, which stakes Milner's intervention in terms of the condition of possibility for meaning in general; she contends that the possibility of symbol formation depends first and foremost on a fusion of object and symbol, a fusion which facilitates symbolic substitution via similarity. Her approach to symbol formation is couched specifically in terms of an objection to part of Ernest Jones's 1916 paper 'The Theory of Symbolism.' In this paper, Jones distinguishes between 'true' symbolism and other forms of 'indirect' representation (metaphor, simile, metonymy etc.) on the grounds of the fixed referent of this 'true' symbolism. Jones's account, incidentally, also connects to the symbolism

⁹⁰ See n. 71, above, on the division of analytical training in within the British Psycho-Analytical Society.

⁹¹ Adam Phillips provides a useful summary of Winnicott's view of 'an excessive early deprivation' that enforces an excessively abrupt distinction between internal and external: 'This intolerable absence of the mother was beyond the infant's capacity to assimilate. It was included as part of the infant's total life experience, but it could not be integrated, it had no place. Beyond a certain point in time the infant, in a sense, was no longer there, he became insentient because he did not have an ego sufficiently developed to encompass, and so account for, the waiting inflicted upon him. He could not hold his belief in his mother's existence alive in his mind' (1988: 21).

Kofman emphasises as the concrete foundation of Freud's aesthetics (more on which later), on the basis that the fixed referent of true symbolism is also necessarily repressed (Jones 1916: 139, 158).⁹² Jones locates the genesis of symbols in the infantile tendency to note 'identity in differences' (ibid.: 156), a location with which Milner concurs (1955: 87-88). It is Jones's reduction of this tendency to a 'desire for ease and pleasure,' however, as well its association with maladaptation and pathological regression in adults, to which Milner objects in the strongest terms. She argues instead that this infantile tendency in fact represents a mode of adaptation to reality, a matter of necessity: 'Are we not rather driven by the internal necessity for inner organization, pattern, coherence, the basic need to discover identity in difference without which experience becomes chaos?' (ibid.: 86). In positing such a necessity, Milner also argues against a conflation of this tendency with primitivism or pathological regression. She points out that, while Jones allows for its connection to a hypothetical theory of scientific discovery, a similar weight is not granted to the same phenomena as they appear in aesthetic experience (ibid.: 87; Jones 1916: 151).

Milner draws from her objection to Jones the idea that there is an ambiguity in his articulation of symbolism, a failure to distinguish between symbolism-as-repression or distortion, and 'prelogical' symbolism-as-identity or fusion (Milner 1955: 88-89). On the basis of this perceived inadequacy, in combination with a view of the identification of sameness in difference as a necessary adaptational process, Milner takes up Otto Fenichel's idea of 'archaic symbolism as a part of prelogical thinking' (Fenichel, cited in Milner 1955: 87), which leads her to formulate a distinct idea of prelogical symbolism as *fusion*. In this form of symbolism, the infant repeats the archaic undifferentiation of mouth and breast, but in a repetition that operates a *double* fusion, between the object and its symbolic substitute (object and symbol being indistinguishable), and between self and object, the condition of possibility for this prelogical symbolism being 'an ability to tolerate a temporary loss of self' (1955: 98). For Milner, this distinct form of symbolism is the only way the infant will be able to adapt to an experience of the object as such; as she says, 'I am concentrating on the problem [...] of establishing object relations at all' (ibid.).

Symbolism-as-fusion is posited in this context as the condition of possibility of a non-pathological experience of alterity. In 'The Role of Illusion in Symbol Formation' (hereafter 'The Role of Illusion'), Milner presents the case of a boy estranged from adaptational symbolism-as-fusion, an estrangement, she concludes, resulting from precocious ego-formation: 'For the sake of self-preservation, it had been necessary for him continually and clearly to distinguish between external

⁹² These characteristics are only two of six that Jones posts for symbolism proper, the other four being '(3) non-dependence on individual factors only; (4) evolutionary basis, as regards both the individual and the race; (5) linguistic connections between the symbol and the idea symbolised; (6) phylogenetic parallels with the symbolism as found in the individual exist in myths, cults, religions, etc' (1916: 182). See also ibid.: 139-43, for fuller descriptions of these characteristics.

and internal reality, to attend to the real qualities of the symbol too soon' (ibid.: 103). She argues that this precocious separateness and self-sufficiency (imposed by living in London during the blitz) is the causal factor in an inhibition of investment in processes of learning and growth, particularly in a school environment. She attributes to the enforced attention to external reality an inhibition of the primary creative fusion required for the integration both of internal and external realities, and of the different modes of thinking that relate to undifferentiation and differentiation.

Milner's solution to this inhibition of integration is to accept the child's need for a temporary sense of fusion with herself, the analyst. She refuses to accept a straightforwardly Kleinian account of what was at play in the patient's need 'to have the illusion that I was part of himself' (ibid.: 95), claiming an area of experience that remains unaccounted for. She accepts that there are elements of splitting, projection, idealisation and control at play, but takes issue with the assumption of a boundary within such interpretations. The idea of a boundary is questioned, she feels, by the content of much of her patient's play, which involved 'burning, boiling down, and melting' (ibid.: 96), and within a form of play with a ritualistic, almost incantatory aspect that Milner struggles to account for within the bounds of received psychoanalytic ideas. *Fire* in particular, within this play, presents her with a great deal of material:

the fire seemed to be here not only a destructive fire but also the fire of Eros; and not only a figurative expression of his own passionate body feelings, not only the phantasy representative of the wish for passionate union with the external object, but also a way of representing the inner fire of concentration. The process in which interest is withdrawn temporarily from the external world so that the inner work of integration may be carried out was, I think, shown by the boiling or melting down of the various ingredients in what he called "the fire cup", to make a new whole. (ibid.: 97-98)

It is clear from this that toys and play are instrumental in the possibility of a renegotiation of the distinction between internal and external realities within the analytic setting. Milner identifies a function for these comparable to the medium with which an artist works. She suggests that the medium is the means by which 'the artist' reconciles the discrepancy between 'his' internal world, and the common means of expression. The medium is construed as something external which is pliable, a middle ground between the 'unmitigated not-me-ness' of the uncontrollable external world. In this particular analysis, the pliability or receptivity of the toys became the enabling factor in the patient's ability 'to express the idea of integration' (ibid.: 97).

as soon as he had settled down to using the toys as a pliable medium, external to himself, but not insisting on their own separate objective existence, then apparently he could treat me with friendliness and consideration, and even accept real frustration from me. (ibid.: 93)

As well as the medium as a facilitating support for adaptational undifferentiation, Milner also emphasises the importance of an idea of framing, be it temporal or spatial, for the possibility of psychic creativity. She identifies the need for a time or a space that is separated from the 'objective'

external world, that can enable the possibility of the development of illusion of undifferentiation of subject and object, this framing repeating the environmental facilitation that is necessary for successful development (ibid.: 89). The exemplary illusion for Milner is the transference relationship, so it is clear that 'illusion' is being used in a very specific manner. It is a term also used by Winnicott as the locus of the transitional object: in addition to the delimitation of inner and outer realities, he claims a 'third part of the life of a human being,'

to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it should exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated. (1991: 2)

According to Milner, it is part of the analyst's role to constitute an instance of this third part of human life within the analytic session, that 'the central idea underlying psychoanalytic technique is that it is by means of this illusion that a better adaptation to the world outside is ultimately developed' (1955: 89).

To return to Milner's objection to Jones, however, the idea that this adaptational process is not limited to the domain of child development constitutes a major element of the significance of Milner's symbolism-as-fusion for psychoanalytic aesthetics. In addition to her identification of the ecstatic aesthetic moment with a return to archaic fusion, she also carries this into a theory of specifically artistic creativity, which, first and foremost, requires that prelogical symbolism is not relegated to the 'useless and superfluous' status Jones so readily accepts, to the idea of a 'lumber-room of civilisation to which the adult readily flees in states of reduced or deficient capacity for adaptation to reality, in order to regain his old, long-forgotten playthings of childhood' (Rank and Sachs, quoted in Jones 1916: 152). The rejection of a view of an adult relation to prelogical symbolism as regression or simple nostalgia subtends both Milner's extension of it into artistic creativity, and her resulting approaches to the question of sublimation. While this extension constitutes an important aspect of Milner's contribution to the relationship between psychoanalysis and aesthetics (although one that brings its own problems), the value of this contribution can only be fully understood if we take into account the particular character of Milner's working methodology.

THEORETICAL POIESIS: MILNER'S CREATIVE PRACTICES

The significance of Milner's idea of symbolism-as-fusion does not only lie in its conceptual positioning. The narrative of its clinical emergence in 'The Role of Illusion,' is characteristic of an important aspect of her work that exceeds its conceptual content. I am referring to Milner's apparent ability to facilitate conceptual renewal and change on the basis of an encounter with the limits of pre-existing frameworks. It is an ability clearly evident both in her accounts of analytical

treatment—‘The Role of Illusion’ and the much later *The Hands of the Living God*—as well as in the non-clinical *On Not Being Able to Paint* (hereafter *On Not Being Able*), where she explores the process of learning to paint, paying special attention to correlations between modes of attention and the state of the finished artwork. The relationship between Milner’s clinical and non-clinical texts is an important one, as many of the discoveries made in *On Not Being Able* are reflected in her clinical writing.

The process by which Milner reaches a formulation of primary creativity in ‘The Role of Illusion’ involves an interrogation of both theory and technique as a result of their lack of fit with the material presented. Not only does she reject the mechanisms of introjection and projection as adequate to the content of her patient’s play, in her consideration of interpretation and countertransference, there is a tangible sense of an impasse or struggle, which is followed by a reconsideration of both theory and technique. In this reconsideration there also seems to be a shift in Milner’s use of play away from strict Kleinian practice. Where it might be expected that the analyst would seek progress in interpreting the play of the child, Milner suggests that in relation to the specific case material discussed, she found interpretation to be ineffective:

With this boy there was always the question of whether to emphasize, in interpreting, the projection mechanisms and persecutory defences and to interpret the aggression as such; but when I did this the aggression did not seem to lessen and I was sometimes in despair at its quite implacable quality. (ibid.: 103)

The solution to this despair comes in the form of a wordless repositioning of the analyst in relation to her patient. Milner attributes progress in this case to a change in her own thinking, to the formulation of creativity as a repetition of primary fusion, and the idea that this is the condition of possibility of recognising the autonomy and difference of the other. This shift, however, apparently took place without explicitly verbalising it in the analytical session: ‘when I began to think along the lines described above, even though I knew that I was not succeeding in putting these ideas clearly into words in any interpretations, the aggression did begin to lessen’ (ibid.: 103). As a result of this, Milner suggests, she was able to reconceive both the source of the aggression—a failure to tolerate autonomous otherness as a result of too-early deprivation, rather than a ‘defensive regression’—and its solution: the need for the analyst to act as an environment, the facilitator of a necessary return to a state where the patient could renegotiate his troubled relation to alterity.

The way Milner situates and articulates the relationship between clinical experience and analytical theory in ‘The Role of Illusion’ is directly related to a method of working and thinking that is evident in her work in *On Not Being Able*. The importance of the work in the latter text is its identification of the practice of painting as a privileged site for the kind of working-out we have seen in ‘The Role of Illusion’. For Milner, painting is a site which requires the laying open, or

acquiescence, of conceptual cognition. Such acquiescence is necessitated by an encounter with an object that resists assimilation to a pre-existing mode of cognition, as in the case of Milner's patient in 'The Role of Illusion.' On the basis of this acquiescence, conceptual cognition—Milner's understanding, treatment and theorisation of her patient's play—is able to move forward, a remodelling of psychoanalytic thinking to take account of the object's resistance. This also seems to follow from another important factor of *On Not Being Able*, the discovery of a mode of attention which can accommodate such openness: 'the wide embracing kind of concentration that gives of its own identity to the particular nature of the other' (1957: 84), an attention which emerges directly from Milner's exploration of painting:

In 1950, when writing about problems to do with painting, I used the term 'concentration of the body' to describe certain phenomena to do with one's way of attending to the object one is painting. During the years since then I have been finding that this kind of body attention has come to play an increasingly important part in my analytic relation to some of my patients. (1960: 239)

The reason I mention this tendency in Milner's work relates to the quotation from Judith Butler used in the introduction to this thesis. I would like to suggest a strong, but indirect connection between Ettinger's and Milner's work on the basis of a theoretical practice that in itself adds something to the difficult relationship between psychoanalysis and aesthetics (and, in connection to Butler, to the general problematic of the reconciliation between conceptual and theoretical thinking and aesthetic *experience*). Both Milner and Ettinger claim an area of thinking that, while strongly conceptually and theoretically informed, apparently subjects that conceptual knowledge to an interrogation by the object. The idea of such a theoretical practice seems to exceed both Thurston's idea of the mastery of aesthetic experience by psychoanalysis and its undoing by the *sinthome*, and Kofman's idea of the anti-metaphysical impetus behind Freud's psychoanalytic symbolism, in that both Milner and Ettinger undertake an *extension* of psychoanalytic theory on the basis of its falling-short of dimensions of aesthetic and clinical experience that reside beyond the limit-cases of 'ordinary experience'. Milner's clinical work in particular has a surprising connection to part of what we will see of Guattari at the end of the next chapter, in that this work mostly concerns non-neurotic patients with a limited capacity for making use of the transference relationship (*ibid.*).

This connection between Milner and Ettinger, however, is on a level which brackets their inter-theoretical differences (on both the subject of early object-relating and the role of a corporeal dimension of subjectivity), and concerns both a working methodology and a situation which brings creativity within the remit of psychoanalytic thinking. Ettinger's paper, 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen,' which I will consider later in the context of a transmission of the matrixial gaze via the work of art, explicitly mentions her work as an artist, and does so in the following terms, which specifically describe an upward movement from painting, and its intertwining with theory:

My immersion in painting – I am an artist as well as a psychoanalyst – has led me to apprehend a matrixial borderspace beyond-the-phallus in the field of experience and representation and so in turn to enter a dialogue with Lacan, and with Merleau-Ponty whose work on the gaze strongly influenced Lacan. Via the subject's early contact with a woman, I suggest, there emerges a swerve and borderlinking [...] – sexual in the broad psychoanalytic sense – which engraves a kind of sub-knowledge that is not appropriated by the phallus and which has surfaced for me in painting. (MG&S: 4)

Such a critical interaction between creative aesthetic experience and theory is specifically invested in the idea that theory may be modified by that which escapes it. In Milner's work also, her ability, in 'The Role of Illusion,' to have her theoretical assumptions called into question by an aggressive and resistant child, as well as her grappling in *On Not Being Able* with the resistances of the cognitive mind to the basic processes necessary for painting, point to an engagement with the margins of thinking, and with the possibility of an openness of psychoanalytic thinking at its limits. In spite of the strength of this creative engagement of the limits of conceptual cognition, however, Milner's attempts to theorise how this process might take place in aesthetic experience—particularly insofar as she tries to return the idea of symbolism-as-fusion to artistic practices—in my view do not match what takes place in the practice she describes. This points to two limitations, I will argue, that she is unable to call into question, one that is a direct consequence of a conflict between her idea of the medium and the discourse of symbols and symbol-formation, and one that is an effect of situating the infant in a primary objectless state.

PART II

Creativity, aesthetics and the work of art

ARTISTIC CREATIVITY AND THE DEMOTION OF SYMBOLISM

In Milner's transportation of symbolism-as-fusion into the secondary sphere of specifically artistic creativity, there is, unsurprisingly, an effort to differentiate the former, generalised form of creativity, from the latter. At first, the secondary repetition of this primary creativity seems to be couched quite simply in terms of a return to the primary state, 'regression in order to take a step forward' (1955: 87). Shortly after the appearance of this phrasing in 'The Role of Illusion,' however, Milner engages with questions relating both to the specificity of *artistic* creativity, and the work of art as differentiated from the object of play. The specific problematic with which Milner is engaged in making this differentiation is also raised, although in more Kleinian terms, by Adrian Stokes in 'Form in Art,' where he sees the need to posit an imago within artistic creation in addition to the feeling of oneness and unity, this additional imago being 'the keen recognition of a separate object'

(1952: 414). Although Stokes articulates the need to do this in terms of the Kleinian understanding of ‘the oceanic feeling of fusion’ as a manic defence, Milner—in spite of not subscribing to this interpretation of oceanic states—nonetheless agrees with the inability of an idea of creative fusion alone to account for artistic creativity as such.

In ‘Psychoanalysis and Art,’ Milner’s solution to this problematic is on an entirely different level to Stokes’s image of a separate object, although with a similar effect. She deploys Anton Ehrenzweig’s differentiation of surface and depth perception (or mind), in a description of secondary artistic creativity as an oscillation between the two states. The surface mind is presented in terms of a tendency ‘to notice compact, simple, precise forms, at the same time eliminating vague, incoherent, inarticulate forms from our perception’ (1956: 194), and is able to experience the separateness of the object. The depth mind, on the other hand, ‘can encompass a complexity of relationships that is quite beyond the capacity of the surface mind’ (ibid.: 196), and is associated with undifferentiation. For artistic creativity to avoid collapse into psychosis and/or mysticism, it must co-operate with the surface or conscious mind, which itself operates according to Milner, in terms of the *differences* between things. After Ehrenzweig, and in line with her formulation of symbolism-as-fusion, Milner constitutes creativity *in itself* as incompatible with this consciousness of difference, its ‘temporary, cyclical paralysis’ being the necessary condition of any creative act (ibid.: 195). The necessarily temporary nature of this state is counterposed by Milner to mysticism, artistic creativity proper emerging only through an active deployment of an oscillation between the two states:⁹³

The state of mind which analysts describe as a repetition of the infant’s feelings in its mother’s arms, the state which Freud called oceanic, is thus being regarded by certain writers on art as an essential part of the creative process. But it is not the oceanic feeling by itself, for that would be the mystic’s state; it is rather the oceanic state in a cyclic oscillation with the activity of what Ehrenzweig calls the surface mind, with that activity in which ‘things’ and the self, as Maritain puts it, are grasped separately, not together. And the cyclic oscillation is not just passively experienced but actively used, with the intent to make something, produce something. (ibid.: 196-97)

Thus it is clear that, in spite of her appropriation of particular relations and modes of attention from aesthetic experience and artistic creativity in positing primary symbolism-as-fusion, Milner still needs to do extra conceptual work to relate this creativity back to artistic production, union (or any relation) with the object being attainable only by regression and retreat from exteriority, which is difficult to align with the object-led materiality of artistic work. There is an additional problem inherent in locating artistic creativity within a regressive frame, inasmuch as it plays upon the ubiquitous and romantic link between creativity and the subjective unravelling of psychosis or

⁹³ The pathological nature of a more sustained predominance of the undifferentiation with which the depth mind is associated is clearly visible in *The Hands of the Living God*, where such states are the prevailing characteristic of her patient’s psychosis (see Milner 1969).

mysticism.⁹⁴ As is clear in the above quotation, Milner distances her ideas of artistic creativity from this tendency but with a move that is almost as problematic, the taming of a wild underside (which is, moreover ‘symbolized by the female’ (ibid.: 206)) by a rational and disinterested dimension of the mind. In this solution, artistic production only manages a role for the oceanic undifferentiation of symbolism-as-fusion through the presence of an objective, regulating consciousness. This structure divides Milner’s approach to the work of art into two areas, symbolism and the medium, both of which have major consequences for how she configures the relationship of psychoanalysis, art and aesthetics.

A REJECTION OF PSYCHOANALYTICAL SYMBOLISM

One effect of Milner’s division of the mind into two distinct levels is an idea of the work of art as a translation or representation of the creative process, whereby the depth mind creates, and the surface mind produces a communicable symbol referring to the process of creativity. In both ‘Psychoanalysis and Art’ and the ‘Role of Illusion,’ Milner uses a symbolic approach to creative production as evidence both for her theory of symbolism-as-fusion, and for the view of artistic creativity as an oscillation between surface and depth minds. In ‘The Role of Illusion,’ she treats the content of the boy’s play as symbolic, *referring* to something absent or lacking, rather than involving itself in the creative fusion she subsequently formulates:

the sacrifice of the toy soldier by melting it down both expressed the wish to get rid of a bad internal object, particularly the cramping and cruel aspect of his superego, and also his sense of the need to absorb his inner objects into his ego and so modify them. But in addition to this I think it *represented his feeling of the need* to be able, at times, to transcend the common-sense ego. (1955: 98, emphasis added)

Such an approach is also evident when she later discusses the drawing of a psychotic patient, which is seen symbolically to ‘*represent* the state of feeling of oneness with the universe, the undivided state’ (Milner 1956: 197, emphasis added). This approach is also extended beyond the clinical environment and applied in a specifically artistic context; in discussing Blake’s *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, Milner refers to the illustration of Behemoth and Leviathan in the following terms:

⁹⁴ The dangers of a romantic association of artistic creativity and psychopathology are clearly legible in the work of Donald Meltzer, whose emphasis on truth and intimacy as the keys to mental health is combined with a profound cynicism about social interaction and adaptation. This cynicism heavily limits the possibility of sociality having a positive role to play in mental health and leads to an uncomfortable comparison of the infantile withdrawal of psychosis with that of artists: ‘whose pained perception of the inhumanities daily in force about them, juxtaposed to a vision of the beauty of the world being vandalized by these primitive social processes, forbids them to squander the huge blocks of lifetime required for adaptation’ (Meltzer & Williams 1988: 185).

as I see it and in the setting of the problem of creativeness, we are back on the theme of the two levels of the mind — the surface or the conscious mind and the depth or unconscious mind. For Behemoth seems to be standing on the land, though looking rather angry about it; and Leviathan is certainly half submerged in water, and looks as if about to go under, though whether in a swoon of agony or ecstasy it is hard to say. (ibid.: 203)

Milner is unequivocal in a number of places as to the connection between creativity, the work of art, and the symbol; in *On Not Being Able*, for example, she says: 'I could look on the artist as creating symbols for the life of feeling, creating ways in which the inner life may be made knowable' (1957: 158-59; see also 1956: 214; 1960: 236). In this context, Milner also differentiates artistic and scientific creativity on the basis of what they symbolise: 'creativeness in the arts is making a symbol for feeling and creativeness in science is making a symbol for knowing' (1957: 148). In spite of this binding of creativity and symbolism, however, she is also highly critical of those psychoanalytic approaches to aesthetics that are based on symbolism, driving a wedge between the work of art as a symbol, and the practice of symbolic interpretation. In 'Psychoanalysis and Art,' on the subject of symbolic interpretation, Milner directly considers some of the same points touched on by Kofman in the opening of *The Childhood of Art*, with some interesting results.

Milner especially criticises Freud's symbolic approach to art, interpreting it as a diagnostic assessment of the artist's complexes, via the work of art as a proxy for the speech of the analysand. This approach is rejected—with support from Gombrich, Ehrenzweig and Maritain—because it 'leaves out what is essential and perhaps specific to art. It leaves out this deliberately fostered getting in touch with, not just hidden wishes but a different way of functioning' (Milner 1956: 211). While the argument against the reduction of Freud's symbolic approach to works of art might be an attractive one, as Kofman's reading of Freud indicates, there is more at stake in this problematic than a simple intellectual reduction of aesthetics. Indeed, read alongside Kofman's work, Milner's configuration of the mental apparatus by which primary creativity is transformed into artistic creativity, combined with this rejection of a symbolic approach to art, is strongly suggestive of the kind of metaphysical opposition Kofman sees Freud as trying to escape. For example, even the terms in which Milner sets up Freud's thinking in order then to reject its approach to art strongly suggests a reduction of Freudian metapsychology to a discourse of the faculties. She refers to the unconscious as 'the hidden creative roots of [...] thinking,' and construes the aim of Freudian analysis as one of enabling patients to 'attend to what they freely imagined rather than to their common-sense reasoning,' and so become 'able to free their powers of loving and working' (ibid.: 206-7). This construal of Freud's thinking is indicative of a division of the mind into intellect and sensibility (or in more Kantian terms Understanding and Imagination). One apparent effect of this representation of Freud is an erasure of repression, and thus of any possible sense of affectivity arising specifically from works of art as compromise- or reaction-formations.

Kofman argues that in symbolism Freud navigates the problem of reconciling (or ‘concatenating’) the metaphysical opposition of affect and representation. She characterises his approach to works of art as aiming ‘to render intelligible the effects of affect’ (Kofman 1988: 4). With reference to ‘The “Uncanny”,’ this approach is specifically connected to symbolism:

the uncanny impression produced by the *Tales of Hoffmann*, especially “The Sandman,” cannot be understood without reference to the symbolism of dreams. Only an acknowledgement of the symbolic equivalence between tearing out the eyes and castration can account for this effect. (ibid.: 7)

Kofman also attributes the effect of the work of art to repression, to what in the artist ‘is symbolic and symptomatic’ (ibid.: 15). The trace of a failure of repression, of the return of the repressed in the work of art is, for Kofman, ‘the only thing that opens a space of legibility in the work.’ One such trace is decipherable in ‘the effect of the work on other people: what is repressed by the artist and can be read in his work produces a powerful and enigmatic effect’ (ibid.). This effect seems to rest upon the possibility of a universal response: ‘the work of art, like religion, implies the work of something universally repressed’ (ibid.), taking up from Freud the idea of a cultural repression, or even a phylogenetically-transmitted ‘archaic heritage’: ‘For Freud, then, the problem of art is linked to that of the father, that is, to the Oedipus complex. Art, like all cultural phenomena, is a reaction formation which stems from this complex’ (Kofman 1988: 21).

While there are obvious issues with this postulation—not least the in ideas of the universality of the Oedipus complex, and of a phylogenetically transmitted cultural heritage—if this affective dimension of Freud’s symbolism is overlooked, texts such as ‘The “Uncanny”’ or ‘Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood’ become reducible to *applications* of psychoanalysis to art, rationalisations of aesthetic experience. Thus, in conjunction with the absence of repression from Milner’s account of Freud, she also empties his attention to art of any connection to aesthetics: symbolic approaches to art are reduced to ‘irrelevant’ ‘explanation’ of art ‘in terms of the content of repressed wishes’ (Milner 1956: 211), and symbolic meaning is pushed into the distinct realm of rational thought, disconnected from the possibility of generating an affective response. In spite of this, however, Milner’s ‘Psychoanalysis and Art’ is itself curiously empty of any sense of an attention to art as an aesthetic experience. One possible explanation for this, which is also significant in its connection to Kofman’s critique, is the following. In referring to an account of beauty and style given by Ehrenzweig, Milner says that

It is a discussion which is made rather confusing [...] because he does not make it sufficiently clear that he is limiting the concepts of beauty and style to what can be talked about and analysed by the aesthetician. I think he has artificially restricted the meaning of these concepts in order to get round the undoubted difficulty that what he is talking about is something which cannot, in fact, be analysed without destroying it, but can only be appreciated. (ibid.: 209)

This apparent regression to an expulsion of the effects of art into the distinct field of aesthetics could perhaps be understood as a side-effect of an attention to creativity. That is, in 'Psychoanalysis and Art,' Milner's treatment of the work of art as a matter of creativity appears to excise the question of affectivity altogether, reducing its value to an embodiment of newness: 'what is most important about this thing we call a work of art, that is admittedly a symbol, is not the unconscious wish or wishes that it symbolizes, but the fact that a new thing has been created' (ibid.: 214). Across the group of Milner's writings under consideration here, the function of the work of art for the viewer is also reduced to creativity, the work providing a space for 'reproducing states that are part of everyday life in infancy' (1955: 99), an idea of a holding environment which draws a parallel between the 'spaces' of art and creativity and the space of analysis:

Such a setting, in which it is safe to indulge in reverie, is provided for the patient in analysis, and painting likewise provides such a setting, both for the painter of the picture and for the person who looks at it. (1957: 165)

Although this parallelism between art and the space of analysis also appears in Ettinger's work, as we will see in Chapter 3, the relationship Ettinger establishes escapes the dualistic oppositions within which Milner operates. The main problem with Milner's approach, for me, is that the particular work of art becomes irrelevant, creativity is opposed to content, which is generically reduced to symbolism, itself reduced to mere communication, even if this is a non-verbal communication of feeling (ibid.: 159). In diagnosing a shortcoming in Freud's aesthetics based on an idea of his exclusive attention to content, Milner simply inverts this hierarchy, remaining (theoretically at least) trapped within a framework that is content to preserve the loaded oppositions of intellect and sensibility, representation and affect, form and content, and returning aesthetic experience to a domain beyond the reaches of psychoanalytical thinking. The question it is necessary to ask, at this point, is whether such an outcome is a necessary corollary of an attention to creativity within psychoanalysis? Also, in response to Kofman, if the idea of a symbolic (hermeneutic) analysis of works of art is rejected, does psychoanalysis find itself necessarily mute on the subject of aesthetics?

To some extent, Ettinger concurs with Milner's dissatisfaction with symbolic or hermeneutic approaches to works of art, but her alternative seems escape the metaphysical oppositions Milner repeats. The issue of symbolism and hermeneutics in relation to art is legible in Ettinger's distinction between *sinthome* and *symptom* (see Overview p. 65), but is negotiated in a way that reconfigures Milner's duality of medium and symbol as a differentiation between two types of creative production. Although 'Some-Thing' presents as an evaluative distinction between different types of visual production, it ostensibly supports Milner's view on the redundancy of symbolic interpretation of works of art. This is, however, on the grounds of an argument for the need to recognise the constitutive capacity of works of art to alter the limits of knowledge and thinking,

rather than a division of the mind into intellect and sensibility. The work-as-symptom is a symbolic *communication* addressed to an other who is presumed to be able to decipher it. The work-of-art-as-sinthome, on the other hand (for which the literary archetype is Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (Lacan 1976a: 96; 1976b: 166)) is not only radically exempt from symbolic legibility, but also calls into question and expands the very fabric of the symbolic:

The Symbolic is to start with thereby dethroned, in order to only reappear by the back door on condition of becoming a receptive texture that is capable to leave the access to and from what I call the Event-Thing and the Encounter-Thing of the body-psyche—that affected body-psyche, denuded and lusting—open. (ST: 63)

So while Ettinger, like Milner, critically acknowledges a contained and stable relation between psychoanalysis and symbolically legible 'creative artefacts,' unlike Milner, she altogether dissociates this kind of creativity from her understanding of art. For Ettinger, the work of art is not a symbol. In the wake of this dissociation, one major importance of the sinthome is that, while Ettinger works hard to locate matrixiality away from the level of symbolism and signification, she is also profoundly aware of the dangers of moving too far in this direction (that is, in the direction of a divorce of affect and representation), using metramorphosis and the matrixial object/*objet a* to infuse the margins of the symbolic. That is, in spite of her commitment to the non- or extra-linguistic, this is accompanied by a refusal to jettison or oppose it to linguistic dimensions of subjectivity. The theory of the matrix is, after all, a supplementary intervention, and the aesthetic sense-making generated by metramorphosis and by the work-of-art-as-sinthome leaks into the margins of the symbolic:

The symbolic world which opens up to us is thus suffused with meanings created on a matrixial level. [...] With symbolic approximations of matrixial threads between trauma and phantasm, 'feminine' swerve and borderlinking may open up cultural and political spaces and point at the ways that art 'works' for rethinking the historical and social subject. (MG&S: 34).

Milner, by contrast, although she views creativity and aesthetic practices as having the potential to transform meaning and higher-level cognitive orientations and as out of reach of symbolic *reduction*, they are not, in and of themselves, heterogeneous to symbolic interpretation in the same way as is the sinthome. Indeed, in 'Psychoanalysis and Art,' as elsewhere, Milner is unequivocal in presenting symbolism-as-fusion as the condition of possibility of symbolism proper (1956: 208). She configures the transformative potential of art as a matter of correcting a discrepancy between 'experience' and the available means of 'expressing feeling,' the value of art lying in the artist's ability to externalise 'his private experiences,' so they can 'be incorporated in the social world of art and so lessen the discrepancy' (Milner 1955: 100). Milner's idea of this transformative potential is limited, in my view, by the establishment of two *distinct* modes of attention, relation and meaning, modes which, despite her emphasis on merging and transgression of boundaries, are themselves

radically distinct, and do not at any point interpenetrate or intertwine, artistic creativity only ever being a matter of oscillation between two distinct levels of mind. This distinctiveness has a limiting effect upon the transformative potential of art because the surface, conscious mind is not disturbed or disrupted by the depth mind; it is only ever suspended, temporarily relinquishing control to the latter. Although the surface mind does experience an anxiety in relation to this relinquishment, this seems to be related purely to the threat of its own absence, rather than any sense of an irruption from the heterogeneous fields of corporeality or the unconscious.

THE MEDIUM AND THE PROBLEM OF THE ARTIST'S BODY

In connection to Milner's devaluation of symbolism in favour of creation, I will now turn to her attempt to account for this creation in terms of a struggle with the artistic medium as a material thing. In response to the differentiation of pathology and artistic creativity or even 'genius,' and in response to the question 'what is art?,' Milner puts forward the medium: 'Perhaps it is true to say that the measure of genius in the arts is linked up with the extent to which the artist does succeed in co-operating with his unconscious mind by means of his medium' (1956: 215). The significance of an idea of the artistic medium is clear in both 'The Role of Illusion' and 'Psychoanalysis and Art,' although in quite different ways. In the former, as I have already indicated, it plays an important role in the progress of the analysis described because, through toys and play, it offers the child a site that is external to himself but that may be controlled (similar in many ways to Winnicott's transitional object); an intermediate otherness, as it were. Also in 'The Role of Illusion,' in terms of art, the medium is, as I have indicated, a conduit between the 'private' language of the artist and language proper, the site where the co-operation between unconscious and conscious minds is 'expressed' (to use Milner's term) (1955: 100-1).

In 'Psychoanalysis and Art,' however, Milner's presentation of the artistic medium significantly differs from the idea of the facilitating medium of play, in that artistic creativity is born of a struggle with an inert and resistant external thing (a formulation, incidentally, that comes close to the creative methodology I suggested in relation to Milner's theoretical practice, above):

it is an ordeal, what Maritain calls the "inner ordeal of creative freedom", when discussing Chardin's words, "He who has not felt the difficulties of his art does nothing that counts". And there is discipline involved, though not the kind that is imposed from above by practice following rules. It is rather a struggling to let something happen in relation to a chosen material, that malleable bit of external world which can be shaped. And it is by this struggle with the material that the conscious mind disciplines the chaotic forces in the creative depths. (1956: 206)

Artistic creativity, as such, is not the blissful fusion with the object that takes place in primary creativity or in a non-artistic regression to it, because the basic structure of artistic work is not dualistic but triadic: the involvement of the medium requires an ability to attend to it as an

autonomous entity. There is an issue, however, within Milner's account of the struggle between artist and medium, to which I would like to draw attention. There is a strong sense, both in the above, and in the division of surface and depth attention, that it is exclusively the conscious 'surface' mind that deals with external reality. Quite aside from any other objection to this, it seems to me that this is significantly problematic for the location of the experience and agency of the body, since it is not given that the body is assimilable to a clear distinction between interior and exterior realities. The above account seems to place bodily interaction with external objects under the domain of conscious control: in the struggle with the material, it is the *conscious mind* that is the agent. Because of its association with exteriority, in Milner's account of a struggle between artist and medium, there is no indication of a participation of the body within creativity *as such*. In fact, in *On Not Being Able*, it is quite clear that Milner in some sense at least conceives of the body as an obstacle to artistic creativity:

Before beginning one could spiritually envelop the object and feel inspired, transcending space and separateness. But once begun it was necessary to face the fact of being a body that does not transcend space as the spirit can. At the moment of having to realise the limits of the body, when beginning to make marks on the paper, all the anxieties about separation and losing what one loved could come flooding in (1957: 57).

This is not to say, however, that the body is entirely absent from Milner's formulations of creativity. In 'The concentration of the body,' she makes a direct connection between 'deliberately directing one's attention to the whole internal bodily awareness' and 'both the creation of the work of art and the growth of a vital emotional involvement in the world around one' (Milner 1960: 236). This focus, however, is very much a turning-inwards, characterised as a 'direct sensory (proprioceptive) internal awareness,' as well as a 'beneficent kind of narcissism' (*ibid.*: 238), and I would like to argue that this articulation has a particular effect upon the conclusions Milner is able to reach concerning artistic creativity as a psycho-corporeal process. Her inclusion of the body within creativity subjects it, in my view, to the division between surface and depth minds, enforcing a schism within it, between inside and outside. The effects of this schism are legible in a surprising—if short-lived—resonance between an exploration she makes in *On Not Being Able*, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's critique, in 'Eye and Mind,' of the Cartesian model of vision.

In *On Not Being Able*, Milner describes, within the actual process of drawing, a different struggle to that between artist and medium. This second form of struggle concerns the relationship between two modes of perception of the world of objects—related to the two levels of mind drawn from Ehrenzweig—one which separates and delimits objects and one which allows them to merge into each other, the former of which she comes to understand as an obstacle to successful artistic work (Milner 1957: 3-14). At first glance, Milner seems to attribute these two modes respectively to the 'objective world of facts' and to the 'world of imagination,' one mode being the *fact* of objectivity,

the other being the phantasy. However, on closer inspection it is clear that Milner is aware on a basic level that both modes of attention are representations. Thus, she states that ‘the outline *represented* the world of fact’ (emphasis added), and characterises an assumption of its reality as a defence: ‘to cling to it was surely to protect oneself against the other world, the world of imagination’ (ibid.: 17). Inasmuch as Milner recognises that the outline is not a direct presentation of external reality, she also recognises that its absence does not belong exclusively to imagination. Having been lead to doubt the ‘reality of outlines’ by a painting manual, she tests out this doubt on the objects around her: ‘when really looked at in relation to each other their outlines were not clear and compact, as I had always supposed them to be, they continually became lost in shadow’ (ibid.: 15). On further consideration, Milner concludes that the assumption of outlines functions as the containment of objects, as well as of the self and the selves of others as a defence against a descent into madness.

The element of this consideration, however, that I would like to reflect upon here is the association Milner repeatedly makes, but pays no direct attention to, between outline and tangibility: the world of fact represented by outline is a world of ‘separate touchable solid objects’ (ibid.: 17). This association strongly recalls the basis for Merleau-Ponty’s critique of Descartes’s *Dioptrics* in ‘Eye and Mind’:

Here there is no concern to cling to vision. The problem is to know “how it happens,” but only enough to invent, whenever the need arises, certain “artificial organs” which correct it. We are to reason not so much upon the light we see as upon the light which, from outside, enters our eyes and regulates our vision. And for that we are to rely upon “two or three comparisons which help us to conceive it [light]” in such a way as to explain its known properties and to deduce others. The question being so formulated, it is best to think of light as an action by contact—not unlike the action of things upon the blind man’s cane. The blind, says Descartes, “see with their hands.” The Cartesian model of vision is modeled after the sense of touch. (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 130-31)

An interesting element of Milner’s thinking about painting thus seems to concern itself with a key problematic of ‘Eye and Mind,’ which is the reconception of painting away from the domination of sight by touch. The outcomes, however, of this concern in Milner’s thinking are rather different to Merleau-Ponty’s reversibility of seeing and seen, in that she ultimately retains the tangible determination of objects according to their external envelopes as the condition of their reality. In *On Not Being Able*, she is clear in accepting the ‘separation of subject from object, me from not-me, seer from seen’ as in accordance with the ‘rational’ laws of ‘the inanimate material environment’ (Milner 1957: 160). Counterposed to this is an ‘irrational’ fusion or ‘con-fusion’ of these dualities, aligned with aesthetics and ‘the inner world’ (ibid.: 161).

I would like to argue that Milner’s acceptance of outlines as objective reality is based on an underlying configuration that might seem rather surprising, given Ettinger’s many references to

Winnicott's transitional object and transitional space as resonant with matrixiality. It might also seem surprising in light of the differentiation made at the start of this chapter between the Kleinians and Winnicott and Milner, on the grounds that the Kleinians are limited in their account of creativity by a pre-existing distinction between interior and exterior. In spite of this initial setup, I would like to hypothesise that both Milner's positing of creative symbolism-as-fusion, and to a similar extent Winnicott's transitional object and potential space are in fact artefacts of a rigid distinction between 'interior' and 'exterior' realities, necessary mediators between two otherwise irreconcilable domains. This distinction is different to that in operation in Segal's rendering of the Kleinian model (1952: 44), in that the delimitation of inner and outer worlds that emerges from the depressive position is already built upon a stratum of 'interaction between introjection and projection, between internal and external objects and situations' (Klein 1946: 293). In Milner's thinking, by contrast, in the idea of an original objectless state, the infant is so fundamentally distinct from the world of objects that a third space and/or entity is required to bridge this distinction, to produce the 'normal self' and its experience of reality as an integrated hybrid of its original objectless state and the objective world with which it must interact:

Observations of problems to do with painting had all led up to the idea that awareness of the external world is itself a creative process, an immensely complex creative interchange between what comes from inside and what comes from outside, a complex alternation of fusing and separating. (Milner 1957: 146)

I would like to argue that Milner enforces a distinction between interior and exterior that subtends what she is able to add—in terms of ideas of merger and the transgression of boundaries—to the psychoanalytical understanding of creativity. In establishing interiority and exteriority as radically discontinuous, Milner removes the possibility of a relation between them, the reconciliation following from their inevitable meeting only being on the terms of an assimilation of one to the other.⁹⁵ The distinction between interior and exterior seems to be a philosophical one, standing outside the concrete psychoanalytical domain, a hypothesis supported by the following comment from Charles Rycroft: 'The need to reinstate the distinction classically maintained by the antithesis between phantasy and reality has, I think, been one of the reasons why Winnicott and Milner have introduced the concept of illusion' (1956: 141).

If this hypothesis of an underlying fracture between interiority and exteriority is accepted, Milner will be limited in the conclusions she can draw from the separation of objects from outlines, in that this separation is constituted as illusory, and cannot be used to say anything about objectivity as such, and moreover cannot contribute anything to the understanding of the struggle between artist

⁹⁵ For a range of Milner's ideas on the pathological outcomes of a failure to make this reconciliation, see 1957: 116-17.

and medium. To return to the question I raised earlier of the participation of the body in this struggle, Milner's acceptance of outlines as the reality of exteriority is reflected in her approach to the boundaries of the body, an approach which seems to treat the skin itself as an outline, reducing both its thickness and its involvement with 'inner' experience.⁹⁶ The skin exceeds Milner's specification of 'inner bodily creativity' according to proprioception: the skin is of the body, but it is turned outwards; it is, in part, the agent of the sensations that invade it, particularly when touching itself. If, as Mary Jacobus suggests, introjection of a 'skin-container' is assumed as 'the necessary step preceding unconscious phantasy and ego-functioning' (2005: 125), this introjection is also a phantasmatic *externalisation* of the skin. That is, to constitute the skin as the container of the body pushes it outside the body, making it the supplement of a bipartition of interior and exterior, foreclosing its phenomenological position as reducible neither to the interior of the body nor the exterior of the inert object.⁹⁷

Ultimately, it seems that Milner's combination of a separation of objects and outlines with the determination by tangibility of external reality as distinctness and solidity, leads to a characterisation of vision as transcendent of external reality, rather than immanent to it. Ettinger's critique of Lacan and uptake of Merleau-Ponty in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen,' as I will shortly show, moves the work of art into a sphere where such a transcendence is no longer tenable, and in which Milner's phantasmatic externalisation of the skin is undermined by the central role of the matrixial part-object of touch. What Ettinger also takes from Lacan in this area, and from Lacan's appropriation of Merleau-Ponty's 'Eye and Mind' and *The Visible and the Invisible*, enables a consideration of painting that makes significant advances upon Milner's grapplings with creativity in general and the work of art in particular, and even upon Ettinger's own early explorations in *The Matrixial Gaze*. In particular, this consideration constitutes painting within a context where the bipartition of interior

⁹⁶ Very interestingly from the point of view of the theory of the matrix, in *The Hands of the Living God*, Milner also pays some attention to the womb, the placenta and phantasies of intra-uterine life. Her treatment of this area is subject to the same criticisms that apply to her work on the skin, in that the womb is phantasmatically reduced to an outline. The womb, she says, 'may be symbolized by the empty circle' (1969: 420).

⁹⁷ In *The Hands of the Living God*, there is a suggestion that Milner herself is aware of the difficult position of the skin and tactility in relation to a bipartition of interior and exterior. She touches upon the idea of a primary form of oral tactility, prior even to the dark undifferentiation—qualified as anal—with which symbolism-as-fusion is now associated (1969: 124): 'I was to come to think of the experience of that inner space that can be actively explored long before the hands can become explorers, the space that is one's mouth can be probed with one's tongue. [...] I even began to wonder whether the capacity to explore one's own inner space, by directing attention towards the various parts of it, does not have its first bodily prototype in the exploring tongue that plays with, actively samples and relishes, the sense of the solidity of the nipple within one's mouth' (ibid.: 123). This later formulation is taken up by Jacobus, but without acknowledging the central value of 'anal' undifferentiation for Milner's earlier work in 'The Role of Illusion' and *On Not Being Able* (Jacobus 2005: 138-39).

and exterior is unsustainable, and in which permeability, transitivity and transmission are primary. Here, rather than constituting a withdrawal from alterity, the aesthetic experience now borders upon the ethical.

THE MATRIXIAL GAZE AS *OBJET A*, PAINTING AND THE SCREEN OF PHANTASY

At this point, I would like to suggest that Ettinger's examination of gaze and screen in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' not only constitutes an advance beyond Milner's attempts to convey a relationship between archaic and artistic forms of creativity, but also goes beyond Ettinger's own earlier attempts to approach this area. This is insofar as the positing of an 'almost-missed encounter' of partial subject and matrixial object/*objet a* in *The Matrixial Gaze* only hints at the possibility of a painting practice and consequent inscription and transmission of the archaic feminine. At this earlier stage, the diffuse concept of 'non-Oedipal sublimation' is often put forward to account for this process, but it is rarely more than sketched in the broadest outlines, relating to the positing of an alternative *objet a*. For example, 'a *matrixial objet a* is the effect of *sublimation*, if some aspects of sublimation can be understood as inscriptions of the *non-Oedipal* in the sub-symbolic sphere' (WOA: 73). I would like to argue that a more developed engagement with Merleau-Ponty in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' constitutes a significant advance in Ettinger's consideration of painting, in that it specifically enables her to develop an understanding of it as constitutively in excess of an opposition of the distinct realms of interiority and exteriority.

The Matrixial Gaze gives a strong sense of the nascency of Ettinger's use of Merleau-Ponty at an earlier stage in her theorisation of painting: his contribution is presented in terms of an embeddedness within Lacan's formulation of the gaze ('Following upon Merleau-Ponty's description of the *scopic field*, Lacan characterizes the gaze as prior to the eye' (MG: 9/81)), and is never distinguished from Lacanian usage (ibid.: 33/98, 37/101, 42/104). It is only within the articulation of the differences between Lacan and Merleau-Ponty in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' that Ettinger begins to approach in more detail some of those areas which make Milner's work problematic: phantasy, psychic bipartition, and a distinction between interior and exterior. The direct contribution of Merleau-Ponty's work is in terms of the later period of his work, in which he attempts to draw out a phenomenology of vision as corporeally grounded and embedded in the concrete being of the universe of things. This work has specific implications for an understanding of painting:

The painter "takes his body with him," says Valéry. Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual

body—not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement. (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 123-24)

In presenting an ontology within which vision and movement are inextricable, in which vision is not subordinate to touch nor vice versa, and vision is a property of the universe, Merleau-Ponty provides Ettinger with a vehicle not only for the tracing of the matrixial *objet a* in painting, but for its transmission. Merleau-Ponty's reversibility of visible and invisible, seen and seeing, is imported into 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' to facilitate the intertwining of phantasy and painting as a locus of shareability between artist and viewer(s): 'Since the painter's internal dialogue with the gaze on the screen of phantasm is externalised onto the painting's screen of vision, something of the psychic gaze is always contained in the painting, waiting to affect us' (MG&S: 12). In her uptake of Merleau-Ponty Ettinger is in theory able to forego Milner's struggles to implicate creativity in art-working, insofar as the relation between the two becomes articulable on a level where the body of the artist (as an 'intertwining of vision and movement') is the conduit between phantasy and visibility, and as such is the locus for a transmission and transitivity below the level of symbolic substitution.

As is clear from Ettinger's reference to a 'dialogue with the gaze on the screen of phantasm' above, an important companion of her uptake of Merleau-Ponty in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' is Lacan's idea of the screen of phantasy, itself built upon a drawing of Merleau-Ponty into the psychoanalytic field. Even within the articulations in *The Matrixial Gaze*, Lacan's *objet a* of the gaze is instrumental in Ettinger's ability to conceive of painting as a site of irruption and the approach of the traumatic trace since, for Lacan, the approach of the gaze is synonymous with castration anxiety (1964: 72-73). In taking up the gaze from Lacan, Ettinger imports a mechanism whereby it is what is precisely *not* legible on the surface of the work that is the means of transmission between artist and viewer(s). In its extension in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen', however, the screen operates within this mechanism as the site of a particular indeterminacy (which is not a merging) of inside and outside, bound as it is to the extimate *objet a* within the scopic field (see Overview, p. 38), and which emerges directly from Lacan's engagement with Merleau-Ponty's late work. It is also of a crucial significance for what Ettinger is able to theorise beyond Milner's formulations that the extimate non-being of the phallic *objet a* trades on an ontology which does not impose a straightforward, 'objective' distinction between internal and external realities. As J. A. Miller rather tartly points out, 'this expression "extimacy" is necessary in order to escape the common ravings about a psychism supposedly located in a bipartition between interior and exterior' (1986: 75).

Because of the importance of the screen of phantasy for Ettinger's articulation of the matrixial gaze in relation to painting, it will be necessary to say a few words on the Lacanian rendering of phantasy that facilitates her uptake of Merleau-Ponty. This is an important point of differentiation from

Milner's work because, although this is not always explicit in her treatment of symbolism-as-fusion, Milner's ideas of creativity and symbolism are dominated by a Kleinian understanding of phantasy which emphasises interiority, image and symbolic substitution (to which I will return later in relation to sublimation). In contrast to this understanding we are offered by Lacan, and by Ettinger's use of his thinking, a 'metapsychological' approach to phantasy which considers its function within a broader structuring. Although Lacan's formulation is highly abstract and formalistic, and as such might be expected to be of little use for the consideration of the field of aesthetics, especially concerning the specificity or singularity of the work of art, this very level of abstraction that provides a step back from a conception of the work of visual art as a representational or symbolic *image*, enabling a reconsideration of its objectness, as situated by and situating the structure of phantasy. From this starting-point, Ettinger is able to reconceive painting within an assemblage which includes the painted mark, its material support, phantasy, and the body of the artist.

As an important grounding element of her formulation of a matrixial infiltration of culture via painting, phantasy is one of the elements of the theory of the matrix with the strongest Lacanian associations, that are, moreover not exclusively tied (in spite of her association of the late period of Lacan's thinking with an 'inverted theory of phantasy') to the later phase of his thinking. The following early comment from Lacan will help to set the scene. He argues that 'any temptation to reduce [phantasy] to imagination, that doesn't admit to its failure, is a permanent misconception,' attributing such an understanding to the Kleinian School (a criticism that applies, indirectly, to Milner, who retains an idea of the interchangeability of phantasy and image (1945: 42)). He then goes on to add that 'the notion of unconscious [phantasy] no longer presents any difficulty once it is defined as *an image set to work in the signifying structure*,' (2006: 532, emphasis added). What Lacan adds to the understanding of phantasy within psychoanalysis (via the matheme $\$ \diamond a$, see Overview p. 64) is an articulation of its trans-individual location and causation, the idea that it does not exist neutrally as the internal psychic reality of the individual subject, but is profoundly implicated in the subject's symbolically located negotiation of alterity. In the earlier stages of his work, this alterity is the little other, the counterpart of the ego. With the move into Lacan's later attention to jouissance, the real, and the impossibility of sexual rapport, however, the alterity with which phantasy is engaged is the desire and the jouissance of the Other. As Slavoj Žižek suggests, this negotiation is 'crucial for the subject's identity':

One should always bear in mind that the desire which is 'realized' (staged) in fantasy is not the subject's own, but the *Other's* desire. Fantasy, fantasmatic formation, is an answer to the enigma of *Che vuoi?*: 'You are saying this, but *what is it that you effectively want by saying it?*' This renders the subject's primordial, constitutive position. The original questioning of desire is not directly 'What do *I* want?', but 'What do *others* want from me?, What do they see in me?, What am I for the others?' (1998: 194-95).

The negotiation of the Other that so heavily determines Lacan's understanding of phantasy has two important corollaries for Ettinger in her consideration of the work of art: its connections both to questions of sexual difference—as Žižek says, the role of phantasy as constitutive of desire 'hinges on the fact that "there is no sexual relationship"' (1998: 191)—and to a rearticulation of the *objet a* of the gaze in painting.

LACAN'S GAZE AS OBJET A

The correlative of the picture, to be situated in the same place as it, that is to say, outside, is the point of the gaze, while that which forms the mediation from one to the other, that which is between the two, is something of another nature than geometrical, optical space, something that plays an exactly reverse role, which operates, not because it can be traversed, but on the contrary because it is opaque—I mean the screen. (Lacan 1964: 96)

Although Ettinger's formulation of the matrixial gaze is indebted to Lacan's drawing of Merleau-Ponty into the psychoanalytic field, in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen,' she also provides a critical commentary on his development of the screen in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, mostly relating to its positioning between subject and *objet a* (gaze):

as Lacan usually defines it, the screen works in accordance with the castration mechanism and in relation to a radically alienated and alienating Other: it is thus a separating veil between the gaze and the desiring subject. Since the gaze and the subject are created by a split, the subject cannot be in the screen, whose function it is to partition. (MG&S: 13)

To understand something of the terms in which Lacan articulates this split, it will be useful to examine the diagrams from chapters 8 and 9 of *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (Figure 1), which give an important sense of the relationship between the phantasmatic gaze and the mechanics of vision. Of the two separate triangles, the first (on the left) presents Lacan's understanding of the structure of visual perspective as 'the point-by-point correspondence of two unities in space' (ibid.: 86). The image, in-between the object and 'geometral point,' is the site of this correspondence. The second triangle (on the right) accounts for the fact that 'what is at issue in geometral perspective is simply the mapping of space, not sight,' which leads Lacan to examine the structure of anamorphosis⁹⁸ as an *inversion* of perspective.⁹⁹ He sees anamorphic distortion as the mark within the geometral dimension of its own necessary lack (which is thus highly relevant for the areas already discussed in relation to Milner and Merleau-Ponty), necessary by virtue of the fact

⁹⁸ Anamorphosis: 'A distorted projection or drawing of anything, which appears normal when viewed from a particular point or by means of a suitable mirror' (OED).

⁹⁹ 'It was to establish a correct perspective image [...] that [Dürer's] *Lucinda* was introduced. If I reverse its use, I will have the pleasure of obtaining not the restoration of the world that lies at the end, but the distortion, on another surface, of the image that I would have obtained on the first, and I will dwell, as on some delicious game, on this method that makes anything appear at will in a particular stretching' (Lacan 1964: 87).

that it is traced with reference to space rather than vision. Geometric perspective is thus presented as ‘a partial dimension in the field of the gaze.’ For Lacan the function of anamorphosis—exemplified by the skull in Holbein’s *The Ambassadors*, and closely aligned with the *objet a*—is to *trap* the subject: ‘in Holbein’s picture [...] the singular object floating in the foreground [...] is there to be looked at, in order to catch, I would almost say, *to catch in its trap*, the observer, that is to say, us’ (ibid.: 92). The skull *looks at* the subject, but not with its ‘eyes’: by virtue of its inversion of the structure of perspective it projects the geometric point—quite literally the vanishing-point—into the eye of the subject.

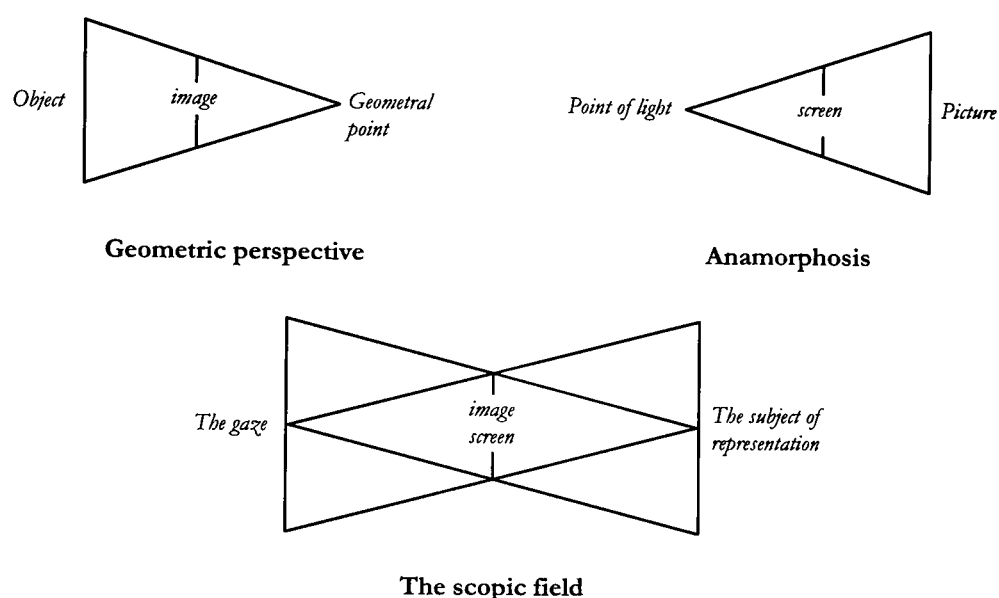


Figure 1 Schematic construction of the scopic field (Lacan 1964: 91, 105)

Having established anamorphosis as the ‘appearance of the phallic ghost’ of the geometral dimension, Lacan superimposes the two triangles of perspective and anamorphosis to form a schematic of the *scopic* field:

On the right-hand line is situated, then, the apex of the first triangle, the point of the geometral subject, and it is on this line that I, too, turn myself into a picture under the gaze, which is inscribed at the apex of the second triangle. The two triangles are here superimposed, as in fact they are in the functioning of the scopic register. (ibid.: 105-6)

This schema is also embodied in *The Ambassadors*, since the skull and the tableau are mutually exclusive; *either* the skull submits the subject to its gaze, *or* the painting is submitted to the eye of the subject. For Lacan, this superimposition represents both the mutual exclusivity of the subject (the eye) and the gaze, as the point of the triangle in which they are located in relation to each other in the above schema is—if we consider the *point* to be ‘a thing having definite position without extension’ (OED)—effectively a nothing. As superimposed, however, the triangles take on a meaning greater than they possessed collectively but separately. That is, in establishing the scopic

field, Lacan moves vision into a relation with desire: ‘This is why the picture does not come into play in the field of representation. Its end and effect are elsewhere’ (1964: 108). Within this scopic field the idea of the screen comes to the fore, from an analogy (borrowed from Roger Caillois’s *Méduse et compagnie*) between mimicry in animals and the practice of creating images (‘mimicry is no doubt the equivalent of the function which, in man, is exercised in painting’ (ibid.: 109)), both of which Lacan sees as constituting a screen, or a masquerade. In the case of mimicry, it ‘reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an *itself* that is behind’ (ibid.: 99), while painting presents itself as the screen behind which is the possibility of the gaze.¹⁰⁰

On top of the schematic of subject, gaze and screen briefly recapitulated here, Lacan also adds two significant characteristics borrowed from Merleau-Ponty. The first is the ontological status of the gaze: ‘what we have to circumscribe, by means of the path he indicates for us, is the pre-existence of the gaze—I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides’ (ibid.: 72). The second is its reversibility: ‘consciousness, in its illusion of *seeing itself seeing itself*, finds its basis in the inside-out structure of the gaze’ (ibid.: 82). This latter, Lacan’s deployment of Merleau-Ponty’s reversibility of the seeing and the seen in a context which associates it with an *illusion* of contact, will be the point from which Ettinger’s critical revision emerges.

‘MATRIXIAL GAZE AND SCREEN’

Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the gaze stands, in ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen,’ as a point of conceptual mediation between Ettinger and Lacan: where, for Lacan, the gaze is characterised by a split from the eye, and the screen as a ‘tychic’ point of contact between subject and gaze is impossible (1964: 77), Ettinger reads into Merleau-Ponty the possibility of the screen as ‘a veil of contact whereby the gaze and the gazed-at meet and touch’ (MG&S: 13). The means by which she undoes Lacan’s understanding of reversibility as an illusory point of contact or narcissistic enclosure, is through a rejection of his reduction of symbiosis to undifferentiation (a rejection that also applies to Milner’s dualistic opposition of merging and separation). Ettinger argues that in this reduction to an impossible point of tychic contact (the encounter in the real), Lacan neglects key characteristics of Merleau-Ponty’s ‘symbiotic’ understanding of the gaze, characteristics which, moreover, align more comfortably with matrixiality. On the basis of an excess in Merleau-Ponty’s thinking beyond Lacan’s deployment of it, Ettinger divides the scopic field into three gazes—phallic, symbiotic and

¹⁰⁰ Even within Lacan’s formulations, this is not a property of all painting: ‘The problem is that a whole side of painting—expressionism—is separated from this field. Expressionist painting, and this is its distinguishing feature, provides something by way of a certain satisfaction—in the sense in which Freud uses the term in relation to the drive—of a certain satisfaction of what is demanded by the gaze’ (1964: 101), or in other words, it makes ‘quite a direct appeal to the gaze’ (ibid.: 109).

matrixial—directly problematising a reduction of Merleau-Ponty’s ‘symbiotic’ gaze to symbiosis-as-fusion:

the matrixial gaze, on the contrary, is inspired by reversibility’s other aspects: fission and segregation, exchange and intersection, transgression and transitivity. Merleau-Ponty explicitly addressed the process of ‘dehiscence’ which I understand as the self splitting-apart from the inside of the shell. In the matrixial context, dehiscence indicates a continual development that leaves symbiosis slowly behind, while even symbiosis is not symbiotic in the sense of a confusion between inside and outside or non-differentiation. (ibid.: 32)

Having taken up a Lacanian notion of phantasy as non-representational and as mediating between subject and *objet a*, followed by a revision of this mediating structure according to the transitive possibilities she detects in Merleau-Ponty, Ettinger then goes on to lay out some ideas on the effects of this revision upon ideas both of artistic creativity and affectivity. The main outcome of this theoretical work is the possibility of a non-representational transmission from the register in which the archaic matrixial encounter is engraved, via the artwork, into a shared and transformative aesthetic encounter between the *I(s)* and *non-I(s)* of artist and viewer(s). Although Ettinger is concerned with a non-representational transmission, this does not take place on the level of brute and meaningless affectivity or of regressive withdrawal. It is not divorced from communicable thought and representation in the same way as the undifferentiation experienced in Milner’s version of creativity. Rather than being dependent upon a higher order of consciousness, the event of transmission via the artwork, the transgressive irruption of the matrixial gaze and its shared processing, is *itself* generative of meaning: ‘an active and retroactive matrixial making sense is possible, in which subject is not opposed to object, *transgression becomes an ontogenetic meaning*, and meaning becomes a transgression in severality’ (ibid.: 28, emphasis added). This minimal sense-making in the event of transgression is, however, only the basis of Ettinger’s discussion of painting in ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen’, which also extends well beyond a critical revision of Merleau-Ponty and Lacan. Part of this extension emerges in relation to the complicated temporality inscribed in Lacan’s rendition of the gesture of painting; ‘the painter’s brushstroke is something in which a movement is terminated,’ a movement which is itself involved in a peculiar causality in excess of representation: ‘we are faced with the element of motive in the sense of response, in so far as it produces, behind it, its own stimulus’ (1964: 114; cited MG&S: 13).

Matrixial temporality of transformation

The particular temporality of the matrixial gaze in painting significantly exceeds the linearity of Milner’s ‘regression in order to take a step forward.’ This temporality arises in part from Ettinger’s emphasis upon the necessity of retaining at least an idea of sublimation, to which I will return shortly. Even more important, however, is the contribution made by an element specific to matrixiality: the idea that the work of art is itself creative or transformative, that it *participates* in the

aesthetic encounter. This might be seen as similar to Milner's idea of art as a facilitating environment for a withdrawal into undifferentiation, were it not for Ettinger's characterisation of the impetus behind the matrixial aesthetic encounter as the pull of the borderlink, a desire for the fragile sharing and partiality of the matrixial encounter. The matrixial aesthetic object, she says

is not only a remnant, exposed in the present, of subjacent past relations-without-relating but also a glimpse of the forever future to be created in the now, that reflects a desire not for an object but for the act of borderlinking itself. (MG&S: 35)

The shared nature of the matrixial encounter also means that if there is an element of repetition in this aesthetic experience, it is not a 'pure' repetition, but is inseparable from the contribution of an unknown *non-I* or *non-Is*. The temporality this inscribes refuses the idea of the artwork as a representation, or even a *presentation* of the archaic object, but in understanding the work of art as transformative of both artist and viewer, conceives of the effects of the archaic object in terms of an aesthetics that borders upon the ethical. Ettinger describes these effects through the image of the 'twisting one-surface' of the Moebius strip. The relationship of the 'erotic antennae of the psyche' (as the matrixial counterpart of the gaze, see Overview, p. 54) to the artwork is one of an asymmetrically shared movement along 'a curl or loop whose upside is originally inseparable from its flipside' (ibid.: 29). In spite of the eminently auto-erotic character of the Moebius strip,¹⁰¹ Ettinger brackets its closure in order to describe the temporality of the aesthetic encounter, transporting the permeable screen developed via Merleau-Ponty into the fabric of its topological surface. She refuses the idea of a return to origin—'Even the m/Other is not a beginning'—constituting the transmission of the matrixial gaze in painting as a matter of unresolved becoming, in an encounter with the trauma of the Other:

Sliding and double-turning along such a strip, the viewer becomes fragilised by the artist's traumatic encounter in whose effect the viewer is caught, so that new paths open for the viewer to get in contact with the trauma of the Other and with the tragedy of the world. The end point of the sliding is not the artist's initial traumatic encounter, but your future opening (as a viewer) to an-other outside by unfolding your inside. (ibid.: 30)

It is an important characteristic of Ettinger's approach to the work of art in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' that it steers well clear of any prescription or determination of how any traces of the matrixial gaze might be inscribed or appear. There are, however, some generalised ideas given as to the locus of the transmission that takes place in the process of artworking. Having nominated the touch as the originary partial object of the matrixial encounter, in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' she

¹⁰¹ In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Irigaray discusses the Moebius strip in the context of the Lacanian subject, in terms of its autarchic enclosure, 'moving from inside to outside, from outside to inside, without changing edges'. She considers this enclosure to have a limiting effect upon subjective possibility: 'it would *close off* the cycle of love between mother and daughter, among women' (1984: 105).

figures it within a 'contamination' of the scopic register, and in so doing opens the door to a potentially productive conception of the bodily movements of painting as inextricable from what she terms an *im-pure* matrixial gaze.

That is, as well as returning to Merleau-Ponty and re-reading him beyond Lacan's reduction, Ettinger also reconceives the gaze to include a role for non-visual sensory and phantasmatic modalities. This is important because, to return to Milner, her emphasis upon the interchangeability of creativity and symbolism (1957: 148), as well as its corollary binding of image and phantasy, gives rise to an emphasis on vision as the dominant (and moreover, transcendent (ibid.: 57)) sensory modality connected to art. Ettinger, by contrast, builds within her discussion of painting a cross-sensory articulation of the gaze that reduces the dominance of vision. This cross-sensory modality relates to the matrixial part-object of touch, and is an 'im-pure hollow gaze created as an incompatible composite' (MG&S: 6) whose scope is not only beyond vision, but also beyond the phantasmatic scopic field:

The span of movement and touch expose more borderline qualities that fit the Matrix than the spans of vision and voice. Moreover, the matrixial object and link are founded in the Real on psychic events of encounter so libidinally charged that they seep into the scopic field as a mode of sensing and apprehending the world that by-passes any symbolic seizure that implies couples of opposition. (ibid.: 23)

Although we have seen Merleau-Ponty's clear opposition to a subordination of vision to touch (1964: 130-39), we have also seen that he is adamant as to the irreducible participation of the body in painting ('Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint' (ibid.: 123)). His critique of the relation of vision and touch is specifically concerned with Descartes's *Dioptrics*, where Descartes devalues painting as having a secondary relation to vision, line drawing in general and etching in particular being elevated as the true representation of its mechanics. This elevation occurs, Merleau-Ponty argues, because of a priority of touch over vision, touch involving itself only with the outside of the object, or its *envelope*. From this, one might suggest that the dominance of a *tactility of the hand* is that which he rejects in his critique of Descartes, which, in its correction of vision concerns itself only with the object as a surface; such tactility is intentional, controllable, and produces space as an homogeneous absolute, interchangeable in all its dimensions. Space, for Merleau-Ponty, is *not* reducible to this:

Space is not what it was in the *Dioptrics*, a network of relations between objects such as would be seen by a third party, witnessing my vision, or by a geometer looking over it and reconstructing it from outside. It is, rather, a space reckoned starting from me as the null point or degree zero of spatiality. I do not see it according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it. (ibid.: 138)

It would seem fair to say that the tactility Ettinger wishes to infuse into the register of the gaze is not the directional tactility of the hand. It is, rather, a more diffuse modality, not locatable at points

of agency (hands, feet, lips, or tongue, for example), and relates more directly to movement and other ambient changes. As such, this tactile modality seems compatible with the intertwining of vision and movement Merleau-Ponty formulates. Ettinger's proposal of an interference, or contamination of the visual field by other sensory modalities (and, as a result, the scopic register by other phantasmatic registers) is also supported from the post-natal perspective of developmental psychology by Daniel Stern's inference the mysterious and innate capacity of *amodal perception* as a characteristic of early infancy:

Infants thus appear to have an innate general capacity, which can be called *amodal perception*, to take information received in one sensory modality and somehow translate it into another sensory modality. We do not know how they accomplish this task. The information is probably not experienced as belonging to any one particular sensory mode. More likely it transcends mode or channel and exists in some unknown supra-modal form. It is not, then, a simple issue of a direct translation across modalities. Rather, it involves an encoding into a still mysterious amodal *representation*, which can then be recognized in any of the sensory modes. (1985: 51)

Given this suggestion from Stern, the possibility that a degree of overlap or contamination at the margins of discrete sensory modes could occur within a very archaic stratum of subjectivisation does not seem so far-fetched.¹⁰² In terms of an inscription of the phantasmatic trace of the archaic object within painting, a contaminated gaze in excess of purely visual modalities brings forward the likelihood of a corporeal participation in this inscription, on the level of 'Emotively-affective oscillations of touch and pressure, fluctuations of motions and balance (kinaesthesia), changing amplitudes of perceived voices and light-and-dark variations' (MG&S: 23). This contaminated scopic register, containing the 'im-pure' matrixial gaze (which also involves the skin as inextricably linked to the matrixial part object-of touch), potentially enables the thinking of painting other than in terms of a split between 'inner' creativity and a countable, geometrically spatialised exterior.

To return to the question of how Ettinger approaches a description of the process of artworking, within the terms of the im-pure matrixial gaze, the touch, as a trans-subjective moving-with, is not separable into active and passive components and, moreover, leaks into the visual field: 'in the field of painting, the act of looking becomes a 'stroking' from with-in-out, for both painter and viewer' (ibid.: 32). In this way, then, the process of painting *itself* might be considered part of the im-pure matrixial gaze, rather than something which creates or produces the gaze according to the laying-down of distinct traces determined in advance by a technics of painting. Rather the painting itself 'after' the activity of painting *is* the remnant of the painter's encounter with the matrixial gaze, the remnant of a matrixial encounter from and in which some of the artist's partial subjects and objects

¹⁰² Stern's understanding of development is organised according to the emergence and co-existence of heterogeneous strata, rather than a succession of stages. See Chapter 3 for more on Stern in the context of Guattari's work.

have faded and been traced. Because the matrixial object/*objet a* is primarily shareable, and is ‘never completely “on” nor completely “off” (MG: 25), the fading from real presence of the painter does not eradicate all trace of her encounter with the painting (and neither does it eradicate all trace of the painting from the painter: both are transforming and both are transformed).

AFFECTIVE DISTURBANCE AND THEORETICAL MASTERY

Going back to the comment from Freud’s ‘The Moses of Michelangelo’ quoted at the beginning of this chapter—‘I am unable rightly to appreciate many of the methods used and the effects obtained in art’ (1914: 211)—the question of a technics of painting brings us back to the underlying concern of this chapter; the relationship between psychoanalysis, art and aesthetics. In the means by which it approaches the idea of a direct rendering of the process by which artistic creativity can give rise to an aesthetic response, Ettinger’s work in ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen,’ and elsewhere, presents a singular treatment of this problematic. I would like to argue that in its positive consideration of artistic practice, the theory of the matrix enfolds within itself an opening onto that which lies beyond the domain of theory. Within ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen,’ this is, I believe, evident in the following rendering of the matrixial aesthetic encounter between artist and viewer:

Having trespassed its eye and met with the eye of the world, the gaze offered by the artist is vibrated in its wanderings, so as to awaken new swerves and roll new borderlinking. The matrixial gaze is re-diffracted by each affected eye onto a potentially joint-by-several erotic screen of vision. Wallowing with-in a shared and floating eye, the gaze re-diffracts at the moment of its rolling-in. (MG&S: 34)

The organisation of this short passage, its interpolation of two extremely opaque descriptions of the mechanisms of a matrixial affective transmission by the product of a highly theoretical revision of gaze and screen, represents, to me, a critical specificity of Ettinger’s approach to aesthetics. In my view this could be considered to contain both a presentation of that which exceeds the grasp of theory, and its partial interpretation (or punctuation) by the theory it exceeds. This kind of presentation is not restricted to its appearance in ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen’: for example, a similar passage is repeated in the later ‘Some-Thing’ (ST: 68), and in the related ‘Trans-subjective Transferential Borderspace’ (TSTB: 635-6). On a much larger scale, the recently published ‘The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre,’ is also permeated throughout with the allusive and image-laden writing exemplified in the above excerpt (see especially AHO: 226). Such an opening is also, at times, presented in negative terms, as in the following:

And nothing guides us in advance as to what witnessing the matrixial gaze will destine me or the other, or as to which witness we will allocate the gaze.

Nothing foresees or prescribes the passage from a symptom to a *sinthôme*, neither in the phallus nor in the matrix.

Nothing paves the way for the passage onto an Irreal-Real in the form of an artwork.

Nothing inscribes the artistic act in the painter’s stroke.

Nothing guarantees the power of the artwork to give rise to a response in viewers nor indicates in advance what transformation will take place in the shared matrixial web.

Nothing proscribes specific linking of out-inner knots in-to an in-outer trans-subjective web.

And nothing decides beforehand what would lead the viewer to produce his/her own threads—"cause"/ *objet a*/borderlink with-in a particular transferential borderspace. (TSTB: 644)

The stylistic peculiarity of this passage, its emphasis through the repetition of *nothing*, is as significant as its negative indication of a space outside the grasp of theory. Even from this negative approach in indicating this space, it is possible to have a strong impression that the *theory* of the matrix as such breaks down and, however briefly, *presents* something that is deeply resistant to paraphrasing or theoretical schematisation.¹⁰³

The relation of this thesis to this poetic, ostensibly non-theoretical facet of Ettinger's writing is complicated. As I am focussing on the theory of the matrix as an autonomous aspect of her work, the points at which its status as theory is called into question are also points at which the separation upon which this thesis is based becomes most fragile. Such fragility is, however, essential to recognise, as the theoretical dimension of Ettinger's work, while to a significant degree independent, is still constitutively bound to its artistic sibling (and to a lesser degree to Ettinger's clinical work). On the question of aesthetics, this bond has a key contribution to make to how the theory of the matrix configures the relationship between psychoanalysis and art. Rather than approaching affectivity as an effect of a common (repressed) stratum accountable for by psychoanalysis, or by expelling it into the specialist domain of aesthetics, Ettinger's approach to art could be understood as a refusal to expel or to resolve affectivity. Instead, where Thurston suggests that Freud's text mimes Michelangelo's Moses in its triumph of the rational mind over affective disturbance, those points at which Ettinger's writing resists containment by the domain of theory might be seen directly to present the affective disruption of subjective (and indeed theoretical) mastery and psychoanalytical Law. The enfolding of this disruption within a theoretical writing recalls another approach to the effects of affective disruption upon psychoanalytic Law: Lacan's *sinthome*.

It also, to return to the connection I suggested between Milner and Ettinger at the beginning of this chapter, relates to the idea of a theoretical practice that uses aesthetic experience to interrogate the limits of conceptual and theoretical cognition. The difference between Ettinger and Milner in

¹⁰³ Of course, it is possible schematically to lay out some of the particular characteristics of this articulation—the processing of the trauma of the other by the matrixial artist (MG&S: 33), its transformative effects on both artist and viewer (*ibid.*: 34), its expansion of aesthetics into the field of ethics (*ibid.*: 33), and its modification of the temporality of sublimation—(*ibid.*: 30, 33-34), much of which is attended to in the Overview (pp. 63-64, 69-71).

relation to this theoretical practice—if the hypothesis of a breakdown of Ettinger’s writing as theory can be sustained—is that Ettinger’s theoretical writing *itself* enfolds a trace of this interrogation, while Milner’s writing descriptively externalises it. The final area I would like to consider in closing this chapter relates—through the idea of the *sinthome*—to the opening of psychoanalytic theory onto that which exceeds its limits, but in a more generalised, discursive register. Ettinger’s deployment of the *sinthome* in the context of non-Oedipal sublimation, will also allow me to indicate a further final problematic relating to the basis upon which Kleinian and post-Kleinian (this to include Milner) formulations of creativity are founded.

C O D A

Sublimation, psychopathology and the self-creating subject

At the end of the previous chapter, I noted Ettinger’s criticism, in *The Matrixial Gaze*, of the dominance of psychoanalytic aesthetics by drive theory. While, in its recourse to an object and a mode of relation that is irreducible to functionality and the contingent object of the drives, there is a partial alignment of matrixiality with Kleinian and object-relations perspectives which allows room for an understanding of creativity that can relate to the object of play, a connection to the corporeal heterogeneity of the drives is explicitly retained in Ettinger’s consideration of art. In a number of papers, she articulates the importance of art in terms of its connection to the libido: ‘Discussing art in the psychoanalytical context is inseparable, to my mind from debating sexual difference, since we enter the function of art by way of the libido and through extensions of the psyche closest to the edges of *corpo-reahty*’ (WIV: 92; see also MG&S: 5-6; TSTB: 627-28; ST: 68). This connection between art and sexuality is ultimately concerned with sublimation: in *The Matrixial Gaze*, the Lacanian formulation of sublimation, libido and sexuality are tied together on the basis of Lacan’s statement that ‘the libido, as its name indicates, can only be participant of the hole [...] and it’s obviously through this that I’m trying to get back to the function of art’ (1976a: 40 and 1976b: 135; cited in MG: 8/80). Following from this connection between the libido and the hole, Ettinger also draws the *objet a* into the equation, insofar as it is a “hole” in the Real’. Sublimation, she suggests, ‘mysteriously’ embodies the *objet a* and as such is able to ‘*incarnate* a satisfaction of a drive that by-passes regression’ (MG: 8/80). The bypassing of regression as a temporal bridge between the originary matrixial encounter and its transmission in painting via matrixial gaze and screen is also related to another Lacanian formulation of sublimation, connected to the *objet a*, the Thing and the vacuole (see Overview pp. 50-52): ‘Lacan’s raising of the ‘woman’ to the level of the Thing in art, does not designate a regressive step to the phallus nor, in the matrixial field, a real returning to

the womb' (MG&S: 27). This particular formulation of sublimation, in its association with Lacan's Thing and his reading of *Antigone* in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, also indicates Ettinger's engagement with the ethical dimension of Lacan's aesthetics (See Overview, pp. 69-71, and Thurston 1997: 15-19).

In Ettinger's approach to art, then, there are then two basic investments in sublimation: its production of the value of art as a site for the investigation of questions of sexuality and sexual difference, and the possibility of a non-regressive contact with matrixiality. In spite of these two basic investments, however, Ettinger's use of sublimation, as is to be expected, is not a straightforward repetition of any of its orthodox renderings. While she does use it in a broad sense to make the connections suggested above, she also notes its basic lack of fit with matrixiality, and raises the idea of an alternative form of 'non-Oedipal sublimation'. As I have already mentioned, this idea does not receive a great deal of elaboration, but I would like to suggest that the articulation of matrixial gaze and screen via a comparison and differentiation of the gaze in Lacan and Merleau-Ponty could be seen as a more detailed reworking of the possibilities for a non-Oedipal, matrixial mode of sublimation. Although non-Oedipal (or non-phallic) sublimation is only mentioned a handful of times in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' (MG&S: 9, 12, 19), it is undoubtedly a paper which attempts—more rigorously and concretely than *The Matrixial Gaze*—to account for the possibility of a non-regressive and transformative tracing and transmission of the matrixial encounter in the activity of painting. The idea of sublimation relates most obviously to the *objet a*, but in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' it is also specifically related to the sinthome, as 'gesturing toward [...] non-phallic sublimation' (ibid.: 19). This latter brings us back to questions of jouissance, sexual rapport and sexual difference, the sinthome operating, in Lacan's conception, 'not as a traumatic return on-to the real corporeal past event, but as a transformation in the writer's [...] artwork' (ibid.). An association between the sinthome and sublimation is an important one, to which I will return shortly, not least because it extends the more usual relationship between sublimation and perversion, reconfiguring the situation of the artist on the margins of psychoanalytical consideration.

Following from Lacan's gaze as *objet a*—as an uncanny affective potentiality related to the drives—and on the basis of the material transitivity inscribed in a reappropriation of Merleau-Ponty, Ettinger also shifts sublimation from an association solely with creativity towards an additional relation to affectivity. This shift is hinted at in Ettinger's correlation of sublimation and the sublime in various early papers (MG: 8/80; MBMB: 145-46; MSBP: 65, 69, 72), a correlation, essentially of creativity and affectivity. In the later 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen,' such a direct connection is not made, but questions of affectivity are approached in the corporeally-founded terms of trauma and jouissance, which strongly relate to her characterisations of sublimation, above. This affectivity is

not 'pure' affectivity, however, since the action of metamorphosis is inseparable from inscription and symbologensis.

With each inversion of inside-outside the antenna-gaze carries heterogeneity, as a conductible borderlink which transmits, diffracts, and diffuses elements of trauma, phantasm, affect and information within the psychic joint space. With each exchange additional traces are inscribed and new trails added, which turn mutuality into heterogenesis and lack of equivalence. The not-purely phantasmatic matrixial web of severality includes remnants of *jouissance* and trauma: imprints of whoever was there, a sub-knowledge that is not just traces of lack but also trails of what is beyond and yet inter-with-in me. (MG&S: 28)

Questions of *jouissance*, corporeality (especially sexuality and sexual difference) and sublimation are, however, at the very limit of a conversational situation of Ettinger and Milner. Ettinger's argument for the significance of art as a matter of a common foundation with sexuality is one that is very difficult to connect to Milner's work, as she does not retain a comparable account of sublimation, and her emphasis upon states of primary undifferentiation push any questions of sexuality and sexual difference beyond her frame of reference. In terms of sublimation, in the Kleinian or post-Kleinian world Milner inhabits, its role in creativity has largely been superseded by the question of symbol-formation. Part of this supercession is due to the effects of play-analysis upon concepts of libidinal discharge: play is a physical action, but insofar as it is 'as symbolic as words,' it is equivalent to a phantasmatic discharge of energy (Hinshelwood 1991: 445). The predominance of play-analysis in Kleinian practice and theory reprioritises phantasy as a primary means of discharge, and as such reconstitutes sublimation as a phantasmatic discharge through 'substitute objects (symbols)' (ibid.: 446).

In the introduction to this chapter, I mentioned Segal's foundation of sublimation upon the loss of the object; this foundation, and the ease with which sublimation is then reduced to symbol formation is connected to the absence of sublimation from Milner's work. The precise move by which Segal relates the two is significant both in that it constitutes sublimation as a renunciation rather than a modification, and it elides the difference between aim and object. As Laplanche and Pontalis point out, Freud, in formulating sublimation as a diversion of the sexual instinct, in some places constitutes this diversion as 'a modification of the aim' of the instinct (Freud 1908: 189), in others a 'modification of the aim and change of the object' (Freud 1932: 97; see Laplanche & Pontalis 1967: 432). In her characterisation of sublimation as a work of mourning, Segal collapses these two formulations by telescoping aim and object: 'The giving up of an instinctual aim, or object, is a repetition and at the same time a re-living of the giving up of the breast' (1952: 53). In doing so, she is able to render sublimation a question of a change of *object* rather than of *activity* (as the aim-only formulation of sublimation undoubtedly is), and so can then swiftly move from sublimation to the substitution of symbol-formation. Also, although in her mention of 'instinctual

aim,' Segal makes some reference to the basic structure of the partial drives, in discussing the *giving up* of an object, especially as a work of mourning, she is already well beyond this structure. As Laplanche points out,

Insofar as the object is that “in which” the aim finds its realization, the specificity or individuality of the object is, after all, of minimal concern; it is enough for it to possess certain *traits* which trigger the satisfying action; in itself, it remains relatively indifferent and contingent. (1970: 12)

Themselves the consequence of an emphasis on phantasy as the primary means of discharging anxiety, the prioritisation of the object over the aim, the centralisation of loss and mourning of the object, and the subsequent emergence of symbol-formation, I would like to argue, together modify sublimation to such an extent that it becomes reducible to questions of substitution and symbolic meaning. With the move away from the drives and the more psycho-corporeal aspects of sublimation—transformation and activity—ideas of phantasy-as-image begin to take hold, relegating art and aesthetics to matters of emotion and interiority, accounts of affectivity turning more and more to ideas of identification with the psyche of the artist, or the symbolic communication of emotional states of mind. The Kleinian object-led reconfiguration of sublimation reduces it to questions of the loss of the object, its mourning and subsequent retrieval by symbolic representation; this, it seems, lies behind the absence of sublimation from Milner's work. Indeed, the closest Milner comes to an idea of sublimation, is in terms entirely consonant with Segal's formulation, to which symbolism-as-fusion is then added as its condition of possibility. In 'Psychoanalysis and Art' Milner acknowledges, in line with Segal, that symbol-formation 'involves a mourning for the loss of that for which [the symbol] is a substitute,' but adds that 'the process of finding the substitute requires a temporary merging of the idea of the original thing with the idea of the substitute' (1956: 208).

The reason I have drawn attention to this Kleinian reduction of sublimation is that it usefully emphasises that, while the prioritisation of the object-relation is (as we have seen in Chapter 1) crucial to Ettinger's theorisation of the intra-uterine as the site of a subjectivising encounter, it brings some major limitations to the understanding of art. In Ettinger's retention of the libidinal and transformative, rather than phantasmatic-representational and substitutive aspects of sublimation, she thus maintains a critical investment in the drives and the economic model (although in a form tied to *jouissance* and the Lacanian real), alongside a primary creative encounter with an archaic alterity. This synthetic perspective again produces some specific items that exceed the capacities of its contributing elements. In the case of sublimation, this is in terms of the more general problematic of the relative positions of artistic creativity and psychopathology.

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned the contribution of Kleinian thinking to the psychoanalytic understanding of creativity as one of an extension beyond the limitations imposed by sublimation. The Kleinian model, I argued, brought creativity itself within the psychoanalytical domain by founding it upon the depressive position and the resulting drive towards reparation of the lost or damaged object. At the close of this chapter, I would like to invert this position and to argue that, although the Kleinian prioritisation of the object does contribute to a generalised understanding of creativity, in terms of *artistic* creativity, this is just as ill-accounted-for by creativity-as-reparation as it is by Freudian sublimation. For example, in differentiating and relating the ‘unresolved depression’ of the artist and the neurotic (the artist needing to regress to the depressive position in order then to symbolically re-create the lost object as a work of mourning (Segal 1952: 47-48)), Segal places the ‘real artist’ in the position of having a mysterious, apparently innate capacity for tolerating psychic pain:

The real artist, being aware of his internal world which he must express, and of the external materials with which he works, can in all consciousness use the material to express the phantasy. He shares with the neurotic all the difficulties of unresolved depression, the constant threat of the collapse of his internal world; but he differs from the neurotic in that he has a greater capacity for tolerating anxiety and depression. The patients I described could not tolerate depressive phantasies and anxieties; they all made use of manic defences leading to a denial of psychic reality. (ibid.: 54)

In terms of this ‘greater capacity for tolerating anxiety and depression,’ Segal approaches similar territory to Freud’s *Leonardo da Vinci*: ‘We are left, then, with these two characteristics of Leonardo which are quite inexplicable by the efforts of psycho-analysis: his quite special tendency towards instinctual repressions, and his extraordinary capacity for sublimating the primitive instincts’ (1910: 136). The specific residence of artistic creativity—be it in a capacity for sublimation or for a tolerance of depressive anxiety—on the boundaries of psychoanalytical comprehension thus seems to be an essential component of the relationship between psychoanalysis and aesthetics. Sublimation itself, particularly within Freud’s first psychological topography, is a mark of this residence. For instance, Laplanche and Pontalis suggest its close alignment with perversion, since it ‘especially affects the component instincts, above all those which do not achieve a successful integration into the definitive form of genitality’ (1967: 432). In addition to this, Kofman aligns sublimation with psychic self-sufficiency in relation to the analytical process:

there is no question of suggesting to a neurotic in analysis that he remedy his ills by sublimating his drives. If he has the capacity to do this, sublimation takes place itself through the play of psychic forces alone. Analysis can only help to lift inhibitions. (1988: 159)

This alignment brings to mind a comment de Lauretis makes on the position of the pervert in relation to Freudian psychoanalysis and the Freudian theory of sexuality: ‘The actual patients, those

suffering or made dysfunctional from their symptoms, are the neurotics and the hysterics, not the perverts, most of whom would, or did live as well as they could without psychoanalysis' (1994: 24). This comment in part simply reiterates the self-sufficiency inscribed in sublimation, but when presented alongside Segal's differentiation of artist and neurotic, can potentially suggest a structural similarity between the artist and the pervert in relation to psychoanalysis, whereby an external category is invoked to construct the categories of normal and pathological, this external category effectively slipping between the two. The artist is not normal; she has to do something in order to survive that is inexplicable to most of us, but she does it and survives, without the intervention of psychoanalysis (this is, of course, within a virtual, theoretical space and not necessarily with reference to actual artists), only seeking the latter when the former fails. One could even suggest that, in these terms, the 'successful' artist is the subject for whom psychoanalysis is redundant.

An element shared by Milner's and Ettinger's work on aesthetics and artistic creativity, however, sets them apart from the association of sublimation and perversion: a refocusing upon psychosis and borderline states. In 'The Concentration of the Body,' Milner makes it clear that the patients with whom she is predominantly concerned, and for whom the clinical practice relating to her artistic investigations is most important, are those 'borderline' patients who slip through the net of traditional analysis, 'the kind of patient who cannot make use of the transference situation in the way that an ordinary neurotic can' (1960: 239). In such an association, and even more so with psychosis, the situation of psychoanalysis and artistic creativity becomes more complicated, in the sense that this association positions creativity as inseparable from subjective unravelling, rather than, as with sublimation, the mark of perverse self-sufficiency. This results in both the need to devise a means of differentiating the artist from the mystic or the psychotically-regressed patient, and to account for the possibility of a conflict between creativity and psychic survival. As Michael Eigen suggests, in emphasising a bond between creativity and psychosis Milner inevitably raises the question of a rift between creativity and psychotherapy, the 'end' of therapy potentially bringing an end to or 'taming' of creativity:

Much psychoanalytic work with creative persons has centred on problems related to a sense of early object loss (whether an actual or fantasy object). As pathological responses to the sense of loss are worked through, the drive to create often loses its bite. (Eigen 1983: 416)

Having suggested this effect, Eigen then goes on to ask 'To what extent can personal healing and creativity go together? Must either the creative or personal self lose?' In the theory of the matrix, although a connection between the artist and the psychotic is also made, these questions are evaded insofar as the terms in which this connection is made constitute a form of self-sufficiency, directly associated with 'non-Oedipal sublimation': the *sinthome*. For Ettinger the *sinthome* is particularly

significant as it draws together the threads of (an escape from) psychosis, sexual difference, sexual rapport and artistic creativity, all of which reside beyond the limits of psychoanalytic thought.

In the *sinthome*—where the subjective structure in question is to all intents and purposes psychotic, and as such should not hold together—the redundancy of psychoanalysis for artistic creativity is all the more radical, extending well into the domain of theory. To indicate something of the relationship between the *sinthome* and the (Lacanian) psychoanalytic field, I will have to repeat a quotation from the Overview, on the relationship of the *sinthome* to Lacan's theoretical project:

It is no accident that Lacan's teaching remains 'stuck' at the point of this *sinthomatique* writing, that it is unable to progress evenly onto the rest of the series: the move from the knot of three to a symptomatic fourth corresponds to the opening of theory onto the real as non-theorizable. As the real of the symptom, *sinthome* is illegible, asemic – marking, not some logic or structure of signification, but the specific modality of a subject's relation to jouissance. (Thurston 1998: 157)

Although Thurston is, strictly speaking, referring to the Borromean knot as the collapse of the referentiality of psychoanalytical theory, rather than the artist and the artist's *sinthome* (as a way of avoiding psychotic breakdown through the suppletion of the foreclosed Name-of-the-Father), to me it is no mere coincidence that this collapse does not take place until Lacan posits the radically singular *reality* of the *sinthome*.

The *sinthome* presents, however, a connection to one final aspect of Kofman's reading of Freud. As well as understanding the Freudian approach to art as an undermining of the metaphysical opposition of intellect and sensibility, Kofman also detects a resistance to the narcissistic infatuation with the myth of the 'artist-hero.' She interprets the objections to Freud's 'application' of psychoanalysis to works of art as a manifestation of a repressed interest 'not in art itself, but in the image it has of the artist as a "great man"' (1988: 15), an image shattered by the 'application' of psychoanalysis. Part of this image, in Kofman's account, is the heroic myth of the artist as his own father: 'The self-sufficient artist, "murderer" of the father, is thus an embodiment of the hero that survives in our culture' (ibid.: 125). Such a myth permeates the idea of the *sinthome*, which is fabricated as a consequence of the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father, the subject giving birth—through artistic practice—to its own cohesion. In this sense, what the *sinthome* might be considered to do, within Thurston's rendering of it, is to enfold the myth of the artist-hero into the limits of psychoanalytic Law. This rendering is still very much tied to the subject: 'Lacan's last version of the subject is situated at the point where the Other fails to function, the symbolic Law cannot be sustained: the *sinthome* entails, in place of an ethic of pure desire, one of aesthetic self-invention' (1997: 116). In Ettinger's hands, however, the emphasis shifts away from the subject as such to the work of art: she pinpoints an affective and symbiogenic effect of the 'sinthomatic'

work of art that resists the attraction of the artist-hero: the work of art ‘makes sense, it boulders, it touches, and fascinates—*it* and not the subject behind it’ (ST: 63).

The relationship between the artist, the sinthome and the spaces of psychoanalysis becomes increasingly important as Ettinger’s work develops, and she begins to formulate the idea of the matrixial artist as *doctor-and-patient*, explicitly carrying transference outside of the psychoanalytic clinic *into* the space of the work of art. In the next chapter I will examine something of this development through ‘Some-Thing,’ and the slightly earlier ‘Trans-Subjective Transferential Borderspace,’ examining especially Ettinger’s approaches to the unconscious and transference, in relation to the work of Félix Guattari and Jean Laplanche, as a means of approaching more directly one of the most important questions of this thesis: that of the relationship of the theory of the matrix to psychoanalysis.

THE UNCONSCIOUS AND TRANSFERENCE

Questions of systematicity, determination and the specificity of psychoanalysis in Laplanche, Guattari and Ettinger

In the previous chapter, we saw a very basic distinction in operation between the theory of the matrix and Milner's psychoanalytic aesthetics, a distinction which lay in the foundations of their respective configurations of the relationships between the subject and the external world of objects. This distinction, although not reflected upon to any great extent by either Milner or Ettinger, had profound consequences for their attempts to implicate an aesthetic theory of subjectivisation with a theory of painting, as well as their abilities to include questions of sexual difference within such attempts. That this distinction was so foundational brings into play the larger aim and methodology of this thesis: the staging of conversations between the theory of the matrix and other modes of thought within a broader theoretical field. I would like to retain an attention to this element within this third and final chapter, insofar as the themes under consideration—the unconscious and transference—are of a similarly foundational character in psychoanalytical terms, and will enable a more deliberate staging and examination of conversational possibility.

As well as exploring ideas of conversation across heterogeneous theoretical registers, this last chapter also seeks to examine those areas in which theory and practice are less clearly demarcated, which very necessarily remind us that psychoanalytical theory is not philosophy, and is inextricable from (although not reducible to) a participation in sites which evade theoretical capture. The unconscious and transference are privileged in this regard, as they both potentially disrupt the possibility of an immaculately-conceived theoretical enterprise. They are also considered—in some quarters at least—as being concepts that have little or no meaning outside the concrete analytical relationship. Although this latter is not a position that will be positively articulated by Ettinger, Guattari or Laplanche, it does point to the necessity of examining some ideas regarding the limits and margins of psychoanalysis, and the location of theory in relation to those sites.

Guattari's pragmatic, trans-disciplinary ethos of *metamodelisation* will emerge in this chapter as a potential model for how to approach points of dissonance between different registers (both theoretical and practical), and also perhaps for approaching the heterogeneous 'internal' dynamic of the theory of the matrix itself. In Chapter 1, the theory of the partial drives, insofar as it is founded in a logic of need and satisfaction, was seen to produce a subjective existence that could only begin at or after the moment of birth. In Chapter 2, as I have said, a comparable limit appeared in the form of a sharp division between interior and exterior realities, founded in the primacy of undifferentiation in Milner's thinking, which heavily restricts what it is possible to think psychoanalytically in terms of an aesthetics of painting. Metamodelisation offers the potential for an attitude to these crucial differential nodes that neither reduces their differences (by privileging one over the other, or according to a larger conceptual schematic) nor collapses all specific values into the indifference of relativism.

As well as Guattari, I would like to consider Ettinger's work alongside some quite specific elements of Laplanche's thinking. All three might be considered in many ways post-Lacanian, inasmuch as they all critique and/or reject the systematising structuralism represented by the unconscious 'structured like a language,' while their particular modes of thought and practice could not have existed without Lacan. Laplanche's work will be of interest insofar as it strongly resists any possibility of determinism or reductionism within psychoanalysis, be it symbolic, linguistic, biological or psychological, but is also highly reflexive in this resistance. Also crucial is the key role of the other *as other* at the heart of his later theoretical enterprise, heavily implicated in a shift away from earlier ideas of the centrality of Freud's *Anlehnung* or leaning-on as a model for accounting for the emergence of human sexuality. Guattari's approach, while sharing with Laplanche a sympathy with the very early Freud (Guattari 1992: 10), as well as a profound antipathy towards hermeneutic approaches to interpretation within psychoanalysis (that is, interpretation according to a key), and the dominance of a universal, homogeneous, binary strain of semiotics, will nevertheless provide a strong counterpoint to Laplanche's detailed and rigorous revisiting of Freud, as well as a potential means of questioning his outspoken defence of the specificity of the psychoanalytic unconscious.

This chapter will be divided into two parts. The structure of Part I will begin from Ettinger's use of the term *non-conscious* in 'Trans-Subjective Transferential Borderspace' (hereafter 'Trans-Subjective'). An attempt to assess this use in metapsychological terms will lead in two directions, firstly to Laplanche's anti-essentialist recuperation of Freud, which attempts to grapple with its biologising tendencies without exclusion or reduction to the signifier, and secondly to Guattari. Guattari's approach to the unconscious will provide a useful median point between Laplanche and Ettinger, since his work contains elements of Laplanche's critique of the deterministic institutions of psychoanalysis, but also of Ettinger's unwillingness to dismiss or reduce those structures critiqued. In attempting to locate the theory of the matrix somewhere between the poles presented by

Laplanche and Guattari, it will emerge that the terms in which the question of the unconscious is negotiated has profound implications for the delimitation of the field of psychoanalysis. In the case of Laplanche this will take the form of a rigorous specification and policing of its boundaries, in Guattari's we will see a disconnection of the unconscious from psychoanalysis, which—particularly in its later manifestations—presents an extreme form of pragmatism, where processes are posited and discussed only insofar as they are productive of subjectivity, in a specific movement away from ideas of science, truth or universality. Ettinger's elusive hints at a topographical location of matrixiality will not, it will also emerge, align with either of these tendencies, but will bring their own particular approach to the questions of systematicity and disciplinary specificity.

While the unconscious is a term the treatment of which undoubtedly reflects a negotiation of the limits of psychoanalysis in general, this is even more the case with transference, which I will consider in Part II. The attitude towards transference in psychoanalytically-founded theory can be seen as the mark of an important reflexivity regarding the relationship between psychoanalysis and theory (the absence of any such a treatment perhaps marking a corresponding lack of reflexivity). Ettinger, Laplanche and Guattari all present singular interventions on transference and thus on the nature and dimensions of the field of psychoanalysis, and I will divide these interventions into two modes. The first mode is an attention to transference at or beyond the limits of the clinical field, and the significance of movements across these limits. This mode encompasses both Laplanche's positing of an extra-clinical transference in the field of cultural production and Ettinger's rendering of painting as a trans-subjective transferential borderspace. The second mode is more critical, and presents the classical doctor-patient relationship as limited, to the extent that it may itself be the source of a pathological repression and/or foreclosure. Both Guattari's encompassing of the psychiatric institution in the idea of *transversality*, and Ettinger's very recent call for the incorporation of matrixiality within the heart of psychoanalytical practice can be seen to operate in this mode. In noting the movement of Ettinger's thinking from the first to the second mode, I will close this chapter, and the thesis, with an indication of some new directions in which the theory of the matrix is beginning to move.

Before going on to approach these issues, I will open with a segue from the previous chapter, which will—in returning to Ettinger's distinction of *sinthome* and *symptom* in 'Some-Thing, Some-Event and Some-Encounter'—lead into the question of the role of Lacanian psychoanalysis in the theory of the matrix.

PART I

The Unconscious

LACANIAN HORIZONS

In the previous chapter, I mentioned the differentiation between *sinthome* and *symptom* as a key point of contact and differentiation between Ettinger's and Milner's respective understandings of the relation between art and psychoanalysis. I also returned to the *sinthome* at the end of the chapter, with the idea that it occupies crucial position in Ettinger's dual approach to artistic creativity and the limits of psychoanalysis. This position was hypothesised at the very margins of psychoanalytic thinking, even very tentatively analogous to perversion in Freud's early work, and led to the suggestion of the successful artist a semi-mythical figure, the subject *for whom psychoanalysis is redundant*. It is significant that it is the 'concept' of the *sinthome* that bridges these two chapters: we will see in what follows that this link represents a vital element of Ettinger's thinking, insofar as an important dimension of the theory of the matrix could be seen as an attempt to reconfigure the relationship between artistic practice and the field of psychoanalysis as both theory and practice. I would, however, like briefly to return one final time to the distinction between *sinthome* and *symptom*, in order to raise the further question of potential sacrifices that might be made by the terms in which the theory of the matrix opens its spaces of operation within psychoanalytic thinking.

The passage in Ettinger's text 'Some-Thing, Some-Event and Some-Encounter' in which the *sinthome-symptom* distinction is presented brings together the questions of art, artistic practice, psychosis, the articulation of suffering and the impossible *rappport sexuel*. The differentiation of the two terms is articulated through the work of art and the potential this latter might have 'to *transform*' the symbolic. The 'creative artifact' as *symptom*, be it neurotic or psychotic, is, Ettinger argues, 'not at all "neurotic" or "psychotic" in its structure, because it is an articulation of suffering *already in the language of the Other*' (ST: 61). Because of this structure, she does not consider the symptomatic artefact to be a work of art. The *work of art* as *sinthome*, in distinction from this, is built around an enigma, which it 'co-responds to and that brings it about.' Where the symptomatic artefact is formed in relation to that which has been processed, 'dissimulated, or cut away, or castrated, or repressed,' the enigma contained in the work of art as *sinthome* is constituted by entirely other means:

it doesn't correspond to lacks defined by the phallic mechanism of castration but to whatever is not yet there, to what is yet to come, to what resists the Symbolic and to the mysterious and fascinating territory which is *not yet even unconscious* or to what is impossible to cognition. (ibid.)

It is clear that the symptom is formulated within this distinction as a message communicated to an Other who is 'supposed to know' (who is (in this case at least) able to decipher it), while the *sinthome*, in its constitutive relation to an enigma, is impossible to anticipate with any prior knowledge.¹⁰⁴ What is particularly of interest in this is the apparent opposition it stages between that which is contained by psychoanalytic discourse (the symptom) and that which exists beyond its margins (the work of art). Insofar as the work-as-symptom may be 'apprehended by those who can analyze it and return its sense to the subject who created it' (*ibid.*), it is presented as subsisting within a hermeneutic practice, as a message to be deciphered. The idea of a message to be deciphered brings with it, inevitably, the idea of a cipher: the symptom is, in this presentation, a *coded message*. The meaning of a code is always legible, determined in advance of communication. In this context, Ettinger's characterisation of the *sinthome* produces the analytic response as a matter of untangling the knots in a material whose form is always already determined.

It is undoubtedly the case, as we have seen in Chapter 2, that in making this distinction Ettinger is repositioning the work of art away from any possibility of a reduction by psychoanalytical thinking, and as the means by which thinking and meaning in general may perpetually grow and renew themselves (and by which psychoanalytic thinking may be renewed, if from outside). What may be of concern, however, are the terms in which this repositioning is made. For instance, one might ask in what sense the distinction Ettinger makes, and the horizons she broadens in discussing the *sinthome* could be meaningful for a mode of psychoanalytical thinking that does not accept the idea of the symptom as a decipherable coded message? This is a question inevitably raised by Laplanche's anti-hermeneutic conception of the psychoanalytic experience, to which I will turn later on.

For now, there are a few more words to say regarding the relation of matrixiality to Lacanian psychoanalysis as its enduring theoretical companion. From the point of view of the positive articulation of the matrixial feminine, the distinction between *sinthome* and symptom is in a strong sense hierarchical: the work of art as *sinthome* has a greater value than the work as symptom, as the latter cannot even hope to undo the phallic foreclosure of the feminine. As is often to be expected from such configurations, what is potentially loaded within this particular hierarchy is a dependency

¹⁰⁴ This latter characterisation will be worth bearing in mind when we encounter Laplanche's general theory of seduction later on. Indeed, it is possible to think the differentiation of *sinthome* and symptom in terms of a message: the latter being susceptible to hermeneutic interpretation according to a key (see below, p. 211, on Laplanche's thesis of psychoanalysis as anti-hermeneutics), while the former draws interpretation away from the safety of pre-determined signification. In terms of the basic structure of primal seduction, however, this resonance is a limited one, as in Laplanche's primal situation the message is unidirectional, from adult (other) to child (subject). His later idea of 'cultural production' as the site of transference outside the psychoanalytic clinic potentially extends this resonance, as this unidirectionality is reversed.

of the sinthome *upon* the symptom-as-coded-message, inasmuch as the former is negatively defined in relation to the homogeneous codification of the latter. The effect of such a dependence would be a limitation of what the sinthome offers to the feminine in this context to Lacanian horizons. If we recall Luke Thurston's statement that the positing of the sinthome as the fourth ring of the Borromean knot 'corresponds to the opening of theory onto the real as non-theorizable' (1998: 157), then the sinthome can be considered to mark the necessary failure of the tendency towards absolute systematicity within Lacan's thinking. In marking this necessary failure, the sinthome is the *immanent* limit of the systematic tendency. To move this limit away from its immanent positing (the opposition of sinthome and symptom placing the latter *outside*, beyond the limit of systematicity) risks reifying the systematicity of the Lacanian enterprise, although within the externally imposed limits of a contained 'phallic' register, which would then become the necessary counterpart of the matrixial.

One particularity of the distinction between sinthome and symptom lies, I believe, in Ettinger's elusive positioning of matrixiality in relation to the unconscious, specifically the Lacanian unconscious. The role this positioning has to play in a reformulation of the articulation of suffering is that it is in terms of the unconscious 'structured like a language' that the possibilities for such an articulation are limited to the already existing chains of signifiers lodged in the (Lacanian) symbolic Other. This is because, within the structuralist dimension of Lacan's thinking in which the signifying chain holds precedence, it is the symptom 'structured like a language' from which the existence of the unconscious is inferred (Lacan 2006: 223). In approaching Ettinger's negotiation of matrixiality in relation to the unconscious 'structured like a language,' and especially her use of the term 'non-conscious,' part of what is at stake—as well as questions of the topographical situation of matrixiality—will be this broader question of Lacanian horizons.

The example I have used to stage this question is, of course, only one very stark instance of a single problem emerging from the highly complex relationship between the theory of the matrix and Lacanian psychoanalysis. It is also an example that takes for granted the key reasons why the theory of the matrix sustains a connection to Lacanian thinking (primarily the material it offers to the search for the Other-Woman). To note this example of a potentially limiting dependency upon the structuralist Lacan as the extimate other of the theory of the matrix is an attempt to approach its horizons within a broader psychoanalytic field that directly relates to the Lacanian unconscious.

BEYOND THE UNCONSCIOUS 'STRUCTURED LIKE A LANGUAGE'

As a psychoanalytically-founded theory, it is to be expected that many of the interventions and critiques made in the name of the theory of the matrix will point, on some level at least, in the direction of the unconscious. If we recall, for instance, the opening levels of the critique of Lacan in

'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' an important one of these was the dominance of the symbolic and the unconscious by metaphor and metonymy (M&M: 178, 195). The uptake of the *objet a*, even before its 'matrixialisation' also presents an interrogation of the possibilities for formulating the founding instance of subjectivity away from a determination by the linguistic signifier (W'OA: 64). The ultimate object of critique in both of these examples is, of course, Lacan's unconscious 'structured like a language'.

In spite of (or possibly because of) the various levels of critique, Lacan's formulation of the unconscious occupies a peculiar position within the theory of the matrix, in that it is also heavily implicated in the openings Lacan provides for Ettinger's feminist project. That is, the universalising tendency according to which the unconscious is produced, and moreover produced under the sign of the phallus, combined with a strong structuralist ethos which specifically strives to reduce the biologising tendencies in Freud's thinking to the defiles of the signifier, provides the perfect environment for a dramatic and unequivocal figuration of the position of the feminine in culture and subjectivity. That is, because so much is excluded and/or regulated by the domination of the signifier in Lacanian thinking,¹⁰⁵ and because the expelled material is more or less explicitly associated with the feminine, this provides a much stronger starting-point than those theories which operate in more equivocal, less boldly-rendered terms. In *Encore* we see Lacan directly reflecting upon this process of expulsion/exclusion, a reflection which gives rise to his most explicit positioning of the feminine at/beyond the limits of his thinking. In his formulas of sexuation, of the *pas-toute* (not-all or not-whole), Lacan positions the impossible ~~Woman~~ in relation to the fundamental incompleteness of the signifying chain (Fink 1995: 178 n. 6), represented by S(~~A~~) (Lacan 1973: 81). This position constitutes the impossibility of the sexual relationship, insofar as the Other jouissance of the ~~Woman~~ is that which the barred (finite) Other cannot contain. Because phallic jouissance (sexual jouissance) is determined by the finitude of the signifying chain, it cannot relate to that which escapes this finitude, relating rather to the remainder of the cut from the infinite heterogeneity of the real, the *objet a*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ In topographical terms, in the case of the id this exclusion operates by the process to which Ettinger most strongly objects in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' an irreversible substitution. That is, Lacan interprets Freud's *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* not as the displacement of *the Id* by *the Ego* (Freud's notorious statement lacking in both cases the *das* that would indicate these, which gives rise to a rather clumsy English translation (1932: 80)), but as an imperative for the replacement of *It* 'the subject devoid of any signifying article', by *I*, 'the true subject of the unconscious' (Lacan 2006: 347). Moreover, in this analysis everything is reduced to the terms of signification—one subject replacing the other—forming a closed system relating only to the structure of signification (the presence or absence of a signifying article).

¹⁰⁶ See *Encore* for Lacan's schematisation of this non-relation (1973: 78).

In spite of the many openings provided by the reflexivity of Lacanian psychoanalysis regarding the effects of its own limits, expulsions and prohibitions upon the position of the feminine, these openings also raise the question of the metapsychological location of matrixiality, which in turn gives rise to two overlapping problematics. Firstly, there is the question of whether and how matrixiality may be situated in topographical terms given the negative associations of the unconscious both with the substitutive erasure of the feminine in the process of symbolic castration, and with the indifferent, trans-individual homogeneity of the signifying chain. Secondly is the possibility that what emerges from this first question is a tacit critique of Lacan's neglect/reduction of Freud's second topography, the latter being, as I hope to show, the only pre-existing conceptual site which can potentially offer some sense of a topographical accommodation of matrixiality. This interpretation is supported by the following, rather dense statement from 'Woman as *Objet a*':

If in the unconscious interval between perception and consciousness dwell together, according to Freud, the Id and the unconscious zones of the Ego and the Super-Ego, we can say in comparison that for Lacan, in that interval dwell together: the *real*, [...] the *objet a* and the unconscious subject that alternates with the *objet a* and comes into existence partly by taking its place; and the Other. The Unconscious, defined as *the sum of all the repressions*, is *only a part* of this interval. (WOA: 64)

If such an interpretation can be sustained, this will not only bring with it some of the problems and complexities that lie within Freud's second topography, but will also raise some interesting further points not only concerning the nature of Ettinger's explicit comments on the unconscious (which only rarely approach the second topography), but also of its relation to ideas of systematicity in general, topographical or otherwise.

MATRIXIALITY AND THE NON-CONSCIOUS

In 'Trans-Subjective,' Ettinger repeatedly uses a term that directly concerns the situation of the matrix in relation to the unconscious: *non-conscious*. As I said in the Overview (pp. 57-58), this term emerges within the theory of the matrix as an effect of Ettinger's additions to and moves away from basic Lacanian structures, but, as I also noted, its use is peripheral. Although 'Trans-Subjective' is the text in which this term most frequently appears, this is in a way that could potentially be passed over as too diffuse to have any larger meaning. It does not appear as a coherently articulated, consistently used conceptual term, being variously discussed in connection to the margins of the symbolic (TSTB: 634), as a vehicle for a matrixial mode of relating (ibid.: 637), in distinction from the unconscious 'structured like a language,' in relation to femininity and originary repression (ibid.: 640), and in relation to metamorphosis (ibid.: 641). In addition to *non-conscious* 'Trans-Subjective' also contains one or two connected references to a need to modify or enlarge the scope of the unconscious (ibid.: 641-42, 645), and to the act of painting as perforating 'a

borderspace which is not conscious' (ibid.: 644). In spite of this apparent diffuseness, within all of these uses 'Trans-Subjective' offers a strong sense that Ettinger is directly pushing at the question of the relationship between matrixiality and the unconscious (Lacanian or otherwise). She is very tentative in following through on such comments as 'Awareness of the impossibility of a total split and the *impossibility of not-sharing* implies certain modifications in the classic Lacanian understanding of the unconscious' (ibid.: 641), but does hint at something quite significant in the following footnote:

Freud differentiates between two uses of the term unconscious: one to designate a particular system, which for Lacan corresponds to the treasure of repressed signifiers, the other to designate a phenomenon. I use the term non-conscious to indicate this second possibility of unconscious phenomena outside the "unconscious" as a system. (ibid.: 637, n. 12)

I would like to use this statement to examine what the idea of unconscious phenomena can mean away from the substantive *the* unconscious, and further to approach the implications it has for the relation of matrixiality to psychoanalysis in general. Although the dual distinction in the above quotation is of the 'phenomenon' of unconsciousness from both the 'treasure of repressed signifiers,' and 'the unconscious as a system,' it is not entirely clear whether both are constitutively incompatible with the theory of matrixiality, or whether one is being collapsed into the other (the 'treasure of repressed signifiers' being the most directly problematic for matrixiality). From this dual distinction, I would like to offer two divergent interpretations, one of which will feed into Guattari and one into Laplanche. The first interpretation is that Ettinger, in aligning matrixiality with unconscious *phenomena*, is taking a stance similar to what we shall shortly see of Guattari, in which universalising or systematic modelisations of the unconscious are objected to as reductive and limiting. The second is that, in defining *non-conscious* with reference to Freud's struggle with the meaning of the term *unconscious*, Ettinger connects it to the heart of the movement between his first and second psychical topographies.

MATRIXIAL ASYSTEMATICITY?

In terms of the first interpretation—*non-conscious* as a deliberate rejection of systematicity—one possible answer to the proliferation of usages of *non-conscious* is to view the footnote referring to two Freudian meanings of *unconscious* as being only one usage in relation to others, and moreover one that does not necessarily have a determining role to play. In other words, one might argue that across the various usages of 'non-conscious' in 'Trans-Subjective' the common thread is simply that Ettinger is deliberately avoiding the use of *unconscious*, in order to make clear the distance between matrixiality and the Lacanian unconscious. In terms of this interpretation, one might have the sense that the unconscious has become so heavily identified with the Lacanian unconscious 'structured

like a language,' repression being synonymous with the laying-down of signifiers, that it has ceased to be a viable term to associate with the processes of matrixiality. On this basis, *non-conscious* could be understood as an attribute, meaning *not conscious, but not of the unconscious*, a refusal to align matrixiality with the systematising (even metaphysical (Laplanche 1999: 115)) reification that lies in the substantive form.

If the proliferation of *non-conscious* does present something like an anti-systematic strategy regarding the relationship between matrixiality and the unconscious, there is, to my mind a slight danger built into it. To refuse, however tactically, to associate matrixiality with any sense of topographical systematicity, particularly when this refusal is counterposed to such a rigid determination as the Lacanian unconscious, risks falling into an association Ettinger's work seems constitutively bound to avoid, between the feminine and asystematicity or indeterminacy. It also does not sit particularly well with the degree of systematicity already present in the formulations of metamorphosis, the matrixial object/*objet a* and so on, as well as the care Ettinger takes to fit the theory of the matrix *around* Lacanian structures. Even the response that matrixiality offers a 'supplementary' position in relation to the Lacanian unconscious could be seen to fall short here, insofar as an apparent lack of determination within the supplementary use of *non-conscious* would be formally similar to Lacan's opposition of phallic and (supplementary) feminine jouissance in *Encore* (1973: 64-77).

There is a small but tantalising comment towards the end of 'Trans-Subjective' which potentially gets around this problem, and tips it in the direction of Guattari's thinking. In discussing a 'matrixial transferential borderspace' in relation to art, Ettinger makes the following remark: 'It is opened in/by the act of painting through a transgression of the splits between eye and gaze and *I* and *non-I* which *momentarily defies the unconscious*' (TSTB: 644, emphasis added). From this, and given Ettinger's references to Varela's concept of autopoiesis (a concept also taken up by Guattari in *Chaosmosis*), one might see here the possibility of a temporary self- (or co-) organising systematicity, but one that is singular, unpredictable and ultimately not definable in advance. This would seem to fit with the role the matrixial object/*objet a* has to play in the formation of the theory: the "'outside" the unconscious as a system' could be seen to refer to something invisible to the theoretical eye seeking a permanent, underlying systematicity, something which in fact only attains a coherence when activated in/with/by a (matrixial) encounter with other previously imperceptible heterogeneous traces.

These last two points will thus be the sites of a connection to Guattari, as his thinking will offer an alternative to the hierarchical opposition between universalising systematicity and wild (feminine) indeterminacy. He takes up both the concept of autopoiesis and the *objet a* (being, with Ettinger, one of the very few people to release it from its Lacanian ownership), as well as Stern's emergent stratification of the self, as sites of subjective and aesthetic autonomisation exempt from systematic

determinations, but which can in no way be considered indeterminate or meaningless. Indeed, for Guattari, these sites present the only possible future of a sustainable and productive approach to subjectivity.

INDICATION OF FREUD'S SECOND PSYCHICAL TOPOGRAPHY?

Before turning to Guattari in any detail, however, I would like to explore the second interpretation of *non-conscious*, which will lead in a very different direction, and will take us into a consideration of Laplanche. In referring to Freud's distinction between the systematic unconscious and unconscious phenomena, Ettinger hints at this second possible interpretation, which is only very hypothetical: an indirect critique of a restriction to Freud's first topographical system. This hypothetical interpretation rests on the idea that in distinguishing *non-conscious* from *the unconscious*, it is not systematicity *per se* that is rejected, but rather systematicity in the form of the homogeneous determination that is the Lacanian unconscious. The retention of a form of topographical organisation is supported by another footnote, this time from 'The With-in-Visible Screen'. Here, although Ettinger does include a version of the negative definition of *non-conscious* suggested above, she adds a second term, which has a strong sense of being a topographical entity, insofar as it is structured as a *container*.

The *sub-unconscious* is a term I suggest for the connectionist sphere of severality and encounter, which treasures traces of borderlinks (metramorphosis) and subsymbolic elements. The sub-unconscious is a non-unconscious sphere that is not included within the definition of the Unconscious. (WIV: 98 n. 43)

Within Freud's first topography, 'unconscious phenomena "outside" the unconscious as a system' belong to the preconscious, which is the domain of verbal language, and is often associated with the unconscious 'structured like a language' (see Kristeva 1996b: 38-40, 42-43; Laplanche 1987: 41-43). In the second topography, by contrast, there is more room for unconscious phenomena outside the repressed unconscious, since there are unconscious dimensions of all three topographical agencies, ego, superego and primordial non-repressed id. For this reason, I would like to remain with the second topography for the moment, to suggest that the id can offer a possibility, if we were inclined to take it up, of situating matrixiality topographically. This will only be a viable possibility, it will shortly become clear, if we take on some of Laplanche's moves to retain the Id in conjunction with a departure from Freud's biologising tendencies.

Throughout his career, Freud grappled with the meaning of the term *unconscious*, his central struggle concerning the disjunction of that which is simply absent from consciousness—formulated in *The Ego and the Id* as 'unconscious only descriptively' (1923a: 15)—and that which is forced from consciousness by some sort of conflict, and is thus *dynamically* unconscious. The latter, within Freud's first topography (unconscious, preconscious and consciousness), necessitates the existence

of the unconscious (intermittently but not entirely consistently represented by the abbreviation *Ucs.*) as an autonomous system, since the notion of conflict implies the operation of distinct intrapsychic systems (see Laplanche 1981: 128-29). Although Freud raises this distinction between descriptive and dynamic meanings much earlier (in ‘The Unconscious,’ and in his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*), the problem is most clearly laid out in *The Ego and the Id* (even if it is then immediately unravelled):

We see [...] that we have two kinds of unconscious—the one which is latent but capable of becoming conscious, and the one which is repressed and which is not, in itself and without more ado, capable of becoming conscious. (1923a: 15)

The connection of the second kind of unconscious and systematicity is, however, extremely complicated. Freud flirts, across a number of texts, with the idea of the unconscious as a topographical system, where the *Ucs.* system is not (in the terms of the first topography) simply a receptacle for contents repressed by the preconscious (*Pcs.*), but has its own specific properties. Laplanche’s account of the inevitability of the unconscious as a system adds some detail to this. In the forgetting of names, faces and so on, it is ‘not necessarily the name itself that I find unbearable’ (1981: 128); that is, the driving force behind repression is not exclusively determined by that which is repressed. The unconscious, as formed by primal repression, does not only receive repressed contents: its primally repressed nucleus also ‘acts as a pole of attraction for the elements due to be repressed’ (Laplanche & Pontalis 1967: 393). It is this force of attraction that, in Laplanche’s view, constitutes the necessity of positing the unconscious as a system:

we are in the presence no longer of a process which excludes an element for its own sake, but of an entanglement of unconscious networks, which inevitably give rise to the idea of a true unconscious system. This is an unconscious system in which an element can find itself attracted, suddenly sucked in, as a result of extremely complex connections. (1981: 129)

In Freud’s *New Introductory Lectures*, the systematic topography to which this relates is presented in terms of the positing of the ego in relation to ‘an extensive and important field of mental life’ withdrawn from its knowledge, and thus unconscious. Conflict between the ego and this other ‘mental province’ inevitably brings forward the idea of the system *Ucs.* (Freud 1932: 71), while at the same time calling it into question. Since the region foreign to the ego does not have a monopoly on being unconscious—‘portions of the ego and superego are unconscious in the *dynamic* sense’ (ibid.)—Freud argues that the specification of the unconscious as a system is no longer tenable. As a consequence, the province foreign to the ego becomes the id, which contains the repressed unconscious, but is not coextensive with it.

It might be possible to argue then, that in Ettinger’s footnote distinguishing the non-conscious phenomena of matrixiality from the Lacanian unconscious, she is approaching similar territory to that which led Freud to posit his second psychical topography. Although she explicitly uses the

term ‘phenomena,’ I would argue that matrixiality can not be considered to be simply latent, or fallen from consciousness, given the lengths to which Ettinger goes to theorise both metamorphosis as a trans-subjective creative dynamic, and the matrixial *objet a* as a specific inscription of a trace of the matrixial encounter. If this is accepted, I would argue that matrixiality is *non-conscious* in a way that, while not being dynamic in the sense of intra-psychical conflict and repression, is undoubtedly *inscribed* within the psyche (as we have seen with the additional positing of the *sub-unconscious*) in a way that is not straightforwardly retrievable at a conscious level.¹⁰⁷ Having made this caveat, the next question would obviously be whether Freud’s second topography, in its expansion of the unconscious away from the repressed, offers any more scope for such inscription to be topographically accommodated. For the sake of argument, it seems clear that (while in part unconscious) neither the ego or the super ego are suitable candidates for such an accommodation, since the former is a cohesive agency whose central role is regulation, while the latter is a rigid and unbending lawgiver. Insofar as the id is introduced as ‘unknown and unconscious’ (Freud 1923a: 24), it offers more scope for movement.

You will not expect me to have much to tell you that is new about the id apart from its new name. It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality; what little we know of it we have learnt from our study of the dream-work and of the construction of neurotic symptoms, and most of that is of a negative character and can be described only as a contrast to the ego. (Freud 1932: 73)

In spite of this negativity, as Laplanche points out (1999: 98-99), Freud does go on to detail some positive characteristics of the id, many of these being characteristics of the unconscious in the first topography. For instance, it is ruled by primary process (‘mobility of cathexes’ via displacement and condensation), and knows nothing of time nor of negation nor contradiction (1932: 73-74; see also 1915: 186-87 for an account of these as characteristics of the *Ucs.*). We already have some scope for an association of matrixiality with this latter characteristic insofar as, in ‘Matrix and Metamorphosis,’ Ettinger says that ‘Freud also spoke of non-resolved contradictions in the unconscious. This idea, which was not specifically developed by Freud or others, suits the Matrix concept’ (M&M: 201). Slightly more problematic for the matrix, however, is that the contents of the id are formed both from ‘above’—from repression by the ego—and ‘below’: ‘we picture it as being open at its end to somatic influences’ (Freud 1932: 73). As Laplanche and Pontalis point out, this latter is the site of a particular shift away from the first topography, in that it undoes the ‘hard and fast’ distinction between the unconscious and the source (*Quelle*) of the drive, in relation to which the instinctual representative (*Triebrepräsenz*) stands as the means of inscription (1967: 198). While this particular shift could speak of a greater participation of corporeality in the

¹⁰⁷ This interpretation is also supported by the statement in *The Matrixial Gaze* that ‘we may differentiate between a castration-type repression and a matrixial type’ (MG: 22).

formation of the psyche, it actually leads to a biological determinism, a closing-in and restriction of the modes of interaction between psyche and world. Indeed, one of the most problematic characteristics of the id, particularly from a matrixial direction, lies in the following statement: ‘the id has intercourse with the external world only through the ego’ (Freud 1932: 79). This is problematic in the sense that it restricts the possibility of an interaction with an external other to what is possible in terms of the ego alone, and as such—since the ego is both a unity and the agent of repression—foregoes the possibility of a primary and subjectivising relation to an unknown other. This incompatibility may not be the end of the story, however, since while Laplanche sustains a priority of the encounter with the unknown dimension of an other as the universal condition of possibility of sexuality and the unconscious, comparable in many ways to matrixiality, he also says of Freud’s second topography that it ‘marks a vast improvement on his first model’ (1987: 133). These two apparently contradictory aspects of his work are founded on a rigorous critique of both the biological drift in Freud’s thinking, and the idea of the phylogenetically-transmitted id containing everything required for the ‘growth’ of a human adult. It is this to which I will turn next, as an example of a turn away from the unconscious ‘structured like a language’ to the second topography, a turn which is built upon the latter’s re-foundation.

What I would like to argue, in placing Laplanche’s negotiation of the biologising tendencies that emerge with the second topography alongside the questions that arise from Ettinger’s *non-conscious*, is that Laplanche offers a model for understanding how the id may be theoretically repositioned, on the basis that it is the question of origins that most significantly determines its form. In Freud’s case the id is determined by a prioritisation of biology and genetic inheritance, but in Laplanche’s, his realist formulation of the unconscious constituted by primal repression evades this biologising tendency, while also escaping the determination of the unconscious by the signifying chain. In approaching the question of topography through the question of origins, however, Laplanche demonstrates that it is not only the structure of the psyche that is at stake, but the field of psychoanalysis itself.

LAPLANCHE: PRIMAL REPRESSION AND THE SPECIFICITY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

[...] what is at stake in the *correct* conception of the unconscious extends far beyond the purely theoretical sphere. It concerns in particular: 1) the foundation and the understanding of analytic practice; 2) the originality of the Freudian discovery and the break it introduces in the history of ideas and even that of mankind; 3) the notion of the drive; 4) the specificity of the sexual-fantasmatic field, which has to be re-affirmed as much in practice as in theory. (Laplanche 1999: 86, emphasis added)

The methodology of a ‘return to Freud’ is a major element common to both Laplanche and Lacan, although this particular commonality is rather short-lived. Where Lacan presents his reading of

Freud as preserving the coherence and truth of the Freudian discovery,¹⁰⁸ Laplanche, while being no less forceful (as is clearly exemplified in the ‘correct’ in the quotation above), allows much greater room for his reading being divergent from the letter of Freud’s work, particularly where he attributes to Freud a ‘going-astray’ (*fourvoisement*) in the jettisoning of seduction theory in 1897. He also makes it clear at which points he departs from Freud, even if in a ‘corrective’ sense. In topographical terms, Laplanche’s double movement of return to and departure from Freud revolves around the positioning of repression:

Alongside texts (such as those of 1915) which give priority to the process of repression, and thus to the creation of the unconscious in the course of each individual existence, there is a constant temptation to situate the unconscious in some genetic lineage, in which it occupies the first, primordial position. (ibid.: 85)

This temptation makes itself felt most strongly with the move into the second topography, in which Freud shifts towards ideas of endogenous foundation and away from any sense of an exogenous implantation of sexuality, the id being formulated as an entity that pre-exists any originary act of inscription (repression). Laplanche objects to this shift in that he perceives a significant danger in such an endogenous foundation. He sees an opposition between the concepts of repression and emergence that will demonstrate very clearly what is at stake in his rereading of Freud. The id, as a biologically pre-existing, phylogenetically-inherited origin of human sexuality (Freud 1938: 145), puts at risk what we have seen in Chapter 1 of the drives as informing a theory of human sexuality without a determinate or pre-determined object. In Laplanche’s words, the positing of a biological, primal id ‘ran directly counter to the originality implied in the notion of the drive, as a sexual process not adapted, in human beings, to a pre-determined goal’ (1999: 86). This undermining of the human specificity of the drive is compounded in the tendency, represented by the id, to *subordinate* repression to emergence, repression becoming ‘essentially secondary, [...] bearing on drives-impulses already present and welling up from the primordial, non-repressed unconscious’ (ibid.). From these two factors Laplanche deduces a further subordination or reduction of both the human, and of the specificity of psychoanalysis ‘as a field of sexuality’ (ibid.).

Laplanche’s main objection to the ‘primordial, non-repressed unconscious’ thus comes from a similar territory to his concern about the origins of sexuality, especially the notion of the drive, upon which so much rested in *Life and Death*. Throughout his work, we find a committed resistance

¹⁰⁸ For example, regarding the question of the relationship between the fundamental rule of free association in analysis and the discovery of the unconscious, he says: ‘A return to Freud’s text shows, on the contrary, the *absolute coherence* between his technique and his discovery, and this coherence allows us to situate his procedures at their proper level.

‘This is why any rectification of psychoanalysis requires a return to the truth of that discovery, which is impossible to obscure in its original moment’ (Lacan 2006: 427, emphasis added).

to the tendency of psychoanalysis as a theory of sexuality to slip into biological reductionism. Although this resistance is evident in his discussion of the *Anlehnung*—leaning-on—of the drives upon the instincts in *Life and Death*,¹⁰⁹ in *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis* (hereafter *New Foundations*) and after, even the theory of leaning-on is critiqued as an effect of ‘*the vacuum created by the abandoning of the seduction theory in 1897*’ (Laplanche 1987: 144). I will return to the conditions of this critique shortly, but for now (as I have indicated in Chapter 1) the leaning of drives upon instincts may be considered to position human sexuality as both related to, but fundamentally separate from the biological, vital register:

The phenomenon Freud describes is a leaning *of the drive*, the fact that emergent sexuality attaches itself to and is propped upon another process which is both similar and profoundly divergent: the sexual drive is propped upon a nonsexual, vital function or, as Freud formulates it in terms which defy all additional commentary, upon a “bodily function essential to life.” (Laplanche 1970: 16)

Laplanche’s notion of Freud’s *fourvoisement* or ‘going-astray’ is based upon the idea of a biological drift that reduces the distinction between the (sexual) human being and the biological. The work which precedes the concrete positing of the *fourvoisement* is laid out in *New Foundations*, and provides a useful insight into Laplanche’s struggle to reconcile his own thinking with this biologising tendency in Freud. As is obvious from what we have already seen, Laplanche does not accept this tendency, but neither does he tread the Lacanian path of using an objection to the biologising tendencies represented by the id to retain a fidelity to the Freud’s first topography (see Green 2005: 196). Rather, what we see in Chapter 2 of *New Foundations* is Laplanche’s struggle to metabolise the less palatable aspects and tendencies of Freud’s thinking, in order to preserve the advantages of the second topography in spite of its associations with biologism. It will be useful to examine some of the main elements of this struggle, insofar as it is specifically relevant for the questions of disciplinary delimitation and trans- and inter-disciplinary synthesis that inform the investigations of this chapter.

CATHARSIS: THE BIOLOGICAL MODEL AND THE BOUNDARY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

One of the most striking and attractive things about *New Foundations* is its reflexivity, particularly in that Laplanche’s methodology for founding-again the specificity of psychoanalysis mostly takes the form of an attention to its limits and margins. Sometimes this attention operates in an excluding mode, as is the case when he discusses (child) psychology, but more often than this, it treats the limits of psychoanalysis as a site of transitivity and relation, rather than inclusion or exclusion. His

¹⁰⁹ ‘The French term *étayage* translates Freud’s *Anlehnung* for which Laplanche suggests ‘leaning-on’ in English rather than Strachey’s ‘anaclisis’ (Laplanche 1999: 154n. (editorial footnote)).

consideration of the role of the biological in Freud's thinking is one of four elements in a consideration of the 'heterogeneous and exogenous foundations' posited at various moments in the history of psychoanalysis (the other three being social anthropology (the phylogenetic model), mechanism (the economic model), and linguistics (the unconscious structured like a language)). Laplanche's discussion of these four elements brings forward this striking reflexivity, in that he makes no attempt to evacuate them from psychoanalysis, nor to privilege only one as its true foundation. Instead, he takes up a far more delicate and open position concerning the location of these heterogeneous foundations, which leads to a very important question:

It might even be said [...] that their place is twofold: on the one hand they exist on the *boundaries* of the psychoanalytic field; on the other, they exist *within* the psychoanalytic field. But what is the relationship between these two positions? (1987: 45)

The answer Laplanche goes on to give to this question is that there is a frequent misrecognition of the differences between what exists upon the boundary of the psychoanalytic field, and what lies within it. It is not anthropology, biology, mechanism or linguistics that are contained within psychoanalysis, but *representations* of them, what he will term *morphisms*. He seems to intend the idea of morphism to stand as a form of simile, relating psychoanalysis to its own limits through the explanatory models it imports, but a statement of similarity that works to establish difference.

The model borrowed from 'biology', or from psychophysiology, is a *false* model. It is as though it signalled a *twofold* heterogeneity; not only is psychoanalysis *unlike* the other sciences in that it does not develop *in the same way* that they develop; its relationship *with* the other sciences may not be comparable to mutual relations between other sciences. (ibid.: 7).

Since the idea of *fourvoisement* largely concerns the role of biology within psychoanalysis, it is the biological model I will focus on here. Although Green attributes to Laplanche an anti-biologism that makes his position 'not very different from Lacan's' (2005: 196), to me this fails to do justice to his consideration of the relation between psychoanalysis and biology in *New Foundations*, in particular the role of biology in *delimiting* the psychoanalytic field. The attention to the operation of the field of the biological within Freud's thinking in terms of *origin*, *model*, and *foundation* is not, as far as I can see, its knee-jerk expulsion from psychoanalysis. It is, rather, an attention to those points at which the biological model is stretched to breaking-point, and which Laplanche uses to argue for the irreducible specificity of psychoanalysis.

Laplanche accepts (and indeed capitalises upon, as we will shortly see) the sense of anteriority contained within the idea of biological *origins*: 'the hypothesis that the living is prior or anterior to the cultural does not, in my view, mean making excessive demands or concessions' (1987: 21). It is in an attention to the biological *model*, however, that his critique really begins. In referring to the biological model, Laplanche indicates a generalised analogy between various levels of the psyche and the idea of the *organism*, 'a living being which is confronted with an environment.' The adequacy

of the organism as a model is questioned on a fundamental level, by pointing to its shortcomings in accounting for the basic situation of the infant: to be considered a viable organism, able to survive, the constitution of the infant must include the mother. This, in Laplanche's view, undermines a direct analogy between the organism and the infant, an undermining that will come into play again in his situation of the parental unconscious as a *necessary* element of primal seduction;

surely the biological model falls apart if it is expanded to include outside intervention, particularly if that intervention is extremely complex and irreducible to being a supplementary element in a so-called autarkic equilibrium? (ibid.: 24)

The third term, *foundation*, is where Laplanche's own thesis and motivation come most strongly into play, and also encompasses the other two terms, exemplified in the problem of 'how the biological-as-model invades the human psyche' (ibid.: 22). It is the idea of biology as the foundation of the human psyche to which Laplanche is most opposed, particularly when combined with 'the idea that the evolutionary process that leads from biology to the human psyche is *in itself* biological' (in other words, the idea that the psyche is formed by the adaptation of an organism to its environment (ibid.)). As well as the biological modelisation at the fairly direct level of the 'whole' organism, Laplanche detects two further levels, in relation to which he rejects the idea of the biological model as foundational: the psychical apparatus—'a specialized system within a living being'—and the ego, both of which are modelled by Freud after the living organism. Particularly in the case of the ego, Laplanche argues, the biological model *cannot* be foundational, and is rather a *real* model, 'something which is represented, or causes itself to be represented, within the psyche' (ibid.: 28). That is, the differentiation of the ego from the id as a means of reconciling the organism with the external world effectively *creates* the 'organism' of the ego, *representing* the biological model within the psyche. From this real modelisation of the ego within the psyche as a divergence from biological foundation, Laplanche questions whether it is given that the differentiation of the psyche conforms exactly to the linear evolution inscribed within the biological model, whether what is foundational necessarily coincides with what is original, anterior. He asks: 'Is the id something primordial and primal, or does it *become* a stranger who lives within us as a result of the very process which constitutes the psychic apparatus and of repression?' (ibid: 28-29). This question ultimately leads to a repositioning of the id as the deepest element of the psyche, but not the first; that is, Laplanche reconciles the id with his anti-essentialist ethos by making it something created, and moreover, as I will soon show, created in response to an encounter with an unassimilable alterity.

Having discussed a few key aspects of Laplanche's critical situation of his own thinking, I will now explore some of its positive elements. The two central components of this positive dimension are the general theory of seduction (the alternative to the adaptational growth of human sexuality from the biological substrate of the id) and the translation theory of repression (which founds the unconscious as a residue of an encounter with an unknowable otherness), both of which lead in the

direction of an argument for the irreducible specificity of psychoanalysis. As I have said, the negotiations of biology so far addressed do not constitute its expulsion from psychoanalysis, and moreover, Laplanche is not only concerned with its *representation* within the psychoanalytic field. He also, following from his acceptance of biological *anteriority*, and through (I will shortly show) an instance upon primary relationality and self-preservation as ‘pre-sexual’ states, *uses* biology to constitute the boundary of the psychoanalytic field. This constitutive movement only makes sense when viewed in terms of his positive work on the implantation of sexuality and the foundation of the unconscious.

THE GENERAL THEORY OF SEDUCTION

Laplanche’s general theory of seduction derives from what he terms Freud’s *special theory* of seduction, the traumatic aetiology of neurosis so significantly abandoned in 1897. In this early period in Freud’s thinking, seduction is the precocious and pathogenic interruption of infantile life by the actions of a perverse adult, the traumatic excess of sexual stimulation produced giving rise to a pathological repression. The repressed contents form an ever-present danger of returning as a symptom through the mechanism of deferred action (*Nachträglichkeit*) (See Freud 1899: 220-32; Laplanche & Pontalis 1967: 404-8). Although Laplanche uses this traumatic aetiology as his starting-point, he does not return to it as such. This is partly because of its specificity, its limitation to ‘perverse relations (in the clinical sense) between an adult and a child’ (1987: 115), but also relates to a larger problem than the statistical improbability by which Freud rationalises his abandonment of seduction theory. In Laplanche’s view this other problem concerns the inscription within analytic investigations of a particular ‘kind of factuality,’ which constitutes the goal of analysis as the retrieval of ‘the hidden scene which reveals all, which is self-explanatory and which does not refer to anything else’ (ibid.). Such a goal stems, in this argument, from the dominance of pathology, in that the unconscious itself is only considered insofar as it is pathogenic, the aim of the psychoanalytic cure being its reduction: ‘The idea of a ‘normal’ unconscious which, despite all we know if it, is irreducible is still out of reach’ (ibid: 116). Because of the absence of a ‘normal’ unconscious, Laplanche argues, the idea of a portion of the unconscious unassimilable to the analytic cure is unthinkable: ‘Freud is not yet able to postulate the hypothesis of primal repression even though the seduction theory could explain it’ (ibid.). It is to this restriction in the scope of psychoanalytic theory that Laplanche credits the more significant reason for the abandonment of seduction theory, a point which, from the outset, links his reclaiming of seduction with the question of the formation and structure of the unconscious.

Neither is Laplanche’s general theory of seduction directly aligned with a form of seduction that intermittently shows itself in Freud well after the break of 1897 (much later and most memorably in the *New Introductory Lectures*), what Laplanche terms the ‘precocious’ seduction by the attentions of

the mother to the 'passive' pre-Oedipal girl-child. He criticises Freud's failure to extend this seduction to sexuality in general, and beyond genital stimulation (*ibid.*: 121), but even more than this, contends that the fate of this reappearance of seduction is sealed by the timing of its appearance in Freud's thinking. To be more precise, the appearance of maternal 'precocious' seduction in the *New Introductory Lectures* (Freud 1932: 120) again cannot find a home because by this time the theoretical environment which might have accommodated it—a theory of the unconscious that included primal repression—is long gone: 'Freud's attempted reassessment of the phenomenon of seduction was doomed to failure because his work was grounded in a theory which combined a biologicistic theory of the drives with an anthropo-phylogenetic theory of fantasy' (Laplanche 1987: 121).

The general theory of seduction follows on from these two untimely appearances of seduction in Freud's thinking at either end of his career, the first too early, the second too late. This untimeliness is rendered by Laplanche as a missed-encounter between seduction and primal repression, and it is this encounter that he stages in *New Foundations*. As I have already said, his general theory returns to neither of these earlier moments, but rather seems to distil them into a more abstract and generalisable formulation of an encounter between infancy and adulthood, the nature of this encounter resting ultimately on difference, on the gap between them. His idea of primal seduction (explicitly differentiated from infantile (perverted) and precocious (maternal) forms) is founded upon the idea of a transmission of 'enigmatic' sexual signifiers from adult to infant, signifiers which the infant is entirely unable to comprehend. This lack of comprehension also takes into account, and is critical of Freud for not so doing, the unconscious of the adult.

The *primal* seduction outlined in *New Foundations* is still the traumatic interruption of infantile life by adult sexuality, but one that takes place without the awareness of the adult. The vehicle for this interruption is, as I have said, the enigmatic signifier, primal seduction being formulated as 'a fundamental situation in which an adult proffers to a child verbal, non-verbal and even behavioural signifiers which are pregnant with unconscious sexual significations' (*ibid.*: 126, corrected¹¹⁰). Both the trauma, and the part these signifiers have to play in the formation of the unconscious, rest in the inability *both of the infant and the adult* adequately to explain them, the inability of the adult depending on his or her own unconscious, of the infant his or her lack of one. For Laplanche, 'pride of place' in the discussion of enigmatic signifiers is given to the primal scene, but in a move that both repeats and profoundly modifies the typical psychoanalytic characterisation of the first object, he also uses the breast as an example of the action of the enigmatic signifier:

¹¹⁰ Due to the number of typographical errors in the English translation of Laplanche's *New Foundations*, it has been necessary to correct one or two words. Any such corrected passages will be clearly marked.

Can analytic theory afford to go on ignoring the extent to which women unconsciously and sexually cathect the breast, which appears to be a natural organ for lactation? It is inconceivable that the infant does not notice this sexual cathexis, which might be said to be perverse in the sense that the term is defined in the *Three Essays*. It is impossible to imagine that the infant does not suspect that this cathexis is the source of a nagging question: what does this breast want from me, apart from wanting to suckle me, and, come to that why does it want to suckle me? (ibid.)

The role of the enigmatic signifier in Laplanche's revision of the unconscious is guaranteed by another innovation, the translation theory of repression. The core of this theory rests in the idea that the infant's (and the adult's) attempts, and ultimate failure, to explain the enigmatic signifier, to translate it into terms the infant can process, creates a residue. This residue, because it cannot be processed, is repressed. In *New Foundations*, this process is accounted for by the following formula, S_1 being the enigmatic signifier, s its signified ('in the case of the first parental signifiers, s is simply replaced by a question mark' (ibid.: 132)), and S_2 the infant's attempted substitution for the parental signifier.

$$\begin{array}{r} \underline{S_1} \\ s \end{array} \quad X \quad \begin{array}{r} \underline{S_2} \\ S_1 \end{array} = \frac{\underline{S_2}}{\begin{array}{r} s \\ \underline{S_1} \\ S_1 \end{array}}$$

Figure 2a The translation theory of repression: initial formula (Laplanche 1987: 131-32; 1999: 94)

Laplanche suggests two possible outcomes of this 'metabola'. The first is a mathematically-viable algebraic simplification, the cancelling-out of the two instances of S_1 , which would result in the obliteration of the enigmatic signifier, leaving only S_2/s . The second outcome, presented above, is mathematically 'absurd,' but retains both instances of S_1 'below the bar,' repressed as 'the formation of the drive's source-object' (ibid.: 133). The primal repression of this untranslatable material constitutes, for Laplanche, both the implantation of sexuality and the formation of the unconscious. The above schema is not, however, the final formulation of the translation theory of repression. In 'A Short Treatise on the Unconscious,' Laplanche adds a second version, on the basis that 'one never translates a single signifier' (1999: 94). This revised formula, where M is a message, and the process is one of transformation (change (\rightarrow)) rather than equation (stasis ($=$)), presents, in my understanding, the translation model proper.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \underline{M_1} & \times & \underline{M_2} \\ s & & M_1 \end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c} \underline{M_2} \\ s \\ \hline \underline{S_1} \\ S_1 \end{array}$$

Figure 2b The translation theory of repression: revised formula (Laplanche 1999: 94)

This formulation of repression has some very particular effects upon how Laplanche conceives of the unconscious. For example, it shifts away from unconscious contents being ‘a stored memory or representation’ toward an idea of ‘a sort of waste-product of certain processes of memorisation’ (1999: 89). It also relates to an important reconception of the differentiation between *Wortvorstellung* and *Sachvorstellung*. In terms of this distinction, he posits an error in the classical Freudian approach to the question of how unconscious contents might become conscious. This error emerges with the division of presentations into the “mnemic image” of the thing’ and an acoustic image ‘made of words to be uttered.’

Now, it is here that the theory of the unconscious – *wrongly in my mind* – lines up with a psychological theory which makes the possibility of a train of thought becoming conscious dependent upon whether or not it is possible to associate with it, here and there, acoustic verbal traces, able to be brought back to life, pronounced again at least in outline, and thus inwardly perceived. (ibid.: 89-90)

Laplanche’s objection to this distinction seems to lie in a larger objection to the idea of the unconscious as a storage space for representational information, a place for forgotten traces of external objects. His view of the unconscious is effectively opposed to this kind of conception, in that he considers the passage to the unconscious as ‘correlative with a loss of referentiality’ (ibid.: 90). S_1 is inscribed by primal repression, following a failure in translation, and as such does not refer to anything; it becomes, in Laplanche’s words a ‘designified-signifier,’ and it is this transformation that underlies his reconception of the *Sachvorstellung*. Because the loss of referentiality embodied in primarily repressed instances of S_1 means that they cannot be returned to their original object with the ‘addition’ of a word-presentation, the translation ‘thing-presentation,’ containing the idea of ‘the more or less direct “mnemic image” of the thing,’ is inadequate (ibid.: 89). On this basis of this objection, Laplanche retranslates *Sachvorstellung* as *representation-chose*: ‘thing-like presentation’. In this formulation, the *Sachvorstellung* becomes a presentation which behaves—in its irruption—as a *thing*, ‘which no longer presents (signifies) anything other than itself’ (ibid.: 90).

The reason I have touched upon Laplanche’s reformulation of the *Sachvorstellung* is to note the effects of the translation theory of repression on the positioning of his work in relation to the Lacanian unconscious ‘structured like a language’. The lack of referentiality of S_1 , the designified-

signifier, means that one of its effects upon the structure of the unconscious is to distance it from the idea of the signifying chain, instead structuring the unconscious as a disconnected aggregation of ‘untranslated signifiers’. Thus, one of the most significant dimensions of this model, for me, is the distance between S_1 in the Laplanchean unconscious and the homogeneous, interchangeable signifier of the Lacanian unconscious: ‘These abandoned signifiers have no relation between them, neither syntagmatic nor paradigmatic. They do not form a second ‘signifying chain’ as Lacan would claim; to paraphrase Freud, they persist side by side without influencing or contradicting each other’ (ibid.: 104).

The ideas of primal seduction and the translation theory of repression do not comprise, however, the entirety of the general theory of seduction. The final component, which returns us to the subject of this section, concerns topography. It also concerns temporality and trauma. In *New Foundations*, the general theory is articulated very much in the terms of the second topography, but in a modified form according to the issues discussed above regarding the role of the biological and phylogenetic models. This modification is best summed up in the following statement from ‘A Short Treatise’: ‘That the id (the unconscious system) is the result of repression, and repression may be understood through a translation theory—these are *my* hypotheses’ (ibid.). The translation theory of repression articulates primal repression within these revised terms as a *dual* action, drawing upon Freud’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit*. The first stage implants the enigmatic signifier without translating it as such, and delimits the bodily ego; the trauma of the inexplicable enigmatic signifier causes the previously ‘Copernican’ infant (‘circulating around the other’s message’ (Laplanche & Caruth 2002: 108), to ‘Ptolemize’ itself, to build itself as a centred and bounded individual. This first inscription lodges the enigmatic signifier within the boundary, ‘primarily in the points known as erotogenic zones’ (Laplanche 1987: 135). The second stage constitutes the ego as an agency, and with the drawing-in of the previous boundary situates the enigmatic signifier as outside the ego, but inside the subject. This second movement is the condition of possibility for the attempt at translation, and thus for primal repression proper, to take place:

In the second stage the enigmatic signifier or, to be more precise, its repressed residue, or the source-object [...], becomes internal; it is still external to the ego or embedded in its periphery but, given that the ego is more restricted than the individual [...], it is an internal-external element which, as far as the ego is concerned, acts from the outside. (ibid.)

Although this account privileges the formation of the ego, its connection to the second topography means that the formation of the ego is inseparable from the question of the id (‘the ego is after all only a portion of the id, a portion that has been expediently modified by the proximity of the external world with its threat of danger’ (Freud 1932: 76-77)). Because Laplanche does not accept the phylogenetic inheritance of the id, the formation of the ego is contemporaneous with the formation of the unconscious. As a result of his rejection of the primal unconscious, Laplanche

effectively precedes its formation with nothingness, or at least the absence of a specifically human psyche: 'the small human being has no unconscious' (Laplanche & Caruth 2002: 108). This primary absence of the unconscious and of sexuality (this being implanted with the enigmatic signifier) means that the 'pre-sexual' dimension of biological self-preservation has a constitutive role to play in Laplanche's delimitation of the field of psychoanalysis, an element to which I will return shortly, in the context of the positing of a primary prenatal dimension of human subjectivity in the theory of the matrix.

PSYCHICAL TOPOGRAPHY AND DISCIPLINARY SPECIFICITY

At the end of his account of the general theory of seduction in *New Foundations*, Laplanche raises the question of its contribution to a theory of the unconscious. Laplanche's work has for many years been engaged in a debate over the 'realism' of the unconscious (a debate to which the theory of the matrix is connected by Ettinger's footnote, and also by Kareen Ror Malone's criticism of Ettinger's rendering of the unconscious, which Malone qualifies as 'phenomenological' (1997: 413)).¹¹¹ The two poles of this argument are constituted by, on the one hand Georges Politzer's anti-realist, phenomenal notion of the unconscious, which seeks to reduce it to the idea of an 'objective elaboration' of the being of the subject. Here the unconscious is done away with insofar as it is held to be structurally identical to all other not-directly-given but scientifically-inferred facts, of which causality is the archetype (Laplanche & Leclaire 1965: 226-27). The other pole is occupied by Laplanche, who, very simply, holds that the unconscious is real: 'the adult *has* an unconscious' (Laplanche & Caruth 2002: 113). This reality is supported, indeed necessitated, by primal repression, which is both the element upon which Laplanche's entire revision of the second topography rests, as well as being (in its absence) one of the main reasons for his critique of Freud's biological *fourvoisement*.

Primal seduction, Laplanche argues, does not rely on a realist view of the unconscious, since it 'has no need' of it: the formation of the ego 'will follow regardless' (1987: 151). The realist unconscious is, however, required by the idea of a *residue* of primal seduction. This seems to me to necessitate (in spite of Laplanche's protestations to the contrary) that a realism of the unconscious is a theoretical consequence of the primal situation since, as he will later acknowledge, as the source of the enigmatic message is not compatible with the anti-realist phenomenal unconscious, the adult unconscious is *necessarily* implanted by the dual action of primal repression: 'if the other was not himself invaded by his own other, his internal other, that is, the unconscious, the messages wouldn't be strange and enigmatic' (Laplanche & Caruth 2002: 108). This, to me, constitutes

¹¹¹ See Laplanche & Leclaire 1965 for Laplanche's first major engagement with this debate.

Laplanche's alternative to the phylogenetic inheritance of the id in that, through the primal situation, the internal-external alterity of the unconscious generates itself again and again through the transmission of enigmatic signifiers from adult to infant.

What happens in *New Foundations*, in both the 'cathartic' attempt to resolve the relationship between psychoanalysis and science, and in the positing of the general theory of seduction, is a clarification and reinforcement of the boundaries of psychoanalysis. This clarification coincides with a delimitation, even a containment, of the field of sexuality which, in its implantation via the enigmatic signifier, seals off the foundations of human sexuality, preserving it as the exclusive domain of psychoanalysis. This action is of great significance when discussing Laplanche alongside the theory of the matrix as it is, unsurprisingly, concerning sexuality that the most problematic differences between them lie. This issue, however, is slightly more complicated than with some other modes of psychoanalytical thinking, given that, partly following from his retention of non-contradiction as a characteristic of the unconscious, Laplanche is extremely sceptical about the universal nature of castration (negation) and the Oedipus complex, and is as ill-disposed as Ettinger towards the kind of pre-determined symbolic interpretation she critiques through the *sinthome/symptom* distinction in 'Some-Thing'. In Chapter 1, I have covered some ground on the incompatibility between drive-based theories and the idea of a subjectivising potential residing within intra-uterine life, but the importance of the drive within Laplanche's thinking is not the only source of conflict with the theory of the matrix. In *New Foundations* and subsequent papers, Laplanche magnifies the potential conflict that lies in his commitment to drive theory, in terms that are significant not only for Ettinger, but also for Guattari, and are inextricable from his argument for the irreducible specificity of the psychoanalytic experience.

As well as its distinction from biology, another key site through which Laplanche works to establish the specificity of psychoanalysis is in its relation to and distinction from psychology, and his delineation of this site concerns the question of whether human life and human sexuality coincide. In *New Foundations*, he is quite adamant that there is no such coincidence, from this establishing the distinct fields of sexuality and self-preservation:

The notions of leaning on and of an 'auto' period mean that sexual life is not something that exists from the very first. To put it more clearly, its beginnings should not be confused with the beginnings of relational life. (Laplanche 1987: 72)

It is important to note, however, that given the particular temporality of primal repression as derived from *Nachträglichkeit*, the separation of self-preservation and sexuality is never a straightforward 'before' and 'after'. Rather, the two spheres intersect and overlap (ibid.: 85). Rather than a *developmental* schism, the distinction and exclusion that *is* made is of a theoretical field. In putting forward the general theory of seduction as the foundation of human sexuality, Laplanche

unequivocally locates this foundation as something outside the infant, which enters it. To constitute a foundation in this way relies upon—as its conceptual support—the idea that prior to such an implantation, the human infant subsists in a ‘presexual’ state. The self-preservative instincts which form this presexual state,¹¹² appear to constitute an essential layer of life outside (but overlapping with) the sphere of human sexuality, that guarantees the irreducibility of the latter and thus the specificity of psychoanalysis as a field of sexuality. Without this presexual dimension, in Laplanche’s view, there comes an inevitable slide into what he variously terms ‘pansexualism’ or ‘panpsychoanalyticism’. He is highly critical of the mixture of psychoanalysis and psychology, not necessarily because one is preferable to the other, but because together ‘they make each other worse’ (ibid.: 65). This ‘mutual’ debasement is of course described from the point of view of psychoanalysis, and it is sexuality that Laplanche sees to be sacrificed. This sacrifice is attributed to a certain hubris on the part of psychoanalysis, a failure to see its own limits:

whenever pansexualism begins to rear its head, and whenever sexuality claims to be everything (or [...] to claim that the stages of infantile sexuality are the sum total of the individual’s relationship with his environment), sexuality becomes meaningless. If psychoanalysis can say everything that is to be said about child psychology, sexuality disappears altogether [...]. (ibid.: 66)

It is indisputable that the critique Laplanche makes of the confusion between psychoanalysis and psychology will apply in some sense to the theory of the matrix, but this will also apply to Guattari’s uptake of the work of Daniel Stern. In terms of matrixiality, in situating an originary subjectivising stratum prior to birth, Ettinger removes the possibility of a post-natal, presexual, purely adaptational mode of relationality. If such a non-sexual self-preservative moment in infancy could be entertained subsequent to the positing of the theory of the matrix, it could only be thought of in terms of a period of retreat from sexuality and the human, or a latency, and could not in any way be considered to be *outside* human sexuality. From Laplanche’s point of view, the removal of this presexual adaptational moment is the removal of the specificity of psychoanalytic thinking, since all relationality becomes sexual and the grounds for differentiating the non-psychoanalytic, adaptational infant from the psychoanalytical child, and thus for specifying the psychoanalytic field, simply vanish. This interpretation, however, leaves some questions unanswered, since the theory of the matrix quite clearly does not slide into a form of developmentalism, preserving—as is most explicit in Ettinger’s paper ‘*Fascinace*,’ as discussed at the end of Chapter 1—a commitment to the

¹¹² And which, in the theory of leaning-on were deviated from by the partial drive, a layer of sexuality ‘peeled off’ from instinct. In Laplanche’s later work, such an account is no longer held to be sufficient as, in his words ‘onions do not peel themselves’: ‘Seduction peels what might be termed a sexual layer away from self-preservation. Seduction peels the onion of self-preservation; self-preservation does not split as the result of some indefinable endogenous movement’ (1987: 145).

workings of deferred action. What is indisputable, however, is that the theory of the matrix foregoes any meaningful sense of there being an animal moment in the life of the infant, since this moment would have come after the human (that is, subjectivising) encounter in the matrix and as such would be a regression, but would have to be a paradoxical regression to a *later* mode of relation (the oscillations of need and satisfaction exemplified in the oral instinct). Indeed, from what we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2 of Ettinger's synthesis of drive and object-relations theory, one might argue that the theory of the matrix *relies* on the 'confusion' of sexuality and relationality, on the idea of all relationality being in some sense sexual.

This is not to say, however, that Laplanche's specification of psychoanalysis is the only possible conclusion to reach in negotiating the question of the unconscious after both Lacan and Freud. To return to the first of my interpretations of Ettinger's footnote on the distinction between phenomenal and systematic meanings of the unconscious, Guattari's attempts to move the unconscious outside the field of psychoanalysis, within an ethos that inevitably calls into question Laplanche's disciplinary specification, will provide us with a very important shift in perspective.

GUATTARI: SUBJECTIVE STRATA AND METAMODELISATION

There is a particular style of writing that often appears in work on and about Guattari (and that has some resonance with certain difficulties that might also be encountered in working on or with the theory of the matrix), that appears to take up Guattari's allusive, elusive and complex language as its own. There are certain terms and phrases that appear in his work—transversality, pathic subjectivation, collective assemblages of enunciation, existential territories, universes of reference, machinic phylums, and so on—which are often only very elliptically explored, and once introduced are often assumed in later texts. This tendency makes Guattari's work rather difficult to write about, particularly within a context that does not assume a Guattarian or Deleuzo-Guattarian background. For this reason, the brief foray into Guattari's work I will undertake in this chapter is undoubtedly limited. In its defence I can only say that Guattari's work presents a response to (and from) the Lacanian and post-Lacanian world of psychoanalysis whose importance as an attempt to break away from universalism in general and structuralism in particular, outweighs the difficulty in doing justice to it. In short, I will explore those points which demonstrate this importance—and which moreover show both the significance of his work independently of Deleuze, and some profound resonances with the theory of the matrix—but will be able to approach little else.

BEYOND THE PSYCHOANALYTICAL UNCONSCIOUS¹¹³

I am interested in a totally different kind of unconscious. It is not the unconscious of specialists, but a region everyone can have access to with neither distress nor particular preparation: it is open to social and economic interactions and directly engaged with major historical currents. It is not centered exclusively around the family quarrels of the tragic heroes of ancient Greece. This unconscious, which I call “schizoanalytic,” as opposed to the psychoanalytic unconscious, is inspired more by the “model” of psychosis than that of neurosis on which psychoanalysis was built. I call it “machinic” because it is not necessarily centered around human subjectivity, but involves the most diverse material fluxes and social systems. (Guattari 1983: 194; translation modified)

I will mention two texts in discussing Guattari’s approach to the unconscious: the short paper ‘Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious,’ and his final work, *Chaosmosis*. Together these papers present some of the main dimensions of his position on the unconscious, the former being a direct engagement with the psychoanalytic unconscious, the latter bringing a more positive development of alternatives to psychoanalytic structures, and a renewed emphasis upon subjectivity. The necessity of retaining Guattari’s early, if limited, critique of the psychoanalytic unconscious lies in the fact that, by the time of *Chaosmosis*, the horizons of his thinking have expanded to such a degree that, considered in terms of this text alone, there is little sense of a specific connection to psychoanalysis. Thus, as this chapter is concerned with the latter, and is unable to extend to a consideration of Guattari’s transversal ontology, the exploration I will make of his work will retain a lifeline in the form of his early critique, and will limit the consideration of his more positive later articulations to their implications for Laplanche’s specification of the psychoanalytic field and Ettinger’s inter-theoretical methodology.

At first, in ‘Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious,’ it seems as though the object of Guattari’s critique is solely the Freudian (rather than the Lacanian) unconscious, since he pays more attention to the dominance of Oedipal and familial structures in Freud’s thought, Lacan in fact being mentioned only three times. It is no coincidence, however, that one of these mentions concerns the unconscious ‘structured like a language,’ the other two concerning the *objet a* and the structural reduction of intersubjectivity. Indeed, in spite of the minimal appearance of Lacan, here Guattari could be seen to operate a two-level critique of the psychoanalytic unconscious, the second of

¹¹³ There are some major issues with the quality of translations of Guattari’s work into English, and this is particularly the case with ‘Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious,’ to such a degree that at one point—simply because of sloppy translation—the reader is led unnecessarily to doubt Guattari’s grasp of basic analytic concepts and structures. In particular, a passage in ‘Les temps machiniques et la question de l’inconscient’ where Guattari outlines the double movement of inscription in the Freudian unconscious (*repulsion* by the preconscious censor and *attraction* by primarily repressed contents) is translated so poorly in ‘Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious’—confusing the terms conscious, preconscious and unconscious—that Guattari’s attention to Freud becomes nonsensical (1983: 195; 1977: 129-30).

which is focused upon Lacanian theory and practice. The particular nature of Guattari's objection to the effects of Lacanian theory upon psychoanalytic thinking reflects an approach which will later develop into the idea of *metamodelisation*. That is, in a way similar to Ettinger, Guattari does not deny the trans-historical operations of structural elements and binary oppositions in the unconscious (although the latter goes against, in Laplanche's words 'the discovery that the unconscious is characterised by the absence of negation' (1987: 37)). Guattari's objection is, rather, to the universalising tendency that uses these binary oppositions and structural elements to exclude all other possibilities, an objection formally rendered as a rejection of "'universals" of expression as much of universals of content as bases for the unconscious' (1983: 197). In addition to the explicit plane of an objection to universalising tendencies, to which I will return shortly, it is possible to draw out another basic element informing Guattari's departure from the orthodoxy of the psychoanalytical unconscious. The first, explicit element is conceptual—the division of the field into expression and content—and the second, tacit element could almost be referred to as a meta-conceptual ethics, and is again related to Ettinger's supplementary methodology: the refusal to follow criticism with a demand for the obliteration of that which is criticised. I will return to this latter element later on, when I approach the idea of metamodelisation as an alternative methodological view upon inter-theoretical and interdisciplinary, even trans-disciplinary, negotiations.

In terms of Guattari's division of the psychoanalytic field into 'universals of expression' and 'universals of content,' it will be the former that will relate most specifically both to a rejection of *the* unconscious, and of it being structured like a language. I will, however, briefly mention some of his issues with 'universals of content,' which will resonate with Laplanche's objections to typicality and symbolism in his notion of psychoanalysis as an anti-hermeneutics (see below, p. 210). For those familiar with Guattari's work with Deleuze, particularly in *Anti-Oedipus*, this aspect of 'Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious' will be unremarkable. His view here is basically that the family (and especially the Oedipal triangle) does not have an exclusive hold over subjective determination. He argues not only that 'the family is permeable to environmental forces and exterior influences' (ibid.: 199), but furthermore that the unconscious itself is implicated in this permeability, and is 'open to social and economic interactions and directly engaged with major historical events' (ibid.: 194). As with his tacit recognition of the existence of structure and binary opposition, Guattari does not reject the existence of the tropes of familialism within psychoanalytic theory and practice *per se*, objecting rather to their *domination* of the field of the unconscious. The unconscious is, Guattari insists, historically and geographically specific, and the oft-criticized 'family-based reductions' in

psychoanalysis are merely the product of ‘a particular kind of collective enunciative arrangement,’¹¹⁴ or ‘In relation to unconscious formation, they proceed from the particular micropolitics of capitalistic societal organization’ (ibid.: 199). This again, although rather surprisingly, finds some support in Laplanche, who draws upon the ‘culturalism’ of Margaret Mead and Merleau-Ponty as part of an argument for the contingency not only of the Oedipus complex and ‘the famous masculinity-femininity pair’ (1987: 91), but also of the family: ‘*Ultimately*, and whatever distortions may result from the fact, it is possible to become a human being without having a family’ (ibid.: 124). In contrast to Guattari, however, Laplanche puts in place one fundamental, transhistorical universal, that does indeed seem particularly unarguable: ‘it is not possible to [become a human being] without encountering an adult world.’ Or, to put this another way, ‘over and beyond cultural variations, the universal fact is the problem of how the newborn child gains access to the adult world’ (ibid.).

In terms of his criticism of universals of *expression* in psychoanalytic thinking on/of the unconscious, Guattari focuses his attention upon primary process as the basic mechanism of the unconscious. It is here that the weight of his argument with the Lacanian unconscious seems to lie, since he immediately critiques the ‘condensation and displacement at the heart of dreams’ (ibid.: 195; translation modified) and their privilege as the *only* things (mechanisms or contents) particular to the unconscious, which relates not only to Ettinger’s positing of metramorphosis, but also to Kristeva’s objection to the dominance of *The Interpretation of Dreams* as determining the role of language in the Lacanian unconscious (see above, pp. 84-85). This privilege, he argues, is severely and unnecessarily limiting: the double movement of repulsion by the preconscious-consciousness system and attraction by the unconscious, combined with the governing syntax of primary process reduces the unconscious to an exhaustively regulated inert receptacle for repressed contents, not allowing for any ‘creative processes that would be specific to the unconscious’ (ibid.: 196). This kind of formulation, he believes, results in a rigid determinism: ‘everything there was played out in advance, every possible path marked out: the psychoanalytic unconscious was programmed like destiny’ (ibid.). This critique has profound resonances with Ettinger’s early objection to the hegemony of metaphor and metonymy in the Lacanian unconscious as a cornerstone of the development of the theory of the matrix (see Overview pp. 23-24). It is also, however, belied to some extent by Laplanche’s retention both of primary process and primal repression as implanting the attractive force of the unconscious, but within a profoundly anti-deterministic formulation.

I have emphasised this objection in ‘Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious’ in spite of the apparently lesser role it has to play, because, of the two dimensions into which the universalism of

¹¹⁴ *Collective enunciative arrangements* by definition correspond, for Guattari, ‘neither to biological individuals nor to structural paradigms’ (1983: 199).

the psychoanalytic field is divided, it is the one which is taken further as Guattari's work develops. Indeed, in his later paper, 'Psychoanalysis Should Get a Grip on Life,' he even goes as far as to say that some time after *Anti-Oedipus*, 'criticism of the "familialism" of psychoanalysis' has 'now become a banal issue' (1985: 69), the future lying, he argues, in 'a descriptive or functional cartography of its mythic references' (ibid.: 70-72). In *Chaosmosis*, the understated objection in 'Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious' to the unconscious 'structured like a language' is distilled into a much more concrete conceptual criticism, to which the work of Louis Hjelmslev is presented as a potential alternative, playing again, although in highly complex terms, on the distinction between content and expression. Before turning to this later work, I will touch on the little there is of a positive intervention in 'Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious':

Guattari's alternative to the Freudian/Lacanian unconscious is the 'schizoanalytic' *machinic* unconscious, and 'is inspired more by the "model" of psychosis than of neurosis on which psychoanalysis was built' (1983: 194).¹¹⁵ In spite of his criticisms of its universalising tendencies, it is in terms of representation that Guattari initially distances the machinic unconscious from the Lacanian unconscious 'structured like a language.' He asserts that the machinic unconscious is 'not the exclusive seat of representative contents,' (ibid.), which suggests an understanding tending towards an equation of language with the *contents* of the unconscious. Despite this apparent opening to the charge of having 'misunderstood' Lacan, on another level Guattari also breaks away from any possibility of the structural universalism evident in Lacan's use of metaphor and metonymy. This is evident where he says, in positing two characteristics of the 'machinic' unconscious, that 'its different components *do not depend on a universal syntax*,' and that '*unconscious inter-individual relationships do not depend on universal structures*' (ibid.: 196). The critical nature of these two 'characteristics' of the machinic unconscious are very much representative, in that its articulation in 'Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious' is almost entirely in negative terms. Of the six characteristics listed, only one manages to avoid any mention of what 'the machinic unconscious is not.' This lone positive characteristic concerns temporality: 'The unconscious can fall back on a nostalgic imaginary *open up to the here and now*, or take chances on the future. Archaic fixations on narcissism, the death instinct and the fear of castration can be avoided' (ibid.: 197).

It is fitting, then, that the idea of an unconscious opened toward the future is, although otherwise little-mentioned in 'Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious,' a key dimension of its articulation in the first chapter of *Chaosmosis*. Indeed there are a series of crucial differences and developments concerning Guattari's interventions on the unconscious that emerge in the decade or so between

¹¹⁵ This comment has some resonance with Ettinger's repositioning of the feminine in relation to psychosis rather than the more usual associations with hysteria (the latter, after all, being a neurosis, and as such offers less potential for disturbing existing psychoanalytic discourse).

the two texts. In the latter, 'On the production of subjectivity,' Guattari states a commitment to the idea of subjectivity and the conditions of its production. The machinic unconscious is very much a part of this production, but—as is to be expected—the two are not coextensive. He also takes even further the diminishing of the opposition between subjectivity and society evident in 'Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious' (the machinic unconscious being constitutively available to production by extra-familial and even extra-human processes), *subjectivity* being much more easily amenable to ideas of collectivity than is *the subject*, the latter representing 'the ultimate essence of individuation, as a pure, empty, prereflexive apprehension of the world, a nucleus of sensibility, of expressivity' (Guattari 1992: 22). Guattari's shift in favour of subjectivity, by contrast, places 'the emphasis instead on the *founding instance* of intentionality' (*ibid.*, emphasis added), an emphasis which has some resonance with Laplanche's commitment to the primal repression as the founding moment of the unconscious. In this opening chapter of *Chaosmosis*, Guattari also positively takes on two other theoretical formulations which work towards answering much of the critique in 'Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious': Stern's formulation of an 'ethological and ecological' approach to the psyche, and Louis Hjelmslev's glossematic semiotics.

I have already noted some intersections with Laplanche as I have introduced Guattari, but it is in connection with Stern that the differences between their respective approaches to psychoanalysis are most dramatically displayed, differences which, moreover, find themselves articulated in relation to a small number of specific problematics. Thus, before commenting on the sites at which Guattari finds Stern's approach valuable, it will be useful to sketch some of the broader points at issue in *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, particularly concerning the means by which it places itself in a critical position to psychoanalytic thinking. The most relevant aspects of this critical positioning are twofold, and concern first temporality, and second the unity of the self.

BETWEEN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND PSYCHOLOGY: THE INTERPERSONAL WORLD OF THE INFANT

The question of temporality is raised by Stern's rejection of the 'backward-looking,' 'pathomorphic' approach to the formation of subjectivity in psychoanalytic thinking, this being something that Guattari particularly embraces:

In contrast [to psychoanalysis], the approach taken here is normative rather than pathomorphic and prospective rather than retrospective. While disruptions in the development of any sense of self may prove to be predictive of later pathology, the different senses of self are designed to describe normal development and not to explain the ontogeny of pathogenic forms (which does not mean that ultimately they may not be helpful in that task). (Stern 1985: 20)

This temporal definition of his idea of the development of the self constitutes the most powerful support for its distinction from the psychoanalytic field. Although Stern differentiates his prospective model from retrospection, this is not, in my view, the only (or indeed the most significant) distinction at play. Rather, the temporality from which it is most distinct is deferred action, Freud's *Nachträglichkeit* being the condition of possibility of the appearance of the unconscious through the symptom, not to mention the dual action of primal repression in Laplanche's thinking. The question of temporality subtends a radical divergence between the goals of Stern's project and the goals of Freudian psychoanalysis, a divergence stated, in fact, by Stern in terms of his distinction between pathomorphism and normativity. While it is unnecessary to dispute Stern's assertion, I would add that the nature of this distinction potentially renders any evaluative comparison between Stern's model of the self and the psychoanalytic unconscious (a comparison that appears in *Chaosmosis*, for example) redundant; to remark upon the limitations of psychoanalysis as a window onto the 'observable reality' of infantile life is at least trivial, at worst disingenuous, in that it neglects the constitutive significance of the temporality it rejects.

Stern's split from psychoanalysis on the basis of a shift of object (his object being an ethology of infantile subjective life) is compounded by his recourse to a notion of 'self' which he defines as

an invariant pattern of awarenesses that arise only on the occasion of the infant's actions or mental processes. An invariant pattern of awareness is a form of organization. It is the organizing subjective experience of whatever it is that will later be verbally referenced as the "self". This organizing subjective experience is the preverbal, existential counterpart of the objectifiable, self-reflective, verbalizable self. (ibid.: 7)

A recourse to this kind of structure as the foundation of human subjectivity rings various alarm bells, the loudest of which is the idea that such an invariant organisation aligns more closely, in my view, with the ego than anything else: 'in each individual there is a coherent organization of his mental processes; and we call this his *ego*' (Freud 1923a: 17). As such Stern's idea of the self is—considered alone—at odds with any advances made by psychoanalysis in terms of understanding subjectivity as something constitutively alien to itself. Even more than this, the idea of a primary organizing stratum underlying the 'self' specifically recalls the anti-topographical formulation that significantly contributes to the motivation for Laplanche's project to specify the psychoanalytic field: the phenomenal unconscious.

In spite of these issues, however, Laplanche and Stern can be considered to occupy two sides of the same argument; although in *New Foundations* it might at times seem that Laplanche is attacking the developmental psychology within which Stern is implicated, the following object of critique suggests a more nuanced position:

At this point, we enter a minefield [...]. It is a domain where a kind of consensus has finally been reached on a number of theses which now seem to be beyond question, one being the thesis that psychoanalysis is a *general psychological* theory which is both unitary and capable of accounting for the entire development of the young human being and, ultimately, of human beings as such. (1987: 56)

Both Laplanche and Stern found their positive theories upon the dissonance between psychoanalytical psychogenesis and the psychological child (in Stern's words the 'observed infant'). Stern's project is located very much on the side of psychology; that is, an observation-led, descriptive attempt to account for the development of a normal child, tracing an emergence from the relatively simple to the complex (the difference between Stern's positive account and classical developmental psychology lying in the centrality of the *self* as the object of his study). Laplanche, on the other side of the fence, begins from a similar distinction, since he argues that his re-founding of psychoanalysis must lie in the 'history of the appearance of the psychoanalytic subject,' but situated in relation to (hence differentiated from) the 'non-psychoanalytic [...] history of the child' (1987: 55). Where Stern concludes that psychoanalysis has little to offer to developmental psychology, however, Laplanche rejects the comparison of the two as a category mistake. This mistake, he argues, lies in the idea that 'discussions of the stages of the constitution of the object or of stages of the understanding of logical relations' concern 'the same topic as a psychoanalytic discussion of stages' (ibid.: 68).¹¹⁶ Because, as we have seen, it is crucial for Laplanche that the psychoanalytic field is founded upon the twin objects of the unconscious and sexuality, and that the constitution of both by the same action (primal repression) is in turn negatively differentiated from a time/space in which they are absent, a failure to distinguish the domains of psychoanalysis and psychology destroys this (a view supported by the complete absence of sexuality from Stern's book):

This reductionism results in more than conceptual confusion; phases and stages of development are being superimposed. The whole of development is being described in terms which Freud applies specifically to the emergence of sexuality. But just as Freudian psychoanalysis gains a hold on development, it is emptied of its substance because the whole evolution of the child is desexualised. (ibid.)

The reason I have laid out this issue before moving into Guattari is to show what is at stake in his use of Stern as an alternative to psychoanalytical models of psychogenesis. Laplanche's careful re-specification of the psychoanalytical field means that generic oppositions to a stereotypical image of psychoanalysis, based on the worst aspects of Freudian reductionism, will not be tenable. While it is not given that Guattari performs such a caricature, what is inescapable is the need for caution

¹¹⁶ See Laplanche 1987: 67 for a table of the concepts collapsed into each other as a result of this category mistake. In *New Foundations* Laplanche retains an idea of stages in the genesis of human sexuality, but they are far more abstract than other formulations. The four stages he mentions are Object of sexual *Wunsch*, objectality: re-finding a sexual object by following the path traced by *Wunsch*, hallucinatory wish-fulfilment, and sexual narcissism (1987: 67-68).

regarding his polemical construal of psychoanalytical orthodoxy, in order to be aware of precisely what is at stake.

STRATIFIED SUBJECTIVITY

In the midst of the questions raised by Stern's book, there are two specific elements that Guattari wishes to take up. The first relates to what I have just examined, in that he embraces Stern's prospective temporality in the idea of an unconscious that is not backwards-looking. The second is the stratification of subjectivity he draws from Stern's renunciation of the idea of development according to a succession of stages, this being a particular point of connection to Ettinger's positing of the co-existence of matrixial and phallic strata of subjectivisation.¹¹⁷ In taking up these strata, Guattari makes a point which relates directly to Laplanche's indication of a category mistake, above. Stern shows, according to Guattari, that the 'pre-verbal subjective formations of infants' are 'not at all a matter of "stages" in the Freudian sense, but of levels of subjectivation which maintain themselves in parallel throughout life' (1992: 6). This idea of co-existing levels of subjectivation is later repeated as a characteristic of Guattari's reformulation of the unconscious:

A long time ago I renounced the Conscious-Unconscious dualism of the Freudian topoi and all the Manichean oppositions correlative to Oedipal triangulation and to the castration complex. I opted for an Unconscious superposing multiple strata of subjectivation, heterogeneous strata of variable extension and consistency. (ibid.: 12)

On the basis of this superposition of heterogeneous strata, the most important characteristic of what Guattari wishes to put in place via Stern partly relates also to the form of Milner's positing of archaic symbol-formation, in that it rests upon an idea of non-verbal modes of experience and relating being available throughout the life of subjectivity. In Guattari's appropriation of Stern, subjectivity becomes a heterogeneous aggregate, dimensions of which are activated, deactivated, modified, produced and re-produced according to environmental and relational factors. The movement between these strata is not, as was the case with Milner, a question of regression from more evolved stages, however, but is something rather closer to the temporality of the matrix as 'not "anterior" but "subjacent"' to other dimensions of subjectivity (MG: 23). Guattari characterises their disappearance from view as a matter of a hibernation or latency, specifically distinguished from repression, psychical topographies, and the economic model:

All the Universes of reference [strata of subjectivation] in action are superimposed in a kind of incorporeal existential agglomeration. When one of these Universes foregrounds

¹¹⁷ This is particularly of note in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' where Ettinger only indirectly refers to Stern's work via Guattari's 'Subjectivities: for Better and for Worse' (which contains large parts of the first chapter of *Chaosmosis*); after this Guattari is only ever referred to in collaboration with Deleuze, or in conversation with Ettinger (see M&M: 206 n. 2; Guattari 1990).

itself, there will not be, strictly speaking, repression of the others, but rather a placing in reserve, in latency, possibly accompanied with a loss of consistency of the contextual constellation; and this can in no way be inserted with a topos, nor balanced within an energetic economy. (1992: 67)

Each of the strata Stern describes indicates a different subjective consistency and relation to alterity. The most important for *Chaosmosis*, especially as regards schizoanalytic practice (more on which later), is the emergent self, a Universe of ‘abstract and amodal forms,’ which ‘ignores the oppositions of subject-object, self-other, and of course masculine-feminine’ (ibid.: 65, 66).

According to the temporality Guattari attributes to Stern’s model, the irruption of the emergent self within the adult is not equivalent to a regression, but production:

What takes precedence [...] is the irruption, at the forefront of the subjective scene, of a real “anterior” to discursivity; a real whose pathic consistency literally leaps at your throat. Must we think of this real as fixed, petrified and rendered catatonic by a pathological accident, or that it was in fact there for all time—past and future—awaiting the activation of a presumed symbolic castration as the sanction of foreclosure? Perhaps it is necessary to straddle these two perspectives: it was already there as an open virtual reference, and it arises correlatively as a production *sui generis* of a singular event. (ibid.: 77-78)

Because the emergent self makes no distinction between subject and object, self and other,¹¹⁸ it is conceptually much more open to ‘a polyphonic and heterogenetic comprehension of subjectivity’ (ibid.: 6), where pre-verbal, non-centralised and non-human elements can contribute to the production of subjectivity, in adulthood as in infancy. In relation to such contributions, Guattari also takes up Varela’s autopoiesis and Lacan’s *objet a* as items which can give an idea of some of the processes at play in what is now irreducible to static metapsychology. The *objet a* (as an extended form of the partial object) is deployed as a ‘partial enunciator’ (ibid: 13), the reference or object ‘by which subjectivity enunciates itself’ (Genosko 2002: 100). This is not a neutral deployment, however, as Guattari explodes the bodily or personological limitations of the partial object, ‘expanding the category to cover the full range of nuclei of subjective autonomisation relative to group subjects, and to instances of the production of subjectivity (machinic, ecological, architectural, religious, etc.)’ (1992: 14).

Alongside Guattari’s references to the *objet a*, the use of which is strongly tied (via Bakhtin (ibid.: 13-18)) to a sense of subjective production as an aesthetic process, Varela’s notion of autopoiesis appears: ‘We are not confronted with a subjectivity given as in-itself, but with processes of the

¹¹⁸ This lack of distinction is, incidentally, not treated by Guattari as a disappearance of the other, but the becoming-other of the self: ‘Alterity as such, becomes the primary question. For example, what finds itself fragilised, cracked up, schizzed, in délire or hallucinating when confronted with the status of the objective world, is the point of view of the other in me, the recognised body in articulation with the lived body and the felt body; these are the normalised coordinates of alterity which give their foundation to sensible evidence’ (ibid.: 63).

realisation of autonomy, or of autopoiesis' (ibid.: 7). Guattari's use of autopoiesis in *Chaosmosis* complements his work on and with Stern, in that it extends the idea of a prospective unconscious into an emphasis upon the production of subjectivity. This emphasis is a key point of contact between Ettinger and Guattari—and in which they find themselves counterposed to Laplanche's critique of the use of emergence within psychoanalytic thinking—in that the temporality of the appearance of matrixiality within subjectivity and culture is never one of simple repetition or regression (or even, straightforwardly, deferred action), but is always partially turned toward the future. On a methodological level, Ettinger's work to relate apparently 'bottom-up' modalities of meaning and inscription—such as the pictogram, autopoiesis and a reworking of the late Lacanian theory of phantasy—to matrixiality also indicates an investment in notions of emergence. Inasmuch as they both privilege such modes of development and subjectivisation, however, Ettinger and Guattari also share a critique of the autopoiesis, that calls into question the idea that emergent models of subjectivity are necessarily endogenous or monadological.

Where Ettinger criticises its homeostatic limitations (MBMB: 157 n. 16) and transforms it into *co-poiesis* (see Overview, p. 45), Guattari also criticises Varela's limitation of autopoiesis to the biological domain, as well as its exclusive definition of autonomous entities, 'unitary, individuated and closed to input/output relationships.' He suggests the following alternative: 'Autopoiesis deserves to be rethought in terms of evolutionary, collective entities, which maintain diverse types of relations of alterity, rather than being implacably closed in on themselves' (1992: 39-40). Both these developments suggest that Guattari and Ettinger deploy this biological notion of emergence from the very point Laplanche indicates as the primary dissonance between biology and its modelisation in psychoanalysis: 'surely the biological model falls apart if it is expanded to include outside intervention' (1987: 24). In their calls for the modification of the closed biological model of autopoiesis to include the presence (or co-emergence) of another entity or (partial) entities, which may be understood as a *critical* appropriation of a biological model, Ettinger and Guattari significantly complicate the modelisations Laplanche describes by multiplying the inter- and trans-disciplinary relationships at play.

In a way that is similar to the connection between Laplanche's realism of the unconscious and his specification of the psychoanalytic field, the way Guattari wishes to use Stern to broaden the possibilities for understanding the consistency of subjectivity also reflects something of the ethos he wishes to put in place at an extra-subjective, discursive level. The idea of a creative interaction of radically heterogeneous registers permeates much of *Chaosmosis*, and this ethos is embodied in the idea of *metamodelisation*.

METAMODELISATION

In *Chaosmosis*, Guattari is much more explicit and unequivocal in his objection to the dominance of structuralist (and particularly Saussurean) linguistics in psychoanalysis: 'It was a grave error on the part of the structuralist school to try to put everything connected with the psyche under the control of the linguistic signifier!' (ibid.: 5). Yet again, we find something similar in Laplanche: in various places he argues against the usefulness of the Saussurean sign, particularly in Lacanian hands. He argues that it is 'only, in the end, applicable to a perfect, well-made, univocal language' (Laplanche 1999: 92), and like Guattari turns to Hjelmslev. Laplanche uses Hjelmslev's division of the semiotic field into the planes of expression and content, and further subdivision into form and substance, to argue against the one-to-one correspondence of signifier and signified that constitutes not only the Saussurean sign, but also Lacan's exclusion of the signified (1981: 109-12). In Guattari's case, in spite of a rejection of the hegemony of the linguistic signifier, he does not reject semiotics all together, also turning to Hjelmslev as 'a valid alternative to the structuralism inspired by Saussure'. For Guattari, the advantage of Hjelmslev's work lies in 'the potential reversibility of expression and content'.

With Hjelmslev, the connection between Expression and Content is realised at the level of the form of Expression and form of Content, which he identified with each other. This common and commuting form is a bit strange, but it represents, in my opinion, a brilliant intuition, posing the question of the existence of a formal machine, transversal to every modality of Expression and Content. (1992: 23)

What this formulation potentially allows Guattari to do—once he has made it clear that he does not subscribe to a simple opposition of Expression and Content, or the tripartite division of matter-substance-form, 'form casting itself "like a net over matter," therefore engendering the substance of Expression and Content'—is to think a 'machinic' heterogeneity of substances of Expression that is productive of subjectivity: 'The problem of the enunciative assemblage would then no longer be specific to a semiotic register but would traverse an ensemble of heterogeneous expressive materials' (ibid.: 24).

Guattari's reference to Hjelmslev is thus far more dense and complicated than Laplanche's critique of Saussure. Although the particular moves Guattari makes in this area are, in their difficulty, far beyond the scope of what I am able to cover in this chapter, it is quite clear in *Chaosmosis* what this particular approach wishes to enable: an ability not only to tolerate, but to actively engage with an interaction of heterogeneous registers that foregoes a descent into relativism. Indeed, a strong dissatisfaction with postmodernist thinking as the representative of such a descent is evident in *Chaosmosis* and elsewhere. This dissatisfaction is based, in one articulation, on the view that postmodernist thought is simply the death rattle of structuralism, particularly insofar as the former still attests to the dominance of 'binarizable and "digitalizable" signifying chains': 'On this point

postmodernists have hardly said anything innovative! In fact, their views are directly in keeping with the modernist tradition of structuralism' (Guattari 1986: 111). It is particularly of note that Guattari locates his objection to postmodern thinking at the level of the signifier, as the Lacanian uptake of Saussure seems to constitute an exemplary negative counterposition to metamodelling as a positive alternative to the 'universalist and transcendent concepts of psychoanalysis':

The Lacanian signifier homogenises the various semiotics, it loses the multidimensional character of many of them. Its fundamental linearity, inherited from Saussurian structuralism, does not allow it to apprehend a pathic, non discursive, autopoietic character of partial nuclei of enunciation. (1992: 72)

Indeed, it seems to be homogeneity to which metamodelling is opposed, but homogeneity at a particular level. That is, metamodelling is a meta-discursive ethics which aims to maintain a grasp upon the specificity and location of heterogeneous registers, while also preventing the ossification of their limits and/or the slippage into disciplinary or discursive segregation and parochialism. As a methodology, it seems closest to a pragmatics, its emphasis being upon the adequacy of theoretical models as accounts of production. In terms of the unconscious and the production of subjectivity, Guattari argues that

Our question here is not simply of a speculative order, but is posed in very practical ways: how appropriate are concepts of the Unconscious, offered to us on the psychoanalytic "market," to actual conditions of the production of subjectivity? Should they be transformed, should new ones be invented? This question of modelisations (more exactly of psychological metamodelling) leads to an evaluation of the usefulness of these cartographic instruments — these concepts from psychoanalysis, systems theory, etc. Do we use them as a grid for an exclusive universal reading, with scientific claims, or as partial instruments, in combination with others, the ultimate criterion being of a functional order? (ibid.: 11)

From what we have seen of Laplanche so far, it would be fair to say that his specification of psychoanalysis is at odds with metamodelling; this is particularly supported by a strong degree of scepticism concerning a pragmatic approach to theory, especially within the psychoanalytic field. He argues that the question 'what use is it?' risks sacrificing the reflexivity brought by theory to what he tentatively suggests might otherwise become a 'technicist' conception of psychoanalysis (Laplanche 1999: 117-18). Likewise with Ettinger who, although she might be considered to operate on a pragmatic level insofar as she synthesises heterogeneous psychoanalytical elements in order to expand the limits of subjectivity, does not necessarily sustain the same methodological ethos as Guattari. I suggest this because the syntheses Ettinger makes are themselves contained within a theoretical project largely limited to a psychoanalytical, human frame.

What is at issue, then, within the space that exists between Guattari, Laplanche and Ettinger, is the meaning of Guattari's pragmatic productive order both for Laplanche's reflexive specification of psychoanalysis as a field of sexuality through a primal encounter with an unassimilable other, and

Ettinger's specification of the matrixial feminine, both of which may be considered to be posited as universals. Thus, one issue we might consider within this space is the bond between specificity and the positing of at least one universal, specificity having a constitutive relation to species and taxonomy, specification inevitably requiring a universal defining characteristic. A further question, apparently embedded in the idea of metamodelisation is whether, in spite of Guattari's castigation of postmodernism, the inevitable consequence of a generalised anti-universalism is the descent into a relativistic interchangeability of values and meaning. It is often tempting, when reading Laplanche and Guattari in tandem, to slip into the idea that what happens in *Chaosmosis*, in the rejection of universals, is that all values are levelled in favour of a prioritisation of the production of subjectivity. In terms of the quotation above, for example, such an effect might be legible in the idea of 'the ultimate criterion' for approaching concepts of the unconscious being 'of a functional order'. The temptation to read a reduction of specificity in *Chaosmosis* also arises from a certain polemical binarism concerning conceptual methodologies: 'We are faced with an important ethical choice: either we objectify, reify, "scientifise" subjectivity, or, on the contrary, we try to grasp it in the dimension of its processual creativity' (1992: 13), a binary which fails to account for Laplanche's anti-essentialist specification. I suggest, however, that while such a reading could be imposed, it adds nothing to our understanding of the space under consideration. As an alternative to this closing-down, I would suggest that this apparent binarism could be considered polemical in the sense that it is not pervasive, and the idea of a descent into homogeneity is sufficiently undermined by the criticism of postmodernism described above. What Guattari seems to put in place (although this is only hypothetical, as there is also some evidence to the contrary (*ibid.*: 39)) of the axis of specificity-universality is an axis of singularity-necessity. In *Chaosmosis* he explicitly questions an interpretative slippage from 'heterogenesis' into homogeneity, which also tacitly opposes any reading of his own methodology as reducing all values to the unitary criterion of the production of subjectivity:

How does this machinic heterogenesis, which differentiates each colour of being — which makes, for example, from the plane of consistency of a philosophical concept a world quite different from the plane of reference of the scientific function or the plane of aesthetic composition — end up being reduced to the capitalistic homogenesis of generalised equivalence, which leads to all values being valued by the same thing, all appropriative territories being related to the same economic instrument of power, and all existential riches succumbing to clutches of exchange value? (*ibid.*: 55)

Bearing in mind the idea of a distinction between axes of singularity-necessity and specificity-universality, the question of where the theory of the matrix lies in relation to the two hypotheses suggested at the beginning of this chapter—a rejection of the tendency towards systematisation, or a move from one systematicity to another—is very difficult to resolve. This is mainly because it has affinities with both, in that, while the theoretical methodology Ettinger employs seems constitutively bound to transgress the kind of disciplinary specificity Laplanche works to put in

place, neither is it entirely consonant with the anti-universalist ethos of Guattari's project. In its positing of the encounter with the archaic feminine m/Other-to-be as something through which every human must pass (FGM: 70; MT: 219), Ettinger puts in place the same kind of minimally-determining universal structure as Laplanche posits in his argument that humanity is impossible without an encounter between infancy and adulthood. The specificity of the theory of the matrix, however, seems to be that such a minimal universal is posited within a discursive framework that does not seek the same delimited specificity as Laplanche's work. One potential consequence of this could be a far greater universalising tendency, inasmuch as Ettinger's combination of an inter-theoretical methodology with the positing of a universal subjectivising event, could be interpreted as a trans-disciplinary universalism. Although this is very much a hypothetical interpretation, which I will be unable to resolve at this stage, I would like to suggest the following (equally hypothetical) counter-argument. This argument would undermine the connection to Guattari's anti-universalism, by arguing that the Lacanian horizons discussed at the beginning of this chapter in fact constitute the specificity of the theory of the matrix. This would rest upon the view that, if the connection to Lacan's work on the feminine is severed, even though matrixiality is not directly founded upon this work, this would unravel the foundation it relies upon to structure the question of feminine sexual difference into the fabric of psychoanalysis. Also, a hypothetical removal of the infrastructure of Lacanian concepts matrixiality inherits, and that are associated with the feminine, such as the *objet a*, the sinthome and the screen of phantasy, would irreparably damage the architecture of the theory. This could be seen as a form of systematicity 'by proxy,' as it were, where—especially in terms of the unconscious—the question of systematicity is indefinitely deferred by taking up a position in orbit around a determinate but critically-differentiated structure (the unconscious 'structured like a language').

As I said, however, this is only a very hypothetical interpretation of the situation, but it is one that ultimately aims to show how, although Guattari's metamodelising ethos has some resonances with Ettinger's synthetic inter-theoretical methodology, it no more accounts for the positioning of matrixiality in relation to the unconscious in particular and psychoanalysis in general than does the model of Laplanche's disciplinary specificity. The question of the precise nature of this positioning will be retained with the move into a consideration of transference as that which is most specific to psychoanalysis. I will return to the relationship between Ettinger's and Guattari's work very briefly at the end of the next section, in reconsidering the hypothetical conclusions drawn above in light of some very recent developments in the theory of the matrix.

PART II

Transference, the limits of the clinic, and the margins of the psychoanalytic field

In closing both this chapter and the thesis, I would like to touch upon the question of transference, which will allow me to indicate how the consequences of the theory of the matrix (particularly in light of some recent developments) extend into psychoanalysis beyond the reaches of theory alone. As a means of setting this consideration in motion, I would like to return to a final criticism put forward by Guattari in 'Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious,' this time of a more practical nature; in contrast to his caution in refusing to pitch his objection to 'the customary psychoanalytical family-based reductions of the unconscious' at the level of truth, his objection to the *ownership* of the unconscious by the analytical profession, is clear and unequivocal:

Explorers or guardians of a domain they consider to be their own, covetous of their prerogatives, they consider that access to the world of the unconscious can only be made after long and costly preparation, with a sort of strictly controlled asceticism. In order to succeed, didactic analysis, like ordinary analysis, demands much time and the use of a very particular apparatus (e.g., transference between analyst and analysand, controlling anamneses, exploring identifications and fantasies, lifting resistances through interpretation, etc.). (1983: 193)

At the heart of this proprietorial relation seems to be training analysis, the 'long and costly preparation' that authenticates access to the unconscious. Although Guattari's implicit castigation of training analysis might seem rather unreasonable—for how else than by training analysis can the casually self-deceiving ordinary person face up to the truth of the unconscious?—it is not, apparently, an entirely unfounded objection. A particularly memorable example of the *ownership* of the unconscious by psychoanalysis is legible in the work of J. D. Nasio, for whom the unconscious, if it exists, 'can only exist within the field of psychoanalysis,' a field which is constituted by training analysis in a direct patriarchal lineage from Freud's solitary discovery of the unconscious (1998: 45-48). In a more direct reference to the relationship between *analysis* (rather than the unconscious) and the institution, even Laplanche, in spite of what we have seen of his labours to specify the psychoanalytic unconscious, is extremely sceptical when it comes to the question of training analysis, and of the direct institutional ownership of the process of analysis:

In my psychoanalytic society, the APF, there are no training analysts or training analysis. It is one of the few societies in the world in which this is the case. People apply to us *after* their personal analysis. They can have been analysed anywhere in the world by analysts of any persuasion, a Jungian, a Lacanian or a member of our society. There is no question of starting an analysis under the auspices of the APF. Analysis is purely a personal question. You start it for whatever reasons there are in your head, fantasies, whatever... Even the fantasy of becoming an analyst: there is no need to leave this out of consideration, it has to

be analysed like everything else. It is not pre-judged as serious, realistic or whatever. Analysis is therefore outside the institution, as it should be. (Laplanche & Stanton 1991: 329)

Another part of Guattari's objection to the ownership of the unconscious by psychoanalysis concerns the nature of interpretation and the work of analysis, 'the customary family-based reductions of the unconscious' (1983: 199). This relates to a particular outcome of Laplanche's theorisation of the unconscious and the psychoanalytic field: the view of psychoanalysis as anti-hermeneutic and, more specifically, the idea that the 'reduction of the unconscious' is, in any form, counter to the aims of analysis.

The translation theory of repression brings with it a hermeneutic element—the interpretation of the enigmatic message of the other—but this element is, crucially, co-extensive with processes leading to the formation of the unconscious. This is stated definitively in the 1996 essay 'Psychoanalysis as anti-hermeneutics,' with the claim that '*the only genuine, originary hermeneutist is the human being,*' the consequence of this originary hermeneutics, activated in response to the enigmatic message being, of course, primal repression (Laplanche 1996: 10). This paper develops on Laplanche's work in *New Foundations* in that it draws out a fundamental incompatibility between the general theory of seduction and the idea of analytical practice as hermeneutics.

Before being identified as a clinical practice or a theory, psychoanalysis is first defined as 'a procedure for the investigation of psychical processes, which are otherwise hardly accessible'. This method is constantly defined as *analytical*, associative-dissociative; 'free association' (*freie Assoziation*) or 'freely occurring ideas' (*freie Einfälle*) are only the means employed for the dissociation of all proposed meaning. (ibid.: 7)

Laplanche sees a profound opposition between the associative-dissociative analytical method and synthetic interpretation (the explanation, or 'family-based reduction' of free associations) in analytic practice, the former being connected to the *unfolding* of the unconscious, the latter with repression, and thus with the *silence* of the unconscious. As with his view on the *fourvoisement* in Freudian thinking after the abandonment of seduction theory, Laplanche places this latter approach within a particular moment in the history of psychoanalysis, with the appearance 'in the decade following 1900,' 'of the reading codes whose names are symbolism and typicality.' From this moment arises the desire to develop a *code* for deciphering the unconscious, a 'fundamental language' of dreams, and this has a very specific effect: 'Subsequently, the great schemas of the typical ensue, the great "complexes", foremost among them the "castration complex"' (ibid.: 8). Following this rather surprising statement, Laplanche takes a step even further, by actively refusing to take an approach to 'sexual' difference that aligns it with *either* the pervasive hegemony of Lacanian symbolic castration, or with Freudian anatomical difference. He argues that the infant has no perception of anatomical differentiation, but rather has a more diffuse sense, 'according to habits, appearance,

behaviour, function, and so on,' of a division into two genders (although one might ask, if the sources of this perception are so vague, why the division into two?). This division is treated as an enigmatic message, and the theory of castration is the result of an attempt to translate it, 'by symbolizing it in a coded system. This code is founded on anatomy, and functions as a binary myth, \pm ' (ibid.: 9). This argument presents, as far as I can see, a *necessary* corollary of Laplanche's formulation of the unconscious, insofar as its formation in the action of primal repression, combined with a resistance to Lacanian linguistic determinism, pushes castration and the Oedipus complex into the secondary domain of cultural contingency (1987: 90-92, 149, 163). This remarkable resistance in Laplanche's work to the universalising tendencies of psychoanalytical interpretation chimes with a similar ethos running throughout Guattari's work. In terms of the space of transference, this resonance is marked by a shared emphasis on the need to circumvent repression within such sites, Laplanche in terms of the escape from the hermeneutic tendency, Guattari in an attempt to disconnect the superego from castration anxiety within an institutional setting (1984: 12-14). Their respective delimitations of the clinical transference space, however, could not be more different, since Laplanche works to account for the structure of the analytical scenario as a contained and containing transference space, while Guattari refuses such containment, attempting, through the concept of *transversality*, to account for interactions that take place across a much broader assemblage of heterogeneous registers.

In concluding this chapter, and in making some tentative statements about the position we have now reached in considering the theory of the matrix within a broader theoretical field, I would like to give an idea of the effects of the approaches we have seen to the unconscious upon the relative positioning of the field of psychoanalysis. Such effects are particularly legible in the consideration of transference; in Laplanche's case I will discuss his delimitation of the clinical field in relation to the external field of transference within 'cultural production,' and in Guattari's the critique of the limitations of the classical doctor-patient relationship within an institutional setting. Ettinger's indeterminate location of the term *non-conscious* as neither radically exterior to ideas of psychical topography, nor articulated within it, is also, as I will show, sustained in 'Trans-subjective' in relation to transference and the analytical relationship.

Subtending the explicit themes of this chapter is the problematic of the relation of psychoanalysis to what stands 'outside' it, a problematic which will be the concluding focus of this thesis. The inverted commas surrounding the 'outside' indicate that, after the model set up by Laplanche's examinations in *New Foundations*, in considering an 'outside,' the 'inside' is just as much in question. For the sake of argument, and in order to create a point from which to start, the space of the clinical transference relationship will constitute the 'authentic heart' of psychoanalysis. I will set the scene thus on the basis of such statements as 'analytic theory exists only insofar as it is invented during psychoanalytic practice' (Roustang 1976: 75), and 'If the analyst is in a position to recognize

the existence of the unconscious of his or her analysand, it is because he or she had already undergone analysis as a patient' (Nasio 1992: 46), both of which place clinical analytical interaction as the singularly necessary foundation for any psychoanalytic knowledge, a centrifugal and unidirectional movement out of the clinic being the only means through which psychoanalytic thinking and experience may be authentically generated. This setup, however, is only initially in place to be gone beyond, in that Laplanche, Ettinger and Guattari all seek to a significant extent to reconceive the experience of psychoanalysis as open to and inseparable from its cultural, theoretical and social surroundings. It is through the idea of transference, and various extensions and modifications of it that a significant part of this opening is made. Such an opening is crucial, in my view, insofar as it escapes the closed and self-generating paternal lineage of Freudian or Lacanian psychoanalysis, as well as the vehement anti-theory of other approaches typified by, in Laplanche's words, 'English empirico-clinicalism' (1987: 53).

LAPLANCHE: EXTRA-CLINICAL TRANSFERENCE

Laplanche's development of a relation between transference inside and outside the clinic emerges from a critique of a 'basic practice' within (French) psychoanalysis which, he argues, leads to an endless deferral of the end of analysis. Laplanche's paper, 'Transference: its Provocation by the Analyst,' reconsiders the end of analysis in light of the general theory of seduction, again using an extra-psychoanalytical phenomenon—this time, what he terms 'cultural production'—to establish the concrete limits of the psychoanalytical field. This reconsideration is on the basis that the analytical transference relationship is established through a seduction, the 'offer of analysis,' and is sustained on the basis of the analyst's own acknowledgement of his or her own 'interior alterity;' 'the maintenance of the analyst's interpellation by the enigma,' which 'truly *creates, provokes transference*' (Laplanche 1999: 229).

Laplanche's critique of a 'basic practice' in analysis is a fairly cautious one, but one which seeks to bring to the fore a reflexivity he feels to be too readily neglected (ibid.: 218). This largely concerns transference, and the particular assumption of its existence as the '*milieu*' within which analysis operates; to this assumption he attributes the effect that 'the very idea that the transference has to establish itself, evolve, disappear, becomes blurred' (ibid.: 216). The counterpart of a lack of reflexivity concerning transference at the start of analysis is the question of what happens to transference at the *end* of analysis, and it is this question upon which I will focus here. In relation to this corollary criticism, Laplanche questions the disappearance of the notion of *Lösung*, the 'resolution or dissolution of the transference' as constituting the end of analysis, but also registers the difficulties in dealing adequately with it, asking 'isn't the dissolution of the transference sawing through the branch one is sitting on?' (ibid.: 218). An alternative to the *Lösung*, and the corollary of the assumption of transference as the *milieu* of analysis, is 'a process of attenuation frequently

embodied in certain ways of ending analysis.’ Laplanche treats the outcome of such attenuation as ultimately nonsensical:

one moves on to two sessions, then one session: why not to a half-session, or a quarter-session? One moves from lying-down to sitting; why not, in caricature, have a couch equipped with a crankshaft which would progressively bring the patient into a sitting position? (ibid.)

His particular solution to the problems of the *Lösung* is to reconsider the question of the end of analysis in terms neither of instantaneous dissolution, nor (potentially infinite) attenuation, but to posit the end of analysis as a transference of transference. This ‘meta-’ transference requires the existence of a transferential field outside the clinical environment, combined with the idea that the end of analysis is not equivalent to the end of transference, but an interface between two forms. This interface is not reducible to a transposition, application or analogisation of clinical structures and processes. Indeed, in trying to think the interaction between analysis and the extra-clinical (i.e., life) in such terms, Laplanche suggests that

perhaps we are looking for something which has already been found. Or perhaps we are looking the wrong way round: we wish to transpose the model of clinical transference onto what lies beyond it (psychoanalysis ‘outside the clinical’), but maybe transference is already, ‘in itself’, outside the clinic. (ibid.: 222)

His deduction of a pre- or extra-clinical site of transference emerges from an interrogation of the irreducibility of poetic creativity to communication: ‘Why create *in order to* communicate, and communicate through creating? And above all, why communicate *in this way* – that is, by addressing no-one, aiming beyond any determinate person?’ (ibid.: 223). This indeterminate address indicates, for Laplanche, an incompatibility of poetic practice with a pragmatics of language or communication, for ‘to communicate is to manipulate, to produce an effect on someone’ (ibid.). The general phenomenon of ‘cultural production’ (of which poetic creativity is but one example) exceeds this pragmatics: in ‘going *towards* another who is no longer determinate’ it disconnects any determination of means (practice) by effect or intention (a distinction that is resonant with some of the terms of Ettinger’s *sinthome*/symptom distinction).

What can be isolated here as characteristic of the cultural is an address to an other who is out of reach, to others ‘scattered in the future’, as the poet says. An address which is a repercussion, which prolongs and echoes the enigmatic messages by which the *Dichter* himself, so to speak, was bombarded: ‘A quiet piece, fallen down here, of an obscure disaster’. (ibid.: 224)¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Quotations within this excerpt are from Mallarmé. See Laplanche 1999: 224 n. 14.

As the site external to the clinic where the echo of the enigmatic message may be heard, cultural production is the ‘outside’ in which transference always already exists. The extra-clinical transference arising from cultural production connects (as does the offer of analysis mentioned above) to the dynamics of primal seduction; it is ‘a renewal of the traumatic, stimulating aspect of the childhood enigma’ (ibid.).

Concerning the fate of transference at the end of analysis, the function Laplanche hypothesises for extra-clinical transference is to provide an ‘escape window’ (‘the precise lapse of time when the launching of a spaceship is possible’) for the *transference of transference*. This window may be exploited as a ‘definitive closure’ of the analysis, or may be bypassed to allow the development of ‘a certain potential for elaboration still present in the analysis’ (ibid.: 232). Laplanche schematises the cyclical interpolation of clinical transference by its extra-clinical sibling in the following diagram, each extra loop resulting from the analyst’s decision not to surrender the analysis to the pull of the cultural:

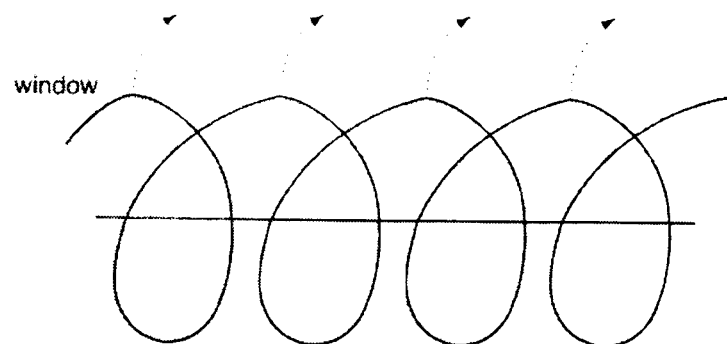


Figure 3 ‘Escape windows’ for the transference of transference (Laplanche 1999: 232)

Laplanche’s treatment of transference attests to the importance of the relationship between psychoanalysis and its outside in the creation of its field of operation. That he should discuss the end of analysis in terms of a movement between the clinical and the extra-clinical is, on its own, trivial, but what is particularly significant is the basis of the end of analysis upon the action of this outside *within* the analytical relationship, an action which effectively plays a determining role in the shape of the analysis:

To be still more precise: not only the subject’s capability to face up to new difficulties and conflicts [...] but also the new poles of gravitation, or the ‘provocations’ which might impinge from the outside. This is the reverse of a conception – monadological again – which would only take account of ‘internal’ modifications in the structure of the personality. (ibid.: 232 n. 25)

The interruption of the clinical by the extra-clinical in Laplanche’s treatment of transference lends support to the idea that what is most psychoanalytical may be in some sense at least open at its limits to an interpenetration with other fields. Analysis is thus not conceived by Laplanche as a

space entirely divorced from the continuity of life; not only does analytical transference differentiate itself from a pre-existing transferential field, and is cyclically interpolated by that field, he also argues that the 'culture' in which psychoanalysis is implicated is irreversibly changed by this implication: 'The analysand, having emerged from treatment to get involved in new gravitational forces, inevitably encounters, at the cultural sites of transference, the expanding presence of analysis' (ibid.: 233). While we shall shortly see, in turning to Ettinger, a similarity with Laplanche in the establishment of painting as a transferential site parallel to the analytical relationship, this similarity is limited. Where Laplanche uses cultural sites directly to *regulate* the limits of the analytical relationship, in that the movement by which the analysand is seduced from clinical transference by the cultural is always a centrifugal movement *out of* the psychoanalytical space, a different dynamic will be legible in Ettinger's work on transference. In her initial establishment of the work of art as a trans-subjective transferential borderspace, she is even more restrained than Laplanche in relating clinical and extra-clinical sites of transference: she does not directly relate the latter to the space of the clinic (that is, it is not involved in the shape of analysis in any direct sense), but figures it rather as an external, extra-psychoanalytical site from which, via a distillation into theory, the seeds of a practical and theoretical renewal may emerge.

The location of the margins of the limited analytical scenario within the sphere of the cultural is not, however, the only possible way the limits of transference may be brought into question. Guattari's revolutionary formulation of *transversality* on the back of an argument for the inadequacy, and even the pathogenic potential, of the doctor-patient transferential dynamic in the setting of the psychiatric institution, articulates the stakes of the location of transference in a wholly different manner. That this articulation takes place in the context more of psychosis than neurosis, begins from a point already problematic in terms of the conventional consideration of transference.

GUATTARI: TRANSVERSALITY

The problem of psychosis and/or schizophrenia in relation to questions of transference and the analytical relationship in general, is one that is almost as old as psychoanalysis itself. It is something that not only concerns Guattari's work, but also has a role to play in the theory of the matrix, as well as having, as Laplanche has acknowledged, a negative relationship to the general theory of seduction (Laplanche & Caruth 2002: 125). The marginal location of schizophrenia begins with Freud's opposition of neurosis and psychosis, an opposition which operates in the most significant terms where transference is concerned. In 'The Unconscious,' Freud explicitly states that the capacity for transference 'presupposes an unimpaired object-cathexis,' and that in neurosis, 'object cathexis in general is retained with great energy.'

In the case of schizophrenia, on the other hand, we have been driven to the assumption that after the process of repression the libido that has been withdrawn does not seek a new object, but retreats into the ego; that is to say, that here the object-cathexes are given up and a primitive objectless condition of narcissism is re-established. The incapacity of these patients for transference (so far as the pathological process extends), their consequent inaccessibility to therapeutic efforts, their characteristic repudiation of the external world, the final outcome in complete apathy—all these clinical features seem to agree excellently with the assumption that their object-cathexes have been given up. (1915: 196-97)

Guattari's various critiques and modifications of psychoanalysis, as well as his movements far beyond it, emerge in many ways from a dissatisfaction with the neurosis/psychosis opposition. As he says in 'Beyond the Psychoanalytical Unconscious,' his 'schizoanalytic' modification of the unconscious is 'inspired more by the "model" of psychosis than that of neurosis on which psychoanalysis was built' (1983: 194). In light of Freud's comment above, Guattari's position on the neurosis/psychosis opposition becomes even more significant in relation to transference, and indeed one of his most radical and far-reaching departures from psychoanalysis emerges from it.

The concept of transversality does not only relate to the problematic relation between schizophrenia and transference, however, but also brings into play the exacerbation of this problem in an institutional setting. Transversality is initially put forward by Guattari as a 'temporary' solution to problems arising from the social organisation and implicit power hierarchies in operation within psychiatric institutions, his 1964 paper 'Transversality' being a prolegomenon to a revitalised 'institutional therapeutics'.¹²⁰ Although this is a very early text by Guattari, one of its most remarkable characteristics is suggestive of his later insistence on the contribution of a heterogeneity of components to the production of the unconscious in particular, and subjectivity in general. The institutional revolution proposed in 'Transversality' could be seen as a tacit attribution of Freud's marginalisation of the schizophrenic to the in-built *structural* limitations of the sites within which transference appears, an attribution made far more explicit in *Chaosmosis*. In a similar way to Laplanche, Guattari is looking at the limits of the classical site of transference—the doctor-patient relationship—but by transposing it into a location where even Laplanche's model of the enclosed space of *le baquet*—the tub—is unsustainable. This model in Laplanche's work is essentially one of containment, the discovery of which is credited to Bion and Winnicott: 'I compare the holding environment to a cyclotron in which particles are accelerated by being bombarded with huge amounts of energy. A cyclotron which is not contained becomes an H-bomb' (1987: 158-59). Within the context of life within a psychiatric hospital, where the extra-clinical transference Laplanche uses to 'bookend' clinical transference is itself contained within the institution, such

¹²⁰ Rosemary Sheed's translation of Guattari's work in *Molecular Revolution*, in which this essay appears, is notoriously problematic. For a point-by-point analysis of each of the translated essays in *Molecular Revolution*, see Murphy 1997.

ideas of contained and containing spaces of transference are insufficient. In *Chaosmosis*, Guattari makes this situation explicit, by placing ‘individuated transference’ within a much larger and more complex arrangement:

Only the network of nuclei of partial enunciation—comprising groups, meetings, workshops, responsibilities, spontaneous constellations and individual initiatives—could arguably hold the title of institutional analyser. The work of the psychotherapist in the office is only a link in this complex apparatus; individuated transference is but one element of the generalised transference already evoked. (1992: 71)

In introducing the concept of transversality, Guattari’s attention is thus not focussed upon the dual dynamic of transference and counter-transference, but upon the multiple, group-based dynamics in operation in the psychiatric institution. One of his particular objects of concern is the role of *power* within the institution, as a source of blockage and stagnation in group relations: ‘in as much as the psychiatrist or nurse wields a certain amount of power, he or she must be considered responsible for destroying the possibilities of expression of the institution’s unconscious subjectivity’ (1984: 17). Guattari considers the effects of intra- and inter- group relations to have a profound effect upon the ability of the members of groups to articulate themselves via the group, the alternative being a retreat into pathological stereotypes. In the latter case, ‘the neurotic will have his narcissism reinforced beyond his wildest hopes, while the psychotic can continue silently devoting himself to his sublime universal passions’ (ibid.: 20). The blocking effects of power and domination in the psychiatric institution, he argues, will operate at many levels, and not only between doctors and patients:

In the traditional psychiatric hospital, for example, there is a dominant group consisting of the director, the financial administrator, the doctors and their wives, etc., who form a solid structure that blocks any expression of the desire of the groups of human beings of which the institution is composed. What happens to that desire? One looks first at the symptoms to be seen at the level of various sub-groups, which carry the classic social blemishes, being set in their ways, disturbance, all forms of divisiveness, but also at other signs – alcoholism among one lot of nurses, perhaps, or the generally unintelligent behaviour of another (for it is quite true, as Lacan points out, that stupidity is another way of expressing violent emotion). (ibid.: 16-17)

It is in answer to blockages of this kind that Guattari posits transversality as a replacement of transference. At this early stage, it is proposed as a quantitative coefficient with two functions, firstly to measure the degree to which expression is blocked and to locate, by group analysis, the sites of those blockages; secondly, to provide a model for a revolutionary reorganisation of the institution, facilitating communication and interaction between heterogeneous groups and registers.

Transversality is a dimension that tries to overcome both the impasse of pure verticality and that of mere horizontality: it tends to be achieved when there is maximum communication among different levels and, above all, in different meanings. [...] My

hypothesis is this: it is possible to change the various coefficients of unconscious transversality at the various levels of an institution. (ibid.: 18)

One of the keys to understanding transversality here is *blindness* as its 'opposite' number (although Guattari's goal here is by no means quantitative, a total un-blinding (see Genosko 2002: 78)). The coefficient of transversality in a psychiatric institution is based, at least in this first outing, in part upon the willingness of those in power ('not necessarily the same as the official authorities of the establishment who control only its official expression' (Guattari 1984: 19)) to relinquish that power, 'to accept being "put on trial," being verbally laid bare by others,' as well as 'the abolition of hierarchical privilege' (ibid.: 21).

This call for the relinquishment of power goes hand-in-hand with a particular formulation of the nature of group analysis, which is explicitly distinguished from group-engineering or group therapy (ibid.: 16): 'Group analysis will not make its aim to elucidate a static truth underlying [a] symptomatology, but rather to create the conditions favourable to a particular mode of *interpretation*' (ibid.: 17). Under these ideal conditions, group analysis would operate in a contingent, almost organic manner. Guattari rejects the idea of the group as simply the multiplication of the dual doctor-patient relationship, in that interpretation of the 'transference' in this ideal group formation is 'not something done by an individual or group that adopts the role of "analyst"' (ibid.). Rather, the group generates its own interpretation, which 'may well be given by the idiot of the ward if he is able to make his voice heard at the right time, the time when a particular signifier becomes active at the level of the structure as a whole' (ibid.). The relative ability of this group to give rise to such an immanently-generated interpretative emission is directly in proportion to its coefficient of transversality, a coefficient which is itself regulated by the transversal coefficient of the institution at large:

If a certain degree of transversality becomes solidly established in an institution, a new kind of dialogue can begin in the group: the delusions and all the other unconscious manifestations which have hitherto kept the patient in a kind of solitary confinement can achieve a collective mode of expression. (ibid.: 20)

In 1964, although Guattari is highly critical of classical psychoanalytic structures, referring to the 'master/ slave relationship' of individual analysis (1984: 22), this critique nonetheless emerges from a framework in close proximity to Lacanian thinking. This proximity is visible in his identification of the failure to increase the coefficient of transversality in an institution with a dominance of 'imaginary incarnations' of power over 'the signifying articulations' of the desire of the group. What is introduced in the long period between 'Transversality' and *Chaosmosis* (as we have seen in the consideration of the unconscious, above) is the alignment of Saussurean semiotics with homogeneity, and a reprioritisation of heterogeneity, as well as a rejection of the structuralist devaluation of the imaginary (1992: 59). The homogeneous dimension of 'Transversality' is most

visible in the positing of transversality as a quantitative measure, a coefficient: 'Now—and remember this is still hypothetical—the multiple coefficients of transversality, though of differing intensity, remain homogeneous' (1984: 18). In spite of this need to subtend heterogeneity with homogeneity, however, it is still possible to detect in this early articulation the minimal beginnings of an articulation resonant with metamodelisation, since what is presented is precisely an attempt to analyse and to reconfigure the otherwise invisible and highly ritualised interactions between heterogeneous levels of organisation in the particular setting of the psychiatric institution.

By the time of *Chaosmosis*, transversality has broadened its operation within Guattari's work to such an extent that it seems to have become a grounding concept of his 'ethico-aesthetic paradigm.' At this later stage, the methodological ethos of metamodelisation and what has now become a highly complex *transversal ontology* (see Genosko 2002: Chapter 5),¹²¹ have become inseparable in a way that transcends Guattari's early bond to psychoanalysis, repositioning the latter as but one locality within a heterogeneous metamethodological transdisciplinary field. Within this movement, *schizoanalysis* appears as counterposed to psychoanalysis, and in *Chaosmosis* takes over (in a much more elaborate form) what was previously articulated under the terms of transversality. Schizoanalysis is combined with an apparent return to transference, although in a 'generalised' form, expanding institutional analysis into a positive practice of producing subjectivity within the institution. Together, transversality and schizoanalysis have significant consequences for the positioning of Guattari's work in relation to the psychoanalytic field. Within *Chaosmosis*, schizoanalysis may be considered the distillation of Guattari's response to the Freudian neurosis/psychosis opposition: 'While psychoanalysis conceptualises psychosis through its vision of neurosis, schizoanalysis approaches all modalities of subjectivation in light of the mode of being in the world of psychosis' (1992: 63). This partial inversion (which is not really an inversion, as neurosis is not excluded) treats the psychotic as an emergent *subjectivity-to-be*, and its *becoming* is facilitated in a register equivalent to that in which transversality was initially formulated:

The treatment of a psychotic, in the context of institutional psychotherapy, works with a renewed approach to transference, focused henceforth on parts of the body, on a constellation of individuals, on a group, on an institutional ensemble, a machinic system, a semiotic economy, etc. (grafts of transference)[...]. The objective of such a therapeutic

¹²¹ Genosko notes the difficulty of the concept of transversality, especially regarding its vast number of modifications subsequent to its initial discussion in 1964; he also urges caution on its appropriation: 'One can imagine for those readers unfamiliar with the concept's deployment and the slow moulting of its psychoanalytic shell, its adjectival deployments may seem to simply multiply, while at the same time the substance of the concept becomes less and less stable, acquiring a second order existence of formal emptiness (empty of history, reality and contingency), while remaining rich in meaning, opening itself to postmodern appropriations without practical consequences for any person or institution, which would not be in the spirit of Guattari's thought' (2002: 66-67).

approach would be to increase as much as possible the range of means offered in the recomposition of a patient's corporeal, biological, psychical and social Territories. (ibid.: 68)

In opening the 'individuated transference' of the doctor-patient relationship to a larger analysis within the psychiatric institution, Guattari is thus able to reconceive transference as a therapeutic possibility for that which it previously excluded.

There is, of course, an issue with the relationship of this reconception to the psychoanalytic field. As Genosko notes, it is possible to argue that 'Guattari was simply not engaging in analysis since he eschewed transference' (2002: 120 n. 9). Although I would dispute Genosko's interpretation of Guattari's position here, as he seems less to eschew transference than to reposition it (see 1992: 70-71), it does bring to a head the critical nature of Guattari's project in relation to psychoanalysis. By coincidence, Genosko's comment takes us back to the conversation between Ettinger and Guattari mentioned in the introduction to this thesis:¹²² Genosko responds to his own hypothetical expulsion of Guattari from the field of psychoanalysis on the basis of Guattari's unequivocal rejection, in conversation with Ettinger, of 'the myth that everything continues as usual during "negative transference"' (Ettinger & Guattari 1997: 614). In this context, Guattari connects (if implicitly) transversality and transference: 'the mechanisms of transference touch the community of care-givers as much as the patients' (ibid.). With this in mind, Genosko's reference to Ettinger and Guattari's conversation seems to suggest that a dismissal of Guattari's work as irrelevant to the concerns of psychoanalysis is subject to the same criticism Guattari makes of the use of negative transference. This criticism construes the prolongation of negative transference as based in a 'consoling myth' that protects the analyst from having to take responsibility for his or her failure of the patient. On a level comparable to the institutional analysis within which transversality is first articulated, a dismissal of Guattari's work might be considered a retreat into psychoanalysis as a parochial, protected space, which has no concern with reflecting upon its inevitable inter-implication with the broader structures within which it appears. Glimpses of something like this criticism appear in the earliest articulation of transversality:

¹²² Although Genosko's reference to Ettinger's conversation with Guattari is useful in making a connection between their respective approaches to transference, it is also slightly misleading, as Genosko misquotes Guattari. Where, in the text of the conversation, Guattari says that 'My role consists in helping the patient develop means of expression and processes of subjectification that would not exist without [*sans*] the analytic process' (Ettinger & Guattari 1997: 613), this appears in Genosko's text as 'My role consists in helping the patient develop means of expression and processes of subjectification that would not exist *with* the analytic process' (2002: 120 n. 9, emphasis added), suggesting an altogether different relationship to the psychoanalytic field.

Not everyone can afford, like some psychiatrists, to take refuge in the higher reaches of aestheticism and thus indicate that, as far as they are concerned, it is not life's major questions that they are dealing with in their hospital work. (1984: 17)

The significance of this for the relationship between matrixiality and transference (and the theory of the matrix and the psychoanalytical field) is complex. Ettinger does not break down the spaces of transference anywhere nearly as extensively as Guattari, largely leaving the dyadic doctor-patient relation intact. What she does in very recent work, however, that resonates with Guattari's critique of individual analysis and his schizoanalytic modification it, is insist on the urgency of recognising a matrixial dimension within the clinical transferential relationship, attributing to its exclusion a traumatic, potentially pathogenic blockage. This is, however, to move a few steps ahead. Before we can consider this call from Ettinger, it will be necessary to understand a little more of her earlier negotiations of the question of transference.

TRANSFERENTIAL BORDERSPACES: MATRIXIALITY WITH/IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

The two attitudes to the analytical transference relationship represented by Laplanche and Guattari, the former delimiting and locating it in relation to an extra-clinical transferential domain, the latter indicating its potential for pathological repression and/or foreclosure and as such its urgent need for modification, will both find an articulation in the theory of the matrix. In this final section I will look at some significant passages which demonstrate what is at stake in Ettinger's direct negotiation of the nexus art-matrixiality-transference, and will point directly to the complex and developing situation of matrixiality (and its mobility in this situation) at the limits of psychoanalysis, but will also indicate that its engagement with psychoanalysis has implications beyond the field of theory. In approaching this area at the close of the thesis, I wish to draw attention to two specific points. Firstly, because this thesis has concerned itself with a living theory, its ending will necessarily be an open one; the theory of the matrix will inevitably outgrow the short span of attention possible here. And secondly, in relation to this open ending, I will touch upon some recent developments in relation to healing and the spaces of transference which, while not necessarily undermining anything covered within the work done here, indicate that this forward movement is already underway. On the basis of these two points, it has been necessary to break the 'rule' mentioned in the Overview (pp. 16-17), of working with material only in the public domain, and refer to an as yet unpublished paper, '*Fascinace* and The Woman-to-woman (Girl-to-m/Other) Matrixial Feminine

Difference'.¹²³ This paper is a much longer version of the recently published '*Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference*,' to which I have already referred in Chapters 1 and 2. The extra passages in the unpublished version contain a re-emphasis of the relationship between matrixiality and clinical transference, which has a significant impact upon how the theory of the matrix is positioned in relation to psychoanalysis. This very recent, and indeed ongoing, development is paralleled in the extraordinarily dense and difficult 2005 text '*The Art-and-healing Oeuvre*,' which I will also touch upon. Before considering either of these recent texts, however, it will be necessary to return once more to '*Trans-Subjective*,' where the first major articulation of the nexus art-matrixiality-transference takes place.

The connection between matrixiality and transference is one of those elements, like the *objet a*, that is present from the inception of the theory, but that only unfolds very gradually. It appears in '*Matrix and Metramorphosis*' in the modest proposal that the matrix is relevant to 'to the understanding of transference and counter-transference' (M&M: 205). In '*Matrix: A shift beyond the phallus*,' this association is expanded in a more critical direction, that is still unfolding to this day. The emphasis here shifts from matrix to metramorphosis, insofar as the latter 'throws additional light on the relationships of transference and counter-transference between the analysand and the analyst in terms of a *bi-(multi)directional* projective-identification process' (MSBP: 34). In '*Feminine/Prenatal*,' an additional strand is added to this development, in that it is placed in proximity to painting: 'A partial subject can conserve traces carried by the unknown other and get into some non-psychotic contact, in adulthood, in transference as well as through artwork, with the trauma of the other' (F/P: 402). It is only in '*Trans-subjective*,' however, that the triangular situation of matrixiality, transference and the artwork reaches the surface of the theory of the matrix, painting becoming a very specific site into which the work of transference extends.

Ettinger's articulation of painting as a *transferential borderspace* begins with a question that is also approached by Laplanche, of the possibility of an analogy between the analytical relationship and the relationship between the 'recipient' and the work of art. Laplanche quotes André Green in suggesting a reversal of the typical formulation of such an analogy, calling into question the idea that the text is the analysand and the 'recipient'/artist the analyst: 'In applied psychoanalysis [...] the analyst is the analysand of the text' (Laplanche 1999: 223). While such a reversal is entirely consonant with the terms Ettinger lays out, it is far from being the whole story, as she aligns the artist neither exclusively with the analyst, nor with the analysand. Instead, she locates the artist in the position of *doctor-and-patient*, and in so doing posits the first item of a matrixial situation of

¹²³ This paper was made available to me by Griselda Pollock, having been submitted for publication in *Psychoanalysis and the Image*, and subsequently reworked as '*Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference*.'

transference in relation to the work of art (TSTB: 625). This idea is intimately tied to the *sinthome*, and to its particular non-Oedipal extrusion of sublimation. During and at the end of Chapter 2, I raised the *sinthome* as a highly significant element in the relationship of matrixiality, art and psychoanalysis, standing beyond the limit of psychoanalytic comprehension, but at the same time posited by Ettinger as a mode of organisation able to expand the horizons of this comprehension. This significance is profoundly connected to the idea of the artist as doctor-and-patient, which is initially defined as an intra-subjective phenomenon, aligning with the idea of the artist as a subjectivity constitutively able to sustain itself independently of psychoanalysis. Independently of transference, the work that takes place within an ‘intrapsychic trans-subjective doctor-*and*-patient sphere with-in the artist’ (ibid.: 626), is described (if rather opaquely) as the re-distribution of ‘a multiple-several and shared *sinthôme*’ (ibid.: 625).¹²⁴ This work is situated as the locus of an opening of the margins of the symbolic, as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter and in Chapter 2. It is the transportation of this work of sublimation into an ‘inter-psychic trans-individual’ dimension (presumably an encounter with some form of viewer/spectator/recipient), ‘via the bordersphere captured in the artwork’ (ibid.: 626), however, that leads Ettinger into a consideration of transference.

In formulating the work of art as a trans-subjective transferential borderspace, Ettinger capitalises on the kind of work done in ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen,’¹²⁵ which establishes—through the phantasmatic permeability theorised in the idea of the matrixial screen—the work of art as a privileged site of trans-subjective transmission and transitivity. Another one of the central threads of her argument as to the potentiality of painting as a transferential borderspace is the nexus transference/libido/*hole-in-the-real*, which is itself built upon a synthesis of Freud and Lacan. As Ettinger notes in ‘Trans-Subjective,’ for Freud the tendency for transference ‘depended on sexuality, on the activity of the libido’ (Freud 1917: 446; cited in TSTB: 638),¹²⁶ which she in turn connects to the following statement from Lacan’s *Le sinthome* seminar:

The libido, as its name indicates, cannot but participate in the hole, just like the other modes in which the real appears. It is thus that I am trying to link up with the function of art; it is implied by what is left blank as the fourth term when I say that art can even reach the symptom. (Lacan 1976b: 135; 1976a: 40-41)

¹²⁴ On the subject of the shared *sinthome*, I refer the reader to Section III of the Overview (pp. 65, 67, 68).

¹²⁵ This kind of work also takes place in other papers, including most significantly ‘The With-in-Visible Screen,’ to which ‘Trans-subjective’ makes reference. See WIV: 95-97, 106-11.

¹²⁶ This connection relates to the neurosis/psychosis opposition discussed above, in that the activity of the libido to which Freud refers is either object-cathexis or its withdrawal. Ettinger does not, at this point, acknowledge that the idea of transference from which she begins potentially excludes the psychotic, but it is an issue worth registering, given her association of the matrixial feminine with foreclosure, and thus with psychosis rather than repression and neurosis.

Because of Lacan's connection between the function of art and the libido, and with the addition of Freud's connection of the latter with the tendency for transference, the bond put forward by Ettinger between art and the space of transference is also able to encompass sublimation and the *sinthome*, and of course the idea that, in this context, the question of art is inseparable from sexual difference, 'since we enter the function of art by way of the libido and through extensions of the psyche closest to the edges of *corpo-reality*' (WIV: 92). In addition to these phantasmatic and libidinal connections, which appear in a number of other, earlier texts, the specific development that takes place in 'Trans-subjective' reinforces and extends this prior work through the deployment of some very suggestive ideas from Marcel Duchamp's 'The Creative Act,' beginning from his use of the term *transference*.

If the artist, as a human being, full of the best intentions toward himself and the whole world, plays no role at all in the judgment of his own work, how can one describe the phenomenon which prompts the spectator to react critically to the work of art? In other words how does this reaction come about?

This phenomenon is comparable to a transference from the artist to the spectator in the form of an esthetic osmosis taking place through the inert matter, such as pigment, piano or marble. (Duchamp 1957: 139, emphasis added)

Although to use this to forge another connection between psychoanalysis and art might seem unnecessary, given the work already in place on the *objet a*, sublimation, the gaze and screen, and the *sinthome*, what Duchamp's use of transference potentially facilitates is a movement in the other direction, from art as a transferential space into the transferential spaces of psychoanalysis.

Before elaborating this any further, it will be useful to add one or two items of detail relating to Duchamp, which will show the strength and relevance of his uptake by Ettinger. In spite of the non-specific (that is, not necessarily psychoanalytical) nature of Duchamp's use of transference, the connection he makes is a very useful one, and is returned to by Ettinger in two important later papers.¹²⁷ One of its main contributions is that he refers to transference in the context of an argument for creativity being an act shared between the artist and 'spectator,' the artist's contribution taking the form of an 'art coefficient,' which is the quantitative measure of the impossibility of a coincidence of intention and realisation in the making of a work of art. Duchamp's view on this coefficient seems to be that, prior to the encounter with the 'spectator,' every work of art, 'at this point in its "raw state",' has an art-coefficient of $n \geq 1$ (the precise quantity of this coefficient having no significance beyond its mere existence). The role of the spectator is to undertake the refinement of the raw material of the work of art, which renders the 'creative act' as necessarily *shared*:

¹²⁷ See ST: 70-71; AHO: 211-12.

The creative act takes another aspect when the spectator experiences the phenomenon of transmutation; through the change from inert matter into a work of art, an actual transubstantiation has taken place, and the role of the spectator is to determine the weight of the work on the esthetic scale. (ibid.: 139-40)

In addition to the reference to transference, and to the creative act as constitutively shared, there is an important final particularity drawn out from Duchamp's rendering of the creative act that does not seem to be articulated in any other dimensions of Ettinger's work. This new element is a temporal (and geographical) dislocation of the transferential relationship, posited as a characteristic of painting as a transferential borderspace: 'That is how we may read Duchamp's *art coefficient* connected to *space of transference*: the artist and the viewer transform the artwork and are transformed by it in different times and places and to different degrees, in different-yet-connected ways' (TSTB: 638). Thus, it is not only Duchamp's use of 'transference' that is of particular significance for Ettinger; it also brings with it the possibility of a reconception of transference to allow for the specificity of the work of art. The idea of a creative interaction that is dislocated in both space and time allows for the articulation of a transferential relation that is not necessarily built on the immediate presence of an object (the analyst) to be implicated in the transference.¹²⁸ That is, it is of crucial importance here to remember that painting does not function within 'Trans-Subjective' as the *object* of transference, but rather as the *space* of transference, functionally comparable to the relationally-facilitating containment spaces of Milner's frame and Laplanche's *le baquet*, but within the context of a matrixially-conceived dynamics of relation (which exceeds containment as such and does not require the co-presence of two individuals). A relation without contemporaneity or co-presence must be incorporated within ideas of transference for the work of art to be conceivable as a transferential borderspace.

The stakes of being able to establish such a connection reside in Ettinger's relation of matrixiality and transference, discussed above, that has persisted since the earliest outings of the theory. The possibility of painting as a transferential borderspace seems to operate in 'Trans-subjective' as an extra-psychoanalytical parallel that is able to comment upon, and thus potentially able to draw attention to, the dwelling of matrixiality within already-existing transference relations.

Since a matrixial co-poïesis is also experienced in transference and countertransference, I take psychoanalytic relations as always containing a dimension of uncanny borderline trans-subjectivity, and psychoanalytic theory as a laboratory for new concepts born in/by art. (ibid.: 640)

¹²⁸ This temporal dislocation is echoed in Laplanche's extra-clinical transference, where he speaks of 'an address to another who is out of reach, to others "scattered in the future",' as a characteristic of cultural production (1999: 224). Laplanche's treatment of this dislocation is not, however, conceivable as a relation as such, but rather one-way issuing of an address, the call away from analytical transference being one effect of its receipt.

Ettinger is at her most cautious in ‘Trans-subjective,’ however, in returning the idea of the work of art as a transferential borderspace to the psychoanalytical scenario, which seems to indicate that once a parallel transference has been set up, the return journey from art back to the analytical relationship is not entirely straightforward. She does not, for instance, take the route legible in both Laplanche and Guattari, of suggesting a concrete involvement of the extra-clinical within the analytical scenario. Throughout ‘Trans-subjective,’ there is something of a retreat from the intertwining of phantasy and vision legible in ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen,’ a retreat legible in a comparison of the following two statements.¹²⁹ Firstly we have this, from ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen’: ‘Since the painter’s internal dialogue with the gaze on the screen of phantasm is externalised onto the painting’s screen of vision, something of the psychic gaze is always contained in the painting, waiting to affect us’ (MG&S: 12), which, in my understanding can only operate on the basis of an intertwining of phantasy and vision. In ‘Trans-subjective,’ on the other hand, this relation is articulated in the form of a limited *analogy*: ‘The “impossible” encounter between the drive and the aesthetic object in the in-outer screen of Vision is *analogous, up to a point*, to the impossible meeting between the drive and the mental object in the out-inner screen of phantasy’ (TSTB: 627, emphasis added). This caution appears again towards the end of the paper, where Ettinger describes two distinct spheres of transference: the analytical relationship, co-emerging ‘in the transferential space, sharing in difference the screen of phantasy through free associations and floating attention’ (ibid.: 642), and the artist/viewer relationship, also co-emerging, but ‘in diverse ways with the work and by the work, sharing-in-difference the screen of Vision through passage-to-action and floating viewing’ (ibid.). The specification of this difference seems to emerge from Ettinger’s insertion of the clinical analytical relationship into the equation. Her direct concern with the positioning of the ‘matrixialisation’ of painting in relation to the analytical scenario, insofar as it ‘sheds some light on the potentiality to engender/produce/invent and analyze transferential relations in psychoanalysis’ (ibid.: 626), seems to require the preservation of a gap or asymmetry between painting as a transferential borderspace and the posited existence of matrixiality in clinical transference relationships. This asymmetry enables the revelation in painting of transferential modes invisible (or pathological) within orthodox psychoanalytical terms. Such a revelation (by the artist as doctor-and-patient) hypothetically generates an enlargement of clinical transference according to the matrixial possibilities with-in the transferential borderspace of painting:

¹²⁹ The chronological positioning of ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen’ and ‘Trans-subjective’ is not straightforward, as it is not immediately clear which text was written first. ‘Trans-subjective’ was first published in 1997, while ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen’ was first published in 1999, but there is strong evidence that it was written in or before 1995 (see Appendix). It is even more difficult to get a sense of when ‘Trans-subjective’ was written, and so the most we can reasonably conclude is that the two texts are roughly contemporaneous, written sometime between 1995 and 1997.

This act of art is not accessible to “therapy,” but the doctor and the patient in *transference/countertransference* relations may extract something from whatever is imprinted for the first time in the transferential borderspaces of art, in order to lift culture’s veil of amnesia. (ibid.: 646-47)

This parallelism is a clear indication of one particular way in which Ettinger negotiates the position of matrixiality on the margins of psychoanalysis. By formulating an asymmetrical duality of transference, which can traverse the limits of the clinical field, Ettinger theoretically creates the means by which the matrixial dimension she believes to be woven within the fabric of psychoanalysis, may be revealed, and returned by theory to clinical practice. The creation of this dynamic between painting, theory and the clinic sets in motion a repositioning of matrixiality in relation to the field of psychoanalysis. Where previously, the theory of the matrix could be contained within the domain of theory or, failing that, within the domain of art and aesthetics, in setting up a mechanism whereby matrixiality could potentially be returned to *clinical* psychoanalysis, Ettinger considerably alters what is at stake. That is, with the shift of attention to the spaces of transference, it is no longer just the subject of psychoanalysis that is in question, but the fabric of psychoanalysis itself. From what I have suggested of a possible correspondence between approaches to the unconscious and approaches to transference, such a shift may have been inevitable, but until the kind of articulation made in ‘Trans-subjective,’ it remained only a latent possibility.

As well as laying out the spaces within which transferential phenomena may circulate, Ettinger is quite specific as to the matrixial transferential mechanisms she considers to reside at the heart of the analytical relationship. In ‘Trans-subjective,’ she describes a matrixial dimension of the structure of this relation:

Beside a phallic transference/countertransference an-other one happens, where trans-individual subjectivity-as-encounter is created between an *I* and an unknown other, or between an *I* and the unknown zone of a known *non-I*. (ibid.: 638)

It is not only the severality of the relation she suggests that is of note here, but the idea—and this of course has a profound resonance with Guattari—of the *creation* of a ‘trans-individual subjectivity-as-encounter’. The idea of a *subjectivising* transferential relationship also recalls Guattari in its configuration of the temporality of transference, which is shifted in accordance with the revelations made by the transferential borderspace of painting:

If amnesia plays a part here, it is double-edged. It looks toward a future in which whatever of it will transform into memory will have become a memory, of that which was neither repressed nor forgotten, that which from the onset appears for the first time as a shared memory in the transferential borderspace, creating its veil of amnesia, hurting while healing. (ibid.: 644)

In indicating this shifted transferential time, Ettinger also refers to Lacan's differentiation between the analyst as a subject-supposed to know, and the analyst as *objet a*. She aligns the passage between these two positions with 'a passage from a masculine to a feminine position,' but also, more importantly, with a shift in the temporality of transference: 'from transference as repetition to transference as "impossible" yet potential encounter between subjects and with their becoming-joint-through sharing psychic part-objects' (ibid.: 639). I note this posited shift in the temporality of transference even *within* a clinical setting in order to show how the revelation of matrixiality in transferential relationships is not simply a matter of recognising an unconscious phantasy of intra-uterine existence, manifest according to transferential mechanisms already in place. The inclusion of matrixiality within clinical transferential relations requires, as with Guattari's transversality, an acknowledgement of the analytical relationship as a *productive*, subjectivising process.

As it stands now, the hypothetical mechanism laid out in 'Trans-subjective' for the revelation of matrixial transferential phenomena is already roughly ten years old, and some recent developments indicate both Ettinger's desire to shift matrixiality beyond the marginal location given in 'Trans-subjective,' and her dissatisfaction with the gap created between painting as a transferential borderspace and clinical transference. These developments both coincide with the formulation of a new phrase connected to a generalised matrixial praxis that traverses both analysis and painting: 'matrixial compassionate hospitality'.

*MARGINAL NEGOTIATIONS: THE MOBILITY OF THE TRANSFERENTIAL
BORDERSPACE*

Where, in 'Trans-subjective,' what is discussed is a transferential space that remains at the very limits of the psychoanalytical field (even if they are necessarily reconfigured as open), what I would like to consider in closing this thesis are two movements which alter the relation of matrixiality to those limits. These are, as I say, very recent developments, and appear in contexts that bring their own specific problems, the first being articulation within a text that presents matrixiality in such a way that the nature of its connection to psychoanalysis may be in question, and the second is in relation to the use of a text that is yet to be published. The unpublished text, '*Fascinace* and the Woman-to-woman (Girl-to-m/Other) Matrixial Feminine Difference,' takes the positioning outlined in 'Trans-subjective' much further, transforming the latter's hypothetical opening of transference in light of the workings of painting into an unequivocal call for a modification of psychoanalytic practice:

I believe that it is the task of psychoanalysis today to take into account the influence of such knowledge of the Real and in the Real, slippery as it may be, and not to simply leave the accumulated ample experience outside the domain of psychoanalysis or expel it under the categories such as mystical experience or psychosis. (FW: n.p.)

This call is, moreover, one presented in the most urgent terms, in that it sets the stakes of an inclusion of matrixiality within psychoanalytic practice in terms of the therapeutic efficacy of psychoanalysis: ‘Without erotic compassion and inclusive hospitality on behalf of the psychoanalyst during psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, a transformative healing will not take place’ (ibid.). This has some resonance with Guattari’s argument for the potential for pathological repression and a ritualised turning-inwards that resides in a persistent recourse to ‘hierarchical privilege’ and ‘fixed’ or ‘predetermined’ doctor-patient relationships. That is, within the terms of Ettinger’s reformative call, a refusal of matrixiality may be actively traumatising:

in refusing to enter and recognize the matrixial space-time, the analyst might add to the cumulative trauma of the analysand by repeating an attitude that caused pain to the analysand both in her early history and in her later life. (ibid.)

This move is paralleled in a reconsideration of the gap between painting and the clinic instituted in ‘Trans-subjective’. Where we saw above the explicit statement of a distinction between art and therapy (‘this act of art is not accessible to “therapy”’), Ettinger’s attention in ‘The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre’ is focussed upon reconceiving this gap: ‘I therefore consider healing [...] to be an integral part of the artistic endeavour and not its side effect’ (AHO: 214). This reconsideration seems to have taken place very recently, and its workings-out are demonstrable in two almost identical passages, one from the unpublished ‘*Fascinace*,’ and one from ‘The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre.’ Firstly, the unpublished version of ‘*Fascinace*’:

I surrender my desire, and the wonder approaches me. It approaches on the border of the real, where the self is oscillating between traumatic encounter and phantasmatic fulfillment, and it is for this reason that if in analysis such a moment occurs, and the analyst, *unlike the artist* must assume [sic] the position of that pole, supporting the aesthetical by the ethical; s/he must be aware and take responsibility for the other pole. (FW: n.p., emphasis added)

As it appears in ‘The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre,’ however, the means of distinguishing between artist and analyst is entirely removed, artist and analyst now appearing together in terms of similarity rather than difference:

I surrender my desire, and the wonder approaches me. It approaches on the border of the real, where the self is oscillating between traumatic encounter and fantasmatic fulfillment, and it is for this reason that the artist-healer, like a psychoanalyst in the transference relationship of working-through, must take responsibility both for her pole and for the pole of the other on the same string. (AHO: 208)

Together these moves—the urgent call for an incorporation of matrixiality within the heart of psychoanalysis, and the rearticulation, through the figure of the *artist-healer*, of the difference between artist and analyst—suggest that Ettinger is no longer content to preserve the critical gap between transference in painting and transference in the analytical relationship. In the decade or so since her first engagement with the question of the potential impact of matrixial workings-out in

cultural practice upon the fabric of psychoanalytic work, she seems to have edged towards a position of greater confidence regarding the significance of matrixiality for the future of psychoanalysis. It is possible to have the impression, from these recent developments, that the critical, marginal position of painting as a transference borderspace is being historicized. That is, Ettinger seems to be suggesting that the time for a mere revelation of matrixiality in clinical transference has passed, and that we are now in a phase where this revelation may (and indeed should) be treated as a given of the analytical scenario.

At the close of this thesis, I would like to suggest that it is by no means insignificant that the conversation from which the work here in part initially grew was between Guattari and Ettinger, and was on the subject of transference. When working out the chronology for the Overview, it struck me as particularly strange that, in spite of the early date of this conversation, Guattari has a remarkably strong understanding of matrixiality and the likelihood of its having implications for transference:

Given that you assume the production and growth of a common subjective stratum of encounter, on the basis of a shareable prenatal/feminine stratum that your model theorizes as escaping Oedipal phallocracy, wouldn't the very concept of transference have to be transformed accordingly? (Ettinger & Guattari 1997: 616)

It is clear from this conversation that Guattari is an important figure for Ettinger; although this is one of the earliest-dated conversations she has published, Guattari displays a knowledge of, and sensitivity towards matrixiality that is far greater than any of Ettinger's other interlocutors (Levinas, Jabès and, more recently, Craigie Horsfield). This knowledge and sensitivity is all the more remarkable for the date of the conversation—June 1989—roughly six months prior to the first writing of the *theory* of the matrix as such (see M&M: 206). To invert the trajectory of the Overview, what is laid out in this conversation could be seen as containing, although in a pre-theoretical, virtual-implicit form, a retrospectively legible indication of what will unfold in the subsequent seventeen years. The encounter between Ettinger and Guattari is, in one sense, a shared working-out of the possibilities for a departure from Lacan, the conversation itself beginning from Ettinger's statement of Guattari's *real* co-presence with Lacan:

While studying the transcripts of Jacques Lacan's seminars, I found a passage where you said something to this effect: When Lacan left the International Psychoanalytic Association and founded the Freudian School, breaking with a long tradition in the psychoanalytic movement, when he said "I found; as always, alone," he committed an act that weighs upon each and every one of us. (Ettinger & Guattari 1997: 611)

The chronological position of this conversation—between Ettinger's intensive study and translation of Lacan's seminars, and the emergence of the theory of the matrix—potentially positions Guattari as (in his words) a catalyst in her departure from Lacan. Guattari's verbal recognition of the ideas

Ettinger puts forward could perhaps be seen as a form of alpha-function, a sharing and reflecting of Ettinger's ideas in a way that provides a crucial hospitable environment for their expansion into a theoretical register. The containment and processing Guattari offers supports Ettinger's nascent critique of the hegemony of the signifier in French psychoanalysis (ibid.: 619), and the Lacanian establishment (ibid.: 620), as well as suggesting the irrelevance of intra-psychoanalytical disciplinary schisms (ibid.: 612). Ettinger's interrogation of Guattari's post-Lacanian (or rather, by this point, non-Lacanian) theory and practice in turn also provides a framework within which her ideas on 'transferential relations that I term *matrixial*' (ibid.: 615) may begin to be articulated. In Guattari's definition of the *refrain*,¹³⁰ put forward in response to Ettinger's questioning of the temporality of analysis, we have a passage which indicates both the space Guattari leaves open, and the persistence of this opening in Ettinger's matrixial recasting of transference:

The refrain holds together partial components without abolishing their heterogeneity. Among these components are lines of virtuality that are born of the even itself and reveal themselves, at the very moment of their self-creation, in the mode of always having been, with time itself conceived as a nucleus of temporalization and mutation. Thus the refrain gives new meaning to therapeutic interpretation. (ibid.: 620)

Although there is a clear connection between the recent developments I have briefly mentioned and Guattari's facilitating presence around the time of the birth of Ettinger's theoretical work, neither the journey that has subsequently unfolded, nor the point reached today, could have been anticipated. As such, the recent repositioning of matrixiality, art and transference has yet to be fully evaluated, but has apparently had two effects legible at this point in time. The first, as I have already indicated, is a call for the reconception of analytical practice to incorporate matrixial 'compassionate hospitality'. The second effect, emerging from the rejoining of art and healing, seems to be the formation of an extra-psychoanalytical, cosmological plane, ostensibly drawn from Deleuze and Guattari, but potentially a form of animism or vitalism (in the Bergsonian sense), where the intertwining of vision and phantasy given in 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' returns as an intertwining of psyche and cosmos. Both of these developments are in themselves beyond the reach of this thesis, but it seems fair to say that what has been worked through in these pages can provide some sense of the challenges that may be faced by the new developments in the theory of the matrix. In particular, the call for the inclusion of matrixiality within psychoanalytic practice in general requires some caution, in that it does not reflect to any substantial degree upon the (almost two decades of) theoretical labour it has taken to formulate the theory of the matrix as it currently stands. Such reflexivity is particularly urgent in terms of understanding the work that has been required for the

¹³⁰ The *refrain* has also recently been put to good use by Lone Bertelsen, in an attempt to conceptualise the action of matrixiality as a 'Trojan horse' within its fields of engagement (2004: 121-22), and across the three heterogeneous registers ('theory, psychoanalysis and art' (ibid.: 142)), within which she considers Ettinger to be working.

movement from the initial positing of the matrix as a symbol, to its articulation as an imperative for the future of psychoanalysis as a clinical practice. This is necessary, in my view, in order to be able to understand, for example, *why* matrixiality is not taken up in certain quarters, and indeed also to gain a sense of what takes place if and when it is. This may be, as Pollock suggests, to do with the radical shift it posits in terms of feminine sexual difference, and the question of whether the reader is able to tolerate this shift (2004: 21), but it is also, I suggest, because of the precise nature of its positing. From what we have seen in this thesis, it would be fair to say that the theory of the matrix builds itself around a series of sites that are highly contentious in terms of the inter-theoretical relationships between the various schools of psychoanalytical thought. The relationship between drive-based and object-relations theories, the primacy of (sexual) difference, the nature of sexuality, the positing and relationship of interior and exterior realities, the structuring and production of the unconscious, and most of all the exclusion of intra-uterine existence, are all called into question as the theory of the matrix unfolds, and all represent sites regarding which Ettinger's theoretical work will inevitably meet with some degree of resistance.

One result, therefore, of the theoretical exploration undertaken in this thesis lies in its ability to precipitate a form of commentary upon the changes that are taking place in the theory of the matrix, and those that are still to come. This is insofar as the points raised across the chapters facilitate a sense of its relation to a broader psychoanalytical field. For example, even in her most recent work, where she refers to a 'break with the Freudian-Lacanian paradigm' (MT: 218), Ettinger is still negotiating the problem of reconciling drive theory with primary relationality (this time in the form of attachment theory): 'The body-real doesn't stand only for the irreducibility of instincts, impulses and drives. It indicates the appeal of the body for closeness' (ibid.: 221). It is of crucial importance to be aware of the kinds of theoretical negotiations that have taken place here, especially in light of Ettinger's growing confidence in the position of matrixiality within psychoanalytic practice, which seems to be coinciding with moves further from Lacanian shores. In an inversion of the prospective narrative presented in the Overview, I will say that this is a theoretical paradigm with a history; although it is not given that what Ettinger formulates now shares an identity with those ideas first put forward in 'Matrix and Metramorphosis,' I would argue that there is a continuity between the two points, that the theoretical labour it has taken to articulate the theory of the matrix is enfolded (if not always acknowledged) within current positions, and cannot be erased, for example, by talk of a break with Freud and Lacan. Because it is not possible for all such workings-out to be made explicit at every stage of the theory, it is all the more imperative to have registered (and to continue to register) sites of particular difficulty, and sites of synthesis. Without such an awareness, it is impossible to understand fully what is at stake in the claims Ettinger makes for the position of the matrix within the field of 'contemporary psychoanalysis.'

APPENDIX

Publication/presentation of selected texts

[Note: publications underlined are texts referred to in this thesis. Full details given in bibliography. Dates given in square brackets refer to the versions I have used, mostly the first year of publication in English. I have made a comprehensive primary bibliography of Ettinger's work available at http://www.metramorphosis.org.uk/primary_bibliography.htm]

1989 December: First parts of 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' [1992] written (see M&M: 176 n.).

1991 'Verbal Hallucinations in Psychotic Patients' published.

July: 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' [1992] presented at Kunsthistorikerinnen Tagung, University of Hamburg (see M&M: 176 n.).

1992 'Matrix and Metramorphosis' published.

'Woman-Other-Thing: a Matrixial Touch' [1993] written (see WOT: 18).

October: 'The Becoming Threshold of Matrixial Borderlines' [1994] presented at *Travellers' Tales* conference, Tate Gallery, London (see MBMB: 156 n. 9).

1993 'Woman-Other-Thing: a Matrixial Touch' published.

Matrix Halal(a)—Lapsus: Notes on Painting 1985-1992 published.

January: 'Matrix: A Rotating Shift in-Side the Symbolic,' presented at *The Point of Theory* conference, Belle van Zuylen Institute, University of Amsterdam.

- This paper contained parts of WOT [1993], WOA [1995], and MBMB [1996], (see WOT: 18, WOA: 75, and MBMB: 154 n. 1).

April: A version of ‘Metramorphic Borderlinks and Matrixial Borderspace’ [1996] presented at *Identity and Display* conference, Tate Gallery, London (see MBMB: 154 n. 1).

June: A short version of *The Matrixial Gaze* [1995], with emphasis on Part I, ‘The “Uncanny” and the Matrixial Object/*Objet a*’, presented at *Psychoanalysis – Art – Philosophy* conference, Russian Museum of Ethnography, St Petersburg (see MG copyright page).

September: A second short version of *The Matrixial Gaze* [1995], with emphasis on Part II, ‘The Almost-missed Encounters as Eroticized Aerials of the Psyche,’ presented at *Starting the Dialogue* conference, University of Leeds (see MG copyright page).

Matrix: A Shift Beyond the Phallus published; limited edition of 10: 27th September 1993.

- This was a revised version of ‘Matrix: A Rotating Shift in-Side the Symbolic’ (see Pollock 1994: 70 n.8).

December: ‘The Lacking Object from Trauma to Phantasy,’ presented at *Psychoanalysis and Language* conference, Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University.

- This paper contained parts of WOA [1995] and F/P [1997] (see WOA: 75, MG: 2, MBMB: 138 n. 27, RC: 93 n. 31, and F/P: 367).

1994 ‘The Becoming Threshold of Matrixial Borderlines’ published.

‘The almost-missed encounters as eroticized aerials of the psyche’ published in *Third Text* 28-29.

Introduction to *Matrix: a Shift Beyond the Phallus* [1993] published in *Women’s Art Magazine* 56.

The Matrixial Gaze [1995] published in a limited edition of 10 (see MBMB: 144 n. 43).

1995 *The Matrixial Gaze* published by University of Leeds Feminist Arts and Histories Network.

‘Woman as *Objet a* Between Phantasy and Art’ published.

Supplementary Jouissance and Feminine Sexual Rapport published in a limited edition of 10.

- This contained what would later become ‘Supplementary Jouissance’ and ‘Feminine Borderlinking’ (see Ettinger 1998: 162 n. 1, and Ettinger 2000b: 165).

Full version of ‘Matrixial Gaze and Screen’ [1999] submitted for Laura Doyle (ed.), *Bodies of Resistance* (see MG&S: 3 n.1).

January: 'The Red Cow Effect' [1996] presented at *Beautiful Translations* conference, Tate Gallery, London (see RC: 111).

May: A short version of 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' [1999] presented in Hebrew at *Event – Traces – Painting* symposium, Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem (see MG&S: 3 n. 1).

September: Parts of 'The Red Cow Effect' [1996] presented at *Feminism & the Aesthetics of Difference* conference, Institute of Romance Studies, University of London, and at *Modernism, Difference & Place* conference, Falmouth College of Arts (see RC: 111).

1996 'Metramorphic Borderlinks and Matrixial Borderspace' published.

'The Red Cow Effect' published.

'The With-in-Visible Screen' published.

January: 'Re-in/de-fuse' [1999] presented in session 'Inside the Visible' at *CAA Annual Conference*, Boston.

1997 'The Feminine/Prenatal Weaving in Matrixial Subjectivity-as-Encounter' published, with 'Reply to Commentary'.

'Trans-subjective Transferential Borderspace' published.

“'The Heimliche' Home-affect and co/in-habit(u)ation' used in Jordan Crandall's project 'Suspension,' *Documenta X*, Kassel.

- This contained parts of 'Traumatic Wit(h)ness-Thing' [1999] (see TWT: 94 n. 1).

December: 'Transgression with-in-to the feminine' [2000] presented at *Leonardo's Glimlach* symposium, Ghent University.

- Parts of this paper used in 'Traumatic Wit(h)ness-Thing' [1999] (see TWT: 94 n. 1).

1998 'Supplementary Jouissance' published.

A short version of 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen' [1999] published in *Studio 99*, Tel Aviv (see MG&S: 3 n. 1).

'Wit(h)nessing Trauma and the Gaze' [2001] published in *The Fascinating Faces of Flanders*, (Antwerp: Hessenhuis) (See WTG: 113 n. 1).

1999 'Matrixial Gaze and Screen: other than phallic, Merleau-Ponty and the late Lacan' published.

'Transcryptum: Memory Tracing In/for/with the Other' [2002] published in *La Ville, la jardin, le mémoire*, (Rome: Villa Medici).

'Traumatic Wit(h)ness-Thing and Matrixial Co/in-habit(u)ating' published.

'Re-in/de-fuse' published online.

'Art as the Transport-Station of Trauma' [2000] published in Hebrew in *Plastika 3*, Tel Aviv (see ATST: 115).

June: 'Metra-morphic Borderswerving, borderspacing and Borderlinking,' presented at *Rethinking Genius Today* conference, ICA, London

- This included parts of 'Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event' (see 2004: 91) and parts of 'Art as the Transport-Station of Trauma' [2000] (see ATST: 115).

June: 'Matrixial Borderspace,' presented in New Constructions of Gender section at *Women's Worlds 99* Congress, Tromso, Norway.

- This also included parts of 'Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event' [2004] (see 2004: 91).

2000 'Feminine Borderlinking' published.

'Some-Thing, Some-Event and Some-Encounter: between Sinthome and Symptom' published.

'Transgressing with-in-to the feminine' published.

'Art as the Transport-Station of Trauma' published.

June: 'Tressage et scène primitive de l'être-à-trois' presented at J.A. Miller's course, University of Paris VIII.

- This was an early version of 'Plaiting a Being-in-Severality and the Primal Scene' [2002] (see PBS: 91), 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference' [2006] (see FGM: 92), as well as the as yet unpublished 'Fascinace and The Woman-to-woman (Girl-to-m/Other) Matrixial Feminine Difference'.

2001 'Wit(h)nessing Trauma and the Gaze: From Phantasm to Trauma, from Phallic Structure to Matrixial Sphere' published.

'The Matrixial Gaze' [1995] reprinted in B. Massumi and C. de Zegher (eds.), *Drawing Papers 24: Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger The Eurydice Series*, (New York: The Drawing Center).

'The Red Cow Effect' [1996] reprinted in M. Howe and S. Appleton Aguiar (eds.), *He said, she says: an RSVP to the male text*, (London: Associated University Presses).

2002 'Plaiting a Being-in-Severality and the Primal Scene' published.

'Weaving a Trans-subjective Tress or the Matrixial *sinthome*' published.

'Transcryptum' published.

2004 'Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event' published.

2005 'The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre' published.

2006 'Fascinace and the Girl-to-m/Other Matrixial Feminine Difference' published.

'Matrixial Trans-subjectivity' published.

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