

**FETISHISM RECONFIGURED:  
SURPLUS, EQUIVALENCE  
AND DIFFERENCE WITHIN THE  
PRODUCTION OF VALUE.**

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## Abstract

Given a post-structuralist critique of the metaphysics of presence within western thought, It is surprising that much contemporary theory that discusses fetishism still subscribes to concepts of substitution and disavowal which uphold a notion of self-present value.

This study offers an original critique of traditional views of fetishism via a consideration of the role of surplus and equivalence within the production of value. Rather than describing fetishism in terms of a disavowal of a self-present determination of value, this critique recognizes that what is ultimately denied within traditional accounts is the artificial surplus production upon which its value is premised.

An original account is proposed in which fetishism is perceived as an immanent productive process where difference generates signifiers of value. The fetish can be perceived as the means by which established measures of value are both endorsed and transgressed in relation to a restricted economy. This theory supplements the Batailleian notion of the fetish as an untransposable object of desire and considers the implications of a Deleuzian metaphysics of difference. The work of Deleuze offers a means to resolve the contradiction in which the fetish can be perceived as both an instigator and transgressor of value. As such, fetishism is found to be the archetype of value, rather than its substitute.

An original contribution to the corpus of Deleuzian theory is made via an understanding of fetishism in relation to the *Body Without Organs*. Whereas fetishism has been discussed in terms of a reifying tendency, a wider consideration of Deleuze and Guattari's work allows the notion to be considered from the point of view of transgression and becoming. Such a conception is found to have greater efficacy than current theories in that it allows the fetish to be understood as either a reified or transgressive value.

## Introduction

Fetishism within modernity has always been associated with the problem of exchange in which the term is used to describe a process of substitution and disavowal of that which is perceived as both the origin and true determination of value. Given a post-structuralist critique of the metaphysics of presence, the notion of value being determined elsewhere, outside fetishistic relations, can be subject to criticism. If value can itself be viewed as a fetishistic construction, then operating within a traditional model of disavowal and substitution can be perceived as being complicit with a metaphysics of presence and the terms of a restricted economy in which it operates.

A post-structuralist critique of the metaphysics of presence within western thought has undermined the legitimacy of privileged signifiers that instigate binary oppositions premised on notions of presence and lack. Given this, it is surprising that much contemporary theory that discusses fetishism still subscribes to concepts of substitution and disavowal that uphold a notion of self-present value. As such, instances of fetishism are described in terms of some form of cultural lack that is then disavowed via strategies of substitution.

This study offers an original critique of the conventional view of fetishism within modernity via a consideration of the role of surplus and equivalence within the production of value. Rather than describing fetishism in terms of a disavowal of a self-present determination of value, this critique recognizes that what is ultimately denied within traditional accounts is the artificial surplus production upon which its value is premised. The tendency for traditional models of fetishism to repetitiously orientate around a singular economy in which one object becomes the privileged signifier of value is criticized – this is perceived as omitting the possibility that difference lies at the heart of the production of the fetish. Given the arbitrary and artificial nature of privileged signifiers that act as

equivalents of value, it is demonstrated that fetishism should be perceived as the archetype of value rather than a substitute.

Against a traditional model of fetishism, an original account is proposed in which the concept is perceived as an immanent productive process where difference generates signifiers of value. As such, the fetish can be perceived as the means by which established measures of value are both endorsed and transgressed in relation to a restricted economy. This account supplements the Bataillean notion of the fetish, as an untransposable object of desire, and considers the implications for a Deleuzian metaphysics of difference for the notion of fetishism. Whereas Bataille offers a means to view the fetish as an untransposable object that transgresses the profane world of the everyday, with its concern for functionality and utility within restricted economies, the work of Deleuze is found to offer us a means to resolve the contradiction in which the fetish can be perceived as both an instigator and transgressor of value.

An original contribution to the corpus of Deleuzian theory is made via an understanding of fetishism from the viewpoint of the *Body Without Organs*. Whereas Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari discuss fetishism in terms of a reifying tendency of anti-production, a wider consideration of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's work allows the notion to be considered from the point of view of transgression and becoming. Against the traditional notion of a fetish that orientates around an economy of the same, in which an object is offered as a substitute and disavowal of a given value, this new conception offers a means to view the fetish as a repetition of difference in which value is simultaneously dispersed and created. As such, this study will offer a fresh perspective on fetishism without recourse to notions of origin, presence and lack.

A Deleuzian conception of fetishism, constituted upon difference and becoming, is found to have greater efficacy than current theories of fetishism in that it allows the fetish to be understood as either a reified or transgressive value. By relying on traditional principles that have remained consistent with the notion, contemporary theories continue to subscribe to the reified oppositions that a restrictive economy puts in place; as such,

these theories can be considered to be blind to the full potential of fetishism as a productive force.

In the first section of this study, *Fetishism and the problem of value*, the domain in which the notion of fetishism is defined within modernity is explored. An examination of the notion within modernity recognizes that the concept is used as a means of delineating legitimate value from its deviant other – as such, fetishism is found to be a tool incorporated within the discourse of modernity for confronting the problem of value. The origins and etymology of the term has been explored. By examining the work of William Pietz, the term is found to simultaneously to contain within it idea of magic, witchcraft and artifice within it. The concept is recognized as originating during the mercantile interchange between Europe and Africa and was used as a means to understand the non-universality and incomprehensibility of value between the two cultures. Rather than celebrating this difference, the concept acted as a means to validate western value whilst deprecating African notions.

By examining the use of the term within modernity – from the eighteenth century onwards – it is recognized that it is used as a means to describe an irrational investment of value in an object that is believed to be innate, yet is in reality a product of human construction. This is true of de Brosses' original use of the term to distinguish primitive, irrational beliefs in opposition to western rationality and scientific reason. It is also true of those psychosexual and socio-economic theories that incorporated the term. In each case the fetish is perceived as deviating from modern western standards of reason and value. The notion of fetishism within both socioeconomic and psychosexual discourses within modernity is found to have been used as an ironic means of describing the irrational and deviant element inherent within western societies – an irrational element whose underlying causes are subsequently disavowed. Whereas the modern world of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was considered to be rational, Marx, Binet and Freud highlighted the ways in which irrationality could still be found in the areas of economics and the bourgeois psyche. As such, the notion was adopted by 'Marx, and nineteenth-century

psychologists, to refer to forms of irrational valuation within their own society' (Ades 1995, p.67). For Marx, the exchange of the commodity form within capitalist society obscured the underlying nature of social relations, so that what should be 'definite social relations between men [becomes] the fantastic form of a relation between things' (Marx 1990, p. 165). For Binet and Freud, the rationality of the civilized, modern mind both veiled and conflicted with the underlying desires hidden deep within the unconscious of the human personality.

In the case of both socio-economic and psychosexual economies, fetishism is recognized as being a product of surplus where an arbitrary value is constituted beyond the realm of need. By examining socio-economic and psycho-sexual accounts of fetishism (Marx, Freud and Lacan), a similar use of the notion of fetishism as a means of designating the arbitrary investment of value into an object is recognised. In both cases, such allocation of value is described as phantasmagoric – the value of the commodity, as a thing, hides the true condition of its value based on abstract human labour and the value of the psychosexual fetish derives from a fantasy in which the maternal phallus is believed to exist. By examining Marx's view of surplus value and Freud's notion of sexual drives, such an investment in value can only manifest itself at a point beyond need – socio-economic surplus value can only exist when production surpasses subsistence, psychosexual desire and its constituent sexual drive which forges new objects can only exist as an excess beyond biological need. In both circumstances, such an excess is found to be channeled through a restrictive economy of value instituted by an arbitrary universal signifier – in the case of socio-economic fetishism, the signifier is gold and its monetary equivalent that instigates the drive for accumulation and investment, in the case of psychosexual fetishism, the signifier is the phallus and the instigation of desire based upon presence and lack.

By recognizing that chosen privileged signifiers act as a means of channeling the exchange of surplus within restricted economies of value, the question is raised as to why exchange resolves around restrictive economies with determined and equivalent values and what role is played

by privileged signifiers within them? This, in turn, raises another question. If the chosen privileged signifier and its corresponding signified is an arbitrary construction, then to what degree can we discuss the fetish as an irrational deviation from an endorsed rational order? The arbitrariness would appear to destabilize an appeal to the validity of such an established order whilst also questioning the criteria from which the non-western other is perceived. It would also appear to question the motive behind the associated notion of disavowal within the concept of fetishism – when that which is disavowed is human agency, which invests objects with an arbitrary value, then the purpose of disavowal can be extended – as well as misrecognizing the causal relations, disavowal also performs the task of vindicating value via a denial of the excess, arbitrariness and artificiality upon which it is based.

In the second section of this study, *Fetishism, the Other and the Privileged Signifier*, the instigation of an established signifier of value is recognized which serves the function of delineating a legitimate exchange of surplus whilst designating the fetish as an illegitimate divergence from its own restrictive economy. As such, privileged signifiers are perceived as acting as a means to channel surplus production into a form that can be accumulated and reproduced. Capitalist surplus value is exchanged via a signifier that acts as an equivalent to value that is accumulated and reinvested in which to develop further surplus. Prodigal expenditure outside of this cyclical mechanism is ignored and excluded – this becomes important in a later consideration of the work of Bataille. Likewise, the surplus that manifests itself as the sexual drive is channeled into an exchange where desire revolves around either having or not having the phallus. Because the phallus instigates a lack in the unity of the subject, desire is recognized as insatiable, requiring an endless cycle of either *having or being* the phallus that can never be attained. Desire outside the realm of the phallic economy is excluded as perverse and interpreted as a deviation from the reproductive aim.

By examining the work of Michel Foucault, the discourses that sustain the authority of these privileged signifiers can be recognized as

examples of power-knowledge relations where a legitimate value is established as much by what is excluded as by that which is included (Foucault 1982). It is found that in this relationship, the fetish is identified as that which disavows difference in an economy of the same, whilst signifying the excess and surplus upon which value is based. It is found that by positioning the phallus at the heart of an economy of desire, desire is allocated the function of reproduction in which male presence fills the void of female lack in a coital act that excludes any form of sexuality and desire that stands outside the terms of its economy. As such, erotic enjoyment and desire that exists beyond the realm of the phallus is excluded and classified as deviant. According to Foucault, that which is judged as deviant in desire is epitomized by the notion of the fetish – this is due to the fact that the model of fetishism is found to illustrate the tendency for desire to diverge from its ‘natural’ utilitarian aim.

Connotations of femininity are to be found in the etymology of fetishism and the feminine which is, in turn, closely associated with notions of the ‘primitive’ and the deviant – all are considered outside the legitimate domain of value within a male-dominated, rational western culture.

Likewise, in the economic realm, money as a privileged signifier that signifies a surplus in the form of commodities is found to exclude prodigal expenditure in favour of accumulation and production. For Foucault, economic value in the modern episteme is determined by historical labour in which man is confronted by his relationship to scarcity; it is this relationship that sanctions a cycle of accumulation and production that excludes expenditure outside its economic terms.

The fetish in modernity, in both its psychosexual and socioeconomic form, is therefore placed within a contradictory position – it must embody difference, but remain anchored to an economy of value, through an act of disavowal, in which to retain its derivative and anomalous status. By performing this contradictory function, it serves the role of defining the Other as illegitimate in a sanctioned economy of the same. As such, legitimate value and that which it excludes are mutually defining terms.

This contradictory function of the fetish can be resolved once it is recognized that any appeal to a self-presence of value is unsustainable.

Whereas it is recognized that both socioeconomic and psychosexual forms of value are predicated upon a surplus, a legitimate and conventional form of value is found to be sanctioned via an appeal to a foundation, an initial presence, at the origin of exchange that authenticates the values within both economies. The authority of such value is found to be contained within the notion of a privileged signifier that generates a similar restrictive code in both socio-economic and psychosexual economies that operate via their own logic.

With reference to Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, the signifiers that constitute value in both socioeconomic and psychosexual economies are recognized as being not only arbitrary, and therefore artificial constructions, but are also found to be based upon unsubstantiated myths of origins and presence that attempt to legitimate their agency. An examination of the work of Marx demonstrates the mythical nature of the idea of primitive accumulation upon which capitalist economics is based. The work of Anne McClintock critiques the Freudian myth of a primal law that underwrites Oedipal relations. An examination of Derrida's critique of Phallogocentrism - the term used to describe the privilege accorded to the phallus (sign of sexual difference) as a mark of presence within logocentric thought - demonstrates how a restricted phallic economy is intimately linked with the prejudices of logocentrism in that, by being the privileged signifier of presence and absence, the phallic signifier becomes the origin from which the single (male) sexual economy is put in place.

The work of Jean Baudrillard is found to recognize an equivalent function between privileged signifiers in both socioeconomic and psychosexual economies. For Baudrillard, our fascination with the form of the fetish exists due to our placement within a 'restrictive logic of a system of abstraction': money and the imperatives of capital. Baudrillard equates this socio-economic phenomenon to that of the psychosexual fetish. Whereas the fetish object bears the mark of the phallus that puts a system

of sexual exchange into place, the commodity bears the mark of money / capital that puts a system of economic exchange into motion – both objects therefore rely on a system of exchange put into play by privileged signifiers. In each case, the authority of the privileged term within each economy is found to be arbitrary. By recognizing the arbitrary and fabricated nature of value, not only is the legitimacy of an established order destabilised, but also the criteria from which the non-western other is perceived – if all value is arbitrary and fabricated, then western appeals to a universal, rational order are no more legitimate than a perceived capricious investment in objects by non-western cultures.

If value is recognized as being predicated upon an artifice constituted by surplus and excess, in which all appeals to a self-present origin are found to be both fraudulent and arbitrary, the possibility that the notion of difference, rather than negation, is inherent within all social value may be considered and that the derivative connotations attached to the notion of fetishism can be put into question – in an act of reversal, this will have the consequence of allowing the fetish to be perceived as both a positive affirmation and the archetype of value, rather than a derivation. The notion of artifice contained within the etymology of the word can then be foregrounded as a positive attribute that generates value, the notion of disavowal could then be perceived as an attribute that refutes artifice - value has the potential to become a reified entity in which fabrication is hidden for reasons of efficiency and utility.

In the third section, *Fetishism, Death and the General Economy*, the connections between fetishism, death and the general economy are considered. By examining these connections, the possibility of constituting a positive notion of the fetish based upon a relation of difference outside a restricted economy of the same can be explored. To understand how a notion of the fetish and value can be constructively constituted upon difference rather than identity requires an examination of the notion of death. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), Baudrillard points out that the concept of death is found to provide a shared notion of Otherness for both socioeconomic and psychosexual realms and provides the origin

and foundation to legitimate their corresponding values. It is this concept that ties these realms together as homogeneous economies that exclude that which is in excess to their utilitarian and reproductive roles.

An exploration of the Freudian and Lacanian notion of the death drive allows us to recognize its premise upon a metaphysics of presence. The death drive is identified as being subject to repetitions fuelled by the currency of the phallic signifier – the symbol of exchange between those that have the phallus and those that lack. The repetitions of the death drive are therefore found to be subject to the same metaphysics of presence, with its appeal to some origin at its foundation from which we are separated. As such, the death drive is tied to a notion of the repetition of the same where the possibility of difference is excluded. According to Louise Kaplan (2006), the funeral imagery in Freud's conception of the fetish draws our attention to the denigrated and castrated status of femininity – a status that excludes the presence of women from a masculine Symbolic Order that constitutes value and identity. Whereas the Lacanian concept of the *objet petit a* describes the eternal, repetitious and ultimately futile search for the lost object of desire, its position as a substitute for this object allows us to consider the possibility that all objects of desire are but fetishes that serve the function of attempting to fill the void inaugurated upon entry in the Symbolic Order – we can therefore consider the possibility that the phallus is nothing more than a privileged signifier, or fetish, within a restricted economy that instigates lack at the heart of desire. This conception reverses the usual psychoanalytic interpretation of the fetish in which the phallus exists as presence first (if only in phantom form), followed by a substitution. If the object-cause of desire – the *objet petit a* – allows us to interpret all objects of desire as fetishes once we recognize them as substitutes for that which has been lost, their status as fetishes, once we negate the causal notion of an original presence from the equation, needs to be considered. Such a consideration points to a notion of the fetish as an immanent object of desire artificially produced rather than being anchored to an original causal relationship. As such, the sexual drive can be perceived as a means of

generating an untransposable fetish – an object that transgresses the restrictive economy of the same. To understand how desire operates outside an economy of the same, the writings of Jean Baudrillard and Georges Bataille are examined.

Baudrillard criticizes the death drive as yet one more example of a tendency to homogenize economies via exclusions. Baudrillard connects the notion of death within this drive to that which is excluded within political economy. Baudrillard proposes that a historical trend exists in which the dead have been increasingly prohibited from symbolic circulation. Death is perceived as the ultimate deviancy within modernity, against which the normal functioning human can be defined. Death is therefore to be radically excluded in order to legitimize the value of life – its very exclusion both valorizes life and provides an alibi for its legitimation. According to Baudrillard, the very notion of survival is itself tied to the exclusion of death, which, in turn, legitimates an intensified valorization of life. Baudrillard perceives a correspondence between death as a value, as a radical Other, political economy and the psychosexual. Whereas Foucault identifies notions of scarcity as a determining factor in modern political economy, in which life and death find an equilibrium, Baudrillard perceives death as the blindspot of political economy, the ‘absence haunting all its calculations, [where the] absence of death alone permits the exchange of values and the play of equivalences’ (Baudrillard 1993, p.154). The mechanism of accumulation and exchange within a capitalist economy is therefore perceived as a means to guarantee survival, deflect scarcity and ward off death. Baudrillard critically ties this notion of equilibrium and equivalence to the concept of the death-drive in its endorsement of death as an absolute finality in opposition to life – an absolute horizon to which we are repeatedly drawn. Baudrillard contemplates the possibility that a prodigal waste and expenditure within the system would upset the circuit of accumulation and exchange to the point that it could no longer function.

According to Baudrillard, the work of Georges Bataille offers us a vision of death that negates its regulative function. To understand the cyclical relationship of life and death and how ideas of surplus and excess

offer an alternative to restrictive economies that delineate that which is to be included and excluded, the notion of eroticism and the general economy within the work of Bataille is considered. An examination of these concepts is found to generate a conception of death as an integral part of the life cycle. By understanding death and life as cyclical rather than viewing death as an origin to which we incessantly wish to return, the possibility of perceiving the fetish as an untransposable object of desire becomes viable. Within such a cyclical relationship, repetition offers the potential of a circuit of desire that can be reproduced and repeated without an appeal to some origin of presence. By examining Bataille's notion of the general economy, the possibility of exchange and value outside the logic of homogeneity and equivalence within restrictive economies is identified. By expending surplus prodigally, the notion of the general economy offers us a means to understand the artifice of production and desire beyond socially endorsed taboos and the realms of utility and reified value. In such circumstances, desire is interpreted as that which transgresses the profane world of the everyday, offering us a means of communication with that which is in excess of ourselves and society – it therefore allows communication with death on the road to becoming Other. Transgression therefore allows the death of identity in favour of difference – it is the constant negotiation between these two realms that gives us a sense of becoming.

By examining Bataille and Michel Leiris' conception of the fetish in relation to the general economy, the fetish is recognized as an object of desire that bridges these two realms and is therefore to be viewed as untransposable. The fetish is found to seduce via its appeal to the transgressive and excessive realm of the sacred, outside the exclusions constituted by taboos and the reified values within a restricted economy. By transgressing the taboo, the fetish is therefore found to enter into the realm of the ineffable – from this perspective desire, in its excess, remains outside the realms of socially endorsed categories of utility, production and reproduction. Whereas a Bataillean conception of the fetish offers a notion that transgresses the profane world of the everyday, it fails to explain and

resolve the contradiction in which the fetish can be perceived as both an instigator and transgressor of value.

In the Fourth section, *Fetishism, Difference and Deleuze*, the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari are explored in which to provide an understanding of how desire productively invests in a fetish object without recourse to an original standard of value. Conversely, their ideas will also explain how such an unprecedented investment has the potential to become an ossified equivalent value. Such explanations will generate an understanding of the mutual relationship that exists between both the reified and transgressive worlds that inhabit the fetish.

By examining the relationship between difference and repetition within the work of Deleuze, a cyclical movement of becoming that incorporates the complementary elements of life and death is recognized that no longer has recourse to an initial origin. This rebuttal of origins refuses the self-present movement and repetition inherent to the death drive and is found to subvert western conceptions of rational linear time. Deleuze's concern for difference and repetition is then positioned within the context of the *Body Without Organs* – a concept used to explain the production and cycles of desire conducted within and upon the body. In contrast to the death drive, the repetitions and reductions of intensity performed upon the *Body Without Organs* is manifested via a play of difference. By exploring a series of syntheses performed upon the *Body Without Organs*, desire can be understood as a productive and liberating force, as well as a means for forging recognition and identity – as such, it offers a means to account for the manifestation of desire and value within both restrictive and general economies.

The relevance of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Body Without Organs to a revised conception of the fetish is explored via a reading of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's writings on the topic. Such a reading is found to allow us to move beyond their notion of the fetish as a reifying tendency of anti-production, towards the possibility that the fetish is a productive process that generates a new object of desire akin to that produced upon the Body Without Organs. As such, a Deleuzian line of

flight is conducted beyond his own writing on the topic. In the case of Deleuze's comparison with masochism, the fetish appears as a means of suspending subjective relations and putting them in potential; the fetish is therefore found to correspond to the Body Without Organs in that there is no determined state prior to the connections made during desiring-production. In the case of Deleuze's notion of the impulse-image, fetishes are those part-objects invested with energies that dislocate such entities from their previous contexts; as such, the fetish of the impulse-image corresponds to those assemblages achieved upon the Body Without Organs. Given the correspondence between the Body Without Organs and fetishism within Deleuze's work, a conception is determined in which the fetish is generated through immanent desire without the determination of a fundamental presence or lack. This revised conception of the fetish manifests itself in terms of invested fragments; for Deleuze, both the connective synthesis within the Body Without Organs and the impulse-image have the potential to rupture, dislocate and fragment so that objects can be reinvested with new possibilities. These new manifestations are then recorded and memorised as so many coordinates of desire. Such coordinates upon the Body Without Organs allows us to recognise a given state of identity - an identity always subject to transformations generated by further disjunctive syntheses. As such, a Deleuzian account posits the fetish as an archetype of value, rather than its derivative. A Deleuzian account therefore supplements the Batailleian notion of the fetish as an untransposable object of desire whilst resolving the contradiction in which the fetish can be perceived as both an instigator and transgressor of value.

A comparison is made between contemporary theories of fetishism in relation to a Deleuzian model in which to ascertain their efficacy for interpreting modes of fetishism that transgress conventions and establish new values. Contemporary interpretations of fetishistic strategies are explored in the work of Amanda Fernbach, Louise Kaplan and Tina Chanter. Despite offering both criticisms and insights into the extended application of fetishism within culture, it is suggested that, by interpreting

the fetish from the perspective of traditional and, in some cases, unsubstantiated principles that have remained persistent throughout the history of the concept, such interpretations continue to focus on notions of presence, lack and the oppositions a restrictive economy puts in place. It is proposed that a Deleuzean notion of the fetish has greater efficacy in that it allows the notion to be understood as productive of value, allowing the possibility to forge value outside the terms of such an economy.

The fifth and final section of the study, *Fetishism, Femininity and the critique of lack*, examines attempts to identify a sexual economy outside the singular male phallogentric realm. Such attempts revolve around the possibility of feminine difference, as this is the realm that is most overtly excluded within traditional accounts of fetishism. According to the traditional psychosexual account, the idea of female fetishism is deemed an impossibility – woman has no reason to disavow castration when already placed within this position. It is argued that accounts of female fetishism expose the limited scope of a phallogentric economy of desire and that other economies must therefore be possible to account for this impasse at the heart of fetishism.

The literature concerning female fetishism is described in which to survey the current understanding of the phenomenon in terms of its relationship to, and divergence from, previous ideas of fetishism. The attempt to define a notion of the female fetish in the work of Elizabeth Grosz, Anne McClintock, Theresa De Lauretis and Gamman and Makinen is explored. By entering into a dialogue with the terms of a singular phallogentric economy, these interpretations of female fetishism are found to replicate the pattern of reducing desire and its objects to a pre-given set of binary oppositions that perceive difference and identity in gendered terms – either as a parody or masquerade, or a pathological response to maternal separation anxieties, themselves tied to a wider Oedipal logic.

Post-structuralist feminist thought is discussed in its attempt to negotiate the insights of Lacanian psychoanalysis in which to define a sexuality outside the confines of a singular phallogentric economy. These theories are found to be effective at defining a sexuality that is the Other of

a phallogentric economy, but which ultimately leaves the binary oppositions upon which it is founded intact. By referring to the work of Christine Battersby, the perceived failure of theories of feminine difference to move beyond the reified categories of a phallogentric order can be seen as symptomatic of a potentially flawed epistemology. The work of Irigaray is examined as a possible means to recognize an alternative economy outside such an order by appealing to women's morphology. It is argued that a Deleuzean model of desire and value has greater efficacy for a model of fetishism due to the artificial and productive notion found to be contained in the idea of the fetish – a notion that is required to go beyond morphological notions of sexual difference.

A comparison is made between a Kristevan and Deleuzean notion of fetishism within literature in which to identify how an alignment to feminine difference can be reinterpreted from an immanent perspective in which to avoid remaining within the binary terms of a restrictive economy. Accusations of phallogentric gender complicity within Deleuze and Guattari's notion of productive desire are addressed. The concepts of 'becoming woman' and the potential neglect of the reproductive realm within their work are discussed in relation to Battersby's metaphysics of natality.

By offering a positive model of identity-through-difference, a Deleuzean notion of the fetish is found to escape the Freudian / Lacanian narrative of presence and lack and is found to provide an effective means to interpret fetishism beyond phallogentric oppositions. By perceiving fetishism as a productive activity where objects of desire are constructed via the repetition of difference upon the Body Without Organs, value is understood as a temporary unity within the interface of the body / world which can either produce a restricted economy or can be disseminated to make new connections. As such, a Deleuzean model of the fetish has the capacity to account for traditional representations of the fetish, as well as manifestations of difference in which the fetish punctuates the point at which desire has taken flight. In conclusion, it is asserted that the fetish should be understood as a productive artifice, an archetype of value

generated from productive desire. It is always an excess, a surplus desire, and it is erroneous to perceive it as anything else.

## **Part One - Fetishism and the problem of value**

In this section, we will outline the domain in which the notion of fetishism is defined within modernity. As we shall see, the concept is used as a means of delineating legitimate value from its deviant other – as such, fetishism is found to be a tool incorporated within the discourse of modernity for confronting the problem of value, understood as the lack of equivalence in exchange across incongruous social groups.

The etymology of the notion is examined in order to identify how fetishism came to stand for that which has deviant value against that which is legitimate within modernity. The word is found to incorporate two central notions: the idea of magic or witchcraft and the idea of manufacture or artifice. Subsequently, the term ‘fetishism’ is found to be used to signal the Other of European Enlightenment - whereas modern reason was considered progressively rational, the notion could be used to indicate what was considered irrational, based on superstitious belief, or that which is beyond reason and in excess of western values. The word also comes to signal the fact that such perceived superstitious beliefs hold their power via the fact that the social relations, which produce their value, are disavowed.

By using the distinction between European reason and non-western beliefs and practices, the notion of fetishism is found to provide a satirical tool for modern socio-economic theorists and psychologists to reflect upon those aspects considered irrational within their own society. Whereas the modern world of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was considered to be rational, Marx, Binet and Freud highlighted the ways in which irrationality could still be found in the areas of economics and the bourgeois psyche. For Marx, the exchange of the commodity form within capitalist society obscured and disavowed the underlying nature of social relations, so that what should be ‘definite social relations between men [becomes] the fantastic form of a relation between things’ (Marx 1990, p. 165). For Binet and Freud, the rationality of the civilized, modern mind both veiled and conflicted with the underlying desires hidden deep within

the unconscious of the human personality. As such, the fetish comes to stand for those points within modern society where difference is disavowed within an established order.

In each case, the fetish in modernity is recognized as being founded on a surplus – whether surplus production or excess erotic energy - which then deviates from a prescribed exchange that serves a specified social function. In both instances, the deviation enacted by the fetish is determined by an established term that acts as an equivalence of value, which simultaneously designates that which digresses from its authority.

### ***Fetishism and the cultural imperialism of value***

In *The Problem of the Fetish, 1* (1985), William Pietz points out that the ‘idea of the fetish originated in a mercantile intercultural space created by the ongoing trade relations between cultures so radically different as to be incomprehensible’ (Pietz 1987, p.24). As such, the fetish is a term that comes to signify the problem of understanding the relative investment of value within social exchange. As Pietz indicates, the

problem of the nonuniversality and constructedness of social value emerged in an intense form from the beginning of the European voyages to black Africa [...] The mystery of value – the dependence of social value on specific institutional systems for marking the value of material things – was a constant theme in transactions [...] (Pietz 1985, p.9)

As Anne McClintock points out, for ‘both Africans and Europeans, the fetish became the symbolic ground on which the riddle of value could be negotiated and contested’ (McClintock 1995, p.187). Pietz gives an example of the relativity of value exposed within fetishistic practices. In the African Akan economy, gold became a measure of value in response to trade relations with Europeans. Whereas Europeans used gold as an

equivalent measure of value in exchange, the Akan population would also adorn themselves with gold weights in which to bring good fortune and health – as such, two forms of value were embodied in one object: European commodity value and indigenous social value (Pietz 1988, p.110-111).

Pietz describes the etymology of the term 'Fetishism' as it evolved within colonial interchanges between Europe and Africa. Pietz argues that the term originally developed from the pidgin word *Fetisso* that was used by Portuguese traders in Africa during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This word derived from the Portuguese word *feitico*, meaning the "magical practice" or "witchcraft" performed by the "ignorant classes". The word *Feitico*, in turn, originates from the Latin adjective *facticius*, which means to be "manufactured" (Pietz 1985, p. 5). The modern manifestation of the word *Fetishism* does not occur until 1757, when Charles de Brosses first coined the term in his work *Du Culte des dieux fetiches, ou parallele de L'ancienne religion de L'Egypte avec la religion actuelle de Nigritie*. In this work, the term fetishism is used to describe the erroneous worship of material objects in "primitive" societies, where the truth 'of the fetish resides in its status as a material embodiment [as opposed to] that of the idol, for the idol's truth lies in its relation to iconic resemblance to some immaterial model or entity' (ibid, p.7). Pietz summarises this post-enlightenment view of the fetish, in which it is viewed as the ignorant, superstitious practice of worshiping material entities, in contrast to the proper understanding achieved by scientific reason:

Failing to distinguish the intentionless natural world known to scientific reason and motivated by practical material concerns, the savage (so it is was argued) superstitiously assumed the existence of a unified causal field for personal actions and physical events, thereby positing reality as subject to animate powers whose purposes could be divined and influenced. Specifically, humanity's belief in [...] supernatural powers was theorized in terms of pre-

scientific peoples' substitution of imaginary personifications for the unknown physical causes of future events over which people had no control and which they regarded with fear and anxiety. (1993, p. 137-8)

Though this view of the fetish persisted within the imagination of western writers during the nineteenth century onwards, it is a perception projected from western prejudices and beliefs that are blind to the actual functions and practices of the fetish objects within their native cultures. As Anthony Shelton points out,

[t]he Western image of African 'fetishism' was constructed from a selective combination of medieval Christianity and witchcraft beliefs with fifteenth and sixteenth-century Portuguese, Dutch and French explorers' and traders' accounts of the beliefs and practices encountered on Africa's Guinea coast. (Shelton 1995b, p11)

By projecting western viewpoints onto African indigenous practices, European writers, missionaries and colonialists could assert that 'adherence to 'fetishism' implied ignorance, leading to an irrational fear of the world around them, and pointed to a basic mental inferiority which was used to justify their tutelage by European powers' (ibid, p.14). The notion of fetishism was viewed as inferior to western belief systems, where 'popular and learned writers alike generally accepted that the worship of terrestrial, material objects [...] was the most primitive moment of religion' (Pietz 1993, p. 131). This derogatory view of the fetish within enlightenment thought is evident in the writing of Hegel. For Hegel, there is no consciousness of higher powers or universals in the religious fetishism of African culture. Man is identified as having power over elements through "magic", mastery over which is given in an external fetishistic form: animal, stone, wooden figure etc. If the fetish object fails to control an element, the user will 'bind and beat and destroy the Fetich [...] making another immediately, and thus holding it in their power

(Hegel 2001b, p.112). As such, African peoples are perceived as having no relation with other forces or consciousness outside their own sensuous whims and desires, making rational universal principles impossible. As Hegel states:

[...] an outward form [is given] to this supernatural power – projecting their hidden might into the world of phenomenon by means of images. What they perceive as the power in question, is therefore nothing really objective, having a substantial being and different from themselves, but the first thing that comes their way [...] it may be an animal, a tree, a stone, or a wooden figure. This is their *Fetich* – a word to which the Portuguese first gave currency, and which is derived from *feitizo*, magic. Here, in the Fetich, a kind of objective independence as contrasted with the arbitrary fancy of the individual seems to manifest itself; but as the objectivity is nothing other than the fancy of the individual projecting itself into space, the human individuality remains master over the image it has adopted (ibid).

For Hegel, the perceived whimsical fetishistic values of African culture, that prevent the development of higher universal principles, have implications for historical time. Whereas western enlightenment believes in a notion of linear historical progress – manifested in Hegel's dialectical movement – the arbitrariness of the fetish positions African culture outside of historical time. As Hegel states:

[Africa] is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit [...] What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which [has] to be presented [...] as on the threshold of the World's History. (ibid, p.117)

The subjugation and deprecation of African culture implicit within western discourses on fetishism correlates with Orientalist practices identified by Edward Said as a 'Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority' (Said 2003, p.3). According to Said, an 'idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans' (ibid, p.7) was asserted in which to produce a hegemony 'both inside and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures' (ibid). As such, the subjugation of colonial peoples and the non-western was justified via a western hegemonic discourse in which the Other was viewed as inferior through notions of 'backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality' (ibid, p. 206). The notion of Otherness that informs Said's discussion of Orientalism is influenced by Foucault's concept of power-knowledge, a notion explored in part two.

This distinction between European reason and non-western beliefs and practices inherent to the notion of fetishism is found to provide a satirical tool for modern socio-economic theorists and psychologists. Marx, Binet and Freud adopted the western notion of the fetish – complete with its assumptions of Otherness, superstition and irrationality – as a means to reflect back upon European society what was irrational and superstitious within their own culture. As the cultural theorist Laura Mulvey states, these thinkers used the word 'ironically, throwing back at their own [modern] societies the term used to encapsulate primitive, irrational, beliefs that we associated with Africa' (Mulvey 1996, p.2). In each case, that which is deemed irrational is the deviation from the determinants of value – social relations of production and reproduction – towards an investment in objects that appear to have an inherent value in their own right. This apparition occurs via a disavowal. The implications of notions of deviation and disavowal within the modern concept of fetishism will now be examined.

### ***Fetishism and Disavowal.***

As Pietz has recognised (Pietz 1993, p.134), Marx had studied religious fetishism in depth, making extensive excerpts from the book in which the term was coined, Charles de Brosses' *Du culte des dieux fetiches* (1760). Marx first makes reference to the notion of fetishism in his article *Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood* (1842) in the *Rhenish Times*. Within this article, Marx makes a direct comparison between the fetish practice of Cuban 'savages' and the material interests invested in wood by Rhineland forest owners. Marx states:

The savages of Cuba regarded gold as a fetish of the Spaniards. They celebrated a feast in its honour, sang in a circle around it and then threw it into the sea. If the Cuban savages had been present at the sitting of the Rhine Province Assembly, would they not have regarded wood as the Rhinelanders' fetish? (Marx / Engels 1975, p.262-3)

According to Marx, the Rhineland Province Assembly, which was dominated by the Rhine forest owners, orientated their interests around wood as a material object, rather than prioritizing the general interest. As such, wood, as an embodiment of the forest owners' private economic interests, 'abolish[ed] all natural and spiritual distinctions by enthroning in their stead the immoral, irrational and soulless abstraction of a particular material object and a particular consciousness which is slavishly subordinated to this object' (ibid). In this first example, we can see that Marx adopts the typical nineteenth century perception of the notion of fetishism in which to compare a perceived superstitious and primitive practice with that which was perceived as irrational in the West – the subordination of consciousness to a particular inanimate object that appears to have inherent value. Marx extends this use of the concept in *Capital: Volume 1* (1867) in which it is applied to commodities in general, regardless of their material qualities.

In chapter 1 of the first volume of *Capital*, Marx makes his famous analogy between the fetishism of commodities and that of contemporaneous perceptions of “primitive” religions. In section 4 of this chapter, *The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret*, Marx describes how the value of commodities, which are the ‘definite social relations between men [become] the fantastic form of a relation between things’ (1990, p. 165). To illustrate this phenomenon, Marx takes

flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. (Marx 1990, p.165)

By making the comparison whereby the seemingly innate value of commodities is akin to the superstitious, purposeful meanings erroneously applied to intentionless natural objects within popular notions of African fetishism, Marx was able to describe the process whereby the determinant of exchange value – the socially necessary labour time to produce a commodity - becomes lost through the alienated relations between producers, giving the false impression that commodities have a value in themselves. According to Marx, the production of commodities embodies a two-fold character of labour: *concrete labour* and *abstract labour*. Whereas concrete labour refers to the diverse range of particular skills necessary in the creation of a specific object, abstract labour refers to the expenditure of labour in general in the production of commodities. For Marx, it is only when labour is reduced to this abstraction that all concrete instances can be comparably measured and exchanged for money – more on this will be said when we consider surplus and equivalence later in this chapter. In chapter one of *Capital*, Marx describes how commodities have a determinate value, of which exchange-value is the reflection. This value is the cost to society of producing a commodity, the cost of which can be measured through *abstract human labour*. As Marx states:

On the one hand, all labour is an expenditure of human labour-power, in the physiological sense, and it is this quality of being equal, or abstract, human labour that it forms the value of commodities. On the other hand, all labour is an expenditure of human labour-power in a particular form and with a definite aim, and it is in this quality of being concrete useful labour that it produces use-values (1990, p.137).

The measurement of abstract human labour is determined through the socially necessary labour time 'required to produce any use-value under the conditions of production normal for a given society and with the average degree of skill and intensity of labour prevalent in that society' (Ibid, p.129). As the above implies, there is also a two-fold character to commodities produced – all commodities have both a use-value and an exchange-value. The use value is defined as that which the commodity can be used for, the exchange value is the quantitative value of a commodity in relation to other commodities. Because a commodity is, by definition, that which has been produced for exchange, the diverse range of use-values are not that which gives the commodity its value – it is the embodiment of abstract labour in the production of a thing for exchange, personified by money, that is the determinant. As Marx states:

As use-values, commodities differ above all in quality, while as exchange-values they can only differ in quantity, and therefore do not contain an atom of use-value. (ibid, p. 128)

As we shall see later, it is this notion of an object produced as a surplus for exchange that determines the need for an equivalent manifested in the form of money towards which all other commodities are compared. As an object of exchange then, a commodity's value has nothing to do with its useful, material features. Because the commodity only enters an exchange relation via the marketplace – a relation that separates the consumer from the producer – each worker is forever alienated from each

other and the commodity appears to have value inherent to itself; it is this alienation and disavowal of productive relations that gives the commodity its fetishistic character. As Marx points out,

the labour of the private individual manifests itself as an element of the total labour of society only through the relations which the act of exchange establishes between the products, and, through their mediation, between the producers. To the producers, therefore, the social relations between their private labours appear as what they are, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things. (ibid, p. 165-6)

Labour relations, as the determinant of value, are therefore disavowed precisely due to the fact that such relations are hidden once a worker's expropriated labour has been alienated within the marketplace. As Laura Mulvey points out, the fetishisation of commodities occurs because of the 'disavowal of the source of [their] value in labour power' (Mulvey 1996, p.4). One can extend the notion of disavowal within the commodity fetish further – it is not only a disavowal of productive relations, the commodity is also a disavowal of human artifice and activity within the very surface of the packaged commodity itself; as Mulvey states:

Any indexical trace of the producer or the production process is wiped out, in a strange re-enactment of the failure of the workers' labour power to stamp itself on its products as value. Any ghostly presence of labour that might haunt the commodity is cancelled by the absolute pristineness and the never-touched-by-hand packaging that envelops it. And the great intellectual achievement of capitalism, the organization of an economic system as a symbolic system, can continue in its own interests. (ibid, p.4-5).

As we shall see, this notion of an economic system as a symbolic system becomes pronounced when we come to consider the work of Baudrillard – this notion will clarify our understanding of the concept of the fetish as a reified product within a restricted economy.

On considering the role of fetishism and disavowal within socio-economic theory, let us now move on to consider the manifestation of these notions within the psychosexual realm. Alfred Binet first proposed the notion of fetishism as a psychosexual category in his essay *Le fetichisme dans l'amour* (1887). In this work, the conventional European understanding of fetishism as an African religious object irrationally invested with value was deemed an appropriate analogy for a particular sexual deviation within psychosexual research. As Binet states:

The worship of these patients for inanimate objects like night caps or nails boots resembles in all respects to the worship of the negro to wild fish bones or pebbles bright, except that this fundamental difference, in worship of our patients, religious worship is replaced by a sexual appetite. (Binet 2001, p.2)

Refusing to separate and place a clear distinction between Western religious practices and non-western beliefs, Binet declared that all religions were in some way involved with fetishism in their development and equates this devotion to religious objects to that experienced by the sexual fetishist. As Binet points out, the idols and images used since the early Christian era, 'sufficiently proves the generality and strength of our tendency to confuse the deity with the material and tangible sign that represents it. Fetishism holds no lesser place in love' (ibid, p.1). When it comes to love, Binet believes that we are all fetishists to a certain degree, he states: 'everyone is more or less fetishistic in love' (ibid, p.2). As such, Binet identifies what he calls a *petit* and a *grand* fetishism – it is only the later which is considered pathological. For Binet, the fetish object could be

either an inanimate object or any fraction of the body; however, certain body parts are identified as more subject to fetishism than others.

[O]ften [the fetish] is a fraction of a living person, like the eye of woman, a loop hair, perfume, a mouth with red lips, no matter the subject of perversion, the important fact is the perversion itself, it is the tendency that individuals have for objects which are normally unable to satisfy their genital needs. (ibid)

For Binet then, the irrational and superstitious investment of values upon material objects inherent to the concept of fetishism is something that can be equally applied to both Western and non-western practices. The sexual desire invested within objects is therefore not considered as exclusively Other, but is only considered a perversion by the degree in which an object comes to satisfy a genital need. However, Binet's theory does not address the causes or function of the fetish within sexual desire, these were to be addressed by Sigmund Freud.

Following Binet, Freud first addressed the concept of fetishism some eighteen years later in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905). Within this work, Freud identifies both the cause and role of the fetish. Within pathological conditions, the fetish is recognised as a substitute for the normal sexual object:

What is substituted for the sexual object is some part of the body [...] which is in general very inappropriate for sexual purposes, or some inanimate object which bears an assignable relation to the person whom it replaces and preferably to that person's sexuality[.] (1905, p.297)

In this sense, the fixation of desire upon an object deemed 'inappropriate' for sexual purposes corresponds to Michel Foucault's point that the phenomenon of fetishism comes to illustrate the potential of the

instinct to deviate from its 'natural' reproductive goal, towards other objects, according to an 'individual's historical adherence' (Foucault 1990, p.154). As we shall see in the next chapter, according to Foucault, the artificial fusion of biological notions of reproduction with an increasing categorization of sexual practices within a deployment of sexuality, comes to define what is normal in the reproductive and ideological interests of the dominant section of society.

The analogy between the substitute object perceived in fetishism and the superstitious investments made within nineteenth century perceptions of so-called "primitive" religions is apparent in Freud's comment that such 'substitutes are with some justice likened to the fetishes in which savages believe that their gods are embodied' (Freud 1905, p.297). In his essay *Fetishism* (1927), Freud declares:

When now I announce that the fetish is a substitute for the penis, I shall certainly create disappointment; so I hasten to add that it is not a substitute for any chance penis, but for a particular and quite special penis that had been extremely important in early childhood but had later been lost. That is to say, it should have normally have been given up, but the fetish is precisely designed to preserve it from extinction. To put it more plainly: the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and [...] does not want to give up (Freud 1927, p.152).

The fetish then, is perceived by Freud to be a substitute for an object of pure superstition - the maternal phallus (or the woman's penis, as Freud describes it here) that woman is perceived as lacking. According to Freud, it is the reluctance to give up a belief in the maternal phallus that generates the fetish – the trauma caused by castration anxiety leads to a contradictory belief within the child: the woman still retains the phallus, but it is no longer the same because something else has taken its place. As Freud describes:

He has retained the belief, but he has also given it up. In the conflict between the weight of the unwelcome perception and the force of his counter-wish, a compromise has been reached [...In] his mind the woman *has* got a penis, in spite of everything; but this penis is no longer the same as it was before. Something else has taken its place, has been appointed its substitute, as it were, and now inherits the interest which was formerly directed to its predecessor' (ibid, p.154).

Freud therefore declares the function of fetishism to be an act of disavowal; as Louise Kaplan states: 'Disavowal is the *sine no qua* of sexual fetishism' (Kaplan 2006, p.27). Within the fetishistic act, the fetishist

can disregard reality and all the facts to the contrary and continue to believe that a woman *has* a penis. Yet, all the while, he will continue to take account of reality and recognize that she *does not* have a penis. (ibid)

Because Freud attributes fetishism to castration anxiety, women are considered incapable of fetishizing – if woman is already deemed castrated within Oedipal relations, then, by inference, there is no room in Freud's theory for a woman to experience the anxiety that is a prerequisite for fetishism. This view of woman as castrated and lacking will be criticized in later chapters when we consider the feminist critique of lack and the phenomenon of female fetishism.

For Freud, fixations upon an object only 'becomes pathological when the longing for the fetish passes beyond the point of being merely a necessary condition attached to the sexual object and actually *takes the place* of the normal aim, and, further, when the fetish becomes detached from a particular individual and becomes the *sole* sexual object' (1905, p.298). As such, Freud places a similar emphasis to Binet upon judging the pathological nature of fetishism via the degree to which an object

comes to replace the typical sexual aim and object of desire. Unlike Binet, Freud identifies the recognition and subsequent disavowal of lack as the condition by which fetishism occurs. The work of Jacques Lacan follows Freud in identifying the role of lack in the constitution of an economy of desire and its subsequent disavowal within fetishism. In a move that revises the central tenets of Freud's theory, Lacan situates our entry into language as the causal mechanism of a radical lack that constitutes sexual desire and the aim of our sexual drives. As with Freud, there is a division between the sexes in Lacan's account between those that have the symbol of desire (the Phallus) and those that are perceived as lacking.

In his famous 'return to Freud', Lacan advocated a rereading of Freud that paid particular attention to the emphasis and effects of language in both constituting the unconscious and mapping its mechanisms. By focusing upon the effects of language, Lacan incorporated the central tenet of structuralism – that meaning is generated through a differential system of signifiers – into the realm of psychoanalysis. According to Lacan, subjectivity does not exist until we enter the Symbolic Order of language – prior to this, we experience a fragmented world that lacks coherence or identity in what Lacan defines as the realm of the Real. Lacan describes the pre-Oedipal development of the child that eventually leads to the identification of the self in relation to a sense of either having or lacking the phallus. According to Lacan, the infant experiences its body as fragmented during early infancy because it has no sense of a unified body image. The infant therefore experiences a series of biological and instinctual needs without any sense of self as separate from the external world or others – as such, the child perceives no sense of lack at this stage. On viewing its body within a mirror, or perceiving its body in relation to its mother or fellow child, the infant begins to identify its body as a separate and coherent entity *through* the image of the other. Lacan defines the point at which this recognition occurs as the "Mirror Stage":

It suffices to understand the mirror stage [...] as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image [...] For the total form of his body, by which the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt, that is, in an exteriority in which, to be sure, this form is more constitutive than constituted [.] (Lacan 2006, p.76)

Lacan's conception of the Mirror Stage therefore suggests that it is 'in the other that the subject first lives and registers himself' (Lemaire 1994, p.177). Such a recognition has two important consequences for the constitution of the self. Firstly, the mirror stage provides the infant with a coherent imagined identity. Secondly, by recognising this identity through the reflection of the other, the mirror stage establishes the child's first alienation from the real world - by observing and mimicking the other, the child perceives itself in relation to an external social context. This process of identifying self and other through reflected images situates the child within the realm of the Imaginary. On identifying coherent images within this realm, the Imaginary also initiates the recognition of the child's objects of desire: the body of the mother and to be all that the mother desires. Because the child's identity is alienated within the image of the other, it has no sense of a separate self; it therefore requires the intervention of a third party to break this dualistic identity–other (child–mother) relationship: namely, the father. The child recognises that the mother is part of a social-symbolic network outside the dualistic relationship that she has with itself. This social-symbolic network is represented through the codes and significations of language that occur every time the father is present and communicating with the mother. Such a theory has implications for a model of fetishism – the lack that the fetishist perceives and then disavows is not a literal penis, but the phallus as signifier within the system of language. As Grosz points out, as a signifier,

no one has a privileged or unique relation to [the phallus], for it exists only by virtue of the entire signifying chain and an intersubjective, multi-subjective, symbolically regulated social order. It functions only through the Other and the other, and this makes clear its divergence from the male biological organ [...] The penis, in other words, does not have sole right of alignment with the phallus. Not only does the penis act as if it were the 'meaning of the phallus', a series of substitute objects are also capable of taking on this function; a baby [...]; the whole of a woman's body [...]; and parts of her body [...] The penis, as imaginary object is always already bound up with signification. It is itself already a signifier, and as such, can function as a metonymic displacement of the phallus. (Grosz 1990a, p. 118-9)

As such, Lacan recognizes the fundamentally conventional nature of gender division based, as it is, upon the arbitrary nature of signification within language. As we shall see, this has implications for the production of desire and the creation of sexual difference. As Jacqueline Rose states:

By breaking the imaginary dyad, the phallus represents a moment of division [...] which re-enacts the fundamental splitting of subjectivity itself. And by jarring against any naturalist accounts of sexuality [...] the phallus relegates sexuality to a strictly other dimension – the order of the symbolic outside. (Rose 1982, p. 132)

On interpreting castration as an effect of division inaugurated by our entry into language, both sexes are radically alienated and neither of which can assume the position of the phallus, as it signifies a lack at the heart of being once we enter the realm of the symbolic; as such, any assumed position of either having or lacking the phallus is ultimately a masquerade. As Colebrook points out:

[T]he phallus acts as a signifier only because it can never be fulfilled. Furthermore, its ability to act as transcendental signifier (which orders the gender system) depends upon its difference from any actual body part. As the signification of full presence the phallus must be other than the penis; the fullness of the signifier is, therefore, dependent on its lack at the level of the signified. It is therefore neither given in man nor woman. (Colebrook 2000,p.120)

Though the signified of the phallus, as an effect of language, is deemed arbitrary, its function as a *paternal* metaphor is subject to criticism – as we shall see, though signification may be arbitrary, the assumption that its divisive function occurs via a *paternal* law against incest, reduces the generation of desire and subjectivity to the conventional road of male presence and female lack.

Lacan calls the codes and conventions produced through the significations within language the Symbolic Order. The coincidence of language with an authority figure – typically the Father – is referred to by Lacan as the “Name-of –the-Father”. The Name-of-the-Father is therefore equivalent to Freud’s threat of castration in which the father splits up the dyadic unity between mother and child, preventing the child further access to the mother’s body.

[...] it is thanks to the Name-of the-Father that man does not remain bound to the [...] service of the mother, that aggression towards the father is at the principle of the Law, and that the Law is at the service of desire, which it instigates through the prohibition of incest.

[!]It is, therefore, the assumption of castration that creates the lack on the basis of which desire is instituted. (Lacan Op Cit., p.723)

Because our objects of desire remain beyond the realm of language within the Imaginary, Lacan suggests that the unconscious is not a secret realm hidden within our mental apparatus, but is an effect of language; because our symbolic representations can never articulate our Imaginary objects of desire, they remain outside of consciousness. Our unconscious desires appear through the substitutions we make for lost objects and in the repetitions, metaphors and metonyms we make in language. As such, 'the subject is divided into two parts: *his unconscious truth and the conscious language which partially reflects that truth*' (Lemaire Op Cit., p.163). It is only through the close monitoring of these processes of substitution and combination within language that the analyst is able to identify the root causes of neurosis, perversions and psychosis – it is in this sense that Lacan suggests that the unconscious is structured like a language. Lacan applies this process of monitoring the substitutions and combinations in language to an analysis of fetishism in relation to the unconscious.

Whereas Freud perceived the fetish to be a disavowal of the mother's missing penis, Lacan perceives it to be a desire to preserve the maternal phallus within the subject of the mother. For Lacan the phallus is the symbol that represents what the mother wants outside the mother – child relationship, it is not therefore to be equated with an actual penis. Lacan claims that the relationship between the maternal phallus and the fetish as substitute can only be understood as a linguistic phenomenon. To support this claim, Lacan makes reference to Freud's patient who developed a fetish for shiny noses<sup>1</sup>. Freud points out that this fetish occurred because the patient mistook the English phonetic word 'glance' for the German phonetic word 'glanz' which means 'shine' when translated. Such a mistake occurred because the patient had been nurtured within an English nursery before moving to Germany. As such, from a Lacanian perspective, the maternal phallus is but one example of the phallic signifier that signifies our entry into the socio-symbolic order through language. This metonymic exchange of the phallic signifier is repeatedly evident within Freud's work - a range

of substitutions are evident in which the penis, mother and baby can all be symbolic of the phallus. <sup>2</sup> For Lacan, the relationship between the mother's lack of a penis and the fetish (the last thing seen before recognising his mother's absence: shoes, underwear fur, etcetera) is not one of visual resemblance:

Indeed, if a slipper were, strictly speaking, a displacement of the female organ and no other elements were present to elaborate the primary data, we would consider ourselves faced with a primitive perversion completely beyond the reach of analysis (Lacan and Granoff 1958, p.268)

On identifying the phallic signifier as the sign of both sexual difference and the acceptance of the Name-of-the-Father, the child fixates upon the last thing seen, embedded within the Imaginary, as a means of simultaneously denying and acknowledging his mother's castration - the child therefore refuses to fully accept his entry within the Symbolic Order:

What is the register in which, for a moment, this child refuses to place himself? We would say [...] the register of the symbol – a register essential to human reality (ibid, p.269)

To interpret the fetish by means of visual analogy would therefore be a mistake. If the fetish is chosen arbitrarily and is trapped within the realm of the Imaginary, it should not be expected to have visual resemblance and the causal relations will not be conscious. Because the phallus is a signifier within language, it is susceptible to metonymic substitutions of which the fetish item is an example. The patient discussed in Lacan and Granoff's account of fetishism (ibid, p.267-275) demonstrates a fear of amputees and a tendency to both caress and cut the shoes of both his mother and analyst – the maternal phallus has therefore been

metonymically displaced, whilst also being subject to behaviour which both simultaneously disavows whilst acknowledging castration.

In both the above socioeconomic and psychosexual cases of fetishism, we can recognise that the act of disavowal relies upon a sense of excess and a notion of equivalence that sets a standard within an economy of value. In the commodity form, the product generated via surplus labour is exchanged through the universal equivalence of money that results in its fetishization as an object that appears to be inherently imbued with value. Psychosexual desire revolves around the universal equivalence of the phallus – as either a physical or symbolic entity - that designates those which have and those that lack. Anxiety surrounding the notion of having or lacking is perceived as producing the fetish that consequently disavows the acknowledgment of lack and its association with femininity and the maternal body. This notion of surplus and equivalence will now be considered in which to ascertain their role in a definition of the fetish, understood as a disavowal and deviation in both its socioeconomic and psychosexual manifestations.

### **Surplus Value and Equivalence**

For Marx, different historical socio-economic formations can be distinguished via the form in which surplus labour is expropriated between dominant and subordinate classes. As Marx states,

[w]hat distinguishes the various economic formations of society – the distinction between for example a society based on slave-labour and a society based on wage-labour – is the form in which [...] surplus labour is in each case extorted from the immediate producer' (Marx 1990, p. 325)

Given such a view, the problem of value and exchange within society is *a priori* a problem of surplus and its distribution once society has satisfied the needs of basic subsistence – as we shall see later, Bataille

refers to this problem of surplus as an *accursed share*. As we have seen, according to Marx, the use-value of objects, in all their particularities, can be distinguished from value in its universality; value is an abstraction constituted at the point at which different qualitative objects need a constant towards which a quantitative equivalence can be determined. How is this quantitative measurement of value materialized in a constant? Marx describes the process in which a given type of useful object becomes the conventional and equivalent exchange object in trade activities. At this point, the object is recognised as embodying a general form (the expenditure of human labour) and therefore takes on a new role, that of the universal form of exchange: money. It can only become the universal equivalent through its exclusion from the relative form of value that other commodities are subject to. As Marx points out:

[T]he universal form is a form of value in general. It can therefore be assumed by any commodity [...A] commodity is only to be found in the universal equivalent form [...if] it is excluded from the ranks of all other commodities, as being their equivalent. Only when this exclusion becomes finally restricted to a specific kind of commodity does the uniform relative form of value of the world of commodities attain objective fixedness and general social utility' (Ibid p.162).

Marx identifies one arbitrary commodity 'which has historically conquered this advantageous position' (Ibid) as universal equivalent: Gold. As Marx points out, 'commodities set apart a specific commodity, say, *gold*, which becomes the direct reification of universal labour-time or the universal equivalent' (Marx 1971, p.65). For Marx then, fetishism is symptomatic of exchange in its universal equivalent form. Once society is capable of producing a surplus beyond its immediate needs, this surplus becomes subject to exchange in which value is determined by the mediation of the money sign at the point of which objects enter the marketplace - on entering this arena, both producer and consumer are unequivocally alienated from each other. As such, objects are fetishized in terms of the

fact that they appear to have an inherent value within themselves. Whereas most commentaries on commodity fetishism focus upon the effects of reification - in which economic relations of exchange and production appear as immutable laws that dominate individuals, rather than serving the needs of the human agencies that created them – it should be recognized that the object relation that is most subject to this process is money (and its gold equivalent), which has the touch of King Midas in relation to everything it comes into contact with. Of necessity, money must remain completely reified if it is to mark all social exchange relations with a universal notion of value – it thus presents us with a restrictive, homogeneous economy that absorbs everything within its movements.

Let us now consider surplus value in the realm of the psychosexual and the role played by equivalence in determining an economy of desire. At the heart of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis is the recognition that desire is based upon a surplus and it is precisely this excess that leads to the problems of neurosis – our active role in constructing objects of desire always risks deviating from the conventional aims and objects designated to it by society. This potential for deviation within surplus desire occurs at the point at which the instinct directs itself beyond an object of need. For Freud, the idea that the instinct can deviate from an original object of need relates to his notion of sexual drives. Freud differentiates between sexual drives and 'natural' biological instincts through the example of nourishment:

The satisfaction of the [oral] erotogenic zone is associated, in the first instance, with the satisfaction of the need for nourishment. To begin with, sexual activity attaches itself to functions serving the purpose of self-preservation and does not become independent of them until later [...As such, the need] for repeating the sexual satisfaction [...] becomes detached from the need for taking nourishment – a separation which becomes inevitable when the

teeth appear and food is no longer taken only by sucking [...] (Freud 1905, p.322)

The original satisfaction found in the biological function of nourishment becomes a drive to repeat through the replacement of another object at the same oral erotogenic zone. This need to repeat through such a replacement is constituted through the absence of the object associated with nourishment – this being the breast / mother. Freud points out that this replacement object is usually another part of the child's body, due to the fact that 'it makes [...] them] independent of the external world' (ibid). This autoeroticism therefore inaugurates the autonomy of the drive. Sexual drives then, can be defined by their departure from their original biological goal. As such, sexual drives and any subsequent 'substitute' object can be viewed as being constituted as a surplus beyond the realm of need.

The phallic stage of development, with its corresponding role in the formation of the Oedipus Complex, is identified by Freud as the point at which surplus erotic energy is focused towards socially given aims and objects. As Freud famously proposes, we assume certain gendered roles after recognizing our relation to the phallus associated with the father. According to Freud, we recognize that our first love object, the mother, desires that which is outside ourselves. This generates a hatred of the father that consequently results in both guilt and a fear of castration that is instigated by our recognition of sexual difference. As Freud points out within *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), we are 'all destined to direct our first sexual impulses towards our mothers, and our first impulses of hatred and violence toward our fathers' (Freud 1950, p.174). On recognizing that it is prohibited from having the mother as its love object, the male child recognizes its physical proximity to that which is desired by the mother and assumes the gendered position of the father; the female child recognizes it lacks that which the mother desires and correlates its own physicality with that of the mother and assumes the feminine gender role. As such, the son wants to become the father and the daughter wants

to become the mother in a bid to obtain the power of the Other that separates the child from its original object of love. As this whole dynamic revolves around the mother's desire for the Other which has the phallus, the whole edifice of sexuality is thought to be masculine – as Freud states, '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*' (Freud 1923, p.391). As such, a phallogentric sexual economy is constituted in which the sexes are divided into 'having a male genital and being castrated' (ibid, p.394). This situation in which one is understood as either having or lacking is then perceived as being responsible for the productive of opposing gender traits. Rather than being based upon an economy of difference then, sexuality is perceived as being founded upon a notion of equivalence where the phallus, as a singular privileged signifier, is the convention that determines desire and subjectivity for all.

This perception of a singular sexual economy determined by the phallus persists within the work of Lacan. Though Lacan views sexuality and subjectivity as being constructed within language, it remains tied to the notion of the phallus as a privileged signifier. For Lacan, the child recognises that the satisfaction of its needs can only occur by negotiation with its mother through language within the Symbolic Order. Such negotiation is required due to the mother's needs being met elsewhere – it is this inevitable alienation of needs within language that subsequently subjects the child to the realm of desire and lack. For Lacan, the Name-of-the-Father is represented by the phallic signifier that is to be viewed as something separate to the real penis it signifies. For Lacan, the phallus is the signifier, in language, which represents both sexual difference and the desire of the mother outside of the mother-child dyad; it therefore also represents the birth of the self as an 'I' that accepts its role within the Symbolic Order and acknowledges its separation from an imagined unity with its mother.<sup>3</sup> According to Lacan, desire occurs because the object of immediate gratification (the mother) is forever lost on entry into the Symbolic Order. Desire is insatiable in that the objects we choose in life -

whether a sexual partner, commodities, power or status – can never return us to the unity we had with the maternal body as an infant.

This condition, in which an object of desire is always a substitute for the lack of the real, is given a formulaic expression by Lacan and is referred to as the *objet petit a*. As Lacan points out, the *objet petit a* is not a Real object (Real in the sense that it exists beyond the realm of lack and the Symbolic Order), but the 'presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied [...] by any object' (Lacan 1991, p.180). The *a* within this formula stands for the fact that any object can be substituted once we are alienated within language – as Lacan states, he wished the *objet petit a* to have the 'status of an algebraic sign' (ibid, p.282). Because the *objet petit a* always remains an object substitute for an irredeemable loss, it should be understood as the object-cause of desire – an object substitute will always remain a failed attempt to fill the void which is the object of our sexual drives. Once we attain an object, it is never enough to satisfy our sexual drives because it will never fill the void created by a condition of lack – as Grosz points out, the 'drive is indifferent to its object: it is not an object that satisfies it, for this object reveals only another want, another satisfaction for which it yearns' (Grosz Op Cit., p.75). As Žižek points out, 'no matter how close [we] get to the object of desire, its cause remains at a distance [from us]' (Žižek 2006, p. 77); enjoyment / satisfaction is therefore always the remainder, an excess beyond the Symbolic Order, created by the lack at the heart of our sexual drives. The notion of the *objet petit a* has consequences for the notion of enjoyment. According to the concept of the *objet petit a*, enjoyment can only exist as a condition of a surplus; it is only when an erotogenic zone becomes subject to the object of a sexual drive – an excess beyond the needs of the biological instinct – that the subject can experience enjoyment beyond any biological function. At the point that the subject enters the Symbolic Order, enjoyment reaches its highest point of maturity – it is here that desire becomes insatiable, that its object (*objet petit a*) is forever barred from conscious thought. At this point, the importance of the notion of surplus as a prerequisite to psychosexual desire should be apparent. As we have

described, for Freud, the sexual drive is produced at the point the body generates a means of gaining pleasure beyond the realm of need; similarly in the case of Lacan, the body generates new means of pleasure once it is forever barred from the real via the Symbolic Order – as indicated, the *objet petit a* is the name given to the range of substitutes that constitute the means of enjoyment once barred.

On understanding the above, the Phallus is ultimately to be perceived in a similar way to Freud: it is the singular privileged signifier that puts the economy of desire into play – all parties, whether child, mother or father, wish to have the phallus which always symbolises the lack of unity within each subject and the desire for something beyond in which to attain satisfaction.

The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark where the share of the logos is wedded to the advent of desire. One might say that this signifier is chosen as what stands out as most readily seized upon in the real of sexual copulation, and also as the most symbolic in the literal (typographical) sense of the term, since it is the equivalent in that relation of the (logical) copula [...] If the phallus is a signifier then it is in place of the Other that the subject gains access to it. But in that the signifier is only there veiled and as the ratio of the Other's desire, so it is this *desire of the Other* as such which the subject has to recognize, meaning, the Other as itself a subject divided by the signifying *Spaltung* [(division)] (Lacan 2006, p.581)

For Lacan, the differentiation between the sexes is explained in terms of having or lacking the phallus; this is described as either *having* or *being* the phallus. As discussed, before the Oedipal stage the child perceives the mother as the sole means of satisfaction – as such, the mother is perceived as the all powerful phallic mother. During the Oedipal Stage, the mother loses her phallic role to the father, not because of a perception of anatomical lack, but because her desire exists outside in the form of the

father who, in turn, represents the social codes within language: the Name-of-the-father. At this point, by *having* the anatomical signified of the phallic signifier, the boy assumes the role of the Name-of-the-Father, whilst, lacking any anatomical signified of her own, the girl strives to affirm her position as desirable – *being* the phallus - for the other through secondary narcissism (secondary in that, by becoming the object of desire for man, she receives her phallic status through him). As Elizabeth Grosz describes, '[h]is position as the *subject* of desire is *confirmed*, while her position as the *object* of desire is *affirmed*' (Grosz 1990, p.127, emphasis added).

In both the writings of Binet and Freud, there is a presumption that normal sexuality is synonymous with reproductive activity, evident in the fact that deviancy is judged by the degree to which desire and eroticism wavers from the 'normal' reproductive act of penetrative coitus - hence Freud's focus on the essential role of the penis as the original object of desire for which the fetish subsequently becomes a substitute. A similar emphasis can also be attributed to Lacan – on identifying the phallus as the original signifier of desire, subjects are positioned as either having or being (lacking) the phallus. Though no subject can ultimately fill the void that the Phallus signifies via our entry into language, man has the signified that the Phallus alludes to, whereas woman is always positioned as lacking. As such, a restrictive economy of desire is put into play in which normal desire revolves around a single privileged signifier that is associated with the act of coitus – later we will see how such a singular economy is subject to criticism and ultimately lacks foundation.

Let us review what we have identified so far. Firstly, the origins of the term fetishism have been explored – the term has been found to simultaneously contain the idea of magic, witchcraft and artifice. The concept has been recognized as originating during the mercantile interchange between Europe and Africa and was used as a means to understand the non-universality and incomprehensibility of value between the two cultures. Rather than celebrating this difference, the concept acted

as a means to validate western value whilst deprecating African notions.

As Dawn Ades points out:

[C]onnoting over-evaluation and displacement, its job was to signal error, excess, difference and deviation. Perhaps one of the key phantoms of the dream of reason, it helped to structure and enforce distinctions between the rational and irrational, civilized and primitive, normal and abnormal, natural and artificial (Ades 1995, p.67).

The overriding use of the term within modernity – from the eighteenth century onwards – has been to describe an irrational investment of value in an object which is believed to be innate, yet is in reality a product of human construction. This is true of de Brosses' use of the term to distinguish primitive, irrational beliefs in opposition to western rationality and scientific reason. It is also true of those psychosexual and socio-economic theories that incorporated the term. In each case the fetish is perceived as deviating from modern western standards of reason and value.

Secondly, it has been found that the notion of fetishism within both socioeconomic and psychosexual discourses within modernity has been used as an ironic means of describing the irrational inherent within western societies – an irrational element whose underlying causes are subsequently disavowed. Whereas the modern world of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was considered to be rational, Marx, Binet and Freud highlighted the ways in which irrationality could still be found in the areas of economics and the bourgeois psyche. As such, the notion was adopted by 'Marx, and nineteenth-century psychologists, to refer to forms of irrational valuation within their own society' (Ades 1995, Op Cit). For Marx, the exchange of the commodity form within capitalist society obscured the underlying nature of social relations, so that what should be 'definite social relations between men [becomes] the fantastic form of a relation between things' (Marx 1990, p. 165). For Binet and Freud, the

rationality of the civilized, modern mind both veiled and conflicted with the underlying desires hidden deep within the unconscious of the human personality.

Thirdly, in both the case of psychosexual and socio-economic economies, fetishism has been recognized as being a product of surplus in which an arbitrary value is constituted beyond the realm of need. By examining the above socio-economic and psycho-sexual accounts of fetishism, we have identified a similar use of the notion of fetishism as a means of designating the arbitrary investment of value into an object. In both cases, such allocation of value is described as phantasmagoric – the value of the commodity, as a thing, hides the true condition of its value based on abstract human labour, the value of the psychosexual fetish derives from a fantasy in which the maternal phallus is believed to exist. As we have seen, in each case, such an investment in value can only manifest itself at a point beyond need – socio-economic surplus value can only exist when production surpasses subsistence, psychosexual desire and its constituent sexual drive which forges new objects can only exist as an excess beyond biological need. In both circumstances, such an excess is channeled through a restrictive economy of value instituted by an arbitrary universal signifier – in the case of socio-economic fetishism, the signifier is gold and its monetary equivalent that instigates the drive for accumulation and investment, in the case of psychosexual fetishism, the signifier is the phallus and the instigation of desire based upon presence and lack.

As described, the chosen privileged signifier acts as a means of channeling the exchange of surplus within a singular economy of value – this raises the question as to why exchange resolves around singular economies with determined and equivalent values and what role is played by privileged signifiers within them? This, in turn, raises another question. If, as the above recognizes, the chosen privileged signifier and its corresponding signified is merely an arbitrary construction, then to what degree can we discuss the fetish as an irrational deviation from an endorsed rational order? The arbitrariness would appear to destabilize an

appeal to the validity of such an established order whilst also questioning the criteria from which the non-western other is perceived.

It would also appear to question the motive behind the associated notion of disavowal within the concept of fetishism – when that which is disavowed is human agency, an Otherness hidden behind objects themselves invested with an arbitrary and constructed value, then we can consider the possibility that the purpose of disavowal can be extended – as well as misrecognizing the causal relations of value, disavowal also performs the task of vindicating such value via a denial of its arbitrariness and artificiality. Whereas the commodity disavows labour, the sexual fetish disavows the loss of sovereignty of the mother / love object which is subject to the artifice of language and the agency of the father. Later we shall go further still, given the artificiality and arbitrariness of the fetish, psychosexual accounts can be considered to be guilty of fetishizing the phallus and not, like Marx, perceiving that what is disavowed in the last instance is an active human agency, in this case, an unfettered and creative sexual drive - which both underlies and is subsequently channeled into a restrictive sexual economy.

## **Part Two: *Fetishism, Otherness and the Privileged Signifier***

Within the last section, the question was asked as to why exchange revolves around singular economies with determined and equivalent values and what role is played by privileged signifiers within them? In this section, it will be recognized that an established signifier of value functions to delineate a legitimate exchange of surplus by designating the fetish as an illegitimate divergence from its own restrictive economy of the same. As such, the privileged signifier is perceived as acting as a means to channel surplus production into both a form that is socially useful and which can be reproduced. Capitalist surplus value is exchanged via a signifier that acts as an equivalent to value that is accumulated and reinvested in which to develop further surplus and accumulation. A prodigal expenditure outside of this cyclical mechanism is ignored and excluded – this will become important in our later consideration of the writings of Bataille. Likewise, the surplus that manifests itself as the sexual drive is channeled into an exchange where desire revolves around either having or not having the phallus. Because the phallus instigates a lack in the unity of the subject, desire is recognized as insatiable, due to the fact that the phallus, as the signifier of lack, can never be attained. Desire outside the realm of the phallic economy is excluded as perverse and interpreted as a deviation from the reproductive aim.

In this section, the discourses that sustain the authority of these privileged signifiers can be recognized as examples of power-knowledge relations in which a legitimate value is established as much by what is excluded as that which is included. It is found that in this relationship, the fetish is identified as that which disavows difference in an economy of the same whilst signifying the excess and surplus upon which value is based. It is found that by positioning the phallus at the heart of an economy of desire, desire is allocated the function of reproduction in which male presence fills the void of female lack in a coital act that excludes any form of feminine sexuality or polymorphous perversity that stands outside the

terms of its economy. As such, erotic enjoyment and desire that exists beyond the realm of the phallus is excluded and classified as deviant. That which is excluded is judged as deviant and is epitomized by the notion of the fetish – the model of fetishism is found to illustrate the tendency for desire to deviate from its ‘natural’ utilitarian aim. Connotations of femininity are to be found in the etymology of fetishism, and the feminine, in turn, is found to be closely associated with notions of the ‘primitive’ and the deviant – all are considered outside the legitimate domain of value within a male-dominated, rational western culture. Given this, the fetish in modernity is placed within a contradictory position – it must embody difference, but remain anchored to an economy of value, through an act of disavowal, in which to retain its derivative and anomalous status. By performing this contradictory function, it serves the role of defining the Other as illegitimate in a sanctioned economy of the same. This contradictory function of the fetish can be resolved once it is recognized that any appeal to a self-presence of value is unsustainable.

Whereas it is recognized that both socioeconomic and psychosexual forms of value are predicated upon a surplus, a legitimate and conventional form of value is found to be sanctioned via an appeal to a foundation, an initial presence, at the origin of exchange which authenticates the values within both socioeconomic and psychosexual economies, whilst classifying that which is in excess of its authority as illegitimate. In each case, the authority of the privileged term within each economy is found to be arbitrary and lacking any self-present authority. With reference to Derrida’s critique of a metaphysics of presence, the signifiers that constitute value in both socioeconomic and psychosexual economies are recognized as being not only arbitrary, and therefore artificial constructions, but are also found to be based upon unsubstantiated myths of origins and presence that attempt to legitimate their agency. An examination of Derrida’s critique of Phallogocentrism demonstrates how a restricted phallic economy is intimately linked with the prejudices of logocentrism in that, by being the privileged signifier of presence and absence, the phallic signifier becomes the origin from which

the single (male) sexual economy is put in place. The work of Jean Baudrillard is found to recognize an equivalent function between privileged signifiers in both socioeconomic and psychosexual economies. The arbitrary and fabricated nature of value is recognized as not only destabilizing the legitimacy of an established order, but also disrupting the criteria from which the non-western other is perceived – if all value is arbitrary and fabricated, then western appeals to a universal, rational order are no more legitimate than a perceived capricious investment in objects by non-western cultures.

If value is recognized as being predicated upon an artifice constituted by surplus and excess, where all appeals to a self-present origin are found to be both fraudulent and arbitrary, we then need to consider the possibility that the notion of difference, rather than negation, is inherent within all social value and that the derivative connotations attached to the notion of fetishism must be expelled – in an act of reversal, this will have the consequence of perceiving the fetish as both a positive affirmation and the archetype of value rather than a derivation. The notion of artifice contained within the etymology of the word can then be foregrounded as a positive attribute that generates value, the notion of disavowal will then be perceived as a negative attribute that denies such artifice, in which value becomes a reified entity where its artificiality is hidden for reasons of efficiency and utility. As such, disavowal will be understood as vindicating value via a denial of its arbitrariness and artificiality.

### **Inclusions and exclusions: fetishism and modernity**

In the previous section, fetishism was found to be associated with a surplus beyond the realm of need. We will now explore how the use of the notion of fetishism has been used as a means to judge such an excess as either legitimate or deviant, useful or perverse – in turn, such discriminations will be identified as symptomatic of a culture in which objects, desire and activity is judged in terms of productive and

reproductive utility within restricted economies organized around privileged signifiers. As such, those values that serve no utility are found to be judged as deviant. The distinction between legitimate and deviant value, in which a notion of Otherness acts as a means of excluding that which has no utility within a restricted economy, will be identified as an effect of the modern episteme in which normative subjects are produced and categorized in a society which prioritizes notions of production and efficiency whilst excluding that which deviates from such concepts: the mad, sick, criminals and the perverse.

In his work *The Order of Things* (1966) Foucault devised the notion of an episteme. For Foucault, an *episteme* is defined as the

space of order [in which] knowledge was constituted [...] in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility (Foucault 1994, p. xxii).

The conditions of knowledge are therefore grounded within what constitutes a particular order and its given categories within a specific historical period – in Foucault's study, the classical and modern age are his particular focus for examination. For Foucault, a given order of knowledge, that which can be verified as true, is defined as much by what it excludes as by what it includes.

As industrialization, uniformity and discipline within modernity placed increasing emphasis upon the normative individual as a means of calculating its utility and efficiency within society, it was contrasted against that which deviated from it: the mad, the sick, the criminal and the perverse. Foucault was to see these forms of inclusion and exclusion as effects of power-knowledge. Following a Nietzschean notion that the will-to-truth is but a manifestation of the will-to-power, Foucault conceives both discourse and activity as a mode of power relations, he therefore extends

the typical conception of power relations beyond those usually associated with violence and coercion – as Foucault states, ‘even though consensus and violence are the instruments or results, they do not constitute the principle or the basic nature of power’ (Foucault 1982, p.789). Foucault perceives power as ubiquitous throughout all thought and action:

It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult [...] it is [...] always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions (ibid)

For Foucault, power operates via knowledge discourses and actions which position the subject in relation to their intended objectives – the subject can therefore be coerced into a consensual normative role or be understood as a deviant Other – in each case, power operates in a disciplinary mode upon the actions of others, whether these actions be coercive, consensual or punitive measures; in each case the subject is generated, categorized and coopted via the techniques within a particular power relationship. As Foucault points out

[...] a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that “the Other” (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up [...] The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome [...] Power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government (ibid).

For Foucault, the 'question of government' should be understood in its broader sense, as that which 'designate[s] the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed' (ibid p.790). If all affiliations between subjects are effects of power-knowledge relations, then this has clear ramifications for a notion of resistance. According to this view, to be liberated from a set of coercive relations is not to recover a self that is free from constraint; as Foucault points out:

[P]ower is 'always already there', that one is never 'outside' it [...] But this does not entail the necessity of accepting an inescapable form of domination or an absolute privilege on the side of the law [...] here are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised[.] (Foucault 1980, p. 141-2)

Resistance then, should rather be understood as an opposing alternate set of power-knowledge relations that either contest or take flight from current discourses or practices – as such, strategies of resistance define the limit point for a specific relationship of power. As Foucault states,

there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight. Every power relationship implies, at least *in potentia*, a strategy of struggle [...] Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal. [...] It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape. (Foucault 1982, p.794)

Such an understanding of resistance will become important in our later discussion of the Body Without Organs, where relatively static points of desiring relations are always subject to the possibility of lines of flight in

which new fetishistic relations of desire are formed beyond the confines and limits of previous models.

This concern for a micro-politics of power has clear implications for the governance and understanding of modern sexuality and is particularly relevant for our present study in that, for Foucault, the phenomenon of fetishism was the archetype and model for all the other perversions (Foucault 1990, p. 154). In accordance with techniques of power-knowledge that operate via a disciplinary procedure of inclusion and exclusion that legitimates a normative model, the notion of sexual perversion provided a means for culturally endorsed forms of sexuality to legitimize themselves against that which has the potential to threaten their dominance. Foucault stresses that such a concern for legitimation against that which threatens dominant interests should not be confused for the repressive hypothesis theories of sexuality generated by the likes of Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse<sup>4</sup>. Such hypotheses proposes that a free sexuality and economy of desire would be possible if only it was not subject to distortions and repressions performed on it by dominant economic and social interests. As already pointed out, if all subjective positions are subject to power-knowledge relations, there can be no position outside of such relations from which to be liberated. Repressive hypothesis theories of sexuality presuppose that the concept of sex and sexuality is something that exists both independent and external to repressive power structures. Without denying that modes of exclusion and repression exist, Foucault points out that the discourse of sex and sexuality is itself constituted via a range of historical power interests, and that to discuss exclusion, liberation and repression in relation to the categories within this discourse is to collude with powers with a vested interest in maintaining the body as a site of social control. As Foucault writes in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction* (1976):

One must not suppose that there exists a certain sphere of sexuality that would be the legitimate concern of a free and

disinterested scientific inquiry were it not the object of mechanisms of prohibition [...] If sexuality was constituted as an area of investigation, this was only because relations of power had established it as a possible object; and conversely, if power was to take it as a target, this was because techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse were capable of investing it. Between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority [...] (Foucault 1990, p. 98)

Given that Foucault perceives all relations to be subject to power-knowledge, resistance to coercive and prohibitive models of sexuality can be more effectively understood as the production of new forms of knowledge and practice that rearticulate and harness 'deviant' excess at the limits of established discourse – alternative practices can then be created which contest dominant models. As Jon Simons points out:

The assault on the citadel of bio-power requires radical tools. It begins by converting what is scientifically defined as sexual perversion into the invention of new pleasures, utilizing the unruliness of desires that might be denounced but cannot [...] be governed (Simons 1995, p. 100)

Such a view of desire in relation to power, with resistance being understood as the invention of 'new pleasures', will become important in our later explanation of fetishism as the archetype of desire: an immanent productive process that generates objects of desire, rather than being perceived as an act of substitution within a restrictive economy. For Foucault then, power-knowledge relations can both produce and destroy a new subject of desire that is 'made and unmade by that excess which transgresses it' (Foucault 1977, p.32). In such instances, 'erotic practices all lead to 'little deaths', or the death of the subject as a consolidated unit' (Simons Op Cit). As we shall see, whereas death within a restrictive economy of desire requires mourning for an original lost object of desire,

and a notion of the fetish as a memorial to it, a notion of death from the viewpoint of immanent productive desire perceives it as both a necessary and complementary component within the life process – for the subject of desire to be born anew, a transgression is required in which the death of its previous manifestation occurs.

Foucault proposes that notions of sexuality were legitimized precisely through discourses that categorised what, according to dominant social interests, should be perceived as normal sexual practices, as opposed to deviant sexual behaviour. Such discourses, whether psychoanalysis, psychiatry or modern medicine, defined legitimate sexuality as a reproductive practice that satisfied the function and interests of the bourgeois family – it both guaranteed the maintenance of bourgeois family lineage whilst controlling the reproduction and economic efficiency of the working class<sup>5</sup>. As such, for Foucault, sex and sexuality is not something that is primarily repressed, it is something that is produced as a social construct via relations of power - knowledge. So whereas the dominant class may have repressed and pathologized forms of sexuality that were surplus to the needs of its own reproduction and interests, it must have first produced a notion of sex and sexualities that both defined their bodies whilst setting a standard to differentiate itself against; as Foucault states:

[T]his was far from being a matter of the class which in the eighteenth century became hegemonic believing itself obliged to amputate from its body a sex which was useless, expensive, and dangerous as soon as it was no longer given over exclusively to reproduction; we can assert on the contrary that it provided itself with a body to be cared for, protected, cultivated, and preserved from the many dangers and contacts, to be isolated from others so that it would retain its differential value [...] (ibid, p.123)

Foucault identifies two systems that define the power and knowledge relations of sex: the deployment of sexuality and the deployment of alliance. Whereas the former focuses upon the control and categorisation of sexual practices, the later focuses upon the maintenance and order of sexual alliances centred around the family. The medicalisation and categorisation of sexuality revolved around the interplay of these two systems that defined the relationship between the individual body and the social population. For Foucault, discourses that addressed this interplay converged upon four strategic unities aimed at the production and control of sexual practices: the hysterization of women's bodies, the pedagogization of children's sex, the socialization of procreative behavior and the psychiatrization of perverse behavior. In each case, the notions of sex and sexuality were seen as mutually informing categories – as Foucault points out:

We must not make the mistake of thinking that sex is an autonomous agency which secondarily produces manifold effects of sexuality over the entire length of its surface of contact with power. On the contrary, sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures. (ibid, p. 155)

Such a dialogue between these notions allowed the production of an artificial unity generating a causal fiction that justified the idea of normal sexuality based upon underlying biological functions – Foucault states:

[B]y presenting itself in a unitary fashion [...] it was able to mark the line of contact between a knowledge of human sexuality and the biological sciences of reproduction; thus, without really borrowing anything from these sciences, except a few doubtful analogies, the knowledge of sexuality gained through proximity a guarantee of quasi-scientificity; but by virtue of this same proximity, some of the

contents of biology and physiology were able to serve as a principle of normality for human sexuality. (ibid)

This artificial unity created the circumstances in which sex was described as being 'caught between a law of reality (economic necessity being its most abrupt and immediate form) and an economy of pleasure which was always attempting to circumvent that law' (ibid, p.154). The oscillation within this artificial unity was perceived as symptomatic of a socialized and excessive divergence of desire from a biological function and instinct that underlay it. As such, sex appeared as an economy of desire based upon the interplay of 'whole and part, principle and lack, absence and presence, excess and deficiency, by the function of instinct, finality, and meaning, of reality and pleasure' (ibid). As the bourgeoisie exercised its power over life as a means to more effectively order and administer the social body, the discipline and regulation of the body became increasingly important. Sex was seen as the focal point at which these two areas converged whilst also providing a concept for understanding and controlling them - thus sex was to be found in evidence everywhere the discipline, regulation and reproduction of the body occurred – as Foucault puts it,

the notion of "sex" made it possible [...] to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified. (ibid, p. 154)

Discipline and regulation required the monitor of bodily pleasures, whereas the biological and reproductive function provided a foundational alibi for an endorsed normative sexuality from which a perverse sexuality could be differentiated; as Foucault states:

Sex – that agency which appears to dominate us and that secret which seems to underlie all that we are, that point which enthralls us through the power it manifests and the meaning it conceals, and

which we ask to reveal what we are and to free us from what defines us – is doubtless but an ideal point made necessary by the deployment of sexuality and its operation. (ibid, p. 155)

To view heterosexuality as a normative model premised upon a notion of sex requires that perverse practices must therefore be defined as developmental failures or remain outside the realm of logical possibilities in terms of sex or gender. As Judith Butler describes in *Gender Trouble* (1990):

The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between “feminine” and “masculine”, where these are understood as expressive attributes of “male” and “female”. [Here there exists] a political relation of entailment instituted by the cultural laws that establish and regulate the shape and meaning of sexuality. Indeed, precisely because certain kinds of “gender identities” fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain. (Butler 1990, p. 24)

Against normalized, legitimate forms of sexuality, fetishism was recognized as being at the centre of the psychiatrization of perversity. Foucault describes fetishism as the ‘model perversion [...] which served as the guiding thread for analyzing all the other deviations’ (Foucault 1990, p.154). Perversions were constituted via a medical and psychiatric notion of normal sex, based upon a biological and reproductive function, tied to an instinct whose object was subject to transformation. As Foucault states:

In the psychiatrization of perversions, sex was related to biological functions and to an anatomical-physiological machinery that gave it its “meaning”, that is, its finality; but it was also referred to an instinct which, through its peculiar development and according to

the objects to which it could become attached, made it possible for perverse behaviour patterns to arise and made their genesis intelligible. (ibid, p.153)

Fetishism was therefore the model for the perversions due to the fact that it allowed one to 'clearly perceive the way in which the instinct became fastened to an object in accordance with an individual's historical adherence and biological inadequacy' (ibid, p.154). Freud's analysis of fetishism corresponds to this view – fetishism is allocated to the realm of perversions and is perceived as symptomatic of a failure to accept sexual difference and the consequent engendering of conventional sexual roles that follows the Oedipus Complex. Freud and Lacan's notion of what constitutes sexual difference corresponds to Foucault's proclamation in which a discourse of sexuality entailed an artificial unity between a notion of biological necessity and an economy of pleasure which exceeds and circumvents this notion. Whereas coitus and the reproductive heterosexual act constitute a prescribed normal sexual aim, the propensity for the subject to find surplus pleasure from objects in pursuit of that which it lacks (the Other) provides opportunities where deviation can occur which, according to this view, is ultimately understood as a deviation from the normal sexual aim. In these terms, deviation is a refusal to recognize the lack which is believed to signal sexual difference – presence is to be recognized in the body of the father who has the signifier (phallus) the mother desires and lacks. This signifier also signifies a singular male sexual economy understood as the penetrative act of coitus; as Freud describes:

Maleness combines the [factors of] subject, activity and possession of the penis; femaleness takes over [those of] object and passivity. The vagina is now valued as a place of shelter for the penis; it enters into the heritage of the womb. (Freud 1923, p.394)

If fetishism was perceived as a deviant superfluous erotics, beyond the remit of functional reproduction, then it shared a similar designated erotic excess allocated to that of the female body – an excess most clearly illustrated by the cases of female hysteria. For Foucault, the hysterization of women's bodies performed within medical discourses during the nineteenth century positioned the female as 'being thoroughly saturated with sexuality' (ibid, p.104). This saturated nature was deemed to exist due to woman's alignment with the womb and reproduction. Ironically, as we have commented upon, such a position was at odds with a dominant sexuality designated through male genitality – an economy of desire in which a male has and a woman lacks. As Foucault describes:

[I]n the process of hysterization of women, "sex" was defined in three ways: as that which belongs in common to men and women; as that which belongs, *par excellence*, to men, and hence is lacking in women; but at the same time, as that which by itself constitutes woman's body, ordering it wholly in terms of the functions of reproduction and keeping it in constant agitation through the effects of that very function. (ibid, p.153)

As such, hysteria was interpreted as a pathological excess, outside the realm of a male sexual economy organized around the phallus. Such an excess was perceived as being constituted via woman's biological condition as a reproductive organism – as such, the hysterical woman was deemed to be subject to symptoms associated with the womb.<sup>6</sup> In both cases, woman is positioned within the terms of patriarchy in which her sexuality is only viable as a means for functional reproduction, anything else is defined as an incoherent, pathological excess within the terms of this discourse; as Tina Chanter states:

at the material level of signification, the feminine is admitted only insofar as it can contribute productively to the society or the state, the ends of which are defined by an invisibly white, patriarchal

capitalism. Anything that cannot be converted into assets from this point of view is discarded as incoherent, insane, nonsensical, outside the bounds of reason, as defined by a logic that is taken to be universal. To be admitted into the system as meaningful is to signify within its terms. (Chanter 2008, p.5)

As the above recognizes, the woman as hysteric and the fetishist are therefore both positioned outside a restricted sexual economy, whilst being defined by its terms - in each case, the extent of their deviancy is defined by their position in relation to the phallic signifier. Rather than perceiving difference and active production at the heart of these 'deviant' sexualities, the omnipresence of the phallus must be vindicated in which to keep sexual desire tied to its socially endorsed reproductive role. This has clear consequences for a notion of the fetish; it must be perceived as a deviation from, yet aligned with, the realm of the phallus, and not allowed to be perceived as a productive act of desire within its own terms. As such, fetishism becomes a response to the anxiety induced by the fear of phallic lack and woman, as already castrated, must remain outside of its realm. Woman, which lacks the phallus, is in each case a determining factor in defining these pathologies in that she acts as a signifier of lack to verify the presence that the phallus represents. It will therefore come as no surprise to recognize that she is affiliated with the non-western Otherness which, as we have seen, comes to figure the fetish as an irrational deviation from a notion of rational universal value. As Chanter points out,

the trope of fetishism is also implicated in a racialized discourse. If femininity is figured as lack – the horrific, abject, unthought ground of castration anxiety – its abject status is articulated in terms of an imaginary racing of subjectivity that subtends the more overtly thematic organization of psychoanalysis by sexual differentiation. In this sense one might say race is the real, that which stages the psychoanalytic oedipal narrative, but which itself remains unvoiced or unrepresented by it. (Chanter 2008, p.8)

Whereas the body in Europe was subjugated to a mutually informed deployment of alliance and sexuality that organized desire around notions of reproductive utility in which to affirm and maintain the relations of the bourgeois family, there was a converse perception of the non-European body that was perceived as excessively erotic and uncivilized. Given the perception of woman's body as 'saturated with sexuality', femininity was closely related to the assumed instinctual and erotic nature of so-called 'primitive' peoples. As Colin Rhodes points out:

[T]he 'normal' woman was regarded in biological terms to be altogether more primitive than her male counterpart. A large body of theory purporting to deal with the 'woman problem' [was] invariably written by men [...By] drawing comparative material from a wide variety of cultural sources they implied a racial commonality between civilized and primitive women that was never argued for the European male [...W]omen were generally typed as being essentially instinctive as opposed to rational thinkers. This conveniently situated them in a position closer to nature and so in this way the generic woman was defined, silenced and contained in male discourses of culture in precisely the same way as the savage. (Rhodes 1994, p.62)

The correlation between women and the primitive in terms of a perceived instinctual and erotic nature finds its epitome and ultimate conflation in the form of the non-western woman. As Anthony Shelton describes:

The de-eroticisation of sex at home coincided with the objectification and eroticism of the non-European female body. The construction of the erotic Other, while embodying different 'natures', followed an essentially similar strategy and created like effects in all

the lands that succumbed to European domination (Shelton 1995, p.26).

In *The Chameleon Body* (1995), Shelton describes the relationship between this eroticisation of the non-European female body and the incorporation of fetishism - a term used to define non-western religious practices - within psychosexual discourses. Shelton states that the perception of the foreign female body between Europe and Africa mimicked that between Europe and the Orient:

Whereas in Orientalism, the sexual submission and possession of the foreign female body mirrored the subordinate and dominant position between East and West, African exoticism transcribed near identical power relations between the geography of South and North. (ibid, p.26)

In such a view, the African female body was perceived as irrational, wild and excessively erotic<sup>7</sup>; Shelton states:

Africa remained the 'Dark Continent' impenetrable both territorially and intellectually, medically and morally deleterious, menacing on both the mind and the body. Within such 'waste-land', the archetypal woman was degenerate, untamed and promiscuous[.] (ibid)

An excessive erotics, as personified by the female body, has connotations within the etymology of the word fetishism itself – as Pietz points out, the 'earliest fetish discourse concerned witchcraft and the control of female sexuality' (Pietz 1985, p.6), evident in the Portuguese word *feitico*, from which the notion of fetishism is derived. For Shelton, the fetish provides a focal point in which to equate an excessive erotics maligned by European society – epitomised by the African female body - and the perceived primitive, instinctual and irrational nature of African

culture. In both cases, that which is surplus to the values of western society in terms of its reproduction, organization and administration are allocated to the realm of the Other. Such a correlation between the erotic and the primitive allowed Europe to deflect its own sexual and aggressive instincts onto that outside its own culture – in other words, the west was able to allocate its own internal Other onto cultures subordinated to itself.

The wild, dangerous, potentially polluting and exotic qualities that European writers, travellers and colonial servants ascribed to African sexuality were not dissimilar to the distillation of their religious, intellectual or moral beliefs in the 'fetish' figure – perhaps not surprisingly given that religious 'fetishism' provided the intellectual model through which sexual behaviour could be related. In both cases what was important was not the figure or the body itself, but the prejudices about motivations and understanding, intolerance and the deflection of sexual, aggressive and emotional instincts that had been denied and exiled from Europe to foreign territories. (Shelton Op Cit, p.29)

Given that the notion of the fetish was appropriated within western psychosexual accounts of desire, its association with irrational investments of value points to a concept of desire that is capable of deviating from the "normal" sexual aim – that of coitus and reproduction. As such, sexual fetishism is seen as a polluting agent in relation to desire and corresponds to a similarly perceived notion of African sexuality, especially in its female form, that was deemed a degenerate and polluting element in relation to the civilized West. As we shall see, such crude prejudices, in which fetishism is positioned as a radically non-western Other, can be easily exposed as unfounded.

Whereas Foucault's writing on sexuality gives a clear explanation of the part played by psychosexual notions of fetishism in the production of legitimate and perverse forms of sexuality, there is no similar address to socio-economic forms of fetishism. As we have seen, Foucault stresses

the ways in which sexual practices can legitimate themselves in opposition to a lacking Other – our exploration so far has identified the phallus as the singular signifier of a male sexual economy in which sex appears as belonging ‘par excellence to men, and [...] lacking in women’ (Foucault *Op Clt*, p.153). For Foucault, the socio-economic realm was similarly subject to historical episteme changes that legitimated themselves via the exclusion of their Other. Three main epistemes are identified by Foucault in which the study of the economic realm corresponds to that within the study of language and nature: the Renaissance, the Classical and the Modern. Foucault also hints at the possibility that we could be entering a fourth episteme where ‘man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea’ (Foucault 1994, p.387).<sup>8</sup>

According to Foucault, the understanding of wealth within the Renaissance period was determined by an episteme based upon the principle of resemblance. Given this principle, money had value and was able to act as an equivalence for other values precisely because the metal (Gold, Silver etc.) from which it was made was seen to have an intrinsic value in itself. As Foucault states, ‘[f]ine metal was, of itself, a mark of wealth; its buried brightness was sufficient indication that it was at the same time a hidden presence and a visible signature of all the wealth of the world’ (ibid, p. 174). During the Classical episteme, Foucault proposes that the principle of resemblance was replaced by a principle of representation. Given this viewpoint, objects within the world were categorized according to their commonalities and dissimilarities. For example, in the analysis of the natural world, ‘[a]ll that existed was living beings, which were viewed through a grid of knowledge constituted by *natural history*’ (ibid, p. 128). In the realm of economics, exchange was prioritized due to the fact that the equivalences and differences involved in monetary transactions corresponded to the categorization of commonalities and dissimilarities within this episteme. As Foucault points out, ‘[a]ll wealth is *coinable*; and it is by this means that it enters into *circulation* – in the same way that any natural being was *characterizable*, and could thereby find its place in a taxonomy [...] in a *system of identities*

*and differences* (ibid, p.175). In both epistemes, money acts as the universal representation of wealth, but in each case, how money as a representative is understood is different. As Kologlugil states:

Unlike in the Renaissance episteme, however, the representative power of money (its function as a sign) was not linked to the intrinsic preciousness and value of gold and silver. The relationship was reversed in the classical period: whereas in the Renaissance episteme gold and silver could represent wealth due to their intrinsic value, in the classical period they had value as monetary instruments due to their function in the realm of exchange to represent wealth. (Kologlugil 2010, p.14)

Finally, in the Modern period, the principle of representation was replaced by the principle of historicity. Unlike the Classical period in which things were understood in terms of a non-historical categorization, the Modern period understood things in terms of historical laws of development. As such, the 'mode of being of economics is no longer linked to a simultaneous space of differences and identities, but to the time of successive productions' (Foucault Op Cit, p256). For Foucault the economist Ricardo made the decisive break with the Classical episteme; he states that ' after Ricardo, the possibility of exchange is based upon labor; and henceforth the theory of production must always precede that of circulation' (ibid, p. 254).

Foucault identifies three important consequences of seeing historical production at the heart of Modern economic theory. Firstly, value is determined through historical developments within the organization of production. Secondly, due to the expenditure involved in historical production and consumption, labour is organized around the notion of scarcity in which human beings satisfy their needs within the context of diminishing resources and their propagation. Finally, because human beings recognize their finitude in relation to historical scarcity, man can recognize himself as a unified, rational subject within economic relations

and can reflect on his historical destiny. Foucault places both Ricardo and Marx within the same episteme given their concern for historical production and its consequences for the analysis of wealth. In both cases, Foucault perceives history as the labouring human in confrontation with scarcity and therefore believes 'Marxism introduced no real discontinuity' (ibid, p. 261) in relation to the Modern episteme. Ricardo is considered a pessimist in relation to historical economic destiny – following Malthus, he believed in a notion of diminishing returns in which, as the population outstripped food production, subsistence wages would rise leading to a fall in profit resulting in the economy reaching a static state where '[l]ife and death will fit exactly one against the other [...h]istory will have led man's finitude to that boundary-point at which it will appear in its pure form' (ibid, p.260). Marx's optimistic view works in the opposite direction – whereas history leads humanity to face its condition in scarcity for Ricardo, for Marx it is History itself that creates the conditions of scarcity via exploitation and accumulation within capitalist economic relations. On recognizing the historical condition of scarcity

a whole class of men experience, nakedly, as it were, what need, hunger, and labour are. What others attribute to nature or to the spontaneous order of things, these men are able to recognize as the result of a history and the alienation of a finitude that does not have this form (ibid, p.261).

Regardless of their contrasting optimism or pessimism, Ricardo and Marx's shared concern for scarcity, finitude and historicity position both thinkers within a nineteenth-century mode of thought such that '[t]heir controversies may have stirred up a few waves and caused a few surface ripples; but they are no more than storm's in a children's paddling pool' (ibid, p. 262).

The idea that notions of truth and knowledge are subject to historical determinations within a given discourse seems valid; however, the notion that a Marxist concern for scarcity is ultimately a mere variation

from Ricardo in that both belong to the same episteme seems to belittle the differing import and intentionality behind their theories – whereas Ricardo views scarcity as inevitable and ‘natural’, Marx, views it as a social construction and therefore a condition which can be surpassed. Critically, there is clearly a greater affinity between Foucault and Marx in terms of a concern for social determination than can be perceived between the work of Marx and Ricardo<sup>9</sup>. Given Marx’s critique of Malthus<sup>10</sup>, it should also be pointed out that for Marx and (as we shall see later) for Bataille, an understanding of economic wealth and value is less a problem of scarcity and more a problem of surplus once society is capable of producing beyond need. The key factor to emphasize in a Modern episteme of economic thought – an economics of production – is the role of scarcity within a historical model. Whether scarcity as a historical necessity (Malthus and Ricardo) or scarcity as a transcendable historical construction (Marx), the fact that it *appears* as an essential element in an economic discourse revolving around a privileged signifier demonstrates the restrictive nature of value within such an economy. The fact that human potential, as well as access to resources and materials, is dictated by the restrictive circulation of capital, prevents any heterogeneous expenditure and limits our *legitimate* choices to notions of utility and accumulation.

What is clear from Foucault’s account of economics is that each model within a particular episteme still revolves around a notion of money being a universal signifier of value – it is how value comes to be embodied and perceived within this form that has been subject to change. Though the mercantilists were not concerned with value in terms of it being universally recognized in its resemblance to precious metal, its significance as an object for exchange allowed it to be perceived as a ‘universal instrument for the analysis and representation of wealth’ (ibid, p.175). Likewise, in the Modern episteme, money becomes the universal signifier of value determined by the time invested by labour power. In all cases, however interpreted, value has its manifestation within money as a universal sign – it then becomes a problem of how it attains this value that

each epoch attempts to translate. Whereas there is no direct consideration of the commodity fetish in Foucault's writing in the same way that there is in relation to psychosexual fetishism, one can deduce a similar concern for how homogeneous thinking revolves around a term invested with value – be it money or the phallus. It is from this legitimated notion of value that other values can be perceived as deviant, excluded or lacking.

Though Foucault's theories have been subject to criticism<sup>11</sup>, they ultimately have value in pointing out the relativity of knowledge and the extent to which it legitimates itself via the exclusion of that which is incompatible with its assertions. This exclusion generates an artificial realm of Otherness that prevents difference and heterogeneity from flourishing within homogeneous modes of thinking. Given that Foucault has identified the means by which value is legitimated by both defining and excluding that which is Other, we now need to consider the movement which vindicates the presence of value and defines an Other as deficient in such value. To do this we can turn to Jacques Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence.

### **The privileged signifier and the metaphysics of presence**

The process we have identified, in which a privileged signifier comes to legitimate a homogeneous economy by positioning itself as a self-present value from which other values are excluded, clearly resonates with Derrida's critique of logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence. Metaphysics attempts to explain the origin of truth by defining its foundations. To define the foundation of philosophical truth, presence needs to be affirmed - this can only be achieved by contrasting it against its other that is absent. Derrida confronts the metaphysics of presence in three ways.

Firstly, Derrida criticises logocentrism, which is described as the primacy of the spoken word over the written form within western thought. Derrida points out that western metaphysics privileges speech as a self-evident origin to thought and knowledge; truth is to be found in dialogue

with the authoritative voice of the protagonists to guarantee its presence. In contrast, writing is perceived as derivative – at best, a necessary evil used to record thoughts. Beyond the realm of the presence of speech, writing is subject to an absence that risks distortion of its intended meanings that can be easily taken out of context. In opposition to traditional metaphysics, Derrida demonstrates that the matter of presence and absence, or the privileging of speech over writing, is ultimately undecidable. Following Saussure's proposition that all language and meaning is governed by the differential play of signifiers – where each signifier and signified distinguishes itself through the trace of all other signifiers within its system – Derrida suggests that such a model, most evident in the differential marks visible within writing, negates any ultimate presence or foundation to meaning and truth.

It is thus the idea of the sign that must be deconstructed through a meditation upon writing which would merge, as it must, with the undoing of onto-theology, faithfully repeating it in its *totality* and making it insecure in its most assured evidences [...] That the signified is originally and essentially [...] trace, that is *always already in the position of the signifier*, is the apparently innocent proposition within which the metaphysics of the logos, of presence and consciousness, must reflect upon writing as its death and its resource (Derrida 1976, p.73).

Secondly, Derrida criticises dualism – the manner in which everything is explained in terms of binary oppositions once a metaphysics of presence and absence has been put into place. A metaphysics of presence begins by initially privileging a term from which all presence and meaning is centred around. To posit a term as having a privileged relation to presence and meaning, an opposite, subordinate term needs to be allocated as negative or lacking (i.e. Being and Non-Being). All metaphysical thinking therefore proceeds from a positive, present origin that is then used to explain its negative, lacking other. This procedure,

which sets up a duality within a metaphysics of presence, is apparent in Derrida's analysis of the binary opposition between speech and writing within Plato's *Phaedrus*.

Plato thinks of writing, and tries to comprehend it, to dominate it, on the basis of opposition as such. In order for these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside, etc.) to be in opposition, each of the terms must be simply external to the other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition. And one of the elements of the system (or of the series) must also stand as the very possibility of systematicity or seriality in general. (Derrida 1972, p. 130)

To challenge the self-certainty of metaphysics, Derrida uses a range of strategies and concepts to undermine the foundations on which binary oppositions rest, including *trace*, *différance* and *dissemination* – all designed to expose the perpetual play of difference within language that precludes any appeal to presence or absence within meaning.

Thirdly, Derrida criticises phallogocentrism, a neologism defined as the privilege accorded to the phallus – sign of sexual difference – as a mark of presence. Derrida believes that phallogocentrism is intimately linked with the prejudices of logocentrism in that, by being the privileged signifier of presence and absence, the phallic signifier becomes the origin from which the single (male) sexual economy is put in place.

[The] determination of the proper, of the law of the proper, of *economy*, therefore leads back to castration as truth, to the figure of woman as the figure of castration *and* of truth. Of castration as truth [...] The phallus, thanks to castration, always remains in its place, in the transcendental topology [...] (Derrida 1980, p. 466-7)

For Derrida, sexual difference is always implicit within western thought. Here, 'sexual difference has been brought to reason, which has also meant, almost without exception, that social, political, economic forms of the differentiation of the sexes have been grounded, and thus legitimated, in reason, by reason' (Kamuf 1991, p.313).

In Derridean terms, it is clear that both the phallus and gold operate as privileged terms that act as an original presence that posits a binary systematicity which positions an Other as lacking to legitimate its own economy. The psychosexual fetish can appear as a deviation from an original economy of desire because it acts as a substitute for a maternal phallus – it is thus not only a denial of sexual difference in its binary form which woman-as-lack represents of sexual difference, it is also a refusal of the possibility of heterogeneous desire in which the Phallus is not the only term. Likewise in socio-economic terms, money acts as a substitute for an original signifier of gold that is the chosen privileged commodity that makes all others into its equivalent within a homogeneous economy – anything that eludes its clutches in a system of exchange and accumulation lacks legitimate value (practices of production that do not serve economic efficiency, acts that have no discernible utility or escape commodification). It is no coincidence that both Freud and Marx refer to a primordial myth in which to verify the presence at the heart of these economies of production.

In the case of Freud, the Oedipal drama positions woman's lack and the desire for the Phallus at the heart of exchange within a homogeneous sexual economy. Following a Derridean critique of binary oppositions that operate via notions of inclusion and exclusion in order to justify a metaphysics of presence, the feminine comes to represent lack in order to privilege the presence of the monolithic phallic economy of value. This movement relies on an appeal to a mythical past in order to justify its legitimacy. As Tina Chanter recognizes:

In their attempt to legitimate themselves, psychoanalytic narratives produce sites of excess or irrationality that are posited as exterior and interior to their own coherence and logic. The feminine comes to stand for a mythical past, relegated to a time that predates the Oedipal narrative, the terms of which are formulated in a way that precludes the entry of the feminine [...] The Oedipal configuration thereby surreptitiously acknowledges what it repudiates. Phallic privilege comes to determine what constitutes value, the contingency of which is occluded through a conflation of the values that are instantiated by the ideal of masculinity and those that are taken as a representative of humanity. A symbolic system of meaning and its values is established by way of a compensatory narrative that covers over its lack, finitude, or frailty, by positing this inadequacy as outside itself, an outside that is projected into a mythical past that comes to be associated with the feminine. (Chanter 2008, p.4)

According to the Oedipal myth, the child recognizes his mother's desire outside itself, embodied in the form of the father. The child consequently resents the father and fears a reprisal via an act of castration by the father – the guilt and anxiety surrounding such resentment and perceived reprisal results in the male child giving up its claim for the mother and wanting to be like the father; because the female child is already considered castrated, she decides to become like the mother in which to receive the love of a father figure and received that which she is considered lacking. According to Freud, such adoption of socially generated gender norms and values is installed via the notion of the superego that generates a sense of guilt through a tyrannical injunction to keep our unconscious incestuous desires at bay. This taboo against incest with its corresponding sense of guilt is also positioned within another primordial myth regarding the notion of the primal horde. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Freud speculates about the origin of the paternal law against incest. Freud describes a scene in which the father has sole

access to women which he denies his sons. Out of jealousy, the brothers band together and murder their father. Freud describes the consequences of such an act:

Though the brothers had banded together in order to overcome their father [...] each of them would have wished, like his father, to have all the women to himself. The new [social] organisation would have collapsed in a struggle of all against all, for none of them was of such over-mastering strength as to be able to take on his father's part[.] Thus the brothers had no alternative if they were to live together, but [...] to institute the law against incest. (Freud 1999, p.144)

Despite any evidence to verify this myth – as Freud points out, this ‘earliest state of society has never been an object of observation’ (ibid, 141) - it does serve the function of illustrating one of the functions of the superego: to inflict guilt for desiring that which belongs to the father and to uphold the taboo against incestuous desire. This paternal myth is found in both Freud and Lacan in which there is an appeal to ‘a single, male narrative of origins – the paternal threat of castration – [drawn] from nineteenth century anthropology’ (McClintock 1993, p.12). Anne McClintock points out that, for Lacan, there is ‘a cultural imperative (rooted in ‘primordial law’) that the mother-child embrace be severed’ (ibid). For McClintock, this cultural imperative is put into question. The perceived paternal intervention against incest can be viewed as denying women social agency in the process of separation. McClintock points out that the paternal myth places women in a position where they are ‘seen to have no motivation for weaning or preventing incest, no social interest in guiding children into separation, no role in helping children negotiate the intricate dynamics of interdependence, nor any capacity for doing so’ (ibid). Yet, ironically, as McClintock describes, the ‘activity of overseeing the dialectics of interdependence is precisely what constitutes the gendered division of labour of western cultures’ (ibid).

Whereas Lacan's writing purges psychoanalysis of some of its more mythological explanations and biological determinations via a semiotic interpretation of Freud's theories through the system of language, a primordial event is still prescribed via our entry into the symbolic order and our adoption of the Name-of-the-Father which forever alienates us from the unconscious phantasy of an original object of desire. According to Lacan, it is this alienation that ultimately generates a notion of sexual desire within us. Because the Phallus serves the function of symbolizing both sexual difference and language associated with the external figure of the father, the male takes up his position of *having* the phallus and the woman becomes associated with *being* the phallus (as the quintessential symbol of lack at the heart of desire). The assumption that subjectivity and desire are born from our recognition of the privileged signifier of the phallus, which signifies both sexual difference and our entry into both the realms of language and reason, has justifiably come under criticism due to the fact it assumes the privileged signifier is still something associated with a male signified and therefore aligns reason and presence with the male, whilst positioning woman to the realm of lack. The fact that the phallus in Lacan's writing has moved away from a biological determinant, in terms of the penis, to a cultural signifier within the symbolic order of language, allows some writers, such as Jacqueline Rose, to claim that the power that it entails can be appropriated by either sex, whether male or female.<sup>12</sup> In opposition to such a view, Elizabeth Grosz has argued that even though the phallus is a signifier in language, this does not make it neutral for whichever gender may choose to claim it. Grosz claims that the conventional relationship between the 'penis and phallus is not arbitrary, but socially and politically motivated [...] It is motivated by the already existing structure of patriarchal power, and its effects guarantee the reproduction of this particular form of social organisation and no other' (Grosz 1990, p.124). Following Derrida's critique of phallogocentrism, Grosz recognises that because the phallus is identified as privileged signifier, it can define all the other relations within psychosexual exchange by defining itself as (positive) masculine presence against (negative)

feminine absence. Following Derrida's lead in criticising binary oppositions, Grosz states that:

The two sexes come to occupy the positive and negative positions not for arbitrary reasons, or with arbitrary effects [...] They are distinguished *not* on the basis of (Saussurian 'pure') difference, but in terms of dichotomous opposition or distinction; not, that is, as contraries ('A' and 'B'), but as contradictories ('A' and 'not-A') [...] Distinctions, binary oppositions, are relations based on one rather than many terms, the one term generating a non-reciprocal definition of the other as its negative (Ibid).

Contrary to this position, Grosz gives us another option in which no privileged signifier exists, allowing each term within an exchange to be defined by all the others.<sup>13</sup> For Grosz it is

surely arbitrary, in the sense of social or conventional, that the continuum of differences between gradations of sexual difference [...] is divided into categories only according to the presence or absence of the one, male, organ' (Ibid).

As we shall see later, by appealing to a notion of feminine difference, Luce Irigaray also criticizes the notion that subjectivity and desire should be associated with a singular male homogeneous economy. A similar criticism can be made of the work of Slavoj Žižek whose analysis of fetishism will become important later for a revised notion of the concept.<sup>14</sup>

Whereas Lacan and Freud endorse the inevitability of these primal ahistorical events in the generation of human subjectivity, Marx takes a more critical approach to the notion of an origin at the heart of our socio-economic relations. For Marx, bourgeois economists and thinkers appeal to a notion of 'primitive accumulation' when attempting to legitimate the naturalness and inevitability of capitalist relations of exchange and accumulation. He states:

[T]he accumulation of capital presupposes surplus-value; surplus-value presupposes capitalist production; capitalist production presupposes the availability of considerable masses of capital and labour-power in the hands of commodity producers. The whole movement, therefore seems to turn around in a never-ending circle, which we can only get out of by assuming a primitive accumulation (the 'previous accumulation' of Adam Smith) which precedes capitalist accumulation; an accumulation which is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but its point of departure.

This primitive accumulation plays approximately the same role in political economy as original sin does in theology. Adam bit the apple and thereupon sin fell on the human race. Its origin is supposed to be explained when it is told as an anecdote about the past. Long, long ago there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent and above all frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. The legend of the theological original sin certainly tells us how humankind came to be condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow; but the history of the economic original sin reveals to us that there are people to whom this is by no means essential. Never Mind! Thus it came to pass that the former accumulated wealth and the latter finally had nothing to sell but their own skins. Since then has existed the poverty of the great mass of people who, despite their labour, have nothing to sell but themselves, and the wealth of the few, which increases constantly, although they have long ceased to work (Marx 1990,p.873).

Again, as with a sexual economy of reproduction, a homogeneous economy of production is explained in terms of an origin that legitimates its circuit. The accumulation of capital, and the class relations that are its precondition, are justified and naturalized via a mythological origin in which a frugal and diligent elite accumulated, whilst a lazy majority consumed.

Marx criticizes this account of the pre-conditions of capitalist relations. Marx identifies the historical conditions for capitalist accumulation in the move towards production based on wage-labour, corresponding with the expropriation of workers from ownership and land. It is only at this point that the law of value comes into effect. It is the law of value that regulates competition and drives accumulation through the extraction of further surplus-value. It is only under these conditions that capital accumulation can exist. As such, a notion of value organized around the principle of a monetary sign – which allows commodities to attain a fetishistic character – is falsely justified anachronistically around a mythological accumulation, an accumulation and determinant of value that could not have existed in any other circumstances than the development of capitalism.

The legitimacy and inevitability of capitalist monetary relations, along with its corresponding accumulation, is also evident within enlightenment philosophy. For Hegel, civil society is constituted by the economic wants and needs of ‘private persons, who pursue their own interests’ (Hegel 2001, p.157). The economic activities of private individuals come to satisfy the needs of others through exchange, ‘by which one special means of subsistence is given for others, chiefly through money, the general medium of exchange, in which is realized the abstract value of all merchandise’ (ibid p.166). Though the general form for realizing civil society is money, Hegel argues that its universal principle can only be found outside itself: in the state that regulates the economic system for the good of the whole. For Hegel then, monetary relations are but a general form for a universal principle on the road towards Absolute spirit, and the union of the individual with the state. Though Marx’s notion of fetishism has been criticized due to a presumed complicity with the idea of the non-western Other as ‘primitive’.<sup>15</sup> Marx’s use of the notion can be seen as an attack on this idealistic universal principle. For Marx, a free-market civil society whose universal principles are to be found in God and the state can only be criticized by refuting such principles. As we have described, for Hegel, fetishism was a primitive mode of thought that never transcends the sensuous, material world, never entering the realm of

universal principles - it was therefore a concept analogous to the notion of civil society: both are comprised of the sensuous desires of concrete, embodied individuals. For Marx, this comparison provided a means for refuting the universal principles legitimated by state and church. As Pietz describes:

Marx's materialist critique sought to debunk the claim of universalist social institutions (the Christian church and the state) to a superior ontological status by affirming the untranscendable reality [...] of particular sensuous desires and concrete, embodied individuals proper to fetish worship and civil society. For Marx, then, fetishism and political economy are closer to the true world than monotheism and statism [and can] be used to criticize the fantastic pretensions of monotheism and statism to some sort of transcendent reality (Pietz 1993, p.142).

As such, the criticism of the practice of religious fetishism was to prove to be the same criticism of fetishistic worship within political economy - in the former, objects appeared to have innate powers which were in fact a projection of human intentionality, in the latter capital appears to have innate causal powers of value when, in reality, it has no real power outside its *socially generated* power to command exchange relations and the labour activities of individuals. In both the sensuous realm of ideas (religious fetishism) and practice (production and exchange), socially constructed signs and values come to alienate and restrict human agency by bearing the seal of their own authority. In each case, the material that bears the seal – in the case of political economy, gold and its monetary form – are but an arbitrary choice.

This fraudulent appeal to a notion of origin and presence at the heart of value in both socioeconomic and psychosexual economies has clear repercussions for a notion of fetishism. On the one hand, fetishism can be perceived as the means by which arbitrary values are endorsed in order to include or exclude that which is either beneficial or detrimental to

a given restrictive economy. Those that are excluded (excessive and perverse subjects beyond the realms of utilitarian productivity) remain internal to the logic of such an economy in order to verify and substantiate value. This move is legitimated via an appeal to a mythical past that determines value as opposed to excess, waste and lack. As Chanter describes:

By casting fetishism as only a moment of an ongoing process [...] we can draw attention to the logic of abjection that grounds fetishistic discourses, a logic that such discourses utilize more or less consciously. There is an ambivalent inclusion of subjects, who are on the one hand situated outside of representation, in a mythical, indeterminate past that is mythologized as prior to civilized society, and on the other hand granted access to forms of representation that are nevertheless shaped and informed by their exclusion. Access is granted to these forms of representation only if those that are excluded acquiesce to their representation as subjects who conform to the imaginaries of dominant narratives. (Chanter 2008, p.11)

On the other hand, as we have found, if there is no self-present origin, with any appeal to one being entirely mythical, then the notion of the fetish being a illegitimate deviation derived from an authentic value is found to be erroneous. The psychosexual fetish can no longer be tied to the idea of being a disavowal and substitute for a maternal phallus that never existed; the inevitability of the commodity fetish is found to lack secure foundations once the arbitrariness of its value is recognized. The notion of Otherness that infects the concept of fetishism becomes redundant once it is recognized that all values are the effect of a surplus that is subject to relations of difference rather than an economy of the same.

This criticism of presence and authenticity at the heart of value, from which the fetish is said to deviate, can also be extended to the very ethnographic definition of fetishism from which modern notions derive. The

idea that the African practice of fetishism is an inferior absolute other to western notions of value and rationality is found to be specious. Not only was the notion of fetishism a western projection that silenced the cultural significations of its native population, the very division between European and the non-western values that the fetish is perceived to embody is found wanting when subject to further examination. Anthony Shelton points out that it is highly likely that the fetishes referred to by writers and explorers were not of purely native inspiration. Given the numerous European colonial and missionary interventions within the African Kongo - firstly by the Portuguese in 1482 – it can be plausibly speculated that the practice of inserting nails into African fetish figures is as an act of mutilation akin to the Christian symbolism of the crucifixion; as Shelton states:

The origins of the justly renowned *minkisi minkondi* [...] or 'nail fetishes', remain enigmatic, but it is probable, though historically unproven, that they emerged from a synthesis of Kongo and Christian beliefs. Not only the style, but equally the constellation of beliefs appertaining to the body, mutilation and power may have been derived from the variety of Christian experiences introduced during the intermittent periods of European influence. (Shelton Op Cit, p. 20).

The clear division between European and African values is further blurred when we consider that the term is 'so imprecise and inaccurate that it could equally be applied to many European beliefs and current superstitions such as palmistry' (ibid, p.16). As John Mack points out

sub-Saharan Africa is not alone in the production of such images. Yet, it would seem distinctly odd to talk of broadly similar objects from the Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Asians and Europeans, let alone North African Muslims, Jews and Christians in the same terms. They it is implied, do not have 'fetish'. (Mack 1995, p.53).

On further examination, the practice of fetishism is not simply some superstitious spiritual investment in a material object, as opposed to a western allegiance to a set of universal values. According to Mack, fetishism was in fact part of a sophisticated symbolic network that aided the organisation and functioning of a particular culture; he writes:

*Minkondi* [nail fetishes] have a variety of identified functions [...] the principal approach to *minkondi* is to render oaths and undertakings authoritative and binding – hardly the conventional expectation of a ‘fetish’. As such they are called upon to ratify treaties between opposed communities, to endorse attestations of innocence where someone asserts their wrongful accusation, to confirm initiation vows, and other such oath-taking. (ibid, p.59)

For Mack, the act of inserting a nail into the fetish was a symbolic act that ‘fix[ed] an individual intention or affirm[ed] an undertaking’ (ibid). The fetish is also perceived as providing a means of communication between the spiritual world of the dead and the living, as such ‘so complex an object as the [fetish] is anything but the impulsive product of a self-regarding obsession’ (ibid, p.62). What is embodied in the fetish is therefore a ‘whole series of on-going transactions between the living and the dead, assembled, contained in one powerful image’ (ibid). By understanding the fetish as an object embedded within a symbolic network of cultural practices, it can be seen as equivalent to such western practices as taking the Eucharist, worshipping idols and swearing upon the bible within courts of law.<sup>16</sup>

## **Baudrillard, privileged signifiers and the logic of the code**

In Baudrillard's *Fetishism and Ideology: The Semiological Reduction* (1972), fetishism is interpreted as providing a clear illustration of the reifying and 'restrictive logic' of the system of commodity exchange organized around the imposition of a universal privileged signified. His analysis is also important in recognizing the affinity between the function of the privileged signifier in both socioeconomic and psychosexual economies.

Baudrillard's solution to the problem of accounting for values attributed to commodities, without resorting to an occidental myth of western rationality in opposition to false consciousness, is achieved via reference to structuralist semiotics. Baudrillard believed that the political economic theories of Marx failed to account for the contemporary influence of signs within consumer culture, thereby leaving important instigators of social meaning and cohesion neglected within social analysis. The success of semiotics in providing coherent and effective explanations of meaning within contemporary culture was considered by Baudrillard to be an appropriate corrective model to be used in conjunction with Marxist analysis. The relationship between these theoretical models was focused around the concept of exchange, making the integration of the concept of commodity fetishism within a post-structuralist paradigm a necessary requirement if such a synthesis was to be viable. Baudrillard therefore dedicates a whole chapter to this topic within *A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972).

Baudrillard proposes an alternative theory of fetishism via the adoption of techniques from the structuralist anthropology of Levi-Strauss – techniques that, in turn, were inspired by the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure<sup>17</sup>. In correspondence to Saussure's theory, Levi-Strauss had interpreted the totems of other cultures not as magical symbolic objects, but as signifiers that operated through a system of difference to generate meaning<sup>18</sup>. For Baudrillard, this was a 'radical breakthrough that should be developed, theoretically and clinically, and

extended to social analysis in general' (ibid). Baudrillard extends this 'radical breakthrough' to an analysis of fetishism through an explication of the etymological origin of the word. As previously discussed, the word fetishism has its etymological origins in the Latin word *factitius*, which means "artificial" or to be "manufactured". Baudrillard points to this fact to demonstrate that what is apparent in the phenomenon of fetishism is the 'aspect of faking, of artificial registering – in short, of a cultural sign labor – and that this is at the origin of the status of fetish objects, and thus also plays some part in the fascination it exercises' (ibid, p.91). On this account, the fetish – in either its "primitive" or contemporary manifestation - can therefore be described as an artificial application of signifiers to produce a cultural system of meaning, an account that correlates with Levi-Strauss' analysis of the totem. Such an interpretation has consequences for our understanding of objects - an original use value cannot be appealed to when criticising the supposedly distorting effects of commodity fetishism upon an object; where would such a critical stance come from if the value and meaning of an object is always already generated through the differential play of signifiers? Baudrillard applies this interpretation to the contemporary "fetishist" theory of consumption in which both marketing strategists and consumers see objects 'given and received everywhere as force dispensers (happiness, health, security, prestige, etc.)' (ibid). He reminds us that these "magical" substances are, in fact, firstly a

generalized code of signs, a totally arbitrary code of differences, *and that it is on this basis, and not at all on account of their use values or their innate "virtues", that objects exercise their fascination* (ibid).

Baudrillard's endorsement of post-structuralist semiology as a method of analysis, as well as his denial of both false consciousness and a separate superstructural realm, allow him to claim that fetishism is a 'fascination for a form (logic of the commodity or system of exchange

value), a state of absorption, for better or for worse, in the restrictive logic of a system of abstraction' (ibid, p. 92). It can no longer be claimed that it is a 'force that returns to haunt the individual severed from the product of his labor' (ibid). The form is therefore still subject to the logic of commodity production and exchange value, but is to be interpreted through the signs produced through such a logic, without residual appeal to false consciousness, innate human nature or original use value. As such, fetishism 'is no longer an unreal object, believed to have properties it does not really have, but is a means of mediating social value through material culture' (Dant 1996, p. 497).

Baudrillard's argument against Marx's conception of fetishism rests upon his need to refute a perceived western humanist ideology at the heart of this notion – such a rebuttal is required for a post-structuralist paradigm that advocates system rather than subject in the generation of meaning within society.<sup>19</sup> Although problems have been identified within Baudrillard's analysis of Marx's account of commodity fetishism, the recognition of a reifying impulse constituted by a privileged signifier is important for an understanding of fetishism as an effect of a 'restrictive logic'.

Despite theoretical differences, the writings of Foucault and Baudrillard, share a similar concern for value as relative to its inscription within a cultural code.<sup>20</sup> Baudrillard elucidates the function and similarity between the universal signified in psychosexual and socio-economic discourses. In the case of money, accumulation, surplus and profit are provided by its mechanisms in which to ensure a focus for value and exchange; in the case of the phallus, a singular sexuality is secured around male genitality (what Irigaray describes as a *hom(m)osexualité*) that assigns women to a position of lack and desire to the realm of reproduction. Baudrillard eloquently describes this process whereby a system of value and exchange is maintained through the allocation of a fetishistic privileged signifier to mediate each economy; he states:

[...] the (ambivalent) fascination for a form (logic of the commodity or system of exchange value), a state of absorption, for better or for worse, in the restrictive logic of a system of abstraction. Something like a desire, a perverse desire, the desire for the code is brought to light here: it is a desire that is related to the systematic nature of signs, drawn towards it, precisely through what this system-like nature negates and bars, by exorcising the contradictions spawned by the process of real labor – just as the perverse psychological structure of the fetishist is organized, in the fetish object, around a mark, around the abstraction of a mark that negates, bars and exorcises the difference of the sexes (Baudrillard 1981, p.92).

For Baudrillard, our fascination with the form of the fetish exists due to our placement within a 'restrictive logic of a system of abstraction': money and the imperatives of capital. Our complicity or desire for the commodity values instigated within this restrictive system exist due to its 'exorcising' and negation of the process of 'real labor'. In other words, we partake in a reified, restrictive realm of value, precisely because the commodity value within our system of exchange appears inherent to itself, hiding its real determination through the process of labour. Baudrillard equates this socio-economic phenomenon to that of the psychosexual fetish – again, desire is constituted 'around a mark' that simultaneously puts a system of exchange into play, whilst it 'negates [...] and exorcises the difference of the sexes'. Whereas the fetish object bears the mark of the phallus that puts a system of sexual exchange into place, the commodity bears the mark of money / capital that puts a system of economic exchange into motion – both objects therefore rely on a system of exchange put into play by privileged signifiers. The act of negation in both systems is crucial, for without it desire and labour – the principle agencies of these systems - escape the regulatory function that these systems of exchange perform. Behind the system of exchange established by the Phallic order, is the realm of unregulated so-called 'polymorphously perverse' desire;<sup>21</sup> behind the system of exchange established by capital /

money is, as we shall see, prodigal expenditure – labour which, if it was not always already a commodity itself, would be unregulated without the totalizing restrictions of accumulation and utility which relations under capitalism require. The abstract coherence of value, instigated by the Phallus and money as privileged signifiers therefore acts as an operation of power, hiding all that contradicts it beneath its mechanisms of exchange. As Baudrillard points out, this ‘coherence is found in the erotic system as well as [...] the system of exchange value [...] permitting] signs to function ideologically, that is, to establish and perpetuate real discriminations and the order of power’ (Ibid p.101).

In *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), Baudrillard elaborates this shared notion of general equivalence between socioeconomic and psychosexual economies. According to Baudrillard, the ‘body and sexuality can be analysed in terms of everything that preceded it’ (Baudrillard 1993, p.115) – in this case, the political and economic categories of use-value and exchange-value are the determining factors. In the same way that there is a separation between use value and exchange value in political economy, for Baudrillard there is a separation between ‘sexual needs’ and the play involved in sexual exchange.

[S]exuality is reduced [...] to use-value (the satisfaction of 'sexual needs') and exchange-value (the play and calculation of the erotic signs governed by the circulation of models). [S]exuality [also] becomes separated as a function: from the collective function of the reproduction of the species, it passes to the individual functions of physiological equilibrium (part of a general hygiene), mental equilibrium, 'self-expression' or the expression of subjectivity, unconscious emanations, the ethics of sexual pleasure (what else?). In any case, sexuality becomes an element of the economy of the subject, an objective finality of the subject itself obedient to an order of finalities [...] (ibid, p.115)

Sexuality then is separated in terms of a functional reproduction and an exchange governed by a code of erotic play. In turn, this code is determined by the Phallus as privileged signifier which acts as a general equivalence which not only distinguishes the biological sexes but also reduces erogenous possibilities to the play of presence and lack inherent to its economic circuit; Baudrillard states:

The Male/Female structure becomes confused with the privilege granted to the genital function (whether reproductive or erotic). The privilege of genitality over all the body's erogenous virtualities reverberates in the structure of a male dominated social order, for structure hinges on biological difference. This is not merely in order to maintain a genuine difference, but, on the contrary, to establish a general equivalence, the Phallus becoming the absolute signifier around which all erogenous possibilities come to be measured, arranged, abstracted, and become equivalent. (ibid, p.116)

By reducing the possibilities of erotic play to a realm of either functional use value or restricted exchange, Baudrillard perceives sexuality as mirroring the laws of value and general equivalence within political economy. In each case, the coherence and equivalence of value is determined by a privileged signifier that organizes its economic circuit.

The emergence of the phallus as the general equivalent of sexuality, combined with the emergence of sexuality itself as the general equivalent of the virtualities of symbolic exchange, delineates the emergence of a political economy of the body [and sexuality], a sign of their integration with the law of value and general equivalence [...] From both angles the promotion of sexuality as function or the promotion of sexuality as structural discourse the subject turns out to be back with the fundamental norm of political economy: it thinks itself and locates itself sexually in terms of equilibrium (an equilibrium of functions under the sign of

the identity of the ego) and coherence (the structural coherence of a discourse under the sign of the infinite reproduction of the code).  
(ibid)

Our exploration so far has identified that restrictive economies of production and reproduction have defined the fetish as that which is both in excess of, and Other to, an endorsed legitimate notion of value. These values have the effect of reproducing an economy of the same in which value is always determined via a singular term: the phallus and money. These singular terms have been found to justify their legitimacy by endorsing a notion of original presence which creates the illusion that such economies are natural and eternal entities from which a notion of Otherness and deviation can be defined – the notion of primitive accumulation and the Oedipus Complex generates a mythical original stage upon which the relations created by privileged signifiers, with their accompanying investments and corresponding values, are inaugurated and reproduced. As Chanter points out:

Whether the value to be tapped is reproductive capacity, labour resources, a market for consumer products, raw materials, energy sources, or land for cultivation, the logic of appropriation consigns to prehistory that which is discarded, and designates it as an inassimilable other. Women are rendered unthinkable by patriarchy except as reproductive vessels or maternal caretakers, while the humanity of workers cannot be registered within the logic of capitalism, which acknowledges them only as labor power or consumer power [...] At the same time there is a usurpation, exploitation, and appropriation of precisely that which is only admitted insofar as it is capable of conforming to such logics.  
(Chanter 2008, p. 3-4)

As we have found, if we examine the point at which privileged signifiers are constituted, we find that in both cases, they rely upon a notion of

surplus in which to obtain value. In the previous section, we described how desire is generated through the production of sexual drives which are themselves directed towards arbitrary objects once the function of instinctual need as been removed – in Freud’s example, the case of breast-feeding and nourishment is used. It is upon the basis of a surplus that these drives will then choose their objects within Oedipal relations. Likewise, in the case of commodity exchange, objects can only obtain value once society has produced a surplus beyond need and can therefore enter a mode of production where exchange predominates – economic relations can then choose an arbitrary object to act as an arbiter and equivalent of value.

We have identified how a notion of Otherness within the concept of fetishism has acted as a means of excluding that which is considered surplus to a sanctioned economy of value. In the case of psychosexual economies, it has been demonstrated how a deployment of alliance and sexuality have mutually informed each other within a discourse of sex in which to vindicate a functional erotics aimed at reproduction; those erotic acts that diverge from this function are classified and denigrated as a pathological and deviant activity – in Foucault’s study, both hysteria and perversion, of which fetishism is the archetype, are considered as these types of activity. In the case of socio-economics, it is precisely the problem of value that occurs at the point of surplus that allows commodities to appear as being arbitrarily invested with value at the point of exchange – in this case, excess is understood as surplus production beyond need that allows objects to be produced for the function of exchange. As Baudrillard points out, it is surplus exchange orientated around a privileged signifier that allows all objects and human activity to become assimilated to a code that negates all expenditure that would stand outside its restricted logic of exchange, accumulation and production. As we have seen, for Baudrillard, both socioeconomic and psychosexual economies follow this same logic in which all relations are reduced to a general equivalence of value where utility and exchange are circumscribed within its codes – as we will see

later, Baudrillard goes on to subvert notions of production, accumulation and utility via notions of symbolic exchange and seduction.

In the relationship between the constitution of privileged signifiers and the consequent exclusions of all that is in excess to their economies, we can recognize an ironic move in which the surplus upon which exchange is based becomes filtered, categorized and reproduced within a relation that claims that any subsequent surplus should be understood as emanating from its own restrictive economy, and that any surplus that does not serve the function of its own reproduction ('perverse' pleasures and expenditure without accumulation) is to be recognized as a deviation from its origin within such a relation. As such, the surplus that inevitably occurs as a result of all forms of activity and production, becomes alienated within restrictive economies that claim legitimacy for certain modes of production and exchange via the arbitrary and artificial endorsement of value which both excludes relations as much as sanctioning them. This has profound consequences for our notion of the fetish.

The fetish has been described as an artificial investment in an object that subsequently appears to have inherent value in itself; it has been perceived as a disavowal of, and substitute for, real underlying relations of exchange between subjects. If the fetish is an artificial investment, a construction predicated upon a surplus, and we can no longer substantiate a notion of a self-present origin of value from which the fetish deviates, we can perhaps start to perceive the fetish as the archetype of value, rather than its substitute. Given that the fetish has always been considered an artificial production predicated on a surplus excess, we can consider the possibility that the usual prescription for the fetish should be reversed, rather than being seen as derivative of relations governed by a privileged signifier, this signifier can itself be perceived as but one more example of a fetish – this will become more apparent when we examine the concept of the *objet petit a* within the work of Žižek. The surplus that allows the fetish to be produced is the same that allows the privileged signifiers and their corresponding economies to take hold. In

fact, the notion of disavowal attributed to the fetish can be perceived as the means by which privileged signifiers retain both their legitimacy and agency – it is the means by which the production process is assimilated into an economy of the same.<sup>22</sup>

If an origin of presence is denied privileged signifiers within both socio-economic and psychosexual economies, and the fetish can therefore no longer be seen as a deviation from such an origin, then the notion of the fetish needs to be constituted upon a new premise. Given that both the privileged signifier and the fetish are the effect of an underlying surplus production that has no foundation beyond a given set of immanent productive relations, we can consider the possibility that both the fetish and the privileged signifier are the result of an excess within such a relationship. Because there can be no universal origins that generate the outcomes of these productive relations, the outcome cannot be understood in terms of an economy of the same in which value is understood through a restricted notion of identity and non-identity. Objects invested with value outside a restricted economy – which we will understand as fetishes given a revised notion of the term - will instead be understood through a different criteria: difference.

To understand how a notion of the fetish and value can be constructively constituted upon difference rather than identity within an economy of the same requires an examination of the notion of death. As we shall see, this concept is found to provide a shared notion of Otherness for both socioeconomic and psychosexual realms and provides the origin and foundation to legitimate their corresponding values. By reconfiguring a notion of death that is not perceived in opposition to life, from which it must therefore be radically excluded, death can be recognized as a positive attribute within the cycle of the life process, allowing new relations, creations and values to be formed. A notion of surplus and exchange beyond a restricted economy can be understood through George Bataille's notion of a general economy – here death provides the means to understand activity, desire and exchange outside the restrictive realms of utility, accumulation and reproduction. In a later chapter, death as a

process of eternal rebirth and renewal within the work of Gilles Deleuze will provide a notion of difference as a means for understanding and generating productive relations – here, knowledge based upon the immanent play of difference is asserted in opposition to knowledge based upon an underlying notion of identity and presence. In each case, a notion of death which is no longer radically excluded from life, will allow us to acknowledge fetishism as a productive and generative act, freed from its perception as a substitute for an original presence and value.

### **Part Three: Fetishism, Death and the General Economy.**

In this section, the notion of death will be explored – it will be found that it is the exclusion of this concept as an integral part of life that ties the socio-economic and psychosexual realms together as homogeneous economies, whilst barring that which is in excess to their utilitarian and reproductive roles. An exploration of the Freudian and Lacanian notion of the death drive allows us to recognize that it is premised on a metaphysics of presence orientated around a homogeneous economy of the same. Whereas the Lacanian concept of the *objet petit a* describes the eternal, repetitious and ultimately futile search for the lost object of desire, its position as a substitute for this object allows us to consider the possibility that all objects of desire, including the phallus, are but fetishes that serve the function of constituting value. This conception reverses the usual psychoanalytic interpretation of the fetish in which the phallus exists as presence first (if only in phantom form), followed by a substitution. Such a consideration points to a notion of the fetish as an immanent object of desire artificially produced rather than being anchored to an original causal relationship in which an object is lost. To perceive such a notion of the fetish outside an economy of the same requires a revaluation of the notion of death without recourse to an illusionary moment without tension prior to our entry into the Symbolic Order.

By examining the work of Jean Baudrillard, the notion of the psychosexual death drive is found to exclude the notion of death as an integral part of life – it is therefore found to remain as a radical Other. Likewise, the exclusion of death is found to provide the alibi for the mechanism of accumulation and exchange within a restrictive capitalist political economy. An exploration of the writings of Georges Bataille is found to provide a means by which the cycle of communication between life and death can be reinstated. By reconfiguring a notion of death that is not perceived in opposition to life, death can be recognized as a positive attribute within the cycle of the life process, allowing new relations, creations and values to be formed. Such an interpretation will provide a

means for understanding the fetish as an untransposable object of desire, constituted through difference rather than through presence, identity and origins.

### ***Death-drive and the fetish.***

Before we can consider an immanent notion of the fetish that is no longer constituted upon myths of origin, presence and Otherness, we must consider how restricted economies with reified values are reproduced. As we have seen, in psychosexual relations, the production and exchange involved in desire is reproduced via the mediation of the phallus. To understand this process we need to consider the role of repetition within the death drive – a process in which desire is anchored to phallic presence and a corresponding lack. Later, we will consider the relationship between the reproduction and repetition of value in psychosexual economies and that within political economy.

Our earlier examination of Freud's essay *Fetish* (1927), described the way in which the fetish functioned as a means to disavow the perceived castrated state of women via the ordination of a substitute for the maternal phallus. According to this view, the fetish allows us to have it both ways – to acknowledge woman as castrated whilst disavowing this condition through the use of the fetish object. As such, the 'horror of castration has set up a memorial to itself in the creation of this substitute' (Freud 1927, p.154). In *Cultures of Fetishism* (2006), Louise Kaplan has identified how such funereal imagery draws our attention to the underlying theme of death within the essay. As Kaplan states: 'Freud's likening of fetishism to death sounds the note of destruction that will be echoed in his concluding remarks on the mutilations of women's bodies' (Kaplan 2006, p.27-8). The fetish understood as a funereal memorial to castration allows Freud to explain destructive fetishistic acts, such as the cutting of female hair and the practice of Chinese foot-binding.<sup>23</sup> Kaplan's argues that Freud's denigration of the female sexual organs as castrated perhaps suggests more about his own unconscious attitude towards femininity and

less about the validity of his claims. According to Kaplan, whenever man is subjugated and made to feel vulnerable by the conditions inflicted upon him in society, he recognizes this position as corresponding to the condition of femininity within patriarchy. Given this recognition, a 'popular response to these social humiliations is the desire to silence the sexuality of females' (ibid, p.31). As Kaplan states:

The fears of the female body, and the mutilations that men sometimes inflict on women's bodies to counteract these fears, are not figments of Freud's imagination. Many men do fear the female body and they do sometimes participate in the mutilation of women's bodies to alleviate this fear [...Freud's] unrelenting attack on the so-called castrated female genitals, reveal some of his own aggression toward the female body. (ibid, p.16)

To substantiate the vulnerable physical and mental state of Freud during the time he wrote his essay, Kaplan draws our attention to the painful and humiliating operations he suffered whilst being subject to mouth cancer:

[T]he mutilating surgeries performed on his mouth had stimulated an unconscious feminine identification that was intolerable to a proud man like Sigmund Freud. These feminine identifications, which are unconscious aspects of every man's masculine identity, are frightening to most men, often inducing a defensive misogynist coloration to their erotic life, imbuing it with a degree of destructive aggression toward the female body. (ibid, p.18)

The death of his beloved grandson Heinz, the son of his deceased daughter Sophie, further accentuated thoughts of his own mortality and the suffering caused by mouth cancer during the writing of this essay. Kaplan also draws our attention to Freud's concern with death several years earlier in his elucidation of the death instinct in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).

In addition to an unconscious association of death with the feminine in the essay, Kaplan challenges the view that fetishism is symptomatic of castration anxiety by identifying the ambiguities within the case studies used to support the claim. Kaplan makes reference to the man that used an athletic support-belt as a fetish to aid arousal; the ambiguous significance of this fetish is thus described:

[Freud does not] help us decide who is wearing the fetish [...] According to Freud, the transformation of this ordinary supporter into a fetish was inspired by a fig leaf seen on a statue when the fetishist was a little boy. But this solution just leads to another conundrum. Although we might presume that a fig leaf on a statue is intended to cover up the male genitals, this is not necessarily the case. On some statue, the fig leaf masks the reality of female genitals. Thus the fig leaf solution, though clarifying with regard to the accidental circumstances that lead to the choice of the fetish, only deepens the ambiguity with regard to which sex is having his or her genitals covered up. (ibid, p.28)

As such, the sex of the wearer of the athletic support-belt and the sex of the statue remain ambiguous. Kaplan relates this ambiguity with to a common trait associated with fetishists:

Most fetish objects are adopted to allow a man to express his shameful and dangerous wishes to be female and yet remain male. In many typical fetishistic fantasies, where the male or his sexual partner is wearing a fetishized female garment, the fetishist unconsciously (or consciously) imagines he is a woman, but a woman with a penis. But what about a man who is wearing a male garment? Is he then a male impersonator? As Freud would point out in later years, the repudiation of femininity – a man's struggle against his feminine attitude towards another male – is the bedrock of male psychology. (ibid, 28-9)

Kaplan uses the term 'Venus envy' to describe this hidden desire to be feminine. According to Kaplan, this desire demonstrates the actual significance of the female genitals that are disavowed:

The female genitals are the emblem of that unwelcome news that Mother and Father share a desire that excludes the little child. The Mother does have some genitals of significance and the father does desire her for having them, The little boy, of course, is competitive with his mother for his father's love. He wishes to be in her submissive position with the dominating father. He envies her the power she has over his beloved and mighty father and would just as soon imagine her genitals as insignificant and puny – castrated, if necessary, and definitely inferior to his own. (ibid, p.29-30)

Freud's theory that anxiety towards a woman is caused by a perceived lack rather than envy is therefore put in doubt. For Kaplan, there is an irony in Freud's essay – his description of the process of disavowal in fetishism is itself subject to this process. Freud's denigration of the female to a position of lack is 'tantamount to a disavowal of the enormous and terrifying and humiliating significance of the actual female genitals' (ibid, p.29). Kaplan speculates that Freud's vulnerability, fragility and submissiveness with regard to the surgical procedures endured whilst producing the essay may have caused him to disavow his own association with the feminine position. As such, it is not unreasonable to assume that Freud's notion of fetishism may have been infected by 'a defensive misogynist coloration [...imbued] with a destructive aggression toward the female body' (ibid, p.18). Such destructive aggression therefore orientates around the idea of woman as submissive and lacking – to acknowledge or be associated with this position is to realize the possibility of one's own castration. This funereal image of castration – in which the phallic woman is recognized as lacking and the unity of mother and child is broken – occurs as a memorial in the fetish; as we shall see, it also appears on a

more fundamental level in psychoanalysis in the form of the death drive. By understanding the death drive as an unconscious and repetitious wish to return to a state without tension, prior to the anxiety caused via separation from the mother, we find yet another appeal to an origin that positions desire under the authority of the singular economy of the phallus. Here, desire is the desire to be the phallus – the lost object of desire one lacks.

The death drive is the concept in which the core psychoanalytic themes of drive, repetition and desire are encapsulated. In the work of Freud, the death drive illustrates the process whereby an individual repeats both pleasurable experiences and traumas in an attempt to reduce bodily tension to a minimum level of tension. For Freud, the existence of such a tendency means that 'instincts are conservative [...] and tend towards the restoration of an earlier state of things' (Freud 1920, p. 245); as such, the '*aim of all life is death*' (ibid, 246). Freud illustrates the repetition involved with reference to the *fort – da* game. Freud interprets an account of a child repeatedly throwing a cotton reel from its cot as evidence of the death instinct. Within this account, the child is interpreted as saying 'fort' (German for 'gone') and 'da' (German for there) each time the cotton reel is thrown or returned (ibid, p.224-5). The oscillating cotton reel is described as a substitute for the mother, allowing the child to reduce the tension experienced through the trauma of separation. Whilst retaining the importance of repetition, Lacan reinterprets the *fort da* game, emphasising the linguistic element of the activity and its significance for the split between the symbolic subject and the Real.<sup>24</sup> The repetition involved in the *fort-da* game is therefore no longer a demand for the return of the physical mother, it is rather a repetition inaugurated by our entry into the realm of the signifier; here we are compelled to repeat an insatiable demand for that from which we are eternally alienated: the Real as that realm outside the symbolic order. As such, for Lacan the death drive is to be understood as a repetition of the desire to return to an imagined state before the acquisition of language and our subsequent alienation from the world; as Lacan puts it, if 'we want to get at what was before [...] speech in

the subject and what is prior to the birth of symbols, we find it in death[.]’ (Lacan 2006, p.263) Through a repetition governed by the edicts of the symbolic order, the subject seeks a return to an earlier state prior to its inauguration in language – evident in the subject’s continuous search for the elusive lost object of desire symbolised by the Phallus.

This conception of the death drive has consequences for a notion of desire. If we are radically alienated from a lost object of desire, then all subsequent desire must be based upon that which is surplus to this object. For both Freud and Lacan, human desire can only exist beyond the realm of biological need – it is beyond this realm that desire and sexuality become subject to cultural factors, social demands and language. A realm beyond biological need can, in turn, only exist if there is a surplus that can be subject to such social determinations. To understand desire as a process that exists beyond the realm of biological need, let us again clarify the status of sexual drives within psychoanalysis.

As we saw earlier, Freud differentiates between sexual drives and biological instincts. The original satisfaction found in a biological function becomes a drive to repeat through the replacement of another object at the same erotogenic zone. This need to repeat through such a replacement is constituted through the absence of the object associated with the given biological need. This autoerotic repetition therefore inaugurates the autonomy of the sexual drive and can be defined by their departure from their original biological goal. As Elizabeth Grosz succinctly puts it, ‘drives [...] are a deviation of the (natural) instinct’ (Grosz 1990, p.55). In contrast to biological instincts that thrive on the presence of their object (milk, food), drives are perceived as thriving on absence and lack:

The emergence of erotic and libidinal relations from self-preservative instincts is a function of *lack* or *absence*, the lack or absence of a given or predetermined object. Such a lack would be intolerable and constitute a life-endangering denial in the case of an instinct proper; yet it is the precondition of the drive (ibid, p.55-6).

The sexual drive is therefore determined less by the satisfaction of some biological need or instinct (in the above example, the gaining of milk as nourishment) and more by the displacement of the object of these biological processes (the pleasure gained through sucking directed towards an object other than milk / nourishment). Because sexual drives are established through lack, any object can become the object of desire - though no object will ever satisfy the drive because an object of desire is always the presence of a void produced through this fundamental absence.<sup>25</sup>

As we have described, the condition in which an object of desire is always a substitute for the lack of the real, is given a formulaic expression by Lacan – referred to as the *objet petit a*. Because the *objet petit a* always remains an object substitute for an irredeemable loss, it should be understood as the object-cause of desire – an object substitute will always remain a failed attempt to fill the void which is the object of our sexual drives. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, no object is ever enough to satisfy our sexual drives because they cannot fill the void created by a condition of lack. The fact that the object of desire is always a substitute for that which we lack clearly relates to the repetitions involved within the death drive – when Lacan refers to the cotton reel involved within the *fort da* game, he states: ‘To this object we will later give the name it bears in the Lacanian algebra – the *objet petit a*’ (Lacan 1991, p.62). Our insistence to achieve enjoyment inaugurated through the opening of a void means that this process will be forever repeated. As we have discussed, for Freud pleasure is obtained by the repetition of a sensation beyond the confines of self maintenance – the example of thumb-sucking to repeat the sensation of receiving nutritious breast milk is given (Freud 1905, p.322); for Lacan, this fracture between sensations experienced for self maintenance and the pleasure obtained through external repetition is explained in terms of the difference between *need* and *demand*<sup>26</sup>. Through the repetition of a sensation via external stimuli, both of these views consider objects of desire to be firstly, a surplus produced beyond the remit of instinctual need (no nourishment or self maintenance is required

within such a repetition) and secondly, an effect of lack in that the original source of pleasure (the mother's breast for example) is no longer available and therefore a replacement object is found: Lacan's *objet petit a*.

Given the psychoanalytic notion of the death drive – in both its Freudian and Lacanian forms – we can recognise a clear metaphysics of presence evident within its movements. The drive towards that which is beyond the symbolic order is instigated by a desire born of a radical separation from the Real inaugurated by our entry into the realm of the signifier; such an entry is subject to the dictates of the phallus – that signifier which represents the lack at the heart of desire, which, in turn, determines our gendered subjectivity. The death drive then, requires a repetition within the economy of desire that is always striving towards a realm beyond the symbolic; paradoxically, such an aim is always instigated by the realm of the signifier: the Super-Ego. As the path towards *jouissance* is only to be found via the symbolic order, the subject can only move towards it, without reaching it, in a metonymic movement from one signifier to the next.<sup>27</sup> The sexual economy we have described is therefore subject to repetitions fuelled by the currency of the phallic signifier. The repetitions of the death drive are therefore subject to the same metaphysics of presence, with its appeal to some origin at its foundation from which we are separated. As such, the death drive is tied to a notion of the repetition of the same in which the possibility of difference is excluded. Although the death drive posits desire as being anchored to an economy of the same, it does allow us to revise a notion of the fetish that has been traditionally understood as a deviation from a legitimate desire determined by phallic presence.

If the *objet petit a* is a substitute for the lost object of desire for which we are in a repetitious and eternal search for, then we have to consider the possibility that all objects of desire, including the phallus, are but fetishes that serve the futile function of attempting to fill the lack at the heart of desire. This notion reverses the usual psychoanalytic interpretation of the fetish in which the phallus exists as presence first (if only in phantom form), followed by a substitution. Here, all objects of

desire are substitutions for that which is forever lost. This connection between lack, the *objet petit a* and the fetish is recognized within the writings of Žižek. Žižek uses the concept of the *objet petit a* as a theoretical model to explain our fetishistic desires within culture<sup>28</sup>, Žižek highlights the fact that desire is of itself fetishistic, that what we desire has no original object.<sup>29</sup> For Žižek, our substitution of an object for the lost object-cause of desire – the *objet petit a* – means that there is always some impossible, elusive *Thing* that we desire beyond the object; it is this elusive *Thing* that gives desire its insatiable character and always leaves that which we desire beyond the Symbolic, within the realm of the Real. For Žižek then, all objects of desire are in themselves fetishistic; he points out that the difference between normal sexual desire and sexual fetishism is that one deludes itself that the object is an obstacle for gaining satisfaction, whilst the other recognises this object as the cause of desire and embraces it as such. As Žižek states in *The Fragile Absolute* (2000):

This is the difference between 'normal' sexual repression and fetishism: in normal sexuality; we think that the detail-feature that serves as the cause of desire is just a secondary obstacle that prevents our direct access to the Thing – that is, we overlook its key role; while in fetishism we simply make the cause of desire directly into our object of desire [...] (Žižek 2001, p.20-1)

For Žižek, all objects of desire are fetishes in that each is an arbitrary substitute for that which is lacking - one should be reminded that Lacan himself considered the desire for the phallus to be fetishistic; in his discussion of the phallus in relation to female sexuality, Lacan states:

[Woman] finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of the person to whom her demand for love is addressed. It should not be forgotten [...] that the organ that is endowed with this signifying function takes on the value of a fetish thereby. (Lacan 2006, p. 583)

If sexual drives differ from biological need in terms of an assumed deviation from function towards a surplus pleasure, we can interpret such activity as an act of artifice – a creative movement in which the outcome can have no prior predisposition for the subject. As we have described, according to psychoanalysis, sexual drives move us from the realm of need to that of lack. Yet there appears to be no reason to assume that the creative movement we are describing should fundamentally involve an initial departure from biological function – this becomes important in our later consideration of desiring-machines in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. The question has to be asked, why cannot an erotic object be produced via the play of the body within the material world without recourse to some previously prescribed biological function? It would seem to be the case that the theory of sexual drives, and its corresponding notion of the death drive, are yet another example of the tendency to equate normative sexual practice with heterosexual notions of reproduction and utility – as we have described, according to these theories, though erotic pleasure may be an excess it must always have biological necessity and utility at its origin. This repetition of the same within the death drive will be later subject to criticism in a discussion of difference and repetition within the work of Gilles Deleuze. If the object-cause of desire – the *objet petit a* – allows us to interpret all objects of desire as fetishes once we recognize them as substitutes for that which has been lost, we then need to consider their status as fetishes once we negate the causal notion of lack from the equation. Such a consideration points to a notion of the fetish as an immanent object of desire artificially produced rather than being anchored to an original causal relationship in which an object is lost. To perceive such a notion of the fetish outside this causal relationship requires a reevaluation of the notion of death. To understand how desire operates outside this economy of the same, we will now refer to the writings of Jean Baudrillard and Georges Bataille. Baudrillard criticizes the death drive as yet one more example of a tendency to homogenize economies via exclusions. Baudrillard also connects the notion of death within this drive to that which is excluded

within political economy. Bataille's notion of eroticism and the general economy allows us to perceive a conception of death as an integral part of the life cycle. By understanding death and life as cyclical rather than viewing death as an origin to which we incessantly wish to return, the possibility of perceiving the fetish as an untransposable object of desire becomes viable. Within such a cyclical relationship, repetition offers the potential of a circuit of desire that can be reproduced and repeated without an appeal to some origin of presence.

### **Death and Symbolic Exchange**

For Baudrillard, the convergence of psychosexual and socioeconomic restricted economies around privileged signifiers, is founded upon a fundamental binary opposition which puts all other restricted economies of value into play - this binary is the opposition between life and death, in which life is posited as positive value and death is that which must be excluded. According to Baudrillard, the series of exclusions and inclusions that constitute western thought can be understood by examining our relation to death. As Baudrillard states:

At the very core of the 'rationality' of our culture, however, is an exclusion that precedes every other, more radical than the exclusion of madmen, children or inferior races, an exclusion preceding all these and serving as their model: the exclusion of the dead and of death. (Baudrillard 1993, p.126)

Whereas death is clearly an integral part of our biological condition, Baudrillard argues that the way death is managed symbolically in culture is subject to cultural determinations. Baudrillard proposes that a historical trend exists in which the dead are increasingly excluded from symbolic circulation. In earlier societies, the dead have a role to play within cultural symbolic exchange; as Kellner points out:

In these societies, symbolic exchange between life and death continuously took place, with gifts and ceremonies honoring the dead and favors or hostilities being visited on the living by the dead. In such societies, there need be no fear of death or obsession with death, for it is an integral part of everyday life. (Kellner 1989, p.103)

In contrast to this, there is an increasing move towards the exclusion of the dead as society evolves. As Baudrillard states,

[t]here is an irreversible evolution from savage societies to our own: little by little, *the dead cease to exist*. They are thrown out of the group's symbolic circulation. They are no longer beings with a full role to play, worthy partners in exchange, and we make this obvious by exiling them further and further away from the group of the living. (Baudrillard Op Cit)

Baudrillard describes the cemetery as the first ghettos, prior to any exclusion based upon race, ethnicity or religion. In modernity, death is perceived as the ultimate deviancy, against which the normal functioning human can be defined.

In the domestic intimacy of the cemetery, the [dead remain] in the heart of the village or town, becoming the first ghetto, prefiguring every future ghetto, but are thrown further and further from the centre towards the periphery, finally having nowhere to go at all, as in the new town or the contemporary metropolis, where there are no longer any provisions for the dead, either in mental or in physical space [...] Strictly speaking, we no longer know what to do with them, since, today, it is not normal to be dead, and this is new. To be dead is an unthinkable anomaly; nothing else is as offensive as this. Death is a delinquency, and an incurable deviancy. (ibid)

For Baudrillard then, death is to be radically excluded in which to legitimize the value of life – its very exclusion both valorizes life and provides an alibi for its legitimation. According to Baudrillard, the very notion of survival is itself tied to the exclusion of death which, in turn, legitimates an intensified valorization of life - in survival, 'death is repressed; life itself, in accordance with that well known ebbing away, would be nothing more than a survival determined by death' (ibid, p.127). Baudrillard perceives a correspondence between death as a value, as a radical Other, political economy and the psychosexual. As we saw earlier, Foucault identified notions of scarcity that, in turn, were associated with the idea of human finitude, as a determining factor in modern political economy. Baudrillard goes further than Foucault in identifying death as the common determinant in the inclusions and exclusions associated within both psychosexual and socio-economic discourses. Baudrillard perceives death as the blindspot of political economy, the 'absence haunting all its calculations, [where the] absence of death alone permits the exchange of values and the play of equivalences' (ibid, p.154). The mechanism of accumulation and exchange within a capitalist political economy is therefore perceived as a means to guarantee survival, deflect scarcity and ward off death. Baudrillard contemplates the possibility that a prodigal waste and expenditure within the system would upset the circuit of accumulation and exchange to the point that it could no longer function – an *'infinitesimal injection of death would immediately create such excess and ambivalence that the play of value would completely collapse'* (ibid). Baudrillard ties this notion of equilibrium and equivalence to the psychoanalytic concept of the death-instinct. Baudrillard criticizes the Freudian concept of the death-instinct in its endorsement of death as an absolute finality in opposition to life – an absolute horizon to which we are repeatedly drawn. As such,

the psychoanalytic vision of death remains an insufficient vision: the pulsions are constrained by repetition, its perspective bears on a final equilibrium [...] eliminating differences and intensities following

an involution towards the lowest point [...] (ibid, p.154).

The death-instinct therefore conjures a notion that is radically in opposition to life, rather than being perceived as complementary, in which 'death is not at all a breakdown of life [...] it is willed by life itself' (ibid, p.155). Whereas political economy attempts to ward off death as its radical Other via accumulation and exchange, the death-instinct within the psychosexual economy does the opposite – rather than shy away from death, it is declared as the 'insurmountable finality' (ibid, p.154). According to Baudrillard, Freud's mistake was not recognizing death as integral to life as a process of becoming, an excess in which static states are dispersed; he points out that 'Freud missed [...] seeing the curvature of life in death, he missed its vertigo and its excess [...]' (ibid, p.156). Baudrillard argues that this deficit in Freud's account placed 'life's final economy under the sign of repetition and missed its paroxysm' (ibid). Perceiving a repetition of the same in which to resolve and reduce tension is symptomatic of seeing death as a radical Other, rather than complementary to the life process; the Freudian death-instinct therefore fails to perceive the excess of becoming which dissolution can entail. Though there is an opposite movement between socioeconomic and psychosexual economies in relation to death, both are tied to a division that strictly excludes one term from the other. As such, though the 'death drive is the current system's most radical negative [...] it simply holds up a mirror to the funereal imaginary of political economy' (ibid, p.154).

Baudrillard's concern for symbolic exchange and death becomes important for a discussion of restricted and general economies, as well as a consideration of the death instinct in relation to difference. Baudrillard appeals to the work of Georges Bataille in which to illustrate a relationship to death which is not a 'regulator of tensions and an equilibrium function' (ibid, p. 154) – a condition that Baudrillard believes to exist within economies that are based upon privileged signifiers that perceive life and death in oppositional terms. According to Baudrillard, Bataille offers us a

vision of death that negates its regulative function – from this viewpoint, death gives us a ‘paroxysm of exchanges, superabundance and excess [in which] life only exists in bursts and in exchanges with death’ (ibid p. 154-5). Instead of death and life confronting each other as antagonistic principles, neither ‘has its own specific economy: life and death only fall under the sway of a single economy if they are separated; once they are mixed, they pass beyond economics altogether, into festivity and loss’ (ibid, p.155). Whereas political economic concerns for scarcity and accumulation ‘imposes the *linear* economy of duration’ and the psychosexual economy ‘augurs no other issue than the repetitive involution of death’ (ibid, p.155), Bataille reinstates the cycle between life and death – here there is a ‘vision of death as a principle of excess and an anti-economy [in which only] the sumptuous and useless expenditure has meaning’ (ibid). From such a perspective, the ‘economy has no meaning, it is only a residue that has been made into the law of life, whereas wealth lies in the luxurious exchange of death: sacrifice, the ‘accursed share’, escaping investment and equivalence’ (ibid, p.156). As Baudrillard points out, if life is only a ‘need to survive *at any cost*, then annihilation is a priceless luxury. In a system where life is ruled by value and utility, death becomes a useless luxury, and the only alternative’ (ibid). To understand the cyclical relationship of life and death and how ideas of surplus and excess offer an alternative to restrictive economies which strictly delineate that which is to be included and excluded, we must turn to Bataille’s notions of eroticism and the general economy. By examining these notions, the relationship between surplus, artifice and fetishism, identified earlier, will be further elucidated. It will be found that rather than being tied to a notion of equivalence, in which each object becomes a substitute for the privileged signifier of value in both socioeconomic and psychosexual economies, Bataille’s ideas offer us a means to view the fetish as an untransposable object of desire and exchange which forges value rather than being representative of a pre-given reified form.

## Restricted economy versus the general economy

George Bataille identifies a clear relationship between the socio-economic and psychosexual realms. In many ways this relationship mirrors that recognized by Foucault in that a convergence of work and sexuality is identified and a link is made with the notion of death. For Bataille, death and reproduction are intimately related and come together within the sexual act. Bataille points out that the development of life requires a separation with a subsequent fusion of differentiation. Finally death is needed in which to assure the continuity of the life process. Given this situation, death and reproduction both negate and affirm the life process. For Bataille, eroticism is the point at which the polarities between birth and death meet. According to Bataille, a *conscious* awareness of death and separation produce an anguish in being that does not exist within plants and animals. This anguish has the dual effect of making us want to return to a state of non-differentiation, where separation and otherness do not exist, whilst also making us want to surpass our limits and unite with the feared otherness in which to transcend separation. For Bataille, the desire for such transcendence exists in our wish to overcome death and return to the continuity of the life process via our merging with the Other and the consequent reproduction and renewal of life. Our *consciousness* of the relationship between birth and death within sexual reproduction gives the act its erotic sense – it is this that defines human sexual reproduction from that of the animals. As Bataille points out:

Sexual reproductive activity is common to sexual animals and men, but only men appear to have turned their sexual activity into erotic activity. Eroticism, unlike simple sexual activity, is a psychological quest independent of the natural goal [...] From this elementary definition [...]: eroticism is assenting to life even in death. (Bataille 1998, p. 11)

On being aware of death, humans attempt to postpone its inevitability. Such attempts require the production of clothing, food and shelter, as well as developments in science and technology – in a word, the avoidance of death requires work. To protect the sanctity and efficiency of work required the expulsion of all that generates disorder – for Bataille, such disorder is created via the exuberance and violence of the life process. Such an expulsion required the idea of a collective crime upon which a collective sense of guilt could be founded. As such, taboos were instigated in which to structure society and prevent the disruptions to activity which disorder could cause. As Bataille states:

The feeling of anguish responsible for the earliest taboos showed man's refusal or withdrawal in face of the blind surge of life. The first men, their conscience awoken by work, felt uneasy before the dizzy succession of new birth and inevitable death. Looked at as a whole, life is the huge movement made up of reproduction and death. Life brings forth ceaselessly, but only in order to swallow up what she has produced. The first men were confusedly aware of this. They denied death and the cycle of reproduction by means of taboos. (ibid, p.86)

For Bataille, the necessary imposition of a taboo also requires the need to transgress it. As such, society included rituals and periods of festivities in which all that was denied by work was brought back into the social sphere. Transgression is therefore to be perceived as an integral part of the taboo – it did not subvert or stand outside it, rather, its function was to ensure its efficacy. As Bataille indicates, the 'transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends it and completes it' (ibid, p.63). For Bataille, whereas transgression is to be found in both ritual and festival forms within society, when it comes to the realm of the personal, transgression is to be found in eroticism instead. According to Bataille, eroticism requires an equal sensitivity to both the taboo and the transgressive act: the 'inner experience of eroticism demands from the

subject a sensitiveness to the anguish of taboo no less great than the desire which leads him to infringe it' (ibid, p.38-9). As Michael Richardson points out:

In sexual activity the assertion of the life process and its concomitant need to build, to accumulate its resources, is maintained by reproduction, but the sexual act contains within it at the same time a total effusion of pleasure that simultaneously denies this utilitarian function. Sexual activity at once affirms and denies the principle of work[.] (Richardson 1994, p.103)

Eroticism therefore allows us to transcend our own limits and that of society's taboos via a pleasurable merging of one's body with that of another and a continuation of the life process; as it does this, we are also simultaneously reminded of death and our discontinuity of being required by the process of differentiated reproduction. Eroticism therefore provides an intimate communication with the life process in both its continuous and discontinuous forms.

Bataille claims that the denial of eroticism is strong in our culture and asserts that such a denial occurs as a consequence of our need to evade and disavow death. The agency of this denial is found to be the same as that which denies the sacred and the heterogeneous – it is to be found within Christianity and its corresponding work ethic. As Paul Hegarty points out, the 'sacred and eroticism are part of the same process: they are not just pure threats, but are seen as threats *because they threaten the world of work*, i.e. the putative restricted economy' (Hegarty 2000, p.107). Whereas taboo and transgression were previously viewed as complementary, Christianity is perceived as judging them as strict opposites in which one is inherently good and the other inherently evil. Such determinants are governed by the notion of an original sin (the fall) for which we are to seek penitence through abstinence and good deeds. For Bataille, because penitence is required for Christian guilt, it also implies that there can be salvation: a state in which sin no longer exists.

Rather than recognizing guilt as an inherent part of our condition at the crossroads between taboo and transgression – a position at which there can be no redemption - Christianity seeks to strictly adhere to legitimated taboos whilst denying transgression in the hope of salvation. Man's position at this crossroad is denied in favour of obedience to a transcendental deity whose divinity is a guarantor of the promise of an afterworld without anguish, guilt or sin. As Bataille states:

Christianity rejected impurity. It rejected guilt without which sacredness is impossible since only the violation of a taboo can open the way to it [...Christianity] defined the boundaries of the sacred world after its own fashion. In this fresh definition impurity, uncleanness and guilt were driven outside the pale. Impure sacredness was thenceforth the business of the profane world. In the sacred world of Christianity nothing was allowed to survive which clearly confessed the fundamental nature of sin or transgression. (Bataille Op Cit, p.121)

Given Christianity's denial of transgression and the need to assert continuity in the form of an afterlife, sexual activity had to be divided into that which had utility in terms of the reproductive act, and that which threatened the idea of continuity of being: the fact that its pleasures carried the life process beyond the borders of the individual and reminded the subject of the possibility of its own death. Bataille indicates that Christianity therefore asserted the sexual act as a principle of life whilst denying those aspects that equated it with death; sex was therefore reduced to its utilitarian function, whilst all that gave sex its eroticism – orgies, rituals and individual acts of transgression – was to be repudiated. The intimate act of sex was therefore reduced to a thing and completed the equation of all things of *value* in life to the realm of work and utility. As we have seen, in this respect Foucault concurs with Bataille in recognizing modern sexuality as being divided into the utilitarian function of reproduction, whilst perceiving its excesses as being 'perverse'.<sup>30</sup>

If a Bataillean notion of eroticism provides us with an understanding of the intimate communication between life and death, allowing us to understand the life process in both its continuous and discontinuous forms, a consideration of Bataille's conception of the general economy will allow us to perceive how fetishism can be both a means to transgress and constitute given values.

Much can be illuminated in our attempt to understand the relationship between restricted economies, eroticism and surplus by exploring Bataille's notion of the general economy. Much of the work of Bataille deals with the interrelations between normalized codes of production and utility and the realm of excess, surplus and waste. In Bataille, this relationship is connected to the ideas of taboo and transgression, which contributes towards a further understanding of the connection between socioeconomic and psychosexual economies and helps illuminate how the fetish operates both within and outside restrictive economies. George Bataille clearly recognizes that restrictive economies are founded upon, and prioritize, notions of production and utility. As we have identified earlier, modern political economy was founded upon the principle of scarcity – the assumption that the need to protect scarce resources is fundamental to human society. Bataille recognizes that notions of scarcity are tied to the idea of production and utility; he states:

On the one hand [...] material utility is limited to acquisition (in practice, to production) and to the conservation of goods; on the other, it is limited to reproduction and to the conservation of human life (to which is added, it is true, the struggle against pain, whose importance itself suffices to indicate the negative character of the pleasure principle instituted, in theory, as the basis of utility).

(Bataille 1933, p.116-7)

For Bataille then, restricted economies are concerned with channeling human activity for the means of the production and reproduction of a socially endorsed notion of value that designates that which deviates as illegitimate, taboo or worthless. As Bataille puts it, within restricted economies, 'any general judgment of social activity implies the principle that all individual effort, in order to be valid, must be reducible to the fundamental necessities of production and conservation' (ibid, p.117). Bataille criticizes such restrictive economies due to the fact they reduce the capacity of humanity to expend surplus energy in prodigal and expressive ways.

Pleasure, whether art, permissible debauchery, or play, is definitively reduced, in the intellectual representations of *in circulation*, to a concession; in other words it is reduced to a diversion whose role is subsidiary. The most appreciable share of life is given as the condition – sometimes even as the regrettable condition – of productive social activity. (ibid).

George Bataille champions the notion of a general economy that is contrasted against the reductive nature of modern restrictive economies within western societies. In *The Accursed Share* (1949), a new conception of the economy is forged in which a homogeneous financial system is overturned in favour of a heterogeneous economy founded on the need to give. Bataille subverts the notion of production and utility by asserting that the needs of a prodigal consumption and expenditure are of primary importance, rather than a typical concern for the notion of accumulation – as Bataille states:

Changing from the perspectives of restrictive economy to those of general economy actually accomplishes a Copernican transformation: a reversal of thinking [...] If a part of wealth [...] is doomed to destruction or at least to unproductive use without any possible profit, it is logical, even inescapable, to surrender

commodities without return. Henceforth [...] the possibility of pursuing growth is itself subordinated to giving [...] (Bataille 1989, p. 25)

By appealing to anthropological data that addresses societies other than capitalist ones, Bataille indicates that though concerns of subsistence are necessary, such societies were primarily structured around the notion of expenditure.

For Bataille, humans inherently produce surplus energy that goes beyond that needed for mere subsistence – the problem for both the individual and society was how to expend this surplus. As Bataille states:

The living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of a system [...] if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit, it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically. (ibid, p.21)

Given such a problematic, Bataille makes a distinction within the concept of consumption. On the one hand, there is that which is needed for 'the conservation of life and the continuation of individuals' productive activity in a given society' (ibid, p.118); on the other hand, there is a surplus generated for 'unproductive expenditure [...which] has no end beyond themselves' (ibid) – this is what Bataille refers to as the *accursed share*. Like Marx, Bataille is intent on exposing the fraudulent myth at the heart of classical political economy, which perceives that exchange is founded upon the need to accumulate – but whereas Marx exposes the myth of primitive accumulation, Bataille points out that primitive exchange relied not on a process of barter, but on the need to expend uselessly; he states that the 'means of acquisition such as exchange might have as its origin not in the need to acquire that it satisfies today, but the contrary

need, the need to destroy and lose' (ibid, p.121). To support his argument, Bataille resorts to examples of expenditure found within other cultures.<sup>31</sup> Unlike modern western economies, wealth and power is found to be associated with a prodigal loss; as Bataille describes:

It is the constitution of a positive property of loss – from which spring nobility, honour, and rank in a hierarchy – that gives the [potlatch] its significant value [...] wealth appears as an acquisition to the extent that power is acquired by a rich man, but it is entirely directed toward loss in the sense that this power is characterized as power to lose. It is only through loss that glory and honour are linked to wealth. (ibid, p.122)

Though Bataille's interpretation of anthropological evidence to support his arguments has been subject to much criticism, his assumptions about the nature of the general economy are both still plausible and verifiable.<sup>32</sup> Against this notion of expenditure as loss, modern market relations are described as restricted economies in which expenditure has now become linked with accumulation and frugality. For Bataille, the fundamental obligation to expend prodigally has disappeared within modern societies. According to Bataille, the modern bourgeoisie is

characterized by the refusal in principle of this obligation. It has distinguished itself [...] through the fact that it has consented only to *spend for itself*, and within itself [...] The hatred of expenditure is the *raison d'être* of and the justification for the bourgeoisie[.] (ibid, p.124-5)

The relationship between restricted economies of accumulation and an economy of free expenditure and loss is summed up by Bataille in an analogy that has clear psychoanalytic overtones, linking a notion of individual desire to the wider economy. Bataille points out that the contradiction between restricted economies and what he perceives as the

real needs of society (the general economy) recalls the 'narrowness of judgment that puts the father in opposition to the satisfaction of his son's needs' (ibid, p.117); he states:

This narrowness is such that it is impossible for the son to express his will. The father's partially malevolent solicitude is manifested in the things he provides for his son: lodgings, clothes, food, and, when absolutely necessary, a little harmless recreation. But the son does not even have the right to speak about what really gives him a fever; he is obliged to give people the impression that for him no horror can enter into consideration. In this respect, it is sad to say that *conscious humanity has remained a minor*, humanity recognizes the right to acquire, to conserve, and to consume rationally, but it excludes in principle *nonproductive expenditure*.  
(ibid)

The opposition between the two types of economy is further explicated by the terms homogeneity and heterogeneity. The homogeneous is the realm of the restricted economy, consisting of all that is normalized and subject to control within society: money, the realm of work, utility, laws, taboos, reproductive sex and knowledge. In contrast to this, the heterogeneous is the realm of excess beyond the restricted economy: eroticism, death, festivals, transgression, drunkenness, laughter and the dissolution of knowledge. The heterogeneous is described as the general economy in that it not only refers to an excess *beyond* the realm of the restricted economy, but also refers to how such excess *interacts* with the homogeneous realm. As Paul Hegarty states:

[The] realm of excess is the general economy, but the general economy is also the process whereby the homogeneous realm interacts with excessive phenomena. The general economy redefines the economic such that not everything is under the

economic, but everything is part of one economy among many – this many is the general economy. (Hegarty 2000, p.33)

This process of considering a homogeneous order in relation to the heterogeneous excess and surplus that escapes its economy is part of Bataille's wider method of heterology<sup>33</sup>.

Bataille's opposition between the homogeneous and the heterogeneous is also explicitly compared to the contrast made between the sacred and the profane. For Bataille, the sacred is that excess which exists beyond the conventions and controls within society. The sacred is that which transgresses social taboos, it therefore includes carnivals, non-reproductive sexuality, laughter, sacrifice, excretion and other states of excess. In contrast, the profane is the everyday norms and protocols within society that enforce taboos. The taboos instigated within the profane world are prohibited in which to distinguish the world of the sacred as a realm separate and subject to special, socially endorsed means of entry. For Bataille, the sacred was a necessity for a healthy society in that it allowed for the free creation and expenditure of a surplus beyond the tutelage of notions of production and utility.

Bataille concurs with the ideas of Max Weber in identifying the origins of the restrictive economy of modern capitalism with the rise of the Protestant work ethic. In such a view, an association of individual work and asceticism with salvation, found in Lutheran and Calvinist forms of protestant Christianity, led to the precedence of the virtues of production, accumulation and utility within society.<sup>34</sup> For Bataille, the ideological importance of Protestantism was to individualize property and undermine traditional ties to the notion of the sacred – a notion that had remained intact via the medieval idea of sovereignty. In giving the individual the right to property, Protestantism also gave the subject control over his environment and wealth. As such, the traditional social role of the individual became obsolete and the accumulation of wealth became its own justification. On losing its association with the socially and

symbolically sanctioned idea of the sacred, expenditure was to become something to serve calculated private interests. Like Weber, this move towards the 'iron cage' of modern capitalism has led, for Bataille, to a situation where there is 'an unreserved surrender to things, heedless of consequences and seeing nothing beyond them' (Bataille 1989, p.136).

To summarise, without an experience of the sacred as a necessary surplus waste, allowing us an intimate communication with the life process, both erotic and material exchange are destined to remain caught within a restrictive economy in which utility and accumulation become ends in themselves; consequently there is no possibility allowed for transgression – everything must be a *thing*: an object of utility, a commodity. As we have seen, to escape the homogeneous realm of the restrictive economy, Bataille proposes the general economy in which an allowance is made for prodigal expenditure. The question now remains as to how Bataille's notion of general economy relates to the notion of the fetish. Let us now consider Bataille's own thoughts on fetishism.

### **The fetish as an untransposable object of desire.**

According to Bataille, the fetish is an untransposable object of desire. In his essay *The Big Toe* (1929), Bataille points out that 'classic foot fetishism leading to the licking of toes categorically indicates that it is a phenomenon of base seduction' (Bataille 1929, p.23). Later in the essay, Bataille indicates that

a return to reality does not imply any new acceptances, but means that one is seduced in a base manner, without transpositions and to the point of screaming, opening his eyes wide: opening them wide, then, before a big toe. (ibid)

In this essay, Bataille reveals a notion of the fetish that doesn't rely on its seductive effects via a process of substitution in the way that classical

psychoanalysis would imply. The contrast between the two conceptions can clearly be seen in their explanation of foot fetishism. According to Freud,

the Chinese custom of mutilating the female foot and then revering it like a fetish after it has been mutilated [...] seems as though the Chinese male wants to thank the woman for having submitted to being castrated. (Freud 1927, p.157)

In this view, the simultaneous castration and reverence placed upon the female foot is interpreted as an example of the concurrent acknowledgment and disavowal of female castration that, according to psychoanalysis, is said to reside in the fetish. In this interpretation the foot is an equivalent to the missing maternal phallus – as such, the omnipresent economy of the phallus, as privileged signifier, reigns supreme.

In contrast to this, Bataille perceives the seduction of the fetish precisely in its ability to transgress and enter the realm of the sacred; as such, the fetish is aligned with eroticism in its ability to enter into communication with the world across the boundaries of the sacred and profane. Bataille recognizes the interplay between the two realms and perceives the foot as an exceptional example in that it is the point at which the boundary between the human and the earth most clearly break down. In this respect, Bataille emphasizes that such a move towards transgression should not befall to a simplistic sexual interpretation.

Human life entails, in fact, the rage of seeing oneself as a back and forth movement from refuse to the ideal, and from the ideal to refuse – a rage that is easily directed against an organ as *base* as the foot [...] Man's secret horror of his foot is one of the explanations for the tendency to conceal its length and form as much as possible [...]his uneasiness is often confused with a

sexual uneasiness; this is especially striking among the Chinese, who, after having atrophied the feet of women, situate them at the most excessive point of deviance. (Bataille Op Cit, p.20-1)

To illustrate his argument further, Bataille uses the example of the Count of Villamediana's obsessive desire to touch the feet of Queen Elizabeth. Here, the boundary between the profane and sacred realms are transgressed:

If a seductive element is to be attributed to the big toe, it is evidently not one to satisfy such exalted aspirations as, for example, the perfectly indelible taste that, in most cases, leads one to prefer elegant and correct form. On the contrary [...] one can confirm that the pleasure [the count] derived from touching the queen's foot specifically derived from the ugliness and infection represented by the baseness of the foot [...] Here one submits to a seduction radically opposed to that caused by light and ideal beauty [.] (ibid, p.23)

For Bataille then, the fetish is untransposable in the sense that it is not a substitute for something else in a dialectical movement that would raise the trauma at the heart of desire into a higher form – i.e. phallic lack, negation of lack via the maternal phallus equals substitute fetish object. In contrast, fetishism was never to escape such a trauma, its objects always repeat an eternal return of transgression in the face of a taboo. For Bataille this movement was inescapable and no transposition could ever take place; attempts to sublimate and resolve this movement within cultural forms were destined to fail - to tame what was essential to its movement would be to destroy the possibility of its manifestation, hence Bataille's remark in *The Modern Spirit and the Play of Transpositions* (1930): 'I defy any lover of painting to love a picture as much as a fetishist loves a shoe' (Bataille 1930, p.242). For Bataille, that which transgresses must remain silent, it must always be that outside the discourses of the

everyday with their conventional meanings and cultural taboos. As such, the fetish is implicated in Bataille's wider project of heterology that defines his method and informs the movement within his general economy. Here lies Bataille's dilemma: to talk of the fetish, or any other perversion for that matter, requires assimilating the subject within a system of thought in which, by definition, it cannot take affect. The perverse must always remain an illegitimate excess of pleasure beyond the realm of a restricted economy and its homogenous order - as Denis Hollier states:

[P]erversion whose very principle is that it cannot be subsumed by concept and escapes nosological taxonomy. An unformulatable abnormality[...] perversion marks the locus of illegitimate jouissance – but is there any other kind? Modes of reproduction can, perhaps, like forces of production, be socialized. Desire cannot be. (Hollier 1998, p.114)

The impasse inherent to this dilemma within heterological thought, in which the 'perverse' cannot be incorporated within discourse without destroying its affect, will be resolved later when we consider the writings of Deleuze in relation to the fetish.

If the fetish, according to Bataille, can no longer be considered a transposable object which acts as a substitute for some equivalent object, then the question needs to be asked how can the reified equivalent values that manifest themselves as the commodity fetish and the phallus as fetish (in its numerous manifestations) retain their fetishistic status? As we have seen, for Marx, Freud and Lacan these fetishes were defined as such precisely because they appeared to inherently embody a value that was itself socially defined. The solution to this dilemma can be solved by considering the concept of artifice contained within the notion of fetishism, and how the fetish can, in turn, be seen as either transgressive or restrictive depending on its position within a general economy. How a Bataillean notion of fetishism could possibly bridge both a restrictive and transgressive position becomes apparent by considering the writing of one

of his contemporaries and collaborators in the *Documents* journal that Bataille edited. In an article entitled *Alberto Giacometti* (1929), Michel Leiris elaborates on the theme of an untransposable fetish and draws a distinction between what he perceives as a good fetish and a bad fetish – as we shall see, these can be translated as corresponding to the homogeneous and heterogeneous elements within the restrictive and general economy. In this article, written the same year as Bataille's *The Big Toe*, Leiris describes true fetishes as 'the ones that resemble us and are the objectivized form of our desire' (Leiris 1929, p.250). As such, for Leiris, the fetish is an impassioned movement from the inside of ourselves, projected onto that which resides outside – he states:

[T]he demands of this true fetishism, which is to say to the love – really *in love* – of each other, projected out from within and bearing a solid carapace that traps it between the limits of a precise thing and situates it, like a piece of furniture for us to use, in the vast unknown room we call space. (ibid, p.249).

In other words, the fetish is that which we invest with value in an otherwise indifferent world. For Leiris, works of art - those objects of artifice - are only true fetishes if they meet the criteria of being personal projections of desire, at least as personal as the water of tears:

Drops of water, those pretty liquid spheres that can at least remind us of the shape, if not the taste, of our tears, and that moisture, that fluidity corresponding to the sweetness that flows through out limbs when we love or else when we feel ourselves being touched (ibid).

Leiris further elaborates on the nature of these personal projections – as the analogy of tears implies, such personal investments occur at the point of crises in which the identity of self is put at risk:

There are moments one might call *crises*, and in any life they alone matter. In such moments the outer realm seems suddenly to respond to the summons we serve upon it from within, when the external world opens up so that a sudden communication is set up between it and our heart. I have a few such memories from my life, and they all relate to events that appeared meaningless as well as bereft of symbolic value and that came, one might say, unbidden [.] (ibid)

Here we can see a clear comparison with Bataille's notion of the fetish and his wider concern for the general economy. That which is ineffable and meaningless comes to enter the profane world via our investment in it – as such, the heterogenous enters. In turn, this movement generates a 'communication' between our desire and the world that corresponds to that described within Bataille's general economy. In each example given by Leiris of moments within his life that equate with the fetishistic experience, it is the prodigality and excess of life that generates the inner investment of the heart. For Leiris, true art – which he equates with the fetish in this article – can 'only arise from such 'crises', and the only works which count are those that offer their equivalent [...Like] the real fetishes one might idolize [...] everything in it is prodigiously alive' (ibid, p.250).

In opposition to this, Leiris identifies a 'wretched' fetishism that is opposed to that generated via a spontaneous personal investment of desire. For Leiris, this 'wretched' fetishism is inferior for two reasons. Firstly, it is a transposed form in that it has become a reified object that is invested with a socially endorsed, 'legitimate' notion of value within a restricted economy. Secondly, precisely because of its reified and legitimated form, it is subject to an act of deception in which, as we have seen in both the case of psychosexual and socioeconomic examples, the artificial basis upon which the value of the fetish is formed - whether manifested in gold to reflect an equivalent value in commodity exchange, or manifested in the phallus to reflect an equivalent exchange in sexual relations – is disavowed. The creative artifice inherent to human agency

that allows us to produce, transform and desire, is therefore denied in such a reified form of fetishism. As Leiris states:

As worshippers of those wispy ghosts that are our moral, logical and social imperatives, we thus cling to a transposed fetishism, counterfeiting the one that moves us so profoundly, and this wretched fetishism absorbs the greater part of our actions, leaving almost no space for the genuine fetishism which alone is truly worth pursuing because it is entirely conscious of itself and in consequence does not rely on any kind of deception. (ibid, p.249).

Leiris' notion of the fetish can therefore be considered as either transgressive or restrictive depending on its position within a general economy. If it is subject to the 'moral, logical and social imperatives' of the restricted economy, the fetish remains as a stable reified form that disavows the possibility of its other: a fetishistic investment in productive desire neither directed towards 'useful' commodity production and accumulation or coital acts of reproduction. On discussing Leiris' essay on Giacometti, Pietz recognizes this double-sided character to the fetish and offers us an explanation of how both sides of the fetish come to manifest themselves within culture. Pietz argues that fetish discourse has always been a 'double consciousness of absorbed credulity and degraded or distanced incredulity' (Pietz 1985, p.14). Because of its cross-cultural position, it is recognized that the concept of the fetish has always had a special critical relation to the notion of value in which to expose the degree to which beliefs are culturally and artificially created. As Pietz describes:

The discourse of the fetish has always been a critical discourse about the false objective value from which the speaker is personally distanced [...] "Fetish" has always named the incomprehensible mystery of the power of material things to be collective social objects experienced by individuals as truly embodying determinate

values and virtues, always as judged from a cross-cultural perspective of relative infinite degradation (ibid).

Given that the concept has a critical function that both criticizes and degrades established determinate values, Pietz contends that such a function also, by implication, allows the 'radical creation of value' (ibid). Its double-sided character therefore revolves around both exposing the artificial nature of value and explicating the means by which objects are invested with value.

Pietz puts forward a conception of the fetish that incorporates the notion of it being both a personal investment of desire whilst also becoming a socially endorsed and reified value. Pietz points out that the fetish can be viewed as

the locus of a sort of primary and carnal rhetoric of identification and disavowal that establishes conscious and unconscious value judgments connecting territorialized social things and embodied personal individuals within a series of singular historical fixations. It would thus be the site of articulation both of ideological reification and hypostasis, and of impassioned spontaneous criticism. (ibid).

From this notion, Pietz proposes the following fundamental categories that define the fetish: 'historicization, territorialization, reification, and personalization' (ibid, p.12). For Pietz, the category of historicization refers to the fact that the fetish is 'always a meaningful fixation of a singular event [...] the enduring material form and force of an unrepeatable event' (ibid) – this unrepeatability will become important when we consider the notion of time and repetition in relation to the fetish later. The category of territorialization positions the context and meaning of the fetish within a 'material space (an earthly matrix), whether in the form of a geographical locality, a marked site of the human body, or a medium of inscription or configuration defined by some portable or wearable thing' (ibid). The concept of reification describes the fixation of historical meaning within a

'self-contained entity identifiable within the territory' (ibid). This has the affect of allowing the fetish to be 'recognizable as a discrete thing [...] because of its status as a significant object within the value codes proper to the productive and ideological systems of a given society' (ibid). Finally, the fetish can be said to be 'personalized' in that it 'evokes an intensely personal response from individuals' (ibid) that is 'incommensurable with [...] the social value codes within which the fetish holds the status as a material signifier' (ibid). For Pietz, it is this intensely personal response that allows the possibility for an individual to either embrace an ideological disavowal or forge a new value invested with desire; as Pietz states:

It is in those "disavowals" and "perspectives of flight" whose possibility is opened by the clash of this incommensurable difference that the fetish might be identified as the site of both the formation and the revelation of ideology and value-consciousness. (ibid, p.13)

Within this section, we have identified how an immanent and untransposable notion of the fetish may be forged via a renegotiation of the concept of death in which it appears complementary and integral to the life process. The notion of the general economy has illustrated the possibility of exchange and value outside the logic of homogeneity and equivalence within restrictive economies. By expending surplus prodigally, the notion of the general economy offers us a means to understand the artifice of production and desire beyond socially endorsed taboos and the realms of utility and reified value. In such circumstances, desire is interpreted as that which transgresses the profane world of the everyday and the taboo, offering us a means of communication with that which is in excess of ourselves and society – it therefore allows a communion with death on the road to becoming Other. Transgression allows the death of identity in favour of difference – it is the constant negotiation between these two realms that gives us a sense of becoming. The fetish as an object of desire bridges these two realms and is therefore to be viewed as

untransposable.<sup>35</sup> The fetish is found to seduce via its appeal to the transgressive and excessive realm of the sacred, outside the exclusions constituted by taboos and the reified values within a restricted economy. By transgressing the taboo, the fetish has been found to enter into the realm of the ineffable – as we have seen, from this perspective desire, in its excess, remains outside the realms of socially endorsed categories of utility, production and reproduction.

Though Pietz's proposed categories and functions of the fetish are illuminating in terms of describing the bridge between both transgressive and restrictive values within the notion, it does not clarify how and why these values manifest themselves in terms of either a restrictive or general economy. Likewise, such categories do not address how the fetish as an untransposable and ineffable movement can come to represent value within social discourse and activity. Pietz's concern is to distill a model from the various historical meanings and uses of the notion of fetishism, as such, the application and workings of this model has yet to be explored. For Pietz, the 'ultimate usefulness of this model depends on its applicability outside the historical field of fetish discourse as presently constituted' (ibid, p.15). The workings of his model therefore lie 'outside the scope of [his] present study' (ibid).

As we have seen, Baudrillard makes a clear appeal to Bataille's notion of a general economy in which to break the logic of restrictive economies of value. However, Baudrillard's notion of fetishism remains tied to a notion of death, it is therefore always a reified value inherent to the system of production and reproduction. As described, Baudrillard's earlier writings explained fetishism in terms of an effect of the restrictive code within commodity production – the fetish is therefore subject to exchange value, despite use value being relative to the simulations produced within a post-modern consumerist society. Whereas Baudrillard refers to the general economy to demonstrate how 'sumptuous and useless expenditure' evades the priorities of production and utility, his notion of the fetish 'remained curiously unchanging' (Gane 2011, p.371) – the fetish persists as a reifying force within a culture that prevents

communication between the realms of life and death that, according to Baudrillard, are perceived in oppositional terms. In *Seduction* (1979), Baudrillard describes the fetishist as follows:

The pervert always gets involved in a maniacal universe of mastery and the law. He seeks mastery over the fetishized rule and absolute ritual circumscription. The latter is no longer playful. It no longer moves. It is dead, and can no longer put anything into play except its own death. Fetishism is the seduction of death, including the death of the rule in perversion. (Baudrillard 1990, p.128)

For Baudrillard then, the ritualistic value of the fetish is not the subject of play, it is a frozen, deathly relation. In opposition to this, Baudrillard proposes a notion of seduction – a concept that endorses the idea of a ritualistic game based on artifice. The notion of seduction is related to the idea of symbolic exchange within the general economy in that a challenge occurs that orientates around an exchange and counter-exchange with its own rules. Against a singular restrictive economy of production and desire, seduction sees a prodigal expenditure in which agents are vertiginously seduced via the artifice of appearance, signs and fascination outside a pre-ordained logic. As Kellner speculates, the term seduction is used rather than general economy because ‘symbolic exchange has overtones of pre-capitalist ‘primitivism’ which would expose Baudrillard to charges of nostalgia for bygone eras’ (Kellner 1989, p. 149). However, the term ‘preserves the emphasis in symbolic exchange on reversibility, play and exchange on the level of the symbolic, expenditure and waste, excess and aesthetic display’ (ibid). Despite an earlier recognition of the fetish as artifice, it remains an ossified relation in contrast to seduction; as Baudrillard states:

Perversion is a frozen challenge; seduction, a living challenge.  
Seduction is shifting and ephemeral; perversion, monotonous and

interminable. Perversion is theatrical and complicit; seduction, secret and reversible. (Baudrillard Op Cit)

Baudrillard's notion of seduction reminds us of the seduction Bataille refers to in his description of the fetish as that which seduces us beyond the profane – it is that which is in excess of order and the restricted economy. It also reminds of Leiris' notion of the good fetish and bad fetish, or that which transgresses and that which deceives itself as a legitimate value. It is surprising then, that Baudrillard does not consider this double-sided aspect of fetishism – fetishism can be a dead value or that which annihilates value in a life-affirming process that constitutes value anew. Tim Dant criticizes Baudrillard's analysis of fetishism by pointing out that objects only appear 'to have two dimensions; function and ostentation. [Whereas] there are a number of forms of social relations with objects that could lead to fetishisation' (Dant 1996, p. 509). According to Dant, other forms of consumption can be involved in the fetishisation of objects, including knowledge, aesthetics and mediation (ibid, p. 512). For Dant, It is also not clear in Baudrillard's work 'to what extent all commodities are fetishes and, if they are, whether they have the same fetish quality' (ibid, p. 510). What is apparent is that the fetish for Baudrillard remains at the level of the differential exchange of signs within restricted economies, it is not discussed as a means of transgression that allows us to generate new values outside its restricted mechanisms.

As we shall see, how the fetish is manifested in both a restricted and transgressive form can be elucidated via an examination of the writings of Gilles Deleuze in relation to the fetish. The notion of the fetish as an untransposable object of desire generated through an act of human artifice can be explained by his theories in relation to the concept. Equally, Deleuze's writings offer us a means to understand how the untransposable fetish attains value within social discourse. Though Pietz does not pursue the implications of Deleuzean ideas for the notion of the fetish, some of the functions and categories he prescribes for the notion

are informed by concepts derived from the writings of Deleuze and Guattari that hint at a potentially productive dialogue.<sup>36</sup>

An exploration and extension of Deleuze's ideas will further demonstrate how an immanent notion of the fetish can exist without an appeal to some inherent origin or presence that gives it value. Such a revised notion of the fetish can be understood as either a repetition of the same within a restricted economy or a repetition of difference in which a novel object of desire is produced and exchanged within a general economy. As such, though the fetish has the potential to disavow its origin as an artifice of productive desire, it is not *determined* by the notions of substitution associated with such a renunciation. An engagement with Deleuze's ideas will also demonstrate how a flight into the realm of excess and difference can become a new form of identity with an allocated value.

#### **Part Four: Fetishism, Difference and Deleuze.**

In the last section, the fetish as an untransposable object of desire was recognized, as such the fetish can no longer be understood as a substitute that could be subsumed by some initial origin or presence. The immanent and untransposable nature of the fetish was found to manifest itself in a revalorization of the notion of death and its relationship to the general economy – here surplus and excess are to be expended prodigally into the ineffable realm of the sacred, beyond the profane realm of everyday utility, function and reproduction. Although the potential of the fetish to bridge the realm of the restricted and general economies (the profane and the sacred) has been recognized, how and why the fetish manifests itself at the crossroads of these complementary, yet irreconcilable realms has yet to be accounted for. On the one hand, fetishistic forms have been traditionally associated with a reifying tendency that reinforces an economy of the same, on the other hand, the fetish can be understood as an untransposable object of desire, which demonstrates an opposing transgressive tendency.

In this section, the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari will be explored in which to provide an understanding of how desire productively invests in a fetish object without necessarily having recourse to a restricted economy of value. Conversely, their ideas will also explain how such an unprecedented investment has the potential to become an ossified equivalent value. Such explanations will generate an understanding of the mutual relationship that exists between both the reified and transgressive worlds that inhabit the fetish.

By examining the relationship between difference and repetition within the work of Deleuze, a cyclical movement of becoming that incorporates the complementary elements of life and death will be recognized that no longer has recourse to an initial origin and state of being. This rebuttal of origins refuses the self-present movement and repetition inherent to the death drive and is found to subvert western

conceptions of rational linear time with its ideas of progress. Deleuze's concern for difference and repetition is then positioned within the context of the Body Without Organs – a concept adopted by Deleuze and Guattari to explain the production and cycles of desire conducted within and upon the body. In contrast to the death drive, the repetitions and reductions of intensity performed upon the Body Without Organs is manifested via a play of difference. By exploring a series of syntheses performed upon the Body Without Organs, desire can be understood as a productive and liberating force, as well as a means for forging recognition and identity – as such, it offers a means to account for the manifestation of desire within both restrictive and general economies.

The relevance of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Body Without Organs to a revised conception of the fetish is then explored via a reading of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's writings on the topic of fetishism. Such a reading provides a novel interpretation of fetishism that is understood as an artificial production premised on a notion of difference – it therefore negates the notion of fetishism based upon substitution, presence and disavowal. In this new interpretation, fetishes are to be understood as invested fragments that have the potential to dislocate and rupture in which to reinvest objects with new values and possibilities.

### **Difference and Repetition.**

In *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Deleuze draws our attention to the role of repetition within a metaphysics of presence. By replacing a notion of the ideal – a self present origin that provides a model of the Same - with that of difference, Deleuze opposes the pre-eminence of identity as a notion within western metaphysical thought from Plato onwards. Deleuze suggests that multiplicity and difference should be considered as the primary categories within thought, with identity being secondary and dependent upon them. According to Deleuze, such an insistence on difference has implications for a notion of time and repetition. If we are to accept the traditional notion of repetition as

repeating something over a sequence of moments, each understood as identical to the next, then based upon this convention, we would fall back into a notion of identity. To solve this problem, Deleuze proposes a conception of repetition based upon the notion of the eternal return of difference.

For Plato, truth and its imitations can be defined through a triadic system of idea, copy and simulacrum. For Plato, the idea is the essence of an object; it is what remains when all particular differences between a type of object have been removed to reveal its universal form. As such, Plato proposes there is a dualistic epistemology of perfect forms and imperfect copies in which the ideal essence of a form is never realized within the actual world.<sup>37</sup> Such a hierarchical system is motivated by the idea of an identity that is identical in itself; it therefore mediates all objects and views difference as a superfluous negative, as a not this. As Deleuze points out:

[Plato's thought turns] upon a particularly important distinction: that between the original and the image, the model and the copy. The model is supposed to enjoy an originary superior identity [...] whereas the copy is judged in terms of a derived internal resemblance. Indeed, it is in this sense that difference comes only in third place, behind identity and resemblance, and can be understood only in terms of these prior notions. (Deleuze 2004, p.154)

Deleuze believes that the determining distinction behind Plato's system of identity is not that between the ideal model and its image, but between the two kinds of images: the copies (*icones*) and the simulacra (*phantasmès*). For Deleuze the 'model-copy distinction is there only in order to found and apply the copy-simulacra distinction' (ibid). By proposing the model-copy distinction, based upon a notion of internal resemblance, Plato is able to justify a notion of 'good images, the icons which resemble from within, [whilst] eliminat[ing] the bad images or simulacra' (ibid, p.155). As such, Plato 'splits the material world in two, holding copies to have an internal

resemblance to their Ideas, while the deceptive simulacrum simply 'produces an *effect* of resemblance' (Widder 2011, p.99). Only in this way 'can copies raise themselves above simulacra and claim legitimate participation in their Ideas' (ibid). Deleuze indicates that by distinguishing the good image or copy to the bad image of simulacra, Plato is able to subordinate 'difference to the supposedly initial powers of the Same and the Similar'; this has the effect of 'declaring difference unthinkable in itself' (Deleuze Op Cit, p.155). In contrast to Plato's intentions, Deleuze points out that simulacra 'are not simply copies of copies [...] involving infinitely relaxed relations to resemblance'; they 'have externalised resemblance and live on difference instead [...taking] the form of an illusion, not an internal principle' (ibid). Given that simulacra are generated through their reference to the difference inherent to particulars, they would not be 'endowed with the ideal identity of the Same but, on the contrary, [...would be] a model of the Other, [...] the model of difference in itself' (ibid, p.156). As Deleuze describes in the *Logic of Sense* (1969):

The simulation is built upon a disparity or upon a difference. It internalizes a dissimilarity. This is why we can no longer define it in relation to a model imposed on the copies, a model of the Same from which the copies' resemblance derives. If the simulacrum still has a model it is another model, a model of the Other (*l'Autre*) from which there flows an internalized dissemblance'. (Deleuze 2004b,p.295)

Therefore for Deleuze, 'the different, the dissimilar, the unequal [...] may well be not merely defects which affect copies [...] but rather models themselves' (ibid). Deleuze proposes that if simulacra are models generated through difference, then they 'provide the means of challenging *both* the notion of the copy *and* that of the model' (ibid); for if simulacra provide us with a model self-constituted through difference, then *all* models 'collapse into difference' (ibid), whilst copies become one of a

series 'such that one can never say that one is a copy and the other a model' (ibid).

If simulacra provide us with a model constituted through difference, then models are immanent 'becomings' relative to external relations of disparity and transience; as Widder states:

If simulacra elude the power of Ideas [...] it is because they exceed the order of identity and resemblance. They are therefore characterized by a 'pure becoming', one that moves not in a single direction, as is the case with legitimate copies guided by their participation in Ideas, but in two directions (senses) at once. (Widder 2011, p.99-100)

Whereas Plato recognizes that things participate in this world via transient external relations, he 'remains largely uninterested in the implications of this pure becoming' (ibid). In contrast, Deleuze perceives the duality of becoming in positive terms; as Widder states:

Deleuze holds this duality to be the positive trait the simulacrum displays when it is no longer denigrated as a copy of a copy. Seen affirmatively, simulacra are multiplicities [...] They are structured by a 'disjunctive synthesis' in which divergence is affirmed. (Widder 2011, p. 100)

This idea of a disjunctive synthesis becomes important when we come to consider the idea of the body without organs, upon which identity is constituted via a combination of multiplicities.

For Deleuze, an insistence on difference in itself – as that which is constituted through its relationship to difference – has implications for a conception of repetition and time. As we shall see, the notion of repetition of difference over time has important implications for an understanding of both the role and the goal of desire, such that it no longer remains subject

to the dictates of presence and lack. Deleuze relates repetition to three different notions of time.

Firstly, Deleuze describes a conception of time as circular. Such a relationship is based upon habitual patterns, such as the natural cycle of day and night – this Deleuze refers to as a passive synthesis in that time is understood as being constituted by the passing repetition of present moments.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to this, Deleuze identifies another notion of time, understood in terms of an active synthesis. Deleuze links this notion of time to the work of Kant, whose *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) identified time as a separate category imposed upon sensory experience. Given the notion of time as a separate category, it is perceived as the active placing of events *within* time as a straight line, as such, Kant frees us from a cyclical notion of time in that it is no longer perceived as a passive repetition of moments.<sup>39</sup> Whereas the cyclical view of time saw the return of events within the present, this conception of time returns nothing in that it repeats something in the memory that did not exist before. Deleuze points out that both the passive and active synthesis place repetition within the realm of the identical with regards to time. The passive synthesis sees the return of the identical within the present, whereas the active synthesis can only produce memory through the constitution of a dual identity: the I of memory and the self that undergoes experience.

To avoid this return to the identical, Deleuze proposes a third model of time in which time and repetition are not conceived as separate entities, but repetition is itself conceived as the form of time. To do this, Deleuze refers to the Nietzschean concept of the eternal return. The eternal return is comprehended as the repetition of difference – it is the repetition of being as becoming; as Deleuze points out, the 'subject of the eternal return is not the same but the different, not the similar but the dissimilar, not the one but the many, not necessity but chance' (ibid, p.153). According to this view, the eternal return implies no static identity, there is neither a final or initial state of being, if this were the case, no repetition would ever occur – if there was a final state, it would have already been

reached; if there was an original state, we would have never left it. As Deleuze describes, the eternal return 'relates to a complicated, properly chaotic world *without identity*' (ibid, p.69). The repetition involved in the eternal return is therefore to be understood as the constancy of the state of becoming. As such, the 'present is no more than an actor, an author, an agent destined to be effaced; while the past is no more than a condition operating by default' (Deleuze 2004, p. 117). Whereas the eternal return implies being as becoming, a sense of identity can still be retained due to the subject maintaining an ego-ideal – a coded territory by which the subject recognizes their self. Whereas this identity is the vantage point from which a transformation takes place, paradoxically, this sense of identity is subject to dispersion and transformation during an act of becoming. As Keith Faulkner describes:

The heroic metamorphosis requires the ego to maintain an ideal of itself, by which it finds its *identity* in the image of action [...yet] the ideal image of ourselves *does not return* since it remains fictional; only the *real* returns; only the singularities that compose sensations return, rather than the object's image, form, or idea'. (Faulkner 2006, p. 124)

This ego-ideal is therefore an identity subject to deterritorialization and reterritorialization; as Deleuze states: 'For 'one' repeats eternally, but 'one' now refers to the world of impersonal individualities and pre-individual singularities' (Deleuze 2004, p. 372). As such, the subject lacks a final image, an origin from which to ascertain and control the flows of desire – such an image is always an attempt to assert a restrictive economy and control the acts of exchange. As Faulkner points out:

This impersonal world of the "unequal", or of the dice game of existence, lacks a final aim or an image; it consists of a continuous metamorphosis of energy. The heroic metamorphosis is misguided when it seeks equality with an image [...] Becoming-equal to the

*unequal* requires enough strength to affirm chaos and to forsake our ideal ego' (Faulkner Op Cit, p. 125).

The repetition of difference in an eternal state of becoming gives us an understanding of the phenomenon that is immanent to the processes that produced it - therefore it can neither be subject to some original state or ideal model from which one can ascertain meaning. The essence of a phenomenon is therefore 'always an encounter; it is an event; it is neither stable nor transcendental nor eternal; it is immanent to the dynamic process it expresses [...]'(Massumi 1992, p. 18). As such, for Deleuze, all phenomena are unique happenings, part of a continuous process in a monistic single field of matter; even reproduction does not negate this fact, for reproduction is 'a transformational carrying-over to another site or substance' (ibid, p.19). On the one hand, this process of becoming has profound consequences for thought – thinking is no longer to be perceived as a process in which identity is recognized via a transcendental subject, it is rather the effect of a discordance and shock to current states of being. As Claire Colebrook describes, the task of thinking is not to establish the truest or highest world but to think the multiplicity of perceptions that unfold divergent worlds' (Colebrook 2006, p.140). On the other hand, as will be described, this process of becoming can be fettered by restricted economies of social exchange in which relations between territories are 'over-coded' by an external system: the privileged signifier of value that produces such economies.

Deleuze's notion of difference and repetition has clear implications for the repetitions involved in the psychoanalytic notion of the death drive. The repetitions within the death drive in psychoanalysis can be perceived as yet another example of the repetition of a self-present identity – in this case, the phallus-as-fetish is that which the economy of desire revolves around in a futile attempt to find unity and reduce bodily tension with a substitute for an original lost object. Louise Kaplan clearly identifies this

tendency to equate the strategy of fetishism with death. With reference to the death drive, Kaplan quotes Derrida:

This impression of erogenous color draws a mask right on the skin. In other words the [death drive] is never present in person, neither in itself nor in its effects. It leaves no monument, it bequeaths no document of its own. As inheritance, it leaves only erotic simulacrum [...] (Derrida 1996, p.11)

Here the death drive is perceived as a phenomenon at the heart of fetishism. Behind the fetish is always the repetitive desire to return to a state of death in which neither tension or lack exists. Because such a desire is unconscious, it never manifests itself and is only apprehended via a series of erotic masks (fetishes) that act as monuments to death in an attempt to control and ossify value and desire. For Kaplan, this trait of the fetishism strategy is a 'corollary to the necrophilic principle, an extension of it that exposes the death drive hidden in the folds of the erotic object' (ibid, p.7). As such, by perceiving the repetition of desire as a yearning towards a lost original state prior to lack, the death drive can be perceived as another means by which functional heterosexual relations are confirmed within a restrictive economy of lack which excludes excess and difference; as Judith Butler points out in relation to the performative repetition of heterosexual gender norms:

[...] heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations. That it must repeat this imitation, that it sets up pathologizing practices and normalizing sciences in order to produce and consecrate its own claim on originality and propriety [...] and that it is consistently haunted by that domain of sexual possibility that must be excluded for heterosexualized gender to reproduce itself. (Butler 1993, p. 125)

To perceive repetition in desire as a process of becoming therefore disrupts the regressive and functional nature of normative heterosexual

relations. Deleuze's critique therefore challenges us to consider the possibility of a circuit of desire without an appeal to some form of self-present identity; such a possibility would perceive desire as an immanent process manifested and repeated through the eternal return of difference. In contrast to psychoanalysis, death is here understood as 'not the repetition of some form or identity, but a perverse and 'deathly' repletion that destroys sameness and unity, that abandons the self' (Colebrook 2006, p.135). Whereas the death drive in psychoanalysis requires a move towards an original state prior to the tensions caused by the trauma of separation that defines our identity, death in Deleuze and Guattari is an obliteration of unity and a move towards multiplicity. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that

one moves beyond death as a model – death as defined in relation to the bounded organism – to the experience of death [...] Such an experience would shatter the bounded body, and occur not as the body's other or limit but as a pure predicate, potentiality or intensity taken away from the coordinates of the organism'. (Colebrook 2011, p. 18)

As will be elaborated, the repetition of difference involved in Deleuze's conception of time has implications for a notion of the fetish as an untransposable object of desire.

If the notion of difference and repetition subverts the self-present identity manifest in the concept of the death drive, then the notion of the eternal return of difference reverses what was previously described as a debased relationship between historical time and the fetish. As Anne McClintock points out:

Fetishism [...] flagrantly rebutted the idea of linear time and progress. The fetish – embodying, as it does, contradiction, repetition, multiple agency and multiple time – exemplifies

repeatable time: time without progress. (McClintock 1995, p.188)

The notion of fetishism then corresponds to the idea of the eternal return – a time which is not linear and absorbs multiple and arbitrary agencies. As such, it correlates to time understood as a return of difference. The only variance here is that from this perspective, a denial of linear progression and universality is not to be perceived as a matter of denigration, it is now to be viewed as a prospect for liberation and transgression in which new objects of desire are formed.<sup>40</sup>

The relationship between Deleuze's notion of repetition and difference and the repetitions involved within the circuit of desire are elucidated within his collaborative work with Felix Guattari – their notion of the *Body Without Organs* provides an account of such a relationship. By conceiving a circuit of desire that operates through difference and repetition, Deleuze and Guattari offer us a means to effectively understand the fetish as a process of excess, difference and becoming. The notion of the *Body Without Organs* also offers us a means of understanding how the immanent production of fetishistic forms can have the potential to become reified within a restrictive economy without recourse to a notion of original presence and lack.

### **Desire as production and the Body Without Organs.**

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Body Without Organs can be usefully contrasted to the psychoanalytic concept of the death drive, of which it shares certain characteristics – namely a concern for repetition and a reduction in intensity. Whereas for Freud and Lacan such repetition is governed by a logic of identity, a return of the same, for Deleuze and Guattari, such repetition is governed by difference. Given the importance Deleuze places upon difference and repetition as a means of critiquing the pre-eminence of identity within western metaphysics, it will come as no surprise that he is critical of any notion of a death drive that is constituted upon a return of the same.

As we have seen in the writings of Baudrillard and Bataille, the exclusion of death as a principle of life provides the alibi for the valorization of the subject which lacks – the manifestation of the Father, the Super-ego and the phallus which provides this symbolic function, generates a singular economy that endorses a transcendental law that excludes difference within desire, in which to legitimate notions of production and reproduction that serves to ward off death as the radical Other. For monotheistic cultures of a Judeo-Christian and Islamic tradition, eroticism is therefore separated into that which is functional and reproductive and that which threatens the continuity of being and its corresponding notions of the soul, individual ‘conscience’ and subjectivity (we all stand alone before the presence of God). For Deleuze and Guattari, the merit of psychoanalysis is that it ‘demonstrated that desire is not subordinated to procreation, or even genitality’ (Deleuze / Guattari 1996, p. 154-5). Despite this recognition, Deleuze and Guattari contend that psychoanalysis remains tied to a singular economy of presence and lack, in which it ‘found new ways of inscribing in desire the negative law of lack, the external rule of pleasure, and the transcendental ideal of phantasy’ (ibid, p.155). It does this by distinguishing the normal path of desire from its perverse other. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari propose that there is

a joy that is immanent to desire as though desire were filled by itself and its contemplations, a joy that implies no lack or impossibility and is not measured by pleasure since it is what distributes intensities of pleasure and prevents them from being suffused by anxiety, shame and guilt (ibid).

Against a notion of desire constituted upon the loss of an original object - simultaneously the goal of pleasure and impossible aim – Deleuze and Guattari present a conception of desire as immanent.

By restoring difference to the idea of repetition, Deleuze denies that any reduction of intensity that constitutes the death-instinct necessarily requires a mechanical repetition of a prior state. Deleuze's notion of the Body Without Organs, gives us the conceptual apparatus to view such a reduction, not as a return to something prior, but the culmination of connective syntheses generated through difference and multiplicity. This has consequences for a concept of desire: if, for psychoanalysis, the ultimate aim of desire is a reduction of tension directed towards the past (and ultimately death), then for Deleuze and Guattari, the aim of desire is to generate a multitude of intensive states directed towards the future. As Eugene Holland describes in relation to the Body Without Organs:

Restoring difference to repetition does not diminish the importance of repetition in psychic life as the principle of pleasure, but frees pleasure from mechanical repetition and a strictly linear temporality: whereas repetition of the same constitutes a static neurotic form of pleasure fixed on the past, the repetition of difference takes pleasure in variation, ramification [and] improvisation. (Holland 1999, p.28)

The 'Body Without Organs' is the body from the point of view of its potential, outside of any determinate state.<sup>41</sup> Deleuze and Guattari claim that if we were to freeze an organ in terms of its typical movements, to intensity degree zero (the intensive state of the body-without-organs), everything would stop dead for a moment, 'escaping the wheel of continual birth and rebirth' (Deleuze / Guattari 1984, p.7). Given such a circumstance, the component parts would 'fall apart to such a point that they will return to nothingness' (ibid, p.8); as such, by stopping the automata 'dead [it sets] free the unorganized mass [it] once served to articulate' (ibid). This is the Body Without Organs, the 'unproductive, the sterile, the unengendered, the unconsumable' (ibid). The Body Without Organs then, is the equivalent to the death drive without resorting to the retrogressive desire for a lost object (either to have or to be the phallus); it

instead allows for an immanent production of states of intensities. As Deleuze points out:

[T]his is the point at which death turns against death; where dying is the negation of death, and the impersonality of dying no longer indicates only the moment when I disappear outside of myself, but rather the moment when death loses itself in itself, and also the figure which the most singular life takes on in order to substitute itself for me. (Deleuze 2004b, p. 173-4)

As such, the concept of the body without organs corresponds to Deleuze's notion of the eternal return described above. As Philip Goodchild describes:

[T]he body without organs meets the test of the eternal return: the death that it announces is not that of the organs or drives but its own death – oscillating between the model and experience of death, it constitutes desire itself. (Goodchild 1996, p.79)

Deleuze and Guattari describe the production of states of intensities upon the Body Without Organs in mechanic terms, therefore implying an immanent connection of matter without a distinction between the self and the other and the body and the world. Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor of the machine to describe the relationship between the movement, potential and functions of the body to those of the universe: 'Everywhere it is machines – real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections' (Deleuze / Guattari 1984, p. 1). Given this analogy, Deleuze and Guattari claim that the binary oppositions of man / nature, self and non-self and outside and inside no longer have any coherent meaning:

There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. Producing machines, desiring-machines everywhere [...] all of species life: the self and non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever. (ibid, p.2)

Given this mechanic understanding of man in relation to the world, Deleuze and Guattari revise Freudian and Lacanian notions of erotogenic zones (the gaps within the body (mouth, eyes, anus, vagina etc.)) as organ-machines, rather than zones constituted on the basis of lack. As such, desire does not need to be 'stimulated by an exogenous force such as need or want, it is a stimulus in its own right' (Buchanan 2008, p.47). Deleuze and Guattari state that for each organ-machine there corresponds an energy-source-machine in which 'one produces a flow that the other interrupts' (ibid, p. 2).<sup>42</sup> These connections constitute what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as desiring-machines. Such a revised notion has implications for a notion of pleasure, as Anna Powell states:

Pleasure for Deleuze and Guattari is immanent, and materially based within sensation itself. Desire is not the product of lack or negativity, but is itself productive. Machinic desire is automatic or auto-erotic [...] and] is experienced not by subjectivities, but through intensive states, or 'haeccities': things-in-themselves. The desiring-machine experiences an intense feeling of transition without the static final positionality of psychoanalysis (Powell 2005, p.93)

Desire understood as production is therefore self-constituting; pleasure is to be recognized as immanent to the productive process and is no longer to be comprehended as the result of the reduction of tension generated via lack and castration.

For Deleuze and Guattari, desiring-machines are both binary and linear in that 'one machine is always coupled with another' (ibid, p.5). Such

binary connections create a productive synthesis - referred to by Deleuze and Guattari as the connective synthesis of production. As Deleuze and Guattari describe:

The productive synthesis, the production of production, is inherently connective in nature: “and...” “and then...” This is because there is always a flow producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow (the breast-the mouth). And because the first machine is in turn connected to another whose flow it interrupts or partially drains off, the binary series is linear in every direction. (ibid, p.5)

Connections that are constituted are capable of themselves producing new arrangements and flows of desire, so that as such, there can be no centre, lack or origin from which desire can be understood, desire is therefore self-constituting.

[...] the synthesis of connection snaps our organs together in a new arrangement of its own making and its own design. On this view of things, organs are any parts of the body which seen from the perspective of the unconscious are capable of [...] producing a flow themselves, but also of turning the ceaseless flow of libido into an affect [...], that is to say both an interruption and conversion of desire. (Buchanan Op Cit, p.49)

Deleuze and Guattari designate another two syntheses performed upon the Body Without Organs that generate both a sense of recognition and identity within the circuit of desire; firstly, the disjunctive synthesis of recording, as a point of anti-production upon the Body Without Organs, allows the recording of a level of intensity upon the body and, secondly, the conjunctive synthesis of consumption – consummation, a neutral state in between both production and anti-production, which allows the body to

recognise itself as these recorded intensities, thus generating a sense of identity.

Deleuze and Guattari claim that our bodies record, or memorise, intensities (pleasure or pain) generated by the connective syntheses of production. Deleuze and Guattari call this process the disjunctive synthesis of recording. The point at which an intensity is recorded is referred to as a state of anti-production; this is because an intensity is only achieved as an end result of the connective synthesis. At this point, an organ is able to differentiate itself from other objects and functions; as Buchanan describes, the disjunctive syntheses are 'the means whereby the 'subject' differentiates itself from sheer matter and indeed from the smooth surface of the body without organs on which it stands. It takes the form of an 'either/or' judgement [...]' (ibid, p.61). For example, when the mouth feeds from the breast, the satisfaction obtained is an end product that is not productive in itself – this intensity is thereby recorded in the body's memory. At such a point of anti-production, the mouth as organ is released from one connective synthesis, ready to be applied to a potential range of others connections: an organ for speaking, smiling, vomiting or expelling and inhaling air. Alternatively, some other stimulus may interrupt a current connection before achieving a final state of intensity – something may catch our eye and forge a new connection, in which case one connection is suspended in favour of another – such a circumstance is also an instance of anti-production in that a connection becomes separated or ended (hence the term disjunctive). This stage within the binary-linear series, in which a connection becomes separated, leaving the body in a state of potential and indetermination, is what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the Body Without Organs – the point at which the intensity level generated through connective productions is reduced to a minimum. As Deleuze and Guattari state:

The Body Without Organs is nonproductive; nonetheless it is produced, at a certain place and a certain time in the connective synthesis, as the identity of producing and the product [...]. It is the

body without an image. This imageless, organless body, the non-productive, exists right there where it is produced, in the third stage of the binary-linear series. (ibid, p.8)

Attached to these two modes, there are two corresponding rhythms of attraction and repulsion. When anti-production dominates, the Body Without Organs - as disjunctive synthesis - acts as a barrier in order 'to resist linked, connected, and interrupted flows' (Deleuze / Guattari Op Cit, p.9) – this is referred to as a paranoiac machine in that 'the Body Without Organs repels [desiring-machines...] experience[ing] them as an over-all persecution apparatus' (ibid); when desire as production prevails – as connective synthesis – machines attach themselves to the Body Without Organs as 'so many points of disjunction, between which an entire network of new syntheses is now woven, marking the surface off into coordinates' (ibid, p.12) – this is referred to as a miraculating machine in that 'desiring-machines seem to emanate from it' (ibid, p.11). Desiring production then, is the point at which desire takes flight from the arena of anti-production; as Ian Buchanan points out, 'desiring-production is that aspect of desire that the body without organs as the agent of anti-production is unable to contain, unable to force onto its smooth surface and thereby repress it' (Buchanan 2008, p.44). Which of the two rhythms dominates depends upon the particular social mode of production we are subject to and how we are positioned in relation to it. Given this dynamic between production and anti-production, it is important to recognise that whilst connections are made, suspended and interrupted upon the Body Without Organs, it at the same time records these diverse possibilities which, in turn, adds to the potential relations to be made amongst them.

The relationship between production and anti-production brings us to a final synthesis in the process of desire which Deleuze and Guattari call the conjunctive synthesis of consumption – consummation. This synthesis describes the process whereby the subject appears as an identity, an object of consciousness, only as a retrospective effect generated through the interaction between connective and disjunctive

syntheses. This synthesis is referred to as a celibate-machine – celibate by the fact it is an in between state, an intensity that remains neutral with respect to both production and anti-production; as Deleuze and Guattari state:

Let us borrow the term “celibate machine” to designate this machine that succeeds the paranoiac machine and the miraculating machine, forming a new alliance between the desiring-machines and the Body Without Organs so as to give birth to a new humanity or a glorious organism. This is tantamount to saying that the subject is produced as a mere residuum alongside the desiring-machines, or that he confuses himself with this third productive machine and the residual reconciliation that it brings about: a conjunctive synthesis of consummation in the form of a wonderstruck “So *that’s* what it was!” (ibid, p. 17-8)

The subject is ‘consummated’ then by a process of identifying with the intensities produced and recorded within the disjunctive synthesis. This occurs through a process whereby a part of the surplus energy created through production is not only used for recording, but is used for recognition also. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, just ‘as a part of the [...] energy of production was transformed into energy of recording [...] a part of this energy of recording is transformed into energy of consummation’ (ibid, p. 17).<sup>43</sup> This final synthesis has clear consequences for a notion of identity and the desiring subject. Whereas psychoanalytic accounts describe the origins of desire as emanating from a lack constituted via the relations of the Oedipal triangle – Child, Mother and Father – Deleuze and Guattari propose that such identities and relations are already an effect of productive desire. As Claire Colebrook describes,

*intensities* or relations of desire precede the extended bodies or terms of mother-father-child of the [Oedipal] family. Before there are extended relations among terms [...] there must be a surplus or

excess of desire. ' (Colebrook 2006, p.132)

From the point of view of the Body Without Organs then, bodies are 'not yet organized into interchangeable units that can be exchanged [...] bodies are not yet differentiated into coded forms – mother , father, child – but are intensively different' (ibid, p. 131). As such, desire is not to be understood as a relation between pre-given bodies in which one is striving for what one does not have (lack) – Deleuze and Guattari state:

Desire does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject [...] Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. (Deleuze / Guattari Op Cit, p. 26)

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari describes how the immanent flow of desire across the body without organs has come to be territorialized within the restrictive relations of exchange evident in capitalism and Oedipal man. To explain this, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the potentialities of gift and theft that underlie the processes of exchange; as Colebrook points out,

before there is exchange there is the gift and theft; before there is private 'man' there is collective investment and group fantasy; and before there are relations and systems of persons there is an 'intense germinal influx', a life irreducible to its mediated forms. (Colebrook 2006, p. 124-5)

In accordance with Bataille, Deleuze and Guattari draw our attention to desire as the production of a surplus that has the potential to be expended prodigally rather than accumulated and invested in a restricted model of exchange. With reference to Marcel Mauss' notion of the gift, Deleuze and Guattari propose that our potential is given less in a restricted economy that maintains notions of sameness and equivalence, and is more

apparent in a prodigal expenditure that manifests itself in an excess of life that surpasses mere maintenance and utility. Such a consideration allows us to go beyond notions of privatized man and equivalence. Such a description is premised on the production of an excessive surplus that is characteristic of all desire – it is therefore related to the notion of the general economy. Deleuze and Guattari start from the proposition that desire is collective and intensive, its effects manifest themselves through the relations of intensive flows between society and the world. Deleuze and Guattari refer to the primitive socius as a territorial machine. Deleuze and Guattari describe how the primitive socius creates territories for desire that are recorded as relatively stable forms – as such, desire produces certain anti-productions that generates limits in which to form regular, stable flows of alliance. In such societies, there is a collective investment that allows desire to become coded. Territories within the primitive socius are coded and marked explicitly in rituals performed upon the body (tattooing, scarring and painting). Deleuze and Guattari state:

All the stupidity and the arbitrariness of the laws, all the pain of the initiations, the whole perverse apparatus of repression and education, the red-hot irons, and the atrocious procedures have only this meaning: *to breed* man, to mark him in his flesh, to render him capable of alliance[.] (Deleuze / Guattari 1984, p.180)

Such a process therefore implies that there are not individuals that are then marked and signified, rather such collective marking produces territories of bodies which are then identified as individuals; as Buchanan states, primitive rituals ‘must suppress biological memory and transform it into memory for man [...]’ (Buchanan 2008, p. 95). The body of the individual therefore becomes recognized and orientated towards the collective flows of the socius:

For it is a founding act—that the organs be hewn into the socius, and that the flows run over its surface—through which man ceases to be

a biological organism and becomes a full body, an earth, to which his organs become attached, where they are attracted, repelled, miraculated, following the requirements of a socius. (ibid, p.144)

As we saw earlier, Deleuze and Guattari split the flow of desire into three syntheses: the connective syntheses of production, the disjunctive syntheses of recording and the conjunctive synthesis of consumption – consummation. By designating desire as productive, Deleuze and Guattari already pose a challenge to a model of exchange within restrictive economies. From this point of view, desire is not to be understood as an exchange between given objects – mother, child, father - as these objects are themselves the result of the intensive connective flows of desire which produce relatively stable terms and codes. Productive desire is rather the process of becoming via the production of connections that generate a surplus, it is therefore a means to expand what one is, rather than reinforce a notion of sameness and equivalence. It is only through the process of a repetition and recording – the disjunctive synthesis – that the flows of desire oscillate around points of relative stability. For Deleuze and Guattari, a problem only occurs when these points effected from immanent desire appear as given laws to which we should submit. Rather than viewing desire as a connective this *and* this, desire becomes a relation of *either* this *or* this. A relationship of inclusivity is thereby replaced by one of restrictive exclusivity; as Deleuze and Guattari state:

The system in extension is born of the intensive conditions that make it possible, but it reacts on them, cancels them, represses them, and allows them no more than a mythical expression. The signs cease to be ambiguous at the same time as they are determined in relation to the extended filiations and the lateral alliances: the disjunctions become exclusive, restrictive (the 'either/or else' replaces the intense 'either ...or ... or ...') (ibid, p. 160)

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the notion of exchange within society originates from the idea of extended alliances: there are familial relations of bodies – mother father and child – that enter into relations with other families in which to extend one's powers and create a stable network of exchange. Deleuze and Guattari believe that prior to modernity, the privileged object of exchange was woman. As such, a society of exchange orientates around a notion of debt – to give up desire for one's own family or tribe requires the expectation of a return of another body. From this view, Oedipal relations can be interpreted as a mode of social exchange in which woman is firstly the object prohibited and then exchanged – as such desire is *produced* as desire for a lost object. For Deleuze and Guattari, it is wrong to interpret desire from these oedipal relations in that the condition for such relations is an intensive desiring production that exceeds the relations it generates.

Deleuze and Guattari explain how the tendency to code desire within the territorial machine (primitive socius) has the potential to lead to overcoding which, in turn, defines restrictive economies governed by privileged signifiers. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the move towards restrictive economies of value can be interpreted as a historical tendency towards a 'surplus value of code'. This tendency is related a notion of theft. Theft in this context is interpreted as a seizure of what one has not produced and does not need. Deleuze and Guattari chart this confiscation of surplus from the despot to the circulation of money within a capitalist economy. As Colebrook states:

Whereas coding produces connections of desire as relatively stable and regular, excessive consumption produces a surplus value of code – the despot is placed as bearing a divine relation to the system, just as capital is regarded as the meaning or reason of our systems. (Colebrook 2006, p. 134)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the despot is the body that directs the surplus within the socius towards itself; by doing so, the despot appears as the centre from which all social relations emanate. As Buchanan describes:

The despot [...] becomes the full body on which the socius inscribes itself, replacing the territorial machine's earth [...] The territorial machine's components continue to exist, but only as the cogs and wheels of the despotic machine that has overtaken them from within and without. The new regime overcodes all the previous codings of desire and in this way extracts its requisite share of surplus value. (Buchanan 2008, p.105)

The despot is described as powerful and socially valued precisely due to their capacity to seize the excess within society. Rather than the social being premised on notions of exchange and utility then, society is founded on an intensive, excessive desire that can then be appropriated. The disjunctive syntheses that form a social territory becomes deterritorialized when one point within the territory becomes a nexus of flows, therefore generating a point that exceeds relations, becoming a surplus value of code. Deleuze and Guattari claim that within despotic societies, the privileged body that seizes the surplus is removed from the territorial flows of collective life and appears as the origin of such flows – as such, this privileged despotic body is over-coded. Money is the means by which the flows of the primitive socius are deterritorialized and overcoded – metal therefore becomes an abstract sign by bearing the sign of the despot. Money can then be used as a form of exchange and a means for the despot to extract a surplus from the populace in the form of taxes. At this point, debt is 'rendered infinite in the form of tribute to the despot' (ibid). Whereas alliances proceeded from marked debts within the primitive socius, exchange now proceed through the generation of the surplus value of a single code, money. This has consequences for a notion of the body, as Goodchild points out,

bodies no longer belong exclusively to the tribe; they also belong to the State. The despot functions as a quasi-cause of all production, the source of all blessings; this is because all the processes of production are represented in terms of the overcoding given by the State. (Goodchild 1996, p.95)

Such over-coding has to be internalized if 'man' is to recognize himself as a private individual for capitalism – it is through the recognition of debt in terms of both a despotic threat and the promise of rewards that the private individual internalizes a sense of morality and notion of the self. This process is mirrored in the Oedipal drama via the threat of castration and the internalization of the law of the father. For Deleuze and Guattari, the history of capitalism is the history of the privatization of desire. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the decoding of flows and the internalization of the over-coding of desire prepare society for the potential transition from a despotic machine to a capitalist society.

Decoded flows—but who will give a name to this new desire? Flows of property that is sold, flows of money that circulates, flows of production and means of production making ready in the shadows, flows of workers becoming deterritorialized: the encounter of all these flows will be necessary, their conjunction, and their reaction on one another [...] in order for capitalism to be born [...] (Deleuze / Guattari Op Cit, p. 223-4)

From this point of view, the deterritorialization of private individuals (both workers and capitalists) in conjunction with the flow of surplus capital allows production to become consumed by the deterritorialized body of capital itself, rather than primarily consumed and enjoyed by despotism. At this point, capital becomes the new socius, the quasi-cause that appropriates all productive forces. Under capitalism, privatized individuals become labouring beings whose force is no longer invested in a coded flow directed towards specific objects or privileged subjects, they are,

instead, subject to the effects of decoding and deterritorialization achieved via the flow of money. In capitalism, the flow of money that was initially a means of coding exchange (the representation and exchange of two non-equivalent items via an external value) becomes a force of deterritorialization: the flow of money is itself desired and is the sole goal of the economy. According to this point of view then, money that was once a flow of alliance, becomes filiative and appears as the origin and ground from which all relations emanate. This has the effect of subjugating all forms of culture to systems of exchange – here, private man is nothing more than an agent for the flow of money and labour.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the over-coding of capital and its function within society is internalized by the individual via the reproduction of Oedipal relations. The roles of father, mother and child within this relation reflect the functioning of capitalism – the father as phallus reflects the role of capital, the mother the role of the earth and its resources and the child reflects the role of the worker. As Deleuze and Guattari state:

[A]lliances and filiations no longer pass through people but through money; so the family becomes a microcosm, suited to expressing what it no longer dominates. In a certain sense the situation has not changed; for what is invested through the family is still the economic, political, and cultural social field, its breaks and flows [...] But in another sense everything has changed, because the family, instead of constituting and developing the dominant factors of social reproduction, is content to apply and envelop these factors in its own mode of reproduction. Father, mother, and child thus become the simulacrum of the images of capital ("Mister Capital, Madame Earth," and their child the Worker), with the result that these images are no longer recognized at all in the desire that is determined to invest only their simulacrum. The familial determinations become the application of the social axiomatic. (ibid, p.264)

The channeling of desire via capital is therefore internalized by the individual, resulting in the postponement of pleasure for the benefit of production. The phallus as signifier is therefore equivalent to the flow of capital – there is no desire allowed that is not mediated by the code. Desire must therefore invest in capital and repress all desiring production that cannot be overcoded or bought. Indeed, capital expels deterritorialized flows that it cannot integrate into its system.

Deleuze and Guattari are able to criticize restrictive economies of value by appealing to immanent desiring productions, the body without organs, that underlie extended relations based upon the notions of alliance and exchange. As with the general economy, such productions recognize the primacy of surplus before any extended relations can take effect. As we pointed out earlier, if subjects were only directed to self-maintenance then they would only act or expend energy for the sake of reproduction. Our previous discussion of psychoanalysis and drives recognized that it is precisely the possibility of the organism to form relations beyond necessity that creates sexuality as a surplus (the child that replaces the nourishment provided by sucking the breast with the thumb generates a desiring production as a surplus pleasure). For Deleuze and Guattari, it is precisely society's relation to surplus that defines the degree to which relations are governed by a restrictive or general economy. This is evident in capitalism in which the flow of capital relies on the appropriation of a surplus that allows the circulation of money to appear as the reason and system from which all other relations flow.

In summary, the concept of the Body Without Organs offers us a theory of desire that is outside of a notion of presence, identity and lack. For the Body Without Organs, desire and its objects are produced immanently through the play of difference; the repetitious, continuous flow of desire is therefore not predetermined by the phallus or any other object that could constitute a metaphysics of presence. The concept fuses Deleuze's notion of difference and repetition with the idea of desire as a productive process outside the dictates of some initial presence or origin.

Importantly, any sense of recognition or sexual identity within the terms of the Oedipal family can only occur at the end of the productive process – the conjunctive synthesis of consumption-consummation - rather than being perceived as a ‘natural’ given form that both justifies and functions through a restrictive, determinate economy. Given this view, Deleuze and Guattari champion the idea of a nomadic subject in which the connective and disjunctive syntheses at play upon the Body Without Organs generate multiple states of being: an eternal return of difference in which the subject is constantly under a process of renewal.

The notion of the Body Without Organs has clear consequences for a conception of fetishism - if desire no longer has its foundation within a notion of some fundamental presence from which a conception of lack can be defined, then the fetish can no longer be a disavowal of castration and a substitute for that which is perceived as lacking. It can neither be a conceptual tool to impose a restricted economy of value substantiated by some mythical origin. By perceiving desire as immanent to the connections made upon the Body Without Organs, it can also be perceived as aligned to the notion of manufacture and artifice which exists within the etymology of the concept of fetishism – here desire constructs its object, rather than appealing to an ideal: an origin which is both impossible and forever lost. As such, the fetish as artifice has the potential to appear as the archetype of value, rather than its derivative.

### **Deleuze and Fetishism**

Contemporary interpretations of fetishism in relation to the work of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari view the concept in terms of an ossifying relationship that homogenizes desiring-production within a restrictive economy of value. Whereas much of Deleuze and Guattari’s work coincides with this view, there are also other alternate perspectives to be found within Deleuze’s writing that suggest fetishism can be both generative and productive of value. It will be argued that rather than

viewing fetishism as a means to obscure the underlying determinations of value, the fetish can be perceived as an archetype in terms of which desiring-production can both constitute and disperse value upon the body without organs. Such a perspective has the advantage of being able to account for modes of fetishism that either coincide with previous values or transgress and form new relationships.

In *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Deleuze follows Marx's lead in designating the fetish as

an absurdity, an illusion of social consciousness, so long as we understand by this not a subjective illusion borne of individual consciousness but an objective and or transcendental illusion borne out of the conditions of social consciousness in the course of its actualisation' (Deleuze 2004, p. 259)

Fetishism is therefore not false consciousness in terms of an individual false belief system, it is an effect of real social conditions within a capitalist economy based on the exchange of commodities for money. As such, the reality of historical and material social conditions is the arena of non-sense (the arbitrary and illusory nature of value) and meaning. Given the social reality of such illusions, in which productive relations remain hidden, the problem of the commodity and reification escapes consciousness – the object of social consciousness therefore manifests itself as a fetish; as Deleuze states:

[H]istory is no less the locus of non-sense and stupidity than it is the process of sense or meaning. While it is the nature of consciousness to be false, problems by their nature escape consciousness. The natural object of social consciousness or common sense with regard to the recognition of value is the fetish. (ibid)

Deleuze proposes that when social activity disrupts the objects of social consciousness via revolution, the unity of fetishistic common sense is disturbed:

Social problems can be grasped only by means of a rectification which occurs when the faculty of sociability is raised to its transcendental exercise and breaks the unity of fetishistic common sense. The transcendental object of the faculty of sociability is revolution. (ibid).

On this interpretation, fetishism remains the bad agent of illusory value that dominates social relations and disavows real relations existing below the surface. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari reiterate a tyrannical and restrictive interpretation of the fetish. Here, the fetish functions as a means of over-coding social relations in which to give the impression that all activity within society emanates from its movement; as such the fetish acts as a quasi-cause:

[...] the essential thing is the establishment of an enchanted recording or inscribing surface that arrogates to itself all the productive forces and all the organs of production, and that acts as a quasi cause by communicating the apparent movement (the fetish) to them. (Deleuze / Guattari 1984, p.11-12)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the fetish has historically manifested itself in a variety of forms: the earth, the despot and money. In each case the fetish operates as a full body that inscribes value as emanating from itself which, in turn, both restricts and reproduces the circuit of a given economy:

What is specifically capitalist here is the role of money and the use of capital as a full body to constitute the recording or inscribing surface. But some kind of full body, that of the earth or the despot,

a recording surface, an apparent objective movement, a fetishistic, perverted, bewitched world are characteristic of all types of society as a constant of social reproduction. (ibid, p.11)

For Jason Read (2009), a Deleuzean notion of the fetish is similarly interpreted as a universal despotic term that appropriates productive relations, whilst also appearing to be the form from which all social values emanate. As Read states:

[...] the fetish becomes the socius. It is not just that the product, society, obscures the productive relations that generate it, it actively appropriates them [...] Just as the despot appears to be the cause and not the effect of subjection, capital appears to be the cause and not the effect of labour. (Read 2009, p.88)

As with Baudrillard, the over-coding that occurs in fetishistic relations is not a misrepresentation of some innate needs existing within predetermined subjects. According to Read, such homogenizing codes misrepresent and conceal the immanent and indeterminate relations of production that underlie fetishistic value:

[...] society is a fetish (albeit one with incredibly pervasive effects), but what it misrepresents is not some underlying reality of 'individuals and families' but an abstract subjective activity, which is another way of saying that what is real is the indetermination and transformative nature of activity itself. (ibid, p.99)

For Fadi Abou-Rihan, a Deleuzean notion of the fetish is related to the concept of the miraculating machine in that the body without organs, in a paranoid state of anti-production, appears as the means by which all other circuits of desire flow: the body without organs as money and the phallus. Fadi Abou-Rihan states that the fetish can be understood

not as a commodity or body part standing in for the absent phallus as, presumably, the only legitimate object of desire, but as the movement, event and relationship that reverse the connective synthesis and fix the machine as fatefully miraculated, as, in other words, owing its existence to some body without organs without which it cannot survive. The logic of Oedipus is a telling example of such a fetish; without, presumably, sanity is impossible. To put it bluntly, the logic of the fetish here is the intolerant and singular logic of the 'without me, you are nothing' [...] (Abou-Rihan 2008, p.65)

Under the conditions of patriarchy and capitalism, the fetish can function according to this 'intolerant and singular logic', however, this does not rule out the possibility that a Deleuzean model of the fetish can also generate new values that disrupt, deviate and dispense with those values associated with restrictive economies. In contrast to the above perspectives, a Deleuzean notion of an immanent fetish can be articulated that meets the challenge of becoming an untransposable object of desire, one that constitutes new values and defies the rule that 'without me, you are nothing'.

Though Deleuze does not focus on fetishism as a specific topic within his work, by examining those points at which the concept occurs, a notion of the fetish can be generated that avoids the imposition of a restricted economy of value that is substantiated by some mythical appeal to an origin that justifies its movement. By conducting such an examination, we can take a Deleuzean line of flight beyond some of his own writing on the topic. As such, the fetish can act as a means to both produce and disperse value without it being confined to an ossified singular circuit. This is not to say that fetishism cannot perform the above function of generating a restricted and illusory model of value, but it affords the fact that this is only one possibility in a multitude of potential values that such a revised model of the concept is capable of producing.

Deleuze comments on fetishism in his essay *Coldness and Cruelty* (1967). This essay, written five years prior to *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), discusses the work of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and identifies the differences in kind between Sadistic and Masochistic economies. Deleuze aligns Masochism with the processes of disavowal inherent to fetishism<sup>44</sup>. The process of disavowal in masochism can be found in its aim to delay gratification – it neither wishes to succumb to the law of the father or the desire for the mother; it therefore illustrates the suspension inherent to fetishism:

[O]n the one hand the subject is aware of reality but suspends this awareness; on the other the subject clings to his ideal [...] The Masochistic process of disavowal is so extensive that it affects sexual pleasure itself; pleasure is postponed for as long as possible and is thus disavowed. The Masochist is therefore able to deny the reality of pleasure at the very point of experiencing it, in order to identify with the “new sexless man.” (Deleuze 1989, p. 33).

It is in this sense that a relationship between masochism and fetishism can be understood. Deleuze refers to Sacher-Masoch's *The Divorced Woman* (1870) to illustrate this point; on desiring to see his mistress naked, the hero of the novel invokes ‘a “need” to “observe,” but finds that he is overcome by a religious feeling “without anything sensual about it’ (ibid, p.21-2). Deleuze claims that ‘we have here the two basic stages of fetishism’ and states that the ascent from the human body to the ideal ‘must take place under the shadow of the whip’ (ibid, p.22); the whip therefore becomes an object of fetishism, alongside Sacher-Masoch's other favourite fetish items: ‘furs, shoes [...] the strange helmets that he liked to adorn women with [...]’ (ibid, p.33). When referring to Freud, Deleuze describes the fetish as a ‘frozen, arrested, two-dimensional image, a photograph to which one returns repeatedly to exorcise the dangerous consequences of movement, the harmful discoveries that result from exploration’ (ibid, p.31). Here again, we see a concern for the death–

instinct and its repetitions – the analogy of suspension with the photograph reminds us of Roland Barthes' declaration that the photograph is the 'image which produces Death whilst trying to preserve life' (Barthes 1984, p. 92). This sense of suspense evident in fetishism - where one 'suspends' our awareness whilst arresting the moment, as in a photograph - is also apparent in the masochistic acts described in Sacher-Masoch's novels:

[...] the masochistic rites of torture and suffering imply actual physical suspension (the hero is hung up, crucified or suspended)  
[...] the woman torturer freezes into postures that identify her with a statue, a painting or a photograph. She suspends her gestures in the act of bringing down the whip or removing her furs; her movement is arrested as she turns to look at herself in a mirror' (ibid, p.33).

For Deleuze, this sense of arrest evident in the relationship between masochism and fetishism, allows the masochist to generate a suspended subjectivity in potential – by disavowing the conventional gendered roles within the Oedipal relationship in an attempt to recreate the pre-Oedipal world before subjectivity, the masochist renders reality absurd in favour of fantasy.

[The Masochist] does not believe in negating or destroying the world nor in idealizing it: what he does is to disavow and suspend it, in order to secure an ideal which is itself suspended in fantasy. He questions the validity of existing reality in order to create a pure ideal reality [.]' (ibid, p. 32-3)

By contesting the validity of existing relations, the masochist therefore 'suspends belief in and neutralizes the given in such a way that a new horizon opens up beyond the given and in place of it' (ibid, p. 31). This new horizon – in suspense and in potential – can be clearly related to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Body Without Organs, therefore

bridging the gap between this concept and Deleuze's understanding of fetishism. As discussed, the Body Without Organs, or anti-production, is a notion in which the organs of the body are suspended at degree zero, in which the body is at a state of pure potential: a culmination of connective syntheses generated through difference and multiplicity. In a state of becoming, the Body Without Organs can be identified as the "new sexless man", in that it has no given form, gender or sex prior to the connections made within the connective synthesis. In correspondence to the Body Without Organs, for Deleuze's masochist, there is ultimately no static identity to be found, whether inside or outside the projected phantasy.<sup>45</sup>

In a later discussion of masochism, Deleuze and Guattari make an overt relationship between this phenomenon and the Body Without Organs. In this latter examination, masochism is also expunged of the residues of Freudianism with its emphasis upon Oedipal relations revolving around guilt and the father - here, the very notion of a unified subjectivity is criticized, as well as the typical phantasies associated with an identity inaugurated by lack. In their essay *How do you make yourself a Body Without Organs? (1980)* – written thirteen years after *Coldness and Cruelty* - Deleuze and Guattari state:

[t]he BwO is what remains when you take everything else away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole. Psychoanalysis does the opposite: it translates everything into phantasies, it converts everything into phantasy, it retains the phantasy. It royally botches the real, because it botches the BwO. (Deleuze / Guattari 1996, p.151)

In Freud's later theory of masochism, the condition is viewed as a response to the death drive in that, by repeating and containing the level of pain received, the subject is able to simultaneously reduce tension and control the self-destructive urges that are inherent in its aim to destroy the subject. As Freud states:

The libido has the task of making the destroying instinct innocuous, and it fulfills the task by diverting that instinct to a great extent outwards [...] A portion of the instinct is placed directly in the service of the sexual function, where it has an important part to play. This is sadism proper. Another portion does not share in this transposition outwards; it remains inside the organism and, with the help of the accompanying sexual excitation [...], becomes libidinally bound there. It is in this portion that we have to recognize the original, erotogenic masochism. (Freud 1924, p.163-4)

As discussed, whereas the Freudian view of the death drive is a desire to return to an earlier state without tension (death), Deleuze offers us a means whereby a reduction of bodily tension (the Body Without Organs) is constituted through difference and the multiplicity of bodily intensities in potential. Again, in discussing the relationship between masochism and the Body Without Organs, Deleuze and Guattari point out that the condition is less about satisfying some archetypal original Oedipal anxiety (gaining pleasure through the appeasement of guilt via the infliction of pain), it is more to do with the annulment of subjectivity and the generation of a Body Without Organs that can channel new forms of becoming. As such, this later notion of Masochism that considers the role of the Body Without Organs avoids falling into the trap where a maternal pre-Oedipal realm is opposed to a paternal symbolic law. When Deleuze and Guattari refer to Masochism, they describe two phases: a creation of the degree zero of the Body Without Organs, in which previous circuits of 'subjectivity' are rescinded ready for a second phase in which the generated state is prepared for the flow of new intensities.

One phase is for the fabrication of the BwO, the other to make something circulate on it or pass across it; the same procedures are nevertheless used in both phases, but they must be done over twice. What is certain is that the masochist has made himself a

BwO under such circumstances that the BwO can no longer be populated by anything but intensities of pain, *pain waves*. It is false to say that the masochist is looking for pain but just as false to say that he is looking for pleasure in a particularly suspensive or roundabout way. (ibid, p. 152)

As such, masochism denies typical libidinal routes and frees desire to generate new productions. Deleuze and Guattari use the example of the masochist-as-horse. Whereas a conventional psychoanalytic account might confine an interpretation of this phenomenon to Oedipal origins, a schizoanalytic account denies this reading in favour of a notion of becoming.

What is the masochist doing? He seems to be imitating a horse, *Equus eroticus*, but that's not it. Nor are the horse and the master-trainer or mistress images of the mother or father. Something entirely different is going on: a becoming-animal essential to masochism. (ibid, p.155)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the Body Without Organs is generated in which to forge new intensities borrowed from those imposed and repeated on horses. An inversion of signs is therefore committed – that which tames the beast is integrated onto the human body.

The masochist effects an inversion of signs: the horse transmits its transmitted forces to him, so that the masochist's innate forces will in turn be tamed [...] One series explodes into the other, forms a circuits with it: an increase in power or a circuit of intensities [...] The masochist constructs an entire assemblage that simultaneously draws and fills the field of immanence of desire; he constitutes a Body Without Organs or plane of consistency using himself, the horse, and the mistress. (ibid, p.156)

By referring to the mistress-rider's boots, a Deleuzean notion of masochism from the point of view of the Body Without Organs is clearly correlated with a conception of fetishism. The fetish here appears as a zone of intensity – a bodily fragment invested with significance via its memorization within the disjunctive synthesis. Here the fetish is a zone, an imprint, within the culmination of a new subject; as Deleuze and Guattari point out:

[L]ittle by little all opposition is replaced by a *fusion* of my person with yours [...] In this way, it will no longer be women's legs that have an effect on me, [...] you will give me the imprint of your body as I have never had it before and would have had it otherwise [...] Legs are still organs, but the boots now only determine a zone of intensity as an imprint or zone on a BwO. (ibid, p.156)

Fetishism as becoming, in which boots and a becoming-horse constitute zones of intensity, can be usefully compared to Deleuze and Guattari's relation to sorcery. Sorcery is related to fetishism in that an irrational investment in objects and animals occurs within its rituals. Joshua Delpech-Ramey argues that Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming provides a means to counter the enlightenment's deprecation of sorcery. Delpech-Ramey describes Deleuze and Guattari's series of becomings in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) in terms of a strategy, aligned to sorcery, which escapes masculine restricted economies. Deleuze and Guattari identify

a series of thresholds in becoming: becoming-woman, becoming-animal, becoming-molecular, becoming-intense. As one can observe in the ordering of this series, the movement of becoming is quite specific: it is a movement away from the stereotypically "male" ego, fixated on its isolated body, paranoid about its fragile identity [.]  
(Delpech-Ramey 2010, p. 10-11)

For Delpech-Ramey, becoming animal offers the opportunity to adopt characteristics of a creature in which to activate an intensity which allows the self to subvert and extend its previously restricted limits. Delpech-Ramey states:

Sorcerers have affinities for animals and packs of animals because a sorcerer's power inheres in the relations that are possible for her to activate between herself and the animals. What is important is not that the sorcerer identifies with a snake or a crow, but that in the process of relating to those animals, the sorcerer is able to activate powers in herself that would otherwise be blocked by the fixations of the self upon the self. (ibid, p.14)

New alliances, such as becoming-horse, therefore afford the opportunity to subvert filiative notions of identity and value in favour of new intensities; as such, established hierarchies of power often resist these alliances.

Sorcery is

mysterious, elusive, evasive, "fetishistic," which is why sorcery often appears when alliances are formed. The sorcerer is constantly accused of deception or sedition, of betraying the interests of society, the family or the state. And there is always an attempt by society to corral or break the sorcerer, to re-integrate her and confine her to a social role (ibid, p.15)

Whereas established forces in society endorse the repetition of conventional relations, the sorcerer's fetishistic pacts transgress typical limits in a process of becoming; as Delpech-Ramey describes:

It is *selection* that is the poetic or religious act of institution. Whereas authority figures in society enforce the particular contraction that society is, *mystics* [...] expand the aperture of human awareness in order to enter into communication with other levels of duration—states in which the energies of the virtual whole can be given new shape [...] What Deleuze and Guattari see in the

sorcerer is a particularly condensed ability to “go beyond” the normal plane of development. (ibid, p.12-13)

The generation of new alliances, which constitute novel states of becoming, therefore allow us to understand fetishistic relations as productive points of transgression. Fetishistic relations can therefore be understood as either a repetition of a conventional value system or the generation of a novel form - it is a matter of selection dependent on their relation within or beyond the circuit of a restrictive economy.

The relationship between masochism and fetishism within Deleuze's *Coldness and Cruelty* has been explored by Amanda Fernbach. In *Fantasies of Fetishism: From Decadence to the Post-Human* (2002), Fernbach argues that masochism can be recognized within the category of 'decadent fetishism' – a category that shares a similar concern for artifice that is to be found in the Deleuzean model. Decadent fetishism is characterized by both the superficial and the artificial. For Fernbach, decadent fetishism can occur in two ways:

Either by disavowing one's own cultural lack from a position of cultural marginality, or by disavowing the cultural lack of the Other from a position of cultural centrality. The latter is often demonstrated in idealizations of and identifications with the Other; the woman, the non-white, the homosexual. (Fernbach 2002, p. 26).

Such occurrences therefore derive from the artificial creation and performance of anti-normative subjectivities. These manufactured subjectivities transgress conventional social hierarchies and binary oppositions; as Fernbach states:

Decadent fetishism can be transgressive of hegemonic hierarchized binaries, either by inverting the binary, or by celebrating non-

hierarchized difference. Rather than disavowing difference by making the Other the Same, decadent fetishism tends to proliferate differences. (ibid, p. 27)

Decadent fetishism therefore shares with a Deleuzean methodology a concern for difference rather than an appeal to the Same. Fernbach points out that for Deleuze, masochism involves ‘not only a turning away from the paternal signifier, but a killing off of the father and the creation of a female symbolic’ (ibid, p.208); masochism therefore ‘involves a positive idealizing of [the mother] as representative of culture and law’ (ibid, p.209). This subversion is achieved via the creation of an artifice situation in which punishing woman, as representative of the law, lacks nothing whereas the father, as represented by the masochist, is degraded and reduced to nothing; as Deleuze states:

There is a disavowal of the mother by magnifying her (“symbolically the mother lacks nothing”) and a corresponding disavowal of the father by degrading him (“the father is nothing”, in other words he is deprived of all symbolic function). (Deleuze 1989, p. 64)

Masochism therefore ‘parallels the process of decadent fetishism, whereby anti-normative subjectivities are created through illegitimate identifications’ (Fernbach Op Cit, p. 208). Fernbach reiterates that, according to Deleuze, the masochist is trying to create ‘a pre-symbolic, pre-phallic realm, holding the arrival of the father and the Law in abeyance’ (ibid, p.219). The sexuality of the ‘new man’, in the form of the masochist, is therefore ‘not genital like the father’s but ‘interrupted’ and diffuse’ (ibid, p.221).

Fernbach rightly criticizes Deleuze for perceiving woman’s role as passive within the masochistic contract. In *Coldness and Cruelty*, Deleuze breaks with convention by perceiving Sadism and Masochism as two completely different psychic phenomena; however, this separation is realized at the expense of female agency by reducing the ‘role of woman

torturer purely to an effect of the masochist's will and imagination' (ibid, p.216). As Deleuze states:

The woman torturer of masochism cannot be sadistic precisely because she is in the masochistic situation, she is an integral part of it, a realization of the masochistic fantasy [...] Whenever the type of the woman torturer is observed in the masochistic setting, it becomes obvious that she is neither a genuine sadist nor a pseudosadist but something quite different. She does indeed belong essentially to masochism, but without realizing it as a subject; she incarnates instead the element of "inflicting pain" in an exclusively masochistic situation (Deleuze Op Cit, p.41-2).

By examining sadomasochistic practices within contemporary culture, Fernbach negates the perceived lack of agency within the dominatrix; contra Deleuze, she states that 'rather than existing in parallel worlds that never intersect, contemporary sadists and masochists seek each other out in order to negotiate a consensual arrangement for mutual satisfaction' (Fernbach Op Cit, p.217-8). Despite this corrective, Fernbach maintains that Deleuze's interpretation of masochism, as a form of decadent fetishism, provides an opportunity for the 'spectacular resignification of bodies and subjectivities in terms of social power through non-hegemonic identifications' (ibid, p. 223). As such, masochism maintains the possibility for the generation of fetishistic relations that generate novel values that transgress conventional codes.

In *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (1983), Deleuze again makes reference to fetishism, this time in the context of the impulse-image. The impulse-image is identified as part of a typology of cinematic images. The impulse-image is recognised as an image type fitting in between the affection-image and the action-image. Deleuze describes the affection-image as 'power or quality considered for themselves, as expressed' (Deleuze 2008, p.99). The particular qualities, or intensities, of form,

colour, sound and movement are all instances of *affect* within a cinematic scene.<sup>46</sup> In its focus on the stylistic affect of an image, the affect-image can be described as 'any-space-whatevers' in that the affect is separate, or can be abstracted, from the particular determined context of the image – as such, affects are 'pure singular qualities or potentialities – as it were, pure possibilities' (ibid, p.105).

The action-image is the 'incurving of the universe, which simultaneously causes the virtual action of things on us and our possible action on things' (ibid, p.67). As such, action 'relates movements to 'acts' (verbs) which will be the design for an assumed end or result' (ibid). The action-image is therefore that which provokes its meanings and effects for us through the progression of elements through space-time – whether these are movements within a discrete *mise en scene* or those generated through montage. As elements progressing within a given space-time, they are situated within a determined milieu in that they 'are actualised directly in determinate, geographical, historical and social space-times' (ibid, p.145).

For Deleuze, the impulse-image is 'not an any-space-whatever (although it may resemble one), because it only appears in the depths of a determined milieu; but neither is it a determined milieu, which only derives from the originary world' (ibid, p.127). The 'originary world' is 'composed of unformed matter, sketches or fragments, crossed by non-formal functions, acts, or energy dynamisms [...]' (ibid, p.128) – it is an environment occupied by impulses (drives and forces) that lack categorical differentiation; Deleuze gives the example of characters that are like animals, not because 'they have their form of behaviour, but because their acts are prior to all differentiation between [them]' (ibid). Such lack of differentiation allows impulses to 'seize fragments in [this] originary world' (ibid) in which appear 'heads without necks, eyes without faces, arms without shoulders, gestures without form' (ibid). This originary world has unity, 'not in an organisation, but [...in the sense that] all parts converge in an immense rubbish-dump or swamp' (ibid); as such, this world is both 'radical beginning and absolute end' (ibid) in that it plays upon repetition

and difference. Given this, the impulse-image corresponds to the themes of both the death-instinct and the eternal return discussed earlier. Whereas the death-instinct aims to reduce all tension to zero degree, thus eradicating any static intensities, Deleuze's interpretation of the eternal return allows a repetition of a state of becoming. Given that the impulse is the energy that seizes upon the fragments drawn from this originary world from which a determined milieu is derived, it is comparable to the Body Without Organs upon which connective syntheses are made which are then recorded to constitute recognisable identities. Deleuze divides the impulse-image into two elements: symptoms and fetishes. The impulse energies are symptoms, whereas the fragments are the partial objects towards which these energies are directed. It is the investment of energy into these fragments that constitute these partial objects as fetishes.

To explain the relationship between the fragment and fetishism, requires an understanding of the fragmented body in relationship to desire within the work of Deleuze and Guattari. This relationship can be understood by clarifying the differences between psychoanalytic notions of the fragmented body and those within the schizoanalytic theories proposed within *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

Prior to a perceived loss of an original object of desire, Lacan envisages a fragmentary bodily experience within the Real; such an experience exists before the subject recognises a coherent, unified self that comes into being during the Mirror Stage of development that constitutes the Imaginary. This perception of a fragmentary bodily experience is informed by Melanie Klein's insight into partial-objects<sup>47</sup> Klein believed that during the pre-oedipal years of an infant's life, feelings of love and aggression are fantasised onto parts of the mother's body. For Klein objects could be designated as either good or bad – often both of these attributes could be manifest in the same object. During the oral-sadistic phase, the breast is perceived as a good object at the point it offers the pleasure of nourishment and a bad object if it is withdrawn or fails to provide milk. As Klein points out, 'the ego introjects objects 'good'

and 'bad', for both of which its mother's breast is the prototype – for good objects when the child obtains it and bad when it fails him' (Klein 1935, p.116). The part-object is therefore subject to processes of attraction and repulsion. The sadistic element in this stage exists in the child's aggressive desire to incorporate and devour the breast – a desire driven by both the child's envy of the breast which it perceives as 'giv[ing] him all he needs' (Klein 1956, p.212) and its longing 'for an inexhaustible and always present breast [...] which would not only satisfy him but prevent destructive impulses and persecutory anxiety' (ibid). During the anal-sadistic phase, the child enters into a stage of self-mastery in which faeces is either retained or ejected. For the child, faeces become an object of exchange that can be either ejected to satisfy the will of the mother or, alternatively, can be retained as a means of autoeroticism that simultaneously asserts the will of the child. In both cases, the part-object is both an object of pleasure and an object of frustration.<sup>48</sup>

For Lacan, Klein's notion of the part object is useful in that it emphasizes the partial nature of all drives – for Lacan, part-objects exist 'not because [...] they are part of a total object, the body, but because they represent only partially the function that produces them' (Lacan 2006, p.693). As we have seen, whereas objects have their biological role, their function in desire relies on the surplus of pleasure generated – as such, they are represented in the unconscious as partial with their original biological function being ignored. Further to this, for Lacan, part objects are partial in that they become subject to signifiers within the symbolic order:

[W]hether part-objects or not, but certainly signifying objects – the breast, excrement, and the phallus – are no doubt won or lost by the subject; he is destroyed by them or preserves them, but above all he is these objects [...] This form of identification merely demonstrates the pathology of the path down which the subject is pushed in a world where his needs are reduced to exchange values

– this path itself finding its radical possibility only in the mortification the signifier imposes on his life [...] (ibid, p.513)

For Lacan, the part object is therefore something produced and negotiated within an inter-subjective relationship within the Imaginary, which is then subject to the alienating function of the symbolic; as such the part object becomes an object of exchange within an economy of desire based on lack. Whereas Lacan uses Melanie Klein's insight into partial-objects<sup>49</sup> to support his claim that a fragmentary perception of bodies exists prior to Oedipalisation within the Symbolic Order, Deleuze and Guattari critique Klein's notion in which to indicate that, though a conversion to whole objects takes place, a unified subjectivity is an effect of repression and such an identity is never complete: unified subjectivity is but a provisional state generated upon the Body Without Organs. Though indebted to Klein's notion of partial-objects, Deleuze and Guattari question the assumption that such objects can only be understood as a stage of development towards the unified Oedipal subject:

Melanie Klein was responsible for the marvellous discovery of partial objects, that world of explosions, rotations, vibrations. But how can we explain the fact that she has nonetheless failed to grasp the logic of these objects? [...] She does not relate these partial objects to a real process of production – of the sort carried out by desiring machines, for instance. [S]he cannot rid herself of the notion that schizophrenic partial objects are related to a whole, either to an original whole that existed earlier in a primary phase, or to a whole that will eventually appear in a final depressive stage (the complete Object). [...] Partial objects unquestionably have a sufficient charge in and of themselves to blow up all of Oedipus and totally demolish its ridiculous claim to represent the unconscious, to triangulate the unconscious, to encompass the entire production of desire. (Deleuze / Guattari 1983, p.44)

For Deleuze and Guattari then, part objects are those disjunctive syntheses produced upon the Body Without Organs – the point at the end of a productive connective synthesis in which a surplus, or anti-production occurs, giving the resulting organ the opportunity to make new connections. As such, part objects have their own self-sufficient economy detached from the edicts of the Oedipal symbolic order with its emphasis upon presence and lack. As Brian Massumi points out:

The fragmentation exhibited by the “pre-Oedipal” body is in fact the fractality of part-objects [...] – not the debilitating lack of an old unity but a real capacity for new connection. It is not a negativity in contrast to which a plenitude might be desired. It is a positive faculty for the production of connective syntheses [...] (Massumi 1992, p.85)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the part object is therefore a fragment which exhibits a ‘real capacity for new connection’ - it is an immanent creation with the potential to generate new pathways of desire; such fragments are therefore not a residue from an old perceived unity in which differentiation is yet to occur, neither is it a precursor to the differentiated unity of the symbolic subject that is contingent on lack. As we have seen, for Lacan, the notion of the part object is useful in that it emphasizes the partial nature of drives; for Deleuze, the concept of the part object is useful in that it demonstrates the operation of connective syntheses at the heart of desire. In each case, desire and its objects exist as a surplus: a temporary connection, or organ, in an otherwise fragmented body.

These fetishes-as-fragments within the impulse-image exist through an act in which the impulse shatters the cohesion of previously identified objects. As examples of connective syntheses, the impulse is the eternal state of becoming that constitutes our condition; as such, for Deleuze these fragments as fetishes are not deviations from our nature, but

desire's genuine expression within specific social and historical conditions.

As Deleuze states:

The object of the impulse is always the 'partial object', or the fetish; a haunch of meat, a raw morsel, a scrap, a woman's briefs, a shoe [...] The impulse is an act which tears away, ruptures, dislocates. Perversion is therefore not its deviation, but its derivation, that is, its normal expression in the derived milieu'. (Deleuze 2008, p.132)

The task of the impulse-image then, corresponds to that of desiring-machines – in both cases, a deterritorialisation occurs before any reconstitution comes into affect; as such, the impulse is productive and has the same aim as the death-instinct: to reduce tension (intensities) to a minimum level. As we have seen, in Deleuze's view such a reduction is achieved not through a return to some prior original state, but through a repetition of difference and multiplicity.

[!]Impulses have the same goal and the same destiny: to smash into fragments, to tear off fragments, gather up the scraps, form the great rubbish dump and bring everything together in a single and identical death impulse. (ibid, p.134)

Whereas earlier we recognized a 'becoming-animal essential to masochism', we have identified a similar phenomenon in the impulse-image. In both cases, such an occurrence represents a denial of the unity of the subject and a lack of differentiation between the body and the world – here we are a Body Without Organs simmering with potential. The masochist 'subject' is invented anew via harnesses, straps and a commanding mistress in boots, the impulse-image is a fragmented partial object in potential, independent of any unified sense of subjectivity. Becoming-animal therefore reduces us to a Body Without Organs ready to be retrained / tamed via new paths of potential which establish fetishistic zones that generate new identities.

On examining Deleuze's writings on the fetish, we have recognised a clear relationship between his notion of this concept and the Body Without Organs. For Deleuze, the fetish is the production of a new object of desire akin to those produced upon the Body Without Organs. In the case of Deleuze's comparison with masochism, the fetish appears as a means of suspending subjective relations and putting them in potential, ready for the production of new zones of intensity; the fetish therefore corresponds again to the Body Without Organs in that there is no determined state prior to the connections made within the connective synthesis. In the case of the impulse-image, fetishes are those part-objects invested with energies that dislocate such entities from their previous contexts; as such, the fetish of the impulse-image corresponds to the disjunctive synthesis achieved upon the Body Without Organs. Given the correspondence between the Body Without Organs and fetishism within Deleuze's work, a conception is determined in which the fetish is generated through immanent desire without the determination of a fundamental presence or lack. This revised conception of the fetish manifests itself in terms of fragments; as we have seen, for Deleuze, both the connective synthesis and the impulse-image have the potential to rupture, dislocate and fragment in which to reinvest objects with new possibilities. These new manifestations are then recorded and memorised as so many coordinates of desire within the disjunctive synthesis. Finally, the conjunctive synthesis of consumption – consummation allows us to recognise these coordinates as a given state of subjectivity - an identity always subject to transformations generated by further flights of desire.

In this section, an exploration of Deleuze's notion of difference and repetition has given us a means of viewing the repetition of desire as an immanent and productive process that is no longer tied to a self-present identity – the phallus - that instigates lack within its economy. The notion of the Body Without Organs has demonstrated how desire operates in a cyclical rather than linear motion in which new pathways of desire are simultaneously forged and dispersed via a series of syntheses. These

syntheses provide a means to recognize the constitution of identity without recourse to some initial origin or presence.

Desire understood as a cyclical play of difference has been found to have implications for a revised notion of the fetish. By examining Deleuze's writing on the topic, fetishes can be understood as fragments constituted by desire which have the potential to suspend, rupture, dislocate and connect, allowing new values and possibilities for desire to be formed through a process of deterritorialization. A revised Deleuzean notion of the fetish therefore corresponds to Bataille's concept of the fetish as an untransposable object of desire. As with Bataille's notion, a Deleuzean concept of the fetish traverses the realm of life and death, of the sacred and profane – the process of becoming enacted upon the body without organs witnesses the death of one state in the life-affirming production of another. Unlike the Bataillean account, a Deleuzean conception has the advantage of allowing us to interpret and understand the fetish at the point of excess – whereas Bataille believes the fetish must remain ineffable in its affect, a Deleuzean account views the excess associated with its affect as a stage towards the forging of a new identity: the conjunctive synthesis of consumption – consummation. Whereas Bataille is suspicious of any theory of the fetish that transposes it back within social codes and conventions, a Deleuzean conception avoids this retrogressive movement by premising any subsequent identity and value upon a notion of difference within a continuous cycle of becoming. Given this, a Deleuzean account also has the advantage of allowing us to understand how desire manifests itself in both restrictive and general economies – it operates as either a reified or transgressive force depending upon the stage it appears within the series of syntheses and, also, which stage is endorsed via the social relations of power at a given point in time. Either way, the fetish is to be understood as artifice, a productive outcome of desiring machines constituted upon the body without organs. In turn, the body without organs can itself be understood as a fetishism machine, upon which value can be both constituted and dispersed. Whereas contemporary writers have described the fetish in

Deleuzian thought as a reifying tendency towards anti-production, they have not considered the possibility that the lines of flight that constitute desiring-production can themselves be considered as fetishistic modes of transgression which can forge new values. If, as described, the fetish as *socius* (the earth, despot and money) was initially a term which deterritorialized itself and then appropriated given surplus relations, then the transgressive act should itself be considered a fetishistic mode of desire – one that is untransposable and immanent to the relations it generates.

Given a revised interpretation of the fetish, the conventional notion of disavowal within the concept can also be challenged – it is not so much a refusal to acknowledge the ‘true’ determinants of value within the object (this risks leaving reified relations of utility, presence and lack in place), it is more a refusal to acknowledge the artifice and socially constructed nature of such relations. As Jason Read argues, revolutionary desiring production is positioned against a Deleuzian notion of the ‘fetish as *socius*’ that disavows and conceals this underlying and determining force. This relationship can be understood in terms of ‘the creative activity constitutive of society and its actual articulation and concealment within a specific society’ (Read 2009, p.100). In the analysis of political economy conducted by Marx, this lack of acknowledgement of underlying productive relations is clearly recognized, whereas the rigidity of the phallic economy in psychoanalysis prevents the role of excess and artifice (both premised on a notion of human agency) from being given warranted attention in the construction of fetishistic relations. This modified notion of disavowal is foregrounded once a revised notion of the fetish as a fragment invested with productive desire is recognized.

As we have described, fetishism has previously been discussed in terms of an “unnatural” and perverse desire in contrast to legitimate “natural” needs associated with utility and (re)production. Debra Curtis argues that we need to ‘break free from this legacy’ (Curtis 2004, p. 108). Curtis’ anthropological study of commodities in relation to sexual subjectivities proposes that contemporary sexual practices cannot be

sufficiently understood in terms of previous categories of sexual identity. The fetishisation and consumption of commodities within sexual practices has instigated a plethora of new sexual subjectivities that disrupt conventional notions of sexual identity. Curtis states that fetishism allows

us to explore the contingent nature of the erotic as well as the social and economic structures shaping it [...F]etishism also encourages us to look at the flux and variability of desire [...allowing us to] resist cataloguing the varieties of sexual practices around sexual identities. (ibid).

As we have argued, a Deleuzian theory of the fetish constituted upon difference and becoming proposes that the notion cannot be understood in terms of a predetermined set of identities, it is therefore suggested that such a theory will have greater efficacy in analyzing new forms of subjectivity constituted via a fetishistic engagement that generates new forms of desire. Let us now consider contemporary models of fetishism in which to ascertain the degree to which such theories compare in their efficacy for interpreting modes of fetishism that transgress conventions and establish new values.

### **Deleuze and Contemporary Theories of Fetishism**

Contemporary theories of fetishism attempt to avoid the narrow confines of the Oedipal family romance when discussing the fetish. For these writers, a taxonomy or strategy for the notion is identified that recognizes wider cultural trends and implications for a theory of the concept. As will be suggested, by interpreting the fetish from the perspective of traditional and, in some cases, unsubstantiated principles that have remained persistent throughout the history of the concept, such revisions continue to focus on notions of presence, lack and the oppositions a restrictive economy puts in place, despite their intention to widen the scope of concept. It is proposed that a Deleuzian notion of the

fetish has greater efficacy in that it allows the notion to be understood as productive of value, operating outside the realm of origins, presence and lack.

For Amanda Fernbach (2002), fetishism can be understood via a range of strategies that either assimilate the Other, negate the self / other distinction or transform the self into an image of otherness. Fernbach produces a taxonomy of fetishism that includes:

[M]aking the Other over in the image of the self (classical fetishism), merging with the Other (pre-oedipal fetishism) in a partial (matrix fetishism) or complete annihilation of the self (immortality fetishism), and transforming the self into an image of Otherness (decadent fetishism). (Fernbach 2002, p. 228)

Fernbach's taxonomy has the benefit of celebrating 'the fluidity of meaning [and] deconstructing the binary categories that classical psychoanalysis works within' (ibid, p.223). However, by subscribing to a notion of lack and disavowal, based upon traditional psychoanalytic notions of phallic presence, it can be argued that Fernbach's deconstruction of typical binary oppositions remains tied to the limited terms of play determined within a singular phallogentric economy. As we described earlier, Fernbach argues that masochism can be recognized within the category of 'decadent fetishism' – a category that shares a similar concern for artifice that is to be found in the Deleuzean model. Identifying its initial occurrence at the *fin de siècle*, decadent fetishism describes the tendency to subvert social norms via the use of artifice and masquerade within culture. At a time when social roles and values within modernity were being challenged, especially around notions of gender and sexuality, 'decadence' can be described as a 'pejorative label applied by the bourgeoisie to everything that seemed unnatural, artificial, and perverse, from Art Nouveau to homosexuality' (Showalter 1991, p.169).

Given a shared emphasis on difference and artifice, the post-modern age is aligned with the decadence of the *fin de siècle*. Fernbach describes this correspondence:

Postmodern narratives [...] recycle this decadent desire for the artificial over and above the natural body [...] It is partly because of this fetishistic celebration of artifice and debunking of the self as natural that decadence and postmodernism can emphasize the potential for transformation and flaunt the generation of new identities, for if the self is not bound by nature, it can continuously be redesigned, recreated. (Fernbach Op Cit, p.43)

When discussing sadomasochism within contemporary fetish cultures, Fernbach argues that they have subversive potential because they 'suggest power is not natural, but arbitrary and artificial; they theatricalize power relations and so destabilize hegemonic cultural codes that naturalize the prevailing relations of power' (ibid, p. 193). According to Fernbach, such a phenomenon therefore coincides with Deleuze's notion of masochism. Fernbach acknowledges that 'fetishism provides a way to productively theorise postmodernism's generation of new subjectivities and reconcile this with its narratives of exhaustion' (ibid, p. 229). As such, it is suggested that a 'better understanding of fetishism in all its multiplicity can enable us to survive this lack of a sense of wholeness and completeness that pertains to the postmodern condition, and reminds us that this is the loss of something that never was' (ibid). Fernbach therefore recognizes that in an age in which identity is increasingly fragmented and shared universals are both unsustainable and refuted, fetishism offers us a means of understanding the production of new values, desires and identities. Unfortunately, Fernbach's recognition of hybridity and artifice in the construction of fetishism is always understood via the traditional framework of presence and absence. Despite Fernbach's largely positive assessment of Deleuze's theory of fetishism, her own analysis remains tainted by psychoanalytic concerns for presence and lack which are

ultimately tied to a singular phallogentric sexual economy. For Fernbach, there are two kinds of decadent fetishists:

[T]he dominatrix who uses her role to disavow women's cultural lack and fantasize into being an omnipotent feminist figure, and the male masochist who renounces orthodox masculinity for a non-phallic yet male heterosexual subject position. (ibid, p. 223)

In both cases, the subject position is taken by either adopting or renouncing the phallic role. Subversion is therefore tied to a privileged signifier, despite the emphasis on 'masquerade, the shifting of identities in terms of gender and sexuality between male and female, homosexuality and heterosexuality' (ibid). Fernbach composes a taxonomy of fetishism that defines how value and difference between subjects can be negotiated, these include:

[M]aking the Other over in the image of the self (classical fetishism), merging with the Other (pre-oedipal fetishism) in a partial (matrix fetishism) or complete annihilation of the self (immortality fetishism), and transforming the self into an image of Otherness (decadent fetishism). (ibid, p. 228)

Within each of these categories, the fetish 'disavows some kind of lack as it transforms identity and offers the subject satisfaction, even though this satisfaction is somewhat illusory' (ibid). The emphasis on the disavowal of lack and the illusory nature of satisfaction is symptomatic of an analysis that subscribes to an original presence and is therefore deficient of a means to account for difference outside of its terms. Though this interpretation endorses a difference that transgresses typical binary oppositions and power relations, it is a limited difference that remains tied to the limited terms of play defined and determined within a singular economy of value. Fernbach's analysis and taxonomy ultimately remains tied to a psychoanalytic model premised upon the privileged phallic

signifier and is completely blind to the socio-economic realm (notice the lack of commodity fetishism within the above taxonomy) which influences the degree to which conventional social and gender roles are reified or transgressed.

Fernbach's analysis of masochism does not acknowledge Deleuze and Guattari's later interpretation of masochism in relation to the Body Without Organs – this would have been a corrective to her own theory of decadent fetishism. Deleuze and Guattari's account offers us a means to understand transgression and the generation of novel values without being tied to a premise of presence and lack. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of paranoid machines and desiring machines offers the means to understand the tendency for either reification or transgression, depending on our relation to a particular social mode of production that determines which machine dominates upon the Body Without Organs. At no point is the resulting condition of subjectivity and value determined by an original relation to lack. By always tying her taxonomy of fetishism to the palette of roles offered by a singular economy of value, even the most radical transgressions are limited to prescriptive positions, even though these positions might be subverted or reversed.

In *Cultures of Fetishism* (2006), Louise Kaplan generates five principles, defined as the fetishism strategy, which distinguishes it from the reductive notion of fetishism as 'somehow similar to sexual fetishism' (ibid, p.2). For Kaplan, the notion of the fetishism strategy allows us to consider the wider implications of the term as a means to control life forces and drives that would otherwise threaten established forms of value and desire. As Kaplan states,

some essentially unknown, intangible, spiritual, and ambiguous "someone" or "something" that seems to have a will and energy of its own, is transformed into something tangible and concretely real and therefore capable of being controlled and manipulated. (ibid, p.5)

According to Kaplan, such a means of control is achieved through duplicity in which the value of the fetish, used to manipulate, orientate and determine economic value in all its forms, is found to ultimately lack substantial foundation. For Kaplan, the belief that such forces can be 'controlled through the possession and manipulation of a fetish is misleading and duplicitous. It is a false belief. And this false belief underlies the principles of the fetishism strategy' (ibid). To use the term "fetishism" is therefore to be aware, 'consciously or unconsciously, of the implicit duplicity, falsehood, and fakery that is inherent to the term' (ibid, p.4). Ultimately the fetishism strategy is a

powerful defense that can be evoked, whenever there is a need to exercise control over what is experienced as an enigmatic and uncontrollable force – a force of nature, a force of human creativity, a force of human vitality, a force of violence and aggression'. (ibid, p. 178)

Kaplan defines five principles that illuminate this defensive control strategy.<sup>50</sup> Kaplan's principles of the fetishism strategy are not to be understood as entirely distinct, they are to be perceived as 'shades and reflections of one another' (ibid, p.5). However, these five principles all orientate around the key themes of death, duplicity and disavowal. The fifth principle, which concerns itself with the death instinct, is described as 'the key to the strategy of fetishism' (ibid). Despite being a horrifying and bizarre perversion, Kaplan believes that necrophilia is intimately related to fetishism in that it

expresses succinctly a facet of the fetishism strategy [...because in] its larger, more encompassing meaning, fetishism is about the deadening and dehumanization of otherwise alive and therefore threateningly dangerous, unpredictable desires. (ibid)

For Kaplan, disavowal is closely associated with the death drive in its relation to the fetishism strategy. It is the means by which the contradictions at the heart of socio-economic and psychosexual economies are assuaged. In each case, the fetish manifests itself at the point where one attempts to control the uncontrollable and destructive. The surplus inherent to human desire and productivity must be channeled into forms that are safe and manageable: money, the phallus or some chosen material object. Fetishism, as an act of disavowal, allows us to have it both ways – we acknowledge that below singular economies of equivalence, there inevitably remains difference, but we deny it in which to quell such unruly forces that might destroy these conventional circuits of production and reproduction. As Kaplan points out:

The fetishism strategy is habituated to partnering death and following its lead. Disavowal, having it both ways, seems to be built into the fetishism strategy. Therefore, as the fetishism strategy attempts to regulate the full strength of potentially murderous impulses, it simultaneously gives some expression to these impulses [...] (ibid, p.178)

The belief that disavowal and death are 'built in' to the fetishism strategy leads Kaplan to conclude that such a strategy might be intrinsic. This, in turn, sends Kaplan on a circular path of uncertainty and ambiguity; she states:

Is it because the death drive tints itself in erotic colors that we become susceptible to the deceptions of the fetishism strategy? Or, do our susceptibilities to the deceptions of the fetishism strategy arise from the fantasy of Eros holding Thanatos – the death drive – in abeyance? (ibid, p.189)

Kaplan appears undecided as to whether the reification and alienation of human relationships at the start of the twenty first century are entirely the result of commodity fetishism or are merely an exaggerated form of an essential condition. Kaplan poses the question:

In order to understand the transformations of human existence [...] at the beginning of the twenty first century, we have to examine the susceptibilities of human beings. Why are human beings so vulnerable to the allure of the machine? What makes us so accepting of dehumanization, alienation, and commodification?  
(ibid, p.176)

Elsewhere, Kaplan hints that these 'susceptibilities' to the fetishism strategy might be universal and inherent:

The contradictions have been there for centuries – and possibly for all of human history, ever since the first human societies came into existence. The fetishism strategy is inherent to the human mind.  
(ibid, p.178)

Ultimately, Kaplan views the fetishism strategy as an inevitable curse on our condition that is more or less exaggerated given certain changing social conditions. Kaplan believes we must be 'friendly to uncertainty and ambiguity' (ibid, p.190) if we are to avoid the trappings of the fetishism strategy. At the very least, 'we should be alert to the danger of repeating the traumas of the past each time we venture forth to create something different and new' (ibid).

Kaplan criticizes psychoanalytic models that denigrate manifest content in favour of deeper and 'truer' latent content. According to Kaplan, such models proceed as if

the surface could not itself be psychologically deeper than what lies beneath it; as if one surface did not always contend with another;

as if depth might not be a screen for what is a painful or frightening psychic reality of the manifest present. (ibid, p.125)

In contrast to such models that are based upon notions of repression, Kaplan endorses a methodology borrowed from fetishism, that of disavowal. For Kaplan, disavowal has the virtue of encouraging a 'collaboration and simultaneity of manifestly antithetical forces that coexist in a play of shifting surfaces' (ibid, p.126). As such, therapy can have it both ways, both acknowledging some latent and manifest surfaces whilst identifying those that have been disavowed. It is therefore not a process of presuming an original latent truth behind manifest images, but rather the need to 'comprehend how this conspicuously foregrounded narrative is systemically related to the discordant or latent elements that have been cast into the shadows, margins, and background' (ibid). Such a process has the benefit of protecting the 'patient's psychic reality by creating an atmosphere that gives free rein and expression to the interplay between manifest and latent' (ibid). Kaplan gives an example where the traditional latent-manifest hierarchy would be ineffective: 'a patient might introduce a dream in order to obscure and marginalize the painful latent affects and thoughts that are threatening to emerge in the transference-countertransference interaction' (ibid, p.125). The function of analysis then, is not to uncover a repressed narrative according to reified and prescribed narrative, it is to recognize the interplay and connection between the manifest and latent images which constitute the individual's symptoms, anxieties and desires.

Whereas there are clear merits to the procedure that Kaplan describes, it remains tied to a reductive notion of fetishism. Kaplan's use of the fetishism strategy may not blindly follow the dogma of prescribed narratives which could circumvent any recognition of trauma, but such an analysis still gives a conventional interpretation of the strategy as a duplicitous means to disavowal lack at the heart of trauma – therapy therefore remains a search for lack at the heart of desire. When discussing desire, Kaplan ridicules some American psychoanalysts for having 'no room for desire, which evokes feelings of absence, lack and longing [...]

Desire is about suspended excitement and a longing for something not yet there.' (ibid, p.124). Kaplan's analysis is possibly still guilty of searching for that elusive object of desire at the origin of absence.

The focus on, and repetition of death in Kaplan's five principles of the fetishism strategy is symptomatic of this retrogressive need to return to an original site of trauma, regardless how much this site deviates from prescribed psychoanalytic clichés. It is worth reminding ourselves of our earlier discussions of the death drive, difference and repetition – here it was suggested that the repetitions within the death drive were yet another example of the repetition towards an original lost unity: the futile search for the elusive original object of desire. By perceiving repetition within desire as a process of becoming - a repetition of difference rather than a repetition and return – Deleuze offers us a means to view the fetishism strategy as creative and productive, rather than a deadening, reifying experience.

Kaplan's understanding of fetishism misses the opportunity to fully explore the flip-side of desire: the desiring machines which are not always already prescribed within given modes of production and reproduction; desire which forges new connections not constituted on the basis of absence and lack. By not giving due consideration to this aspect of desire, Kaplan simultaneously reduces the fetishism strategy to a duplicitous means for disavowing traumas based upon absence and lack. Kaplan's interpretation therefore fails to recognize this corresponding flip-side of fetishism: the artifice that is able to constitute value rather than reductively disavowing absence where value cannot be found. Such a reductive interpretation perceives the strategy as a resistance to be overcome within therapy rather than a potentially positive and productive process.<sup>51</sup>

In *The Picture of Abjection: Film, Fetish and the Nature of difference* (2008), Tina Chanter implies that fetishism is complicit with narratives and practices that operate via exclusion and inclusion. By examining the medium of film, Chanter questions the efficacy of theories

that focus on the specular logic of fetishism (Metz 1982 / Mulvey 2009). Chanter argues that even when the illusory effects of fetishism are unveiled via its exposure as a construction, as in avant-garde cinema, the authority of a phallogentric economy of desire still remains – its is either uncritically enjoyed or interrupted, no other space for pleasure is allowed; as Chanter points out:

At every moment I am reminded of my knowledge that the film is not “reality”: I am not allowed to forget its illusory dependence on increasingly sophisticated technology. Yet even as such reminders debunk the fetishistic strategy, they confirm its authority. Pleasure can either conform to the fetishistic model, or it can be interrupted, dislocated – there is, apparently, no way of understanding filmic pleasure differently. (Chanter 2008, p.42)

The logic of fetishism within these theories is therefore accused of assuming an underlying social cohesion in which all are subject to the authority of the same restrictive economy, regardless of social position or unique specificity; Chanter states:

There is an important sense in which the fetishistic model, and the exposure of its logic, fail to acknowledge precisely the extent to which identification operates according to a logic as already in place socially cohesive communities, whose collective, imaginary body images are indeed reflected back to them as invisibly similar – or as noticeably dissimilar. The fetishistic disavowal that consists of bracketing the fact that I know the fantasy unfolding onscreen is not real [...] is thereby undercut by a communal recognition that allows spectators to read filmic images in terms of a shared imaginary that is coded as always already familiar – or marked as unfamiliar, different, exotic. (ibid)

By leaving a shared imaginary in place, theories focused on the logic of fetishism risk being complicit with racist narratives and a phallogentric economy of desire, despite their critical and emancipatory intentions. As previously mentioned, traditional accounts of fetishism have been tied to a notion of the civilized west with its universal values and the uncivilized non-western other which has been deemed irrational and arbitrary. The irrationality of the non-western other has likewise been made analogous to the feminine – western societies own internal other. This has been clearly apparent in the psychoanalytic discourse of fetishism in which the irrational and ‘deviant’ substitution of an object of desire exists as a means to negate the horror of femininity – a sexuality perceived as lacking which reminds us that there might be a sexuality outside the confines of the phallic economy. As Chanter describes:

Civilization is assumed to be masculine, white, and heterosexual, but in ways that are unmarked by psychoanalytic discourse [...Fetishism] fails to acknowledge both that the abjection of women remains a model for the abjection of racialized others, and the accessory status that blackness accrues in relation to whiteness is fashioned by a deeply embedded and institutionally endemic racism that is in fact constitutive of whiteness. The exclusion and denigration of blackness has helped to make both sexuality and whiteness what they are. (ibid, p. 41)

Given the complicity of traditional conceptions of fetishism with a white, western and phallogentric viewpoint, Chanter argues for an alternative model of analysis based around the theory of the abject. A similar focus upon the implications of abjection for a theory of fetishism is also to be found in the work of Laura Mulvey.<sup>52</sup> Chanter’s theory is informed by Kristeva’s notion of abjection in *The Powers of Horror* (1980). In this work, Kristeva argues that abjection is that which disturbs social order and borders. It is that which ‘disturbs identity, system, order. What does not

respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous [...]’ (Kristeva 1980, p.4). Kristeva’s understanding of abjection is informed by the work of Mary Douglas. In *Purity and Danger* (1966), Douglas describes how communities identify themselves by delineating that which is considered human, pure and clean and that which is considered animal, unclean and taboo. Kristeva situates these oppositions in an initial abjection of the maternal body, it is argued that this abjection instigates a separation that will eventually inaugurate a subject with a desire for objects that it recognizes as being other than itself. The abjection of the maternal occurs as the child learns to recognize that which pleases and displeases it – that which brings pleasure comes to be contained within the body, that which brings displeasure is expelled outside. As Chanter points out,

abjection functions in a way that privileges the maternal body as a site of abjection that facilitates the child’s separation from the other by instituting an initial and unstable boundary between subjects and objects. It works to set up a tentative subjectivity for the infant, who sets itself up as an I through rejecting what comes to be figured as the abject maternal body, while remaining beholden to, desirous of, and fascinated by the pleasure and gratification provided by the maternal body. (Chanter Op Cit, p. 18)

Abjection is therefore viewed as a precondition to narcissism and the mirror stage due to the fact it is an attempt to delineate a sense of a borderline between the body and its pleasures and an outside. The horror in abjection exists in the attempt to expel that from which it cannot be excluded – the maternal body operates as an archetype of abjection because it is not clearly excluded from the child, it offers an ambiguous point of both pleasure and danger; abjection is therefore

above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary,

abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger. (ibid, p.9)

For Kristeva, the corpse is the 'utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject' (ibid, p.4). The corpse has this privileged position due to its reduction of identity to refuse and materiality. It reminds us that death is always a part of our materiality and being, an inescapable Real that threatens to infiltrate the identity of the living.

[R]efuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. (ibid, p.3)

According to Chanter, abjection allows us to conceptualise identity and otherness beyond the confines of a restrictive phallogocentric economy instigated by the Symbolic Order. It is able to do this because it appeals to divisions, inclusions and exclusions that predate the phallic Symbolic Order and its separation of sexual difference into an economy of having or lacking – fantasies of identity and the other are therefore affiliated with the pre-oedipal maternal body.

Kristeva's elaboration of the dynamic of abjection as the projection of the mother's body as that which must be rejected in order for a love relation to be conceptualized as such – which is to say, initially, in order for any relationship at all to be figured – admits the significance of fantasies that do not always already adhere to the phallic contours of Oedipus, fantasies that are not always destined to be, for example, castration fantasies. (Chanter Op Cit, p. 38)

As such, the theory and practice of abjection, with its ambiguities and disruptions, has the benefit of being able to both account for, and subvert, a variety of social divisions - this is in contradistinction to fetishistic theory, which already designates sexual difference, in its phallogocentric manifestation, as the privileged realm of opposition, despite relying on racist assumptions based on notions of irrational primitivism.

The imaginary symbolics fueling racialized, nationalist myths can also be thought in terms of the defensive maneuvers of abjection. As a protection against emptiness, narcissism is elaborated as a defense against abjection, one that precedes the mirror stage, and is elaborated by Kristeva in a sensorial register, not limited to the scopophilic drive that fuels either the mirror stage or fetishistic disavowal. (ibid, p.21)

Abjection is perceived as allowing an eruption of the real that unsettles boundaries and exposes the oppositions upon which our social and cultural orders are based. As Chanter describes:

By rendering unfamiliar the familiar, or by rendering familiar the unfamiliar, film can produce identifications against the grain of familiarity. It can do so by engaging in abject maneuvers, bordering on the uncanny [...T]hrough the operation of abjection film can unsettle the boundaries of subjects and objects, as subjects experience a disruption of the identificatory models that have served to consolidate the knowledge that allows [...the] prototypical male subject [to say] that “he knows himself and he knows his like”. (ibid, p.42-3)

Chanter’s criticism of fetishism is undoubtedly valid if we perceive fetishism in its traditional form – notions of substitution and the disavowal

of lack undeniably position fetishistic discourse within the realm of a restrictive phallogentric economy in which the myth of the maternal phallus emerges. However, as we have argued, if the fetish is no longer premised upon the original trauma of the Oedipal scene and is understood to be an immanent creative act, in which desire forges new values, then the fetish is no longer subject to such criticism. From this point of view, the value of the fetish is no longer positioned in terms of a singular 'universal' restrictive economy and is as arbitrary as those fetishistic values of 'primitive' cultures described by Hegel. An immanent notion of the fetish, generated through difference without recourse to an origin, therefore overturns the principle of universal value and endorses an arbitrariness that was previously considered other. In fact, the perceived deviancy of the fetish can be perceived as corresponding to the conditions of abjection – the fetish, as artifice, always exists on the borderline between value and its dispersal. Whereas death is, according to the logic of the abject, the ultimate recognition that the boundary between identity, self, other and the object is tenuous, for the immanent fetish, though death remains ambiguous, it is a positive ambiguity – a nausea and vertigo of becoming. On this interpretation, disavowal within fetishism is a disavowal of becoming that occurs within certain socio-economic or psycho-sexual circumstances – in such circumstances the paranoiac machine of anti-production dominates.

There is also a potential danger in Chanter's argument. Chanter suggests that 'abjection be understood as an inscription of negativity that functions as a precondition of fetishistic disavowal [...]' (ibid, p.21). By describing abjection as an origin to anxieties about sexual difference and all anxieties where ambiguity threatens to disrupt conventional social oppositions, Chanter risks fetishizing the maternal body – one that still remains as an 'outside' to Oedipal logic and therefore operates within its terms. Chanter, herself, warns us that by situating 'abjection within an Oedipal narrative in which the phallic order is "traversable", [such a] traversibility still testifies to privileging sanctioned forms of hegemonic authority [...]' (ibid, p.38). Kristeva's appeal to the maternal body as an

original abject moment, therefore risks falling into the same pattern of inclusions and exclusions that define some as acceptable and others as unacceptable. Chanter points out, the 'construction of the maternal body as abject might be read as inseparable from the devaluation of motherhood that pervades [...] modernity' (ibid, p.20). As such, one can consider the advantages of a theory of fetishism based upon multiplicity and difference – abject moments become the points at which the paranoiac machine 'repels [desiring-machines...] experience[ing] them as an over-all persecution apparatus' (Deleuze / Guattari 1984, p.9); it is the point at which the 'authority' of value threaten to become indeterminate. Abjection from a Deleuzean point of view can also be interpreted as moments of becoming themselves – after all, to become via immanent relations is to also become indeterminate. This is illustrated by Anna Powell, who also criticizes abjection from the point of view of Kristeva; Powell states:

According to Kristevan abjection, the designated 'other' functions to uphold, whilst contesting, human ethical and cultural norms [...] The horrific impact of the monst[rous] partly depends on its coding as anomalous, against nature in some sense. Becomings themselves are traditionally positioned as the source of horror. For Deleuze, however, rather than the horror of an abject, polarized other, both beauty and terror are located in the transformative condition. The process of becoming is experienced and effected by the body-without-organs. (Powell 2005, p.77-8)

As we stated at the outset of our examination, the inadequacy of previous conceptions of fetishism is no more apparent than in the example of female fetishism – here novel forms of desire take flight beyond the boundaries of conventional restrictive economies. As we shall see, though there is evidence that such a phenomenon exists, theories of this subject continue to resort to a notion of fetishism tied to a phallic economy of presence and lack. As we shall demonstrate, to perceive fetishism in such

a conventional fashion is to thwart the possibility of modes of desire beyond a given restrictive economy. Such a notion therefore operates within a Foucauldian power / knowledge model – power produces knowledge that delineates the terms in which a phenomenon can be discussed. If fetishistic desire is to be understood beyond restrictive economies of value, it must operate outside its terms.

## **Part Five: Fetishism, Femininity and the critique of lack**

Earlier, we stated that the Otherness ascribed to woman and fetishism is an integral part of the modern episteme – they are necessarily placed in a negative position in which to provide presence to those concepts advocated within society. As such, these negative terms are prescribed an absence of the substance that gives an object or subject a value. This became apparent when we considered the metaphysics of presence in relation to phallogocentrism. Such an alignment between woman and the fetish gave an insight into why the fetish is described as being a substitute for a maternal phallus that never existed, now perceived as lacking. Such an alignment is not just an apparent thematic similarity with regard to the theme of excess, it is a structural fusion to uphold the integrity of a singular male economy of desire. As we have described, within modern psychosexual discourse, it is precisely within the topic of fetishism that the woman and the phallus become one in the form of the maternal phallus: that which was perceived but never existed. In fact, one can state that it is this phantom object that resides at the origin of the singular sexual economy of desire – without it, there could be no castration and therefore no lack, all that would remain would be difference. Without ascribing a phallic status to ‘deviant’ objects of desire, fetishes would indicate the possibility of a desire radically separate to that proscribed within a male sexual economy. To fetishize must be to fear and disavow the loss of phallic status (castration anxiety), not to choose a different mode of desire in an act of pure difference. As such, the phallus must be ascribed to the site of lack: the female body is thus said to contain the maternal phallus allowing male deviation to remain anchored to a phallogocentric economy of desire. Likewise it is to place woman within a phallic economy, rather than being a subject in a relation of difference, that requires her to be positioned as lacking that which she must desire within men. Given this, it is no surprise that woman is described as incapable of fetishizing; to admit this, when already positioned as lacking, would be to accept that there is a desire separate to the dominant economy. As we

shall see, the above paradox in which woman is simultaneously phallic, lacking and excessive, gives the lie to the notion of the fetish as substitute.

As stated, according to traditional psychoanalytic accounts, woman is considered incapable of fetishizing. For Freud fetishism is a reaction to castration anxiety in which the male child disavows his mother's lack of a penis by choosing a substitute object as a replacement. Because a female infant already lacks a penis, she has no reason to fear the threat of castration; as such, female fetishism is considered to be an impossibility. Likewise for Lacan, fetishism is considered to be a reaction to the threat of castration and therefore predominantly a male preserve with few female practitioners. Whereas Freud perceived the fetish to be a disavowal of the mother's missing penis, Lacan perceives it to be a desire to preserve the maternal phallus within the subject of the mother:

Since it has been effectively demonstrated that the imaginary motive for most male perversions is the desire to preserve the phallus which involved the subject in the mother, then the absence in women of fetishism, which represents the virtually manifest case of this desire, leads us to suspect that this desire has a different fate in the perversions which she represents. (Lacan 1958, p.96)

In this section, the possibility of a potential female fetishism outside the restrictive phallogocentric model is considered. Arguments in favour of a notion of female fetishism are examined in dialogue with traditional phallogocentric psychoanalytic models. The occurrence of female fetishism, where women invest desire 'perversely', raises the issue of an inadequacy of classical notions of fetishism in which women are already viewed as lacking. Such a phenomenon therefore raises the possibility of desire outside of the binary oppositions of presence and lack, whilst exposing the deficiency of traditional models. By following the trajectory of a Lacanian viewpoint, interpretations of female fetishism are found to risk replicating the pattern of reducing desire and its objects to a pre-given set of oppositions that perceive difference and identity in gendered terms.

By following Derrida's critique of logocentrism and Lacan's proclamation that phallic desire is an effect of our entry into the symbolic order of language, feminist writers have attempted to rethink desire outside of the terms of a metaphysics of presence epitomized by the phallus. Whereas such theories have been criticized for failing to escape the logic of presence and absence associated with an economy of the same, the prospect of a theory of sexual difference based upon women's morphology challenges the authority of a theory of fetishism from the viewpoint of phallogentrism. A comparison of a Deleuzian concern for immanence in relation to such a theory is found to demonstrate the greater efficacy of generating a notion of fetishism based upon difference and multiplicity outside the terms of a restrictive economy. A Deleuzian model is found to explain traditional accounts of fetishism, whilst interpreting those occurrences in which the fetish transgresses conventional notions of sexual difference and morphological types.

### **Fetishism Reconsidered: The Case of Female Fetishism**

As described earlier, in traditional accounts of fetishism, it is considered extremely rare, if not impossible, for women to be fetishists. Though Freud and Lacan denied that fetishism could be a female perversion, other writers have identified numerous examples of women fetishists and have refuted or revised the psychoanalytic model. Elizabeth Grosz cites an account of female fetishism given by the psychoanalyst Juliet Hopkins who describes a girl with a shoe and foot fetish that also used a tobacco tin as fetish object for sexual purposes (Grosz 1990, p109). In their review of psychoanalytic literature, Lorraine Gamman and Merja Makinen found that at least a third of the recorded case studies of fetishism were female practitioners – these included a female kleptomaniac who would masturbate with the silk she had stolen; female mackintosh and rubber fetishists; a female who fetishised

string and a woman who derived pleasure from herself whilst holding a non-erotic book (Gamman, L and Makinen, M 1994, p. 96-7).

If, as has been implied, fetishism is better understood as both the archetype and artifice of value that lacks any origin of presence, then there is the suspicion that the denial of female fetishism functions to support a male heterosexual restricted phallic economy. To admit the artificiality of fetishistic value and, in turn, the fetishistic status of the phallus, is to expose the artifice, or masquerade, of all modes of sexuality, including that of the male; as Marjorie Garber points out in regard to the fetishisation of the phallus:

Is it possible that this overt acknowledgment of artifice [...] masks another [...] concern - about the artifactuality and the detachability of maleness? What if it should turn out that female fetishism is invisible or untheorizable because it coincides with what has been established as natural or normal - for women to fetishize the phallus on men? In other words, to deny female fetishism is to establish as natural the female desire that the male body contain the phallus. Heterosexuality here – as so often - equals nature. Female fetishism is the norm of human sexuality. That is why it is invisible. (Garber 1990, P.54)

Some theorists have attempted to expose the fetishistic ruse of phallic power within a male restricted economy by appropriating the phallus outside its heterosexual mode of exchange. Both Elizabeth Grosz and Teresa De Lauretis propose that female fetishism is, in fact, possible and that it can be interpreted as a way of renegotiating the restrictive codes of phallocentrism from the point of view of lesbian desire. In each case, both writers mutually criticize each other for being complicit within the terms of a phallocentric economy.

In her essay *Lesbian Fetishism?* (1990) Elizabeth Grosz argues that forms of lesbian sexuality can be considered as examples of female fetishism. Grosz describes how the disavowal of castration that occurs

within the constitution of a fetish also occurs in the construction of femininity. Three routes are given for women to enact this disavowal: narcissism, hysteria and the masculinity complex. Firstly, by making reference to Freud's paper *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, Grosz argues that many women compensate for their castrated status by treating their own bodies as phallic: their bodies become invested with the care and attention that lover's tend to give each other as external love objects. By tending to the care and appearance of their bodies through painting, plucking, shaving, diets and exercise, women ensure that they are loved and retain their position as the object of the Other's desire. Women's bodies are therefore perceived as being-the-phallus, whereas by having a penis, the male perceives himself as having-the-phallus; as such the 'man's penis and the whole of woman's body are rendered psychically equivalent. He has the object of desire while she is the object of desire' (Grosz 1990, p.110). As we have discussed earlier, the artifice invested in retaining their position as object of desire, leads both Joan Riviere (1929, p. 303-313) and Lacan (2006, p.575-584) to comprehend female sexuality as a masquerade. It is through artifice that woman attempts to deny her position as deficient within the phallic economy – woman therefore performs a masquerade in which to deny her subject position as lacking.

The second process of disavowal available to a woman is through hysteria. Whereas narcissism involved making the whole of a woman's body into the phallus, hysteria involves investing phallic status into a specific part of the body. Through her refusal to except the female passive role within the masculine phallic economy, the hysteric does not phallicize her whole body in the hope that it may be loved, but decides instead to invest her desire onto a body part outside of this economy. This condition is therefore seen by Grosz to be a nostalgic wish by the hysteric to return to her pre-oedipal attachment to her mother. Grosz refers to Freud's case study of Dora as an example of hysteria. Dora receives pleasure not through the genitals but through hysterical choking within her throat – as such she 'phallicizes her throat and uses it to signal her disgust at Herr K's sexual advances' (Grosz Op Cit., p.111), thus demonstrating her rebellion

against masculine sexuality. Grosz indicates that hysteria therefore allows a woman to retain an active role, whilst still being subject to a passive role in patriarchy.

[H]er own body takes on the function of the phallus (confirming her objectlike status in patriarchy) while her subjectivity remains in an active position (one which takes her own body as its object). (ibid, p.112)

Finally, Grosz discusses the masculinity complex as a means for the female to disavow castration. Following Freud, Grosz describes the masculinity complex as involving the refusal of the woman to accept her castrated and subordinated role within the masculine sexual economy. Whereas an acceptance of the subordinated position usually involves the giving up of the clitoris as the leading sexual organ for the passive vagina, the woman with the masculinity complex will retain the clitoris as leading organ with 'the position of activity it implies' (ibid). Though not necessarily implying lesbianism, such a refusal of women's castrated status is often followed by the retention of the maternal figure as erotic object attachment. This lesbian relationship to the masculinity complex allows Grosz to consider the notion of lesbian fetishism.

For Grosz the lesbian with a masculinity complex could be considered a fetishist in that she disavows women's castration but, unlike the male fetishist, this castration is her own, not that of the phallic mother. An external object substitute for the phallus is then selected, in this case it is another woman as substitute for the maternal phallus. Grosz proposes that by fetishizing another woman as love object, the lesbian with the masculinity complex is able to act 'as if she *has* rather than *is* the phallus' (ibid, p.113-4).

Grosz states that her appropriation of the concept of fetishism intends to 'stretch Freud's terms in order to show that in themselves they do not discriminate against women' (ibid, p.114). Such an intention is

important for Grosz in that it allows feminist political considerations to enter the realm of psychoanalysis, without discarding psychoanalysis itself – Grosz claims that to reject the theory would leave us ‘without an account of psychic and fantasy life’ (ibid). Grosz proposes a “fetishist’s” solution [in which a notion is selected] that is deemed impossible or is foreclosed by the theory to show how it may not be as implausible as it seems if the terms are stretched beyond their normal confines’ (ibid). The fetishist solution that Grosz refers to is the fetishist’s strategy of simultaneous disavowal and affirmation. The strategy has been used here to weld the psychoanalytic concept of fetishism to the phenomenon of lesbianism, whilst simultaneously denying its exclusivity as a strictly male perversion. Grosz describes the lesbian with the masculine complex as disavowing her own castration rather than her mother’s. Though there is no recognition of the fact in Grosz’s writing, is it not also the case that when the male fetishist disavows his mother’s castration, he is also protecting himself from such a fate? This coincidence between the male fetishist and the masculine lesbian becomes further apparent when we consider Freud’s account of lesbianism in which there is a ‘failure’ in women to convert their ‘love object from the maternal to the paternal’ (ibid, p.113). Grosz points out that such a failure can often lead to women perceiving their father ‘as simply another embodiment of the phallic status of the mother’ (ibid). As with the male fetishist, it appears to be the case that the masculine lesbian’s castration can be avoided if she believes her mother still retains her phallic status. Whereas an external object is chosen to disavow both the castration of both the male fetishist and his mother, the masculine lesbian chooses another woman as fetish to confirm her own phallic status. Such an interpretation of lesbian fetishism corresponds to the classic Freudian account of lesbianism in which the female refuses her castration, taking ‘refuge in an identification with her phallic mother or her father [...and following] her inevitable disappointments from her father [...is] driven to regress into her early masculinity complex’ (Freud, S 1933, p.428).

Though Grosz's particular appropriation of psychoanalysis raises our awareness of the potential subversive implications of fetishism – namely, its possible use for explaining the fetishizing of women by masculine lesbians – it fails to allow women, lesbian or otherwise, to discuss their sexuality or their potential fetishistic practices outside of the confines of the male phallic economy – as such, the sexual economy remains singular rather than multiple. Lorraine Gamman and Merja Makinen acknowledge this limitation within Grosz's conception of lesbian fetishism and recognise that , ' [a]lthough interesting in its theoretical argument that women can be fetishists, Grosz's argument clearly still privileges the phallus as the signifier of desire' (Gamman, L and Makinen, M 1994, p.110). By appropriating the psychoanalytic concept of fetishism, Grosz remains within a masculine phallic sexual economy of presence and lack, where you either *have* or *be* the phallus. In her criticism of Grosz's analysis of lesbian fetishism, Teresa De Lauretis recognises that by defining masculine lesbians as having the phallus and feminine lesbians as being the phallus, Grosz colludes with the traditional psychoanalytic view that all forms of sexuality, as governed by the phallic economy, are masculine and heterosexual ones in which women are perceived as lacking.

[T]he distribution of lesbians into masculine and feminine women, respectively having and being the phallus, cannot but uphold the latter and all it stands for in psychoanalysis and in the culture at large; consequently it colludes with the heterosexual and patriarchal purposes for which psychoanalytic orthodoxy was intended, and most immediately the foreclosure of lesbian identity (De Lauretis, T 1994, p.281-2).

Teresa De Lauretis refigures Freud and Lacan's conception of fetishism in an attempt to explain lesbian desire outside the confines of

a masculine phallic sexual economy. For Teresa De Lauretis, the castration anxiety inherent to psychoanalytic accounts of fetishism exists for both males and females. Whereas for the male child, fetishism allows the disavowal of his mother's castration (and therefore the refusal of the possibility of his own), for the female child, such a disavowal refutes the subjugation of the female body image as lacking and castrated. By understanding Lacan's notion of the phallus as a signifier of power relations between the sexes, in which the male is favoured as having that signified by the phallus: the penis, De Lauretis is able to interpret female castration – or the female position of lacking the phallus – as the loss of a powerful image of oneself. As De Lauretis states:

[Castration is] a narcissistic wound to the subject's body-image that redoubles the loss of the mother's body by the threatened loss of the female body itself [...] The castration complex, in establishing the paternal prohibition of access to the female body [...] as well as the "inferiority" of women, inscribes that lack in the symbolic order of culture, in the terms of sexual difference, as a biological, "natural", and irremediable lack – the lack of a penis (ibid, p. 261-2).

For De Lauretis then, penis envy – a condition that Freud believed all women suffered from - should be interpreted as 'the sense of lack or dispossession acknowledged by many women privately and in public' (ibid, p. 262). By reframing the mechanism of disavowal within the psychoanalytic account of fetishism, De Lauretis attempts to account for the adaptation of masculine and feminine gender roles within lesbian relationships, without resorting to a model governed by the male phallic sexual economy - as with Grosz's model of lesbian fetishism, De Lauretis therefore supports the idea that female fetishism is in fact possible. The disavowal that occurs within lesbian desire has less to do

with the lost maternal body and phallus – as in the male model – and more to do with the loss of a powerful and positive female body image.

In sum, I am arguing that the disavowal of castration is a force that propels the [libidinal] drive away from the original lost object (the mother) toward the objects/signs that both acknowledge and deny a second, more consequential, narcissistic loss (the subject's own libidinally lost body-image), thus keeping at bay the lack of being that threatens the ego (ibid, p. 265).

For De Lauretis, the acknowledgement and denial inherent in lesbian disavowal manifests itself in the appropriation of masculine and feminine roles. De Lauretis argues that the fetishisation of masculinity and femininity exists within lesbian culture because these gender roles are the only available symbols of desire made available within our culture. De Lauretis points out that the masculine lesbian fetishes masculinity because it is one of the few signs of desire for females recognised within society:

If the lesbian fetishes are often, though certainly not exclusively, objects or signs with connotations of masculinity, it is not because they stand in for the missing penis but because such signs are most strongly precoded to convey, both to the subject and to others, the cultural meaning of sexual (genital) activity and yearning toward women (ibid, p. 263).

At the same time that desire for the female body is indicated through signs of masculinity, De Lauretis indicates that such fetishisation is also a disavowal in that the representation of the disempowered feminine body is denied. As De Lauretis states, such 'signs can also most effectively deny the female body (in the subject) and at the same time resignify (her desire for) it through the very signification of its prohibition' (ibid).

In contrast, according to De Lauretis, the feminine lesbian fetishes femininity by exaggerating the seductive power of the female body (as defined as *being* the phallus within patriarchy) as a means of signifying

her corresponding sexual role within the lesbian relationship. De Lauretis clearly indicates that the femininity symbolised through such a fetishisation is a masquerade and, as such, is a performance: 'The exaggerated display of femininity in the masquerade of the femme performs the sexual power and seductiveness of the female body when offered to the butch for mutual narcissistic empowerment' (ibid, p. 264). For De Lauretis, such a play of masculine and feminine roles beyond the subjects of conventional heterosexuality allows lesbians to desire otherwise. As lesbian fetishism, this play of roles disavows the loss of a desirable and powerful female body within patriarchy, it does this by appropriating the very signs of gender that have effectively prevented a positive female-body image.

De Lauretis' theory is subject to criticism. Even though the notion of fetishism is reformulated so that a woman is able to disavow her castrated and subjugated body-image, such a theory still requires desire to remain within the terms of Oedipal relations, determined by a phallic restrictive economy of desire. This proves to make a concept of lesbian desire problematic as it depends on masculine and feminine binary oppositions, constituted upon notions of presence and lack, to make itself understood. As Grosz points out:

[I]t is unclear that the fetish is any less phallic in its structure and implications. [De Lauretis'] model of the fetish [...] entails an attempt [...] to detach the phallus from paternity and authority and thus to render it more mobile. But if the fetish is just as implicated in masculinity as the phallus, then a theory that displaces the masculinity complex with fetishism does not necessarily leave lesbianism any better off. (Grosz 1994, p.289-90)

By using the categories of psychoanalysis, determined by the terms of a phallic restrictive economy, De Lauretis' use of the fetish, and its

accompanying ‘transgression of the naturalizing effects of heterosexual “gender roles”’ (ibid, p.290-1), is ultimately attempting to

appropriate what has been denied to women and to that extent remain tied (as we all are) to heterocentric and masculine privilege. Such modalities remain reactive, compensatory. (ibid, p.291)

Grosz is critical of such a reactive move in which different types of desire are still understood via a prescribed model. We are reminded of Foucault’s statement that desire and subjectivization are linked to modes of power and knowledge with its own interests. Grosz warns us that such a will to know ‘may be part of the very taming and normalization (even if not heterosexualization) of that desire’ (ibid).

How can lesbian fetishism be interpreted outside the terms of phallocentrism when the roles performed within this fetishistic relationship are understood through the terms of a masculine restrictive economy? A Deleuzian viewpoint, which suggests perceiving fetishism as a productive process of becoming, would seem to have greater efficacy in that it can account for both the generation of butch/ femme roles, whilst also accounting for lesbian subjectivities outside these modes. According to Alison Eves (2004), butch / femme positions are ‘often characterized as imitative, unable to imagine an alternative to heterosexual styles, a copy of the ‘real’ thing’ (p. 494). In contrast to such a view, Eves argues that butch / femme positions can be perceived as ‘[s]ubversive and transgressive gender performances, although framed by the dominant discursive formation, [and] may have some transformative impact, establishing new subject positions and [sub] cultural spaces’ (ibid, p.495). Following Butler’s analysis of gender as a performance (1990), butch / femme positions can be considered as parodies that expose the artifice of heteronormative positions; Butler states, ‘the imitative parody of ‘heterosexuality’ — when and where it occurs in gay cultures — is always and only an imitation of an imitation, a copy of a copy, for which there is no

original' (Butler 1991, p. 314). If butch / femme positions can therefore be perceived as artifice, then such positions understood as fetishes can be reinterpreted as productive transgressions.

Earlier we described the fetishistic mode of becoming-horse within a masochistic relationship. Such a phenomenon was recognized as an example of becoming-animal. This, in turn, was found to correspond to a series of becoming performed upon the body without organs, including becoming-woman, becoming-child and becoming-molecular. In each case, becoming involves the appropriation and adaption of characteristics that are typically designated outside a phallogocentric restrictive economy – such becomings therefore provide a line of flight beyond its strictures. From this point of view, the mutual 'narcissistic empowerment' generated via the masquerade of masculine and feminine gendered positions can be interpreted as a series of becomings that have no recourse to a phallogocentric model that retains a singular and masculine economy of desire that denies multiplicity. A Deleuzian perspective has the potential to be more radical and revelatory in that the butch–femme conventions are not poor adopted surrogates for the lack of more positive images of feminine desire, they are instead an act of desiring-production that makes an incongruous assemblage of gender and sex to form new subjectivities. These subjectivities may be recognized as borrowing given codes and conventions in which to resignify desire for a subject of the same sex, but the process is to be understood as a productive encounter which, from the point of view of patriarchy, appears discordant and disturbs its sense of order. A female becoming-masculine for a female or becoming-feminine for a female are productive encounters that disturb the logic of patriarchy and are *productive* fetishistic encounters immanent to the relations involved, to interpret them through the typical structure of disavowal within conventional notions of the fetish, binded to the idea of a omnipresent phallus, castration anxiety and a masculinity complex, is to do lesbian desire a disservice.

Gamman and Makinen attempt to propose a more radical conception of female fetishism that, unlike Grosz and De Lauretis' notion, stands outside

the roles defined by the phallus within a restricted sexual economy. To achieve this, Gamman and Makinen move away from a theory of fetishism premised on the phallus and its lack towards a feminine notion predicated on pre-Oedipal oral drives. In correspondence to a wider critique of phallogocentric psychoanalysis, it is argued that the penis as phallic signifier, and the corresponding concept of 'penis envy', are themselves fetishes used 'to safeguard the value of phallogocentrism within a patriarchal medical discourse: the male's obsessive fixation on his own signifying value cannot allow a denial of its importance (or the unimportance of a 'lack' within the feminine)' (Gamman / Makinen 1994, p.105). Gamman and Makinen contend that psychoanalysis has 'willfully refused' to see women as practitioners of fetishism because 'an acceptance of female fetishism challenges the very signifier of desire, in a way that none of the other perversions do' (ibid). As we have described, this is because fetishism has been understood within psychoanalysis as the archetypal perversion from which all other perversions could be understood and has been used to corroborate the existence of the castration complex itself – Freud states that an 'investigation of fetishism is strongly recommended to anyone who still doubts the existence of the castration complex' (Freud 1927, p.155). As described, to deem women as capable of fetishism undermines an explanation of fetishistic desire based upon castration anxiety – how can women fetishize if supposedly castrated or, to put it another way, does female fetishism demonstrate that a separate form of female desire requires recognition outside the confines of the male phallic sexual economy? Gamman and Makinen therefore question the authority of the phallus:

If a rupture, an absence, is necessary to construct desire, is the phallus the only signifier that could make such a break? Might there not be some other, as yet unsymbolised, signifier that would allow girls access to desire and to the symbolic code? (Gamman / Makinen Op Cit, p.107-8)

Gamman and Makinen attempt to identify this other, as yet unsymbolised, signifier. To do this, Gamman and Makinen make reference to concepts of fetishism within the work of Robert Bak, D.W. Winnicott, Phyllis Greenacre and Masud Khan<sup>53</sup>. Each of these writers are from the object-relations school of psychoanalysis that subscribes to Melanie Klein's theory of part objects. Klein believes that during the pre-oedipal first year of an infant's life, feelings of love and aggression are fantasised onto parts of the mother's body, primarily the breast. At this point of development the mother is perceived as omnipotent. For Klein, it is the negotiation of part objects in the mother-child relationship – what Klein calls the 'feminine' phase – that is central to the process of individuation that prepares the constitution of the self during the later Oedipal phase of development. For Gamman and Makinen, Klein's stress on orality and weaning in the process of individuation promises the possibility 'for girls as well as boys to develop into sexual fetishists' (ibid, p. 100).

Gamman and Makinen do not mean to deny that fetishism could arise as a consequence of castration anxiety; what they wish to emphasize is that the work of the above writers point to the fact that 'a new positive theoretical model of female sexuality needs to be designed [that accounts] for the development of female fetishists' (ibid, p.117). Gamman and Makinen attempt to outline such a model through their proposition that bulimia may constitute a form of female fetishism. Gamman and Makinen contend that the bingeing and purging of food that is characteristic of bulimia corresponds to the processes involved within psychoanalytical accounts of fetishism.

[J]ust as sexual fetishism redirects the sexual urge, the element of bingeing in bulimia is in fact a pleasurable re-direction ('perversion') of the drive for nourishment. And just as sexual fetishism makes a fetish of an object in the external world, so bulimia fetishes food which is only subsequently ingested' (ibid, p.124).

In their failure to successfully separate from their mothers, bulimics make a compromise solution much like the sexual fetishist.<sup>54</sup> The sexual fetishist reaches a compromise solution to the threat of castration in that he has 'retained [his] belief [in the maternal phallus] but he has also given it up' (Freud 1927, p.154). Similarly, the bulimic creates a compromise solution in which they recognise individuation whilst simultaneously refusing separation. The bulimic refuses individuation through excessive bingeing, followed by recognition of separation through the purging of that which symbolises the maternal breast: food. The excessive consumption that symbolises the maternal bond is therefore negated through a ritual purging which allows the bulimic to retain a socially acceptable appearance. As Dana and Lawrence point out:

It is not just that too much food has been consumed and the fear of becoming fat makes vomiting inevitable [...] It is that needs have been perceived which are so terrifying that they must simultaneously be denied [...] It is about having a clean, neat good, un-needy appearance which conceals behind it a messy, needy, bad part, which must be hidden away. (Dana, M and Lawrence, M 1988, p. 41)

In this account, bulimics negotiate a socially acceptable persona against an unconscious wish for unity with their mother through the fetishisation of food. Gamman and Makinen claim that such fetishisation helps bulimics cope with the anxieties experienced during adolescence. It is often during this transition that 'the regression to the earlier phase of orality seems to be activated' (Gamman, L and Makinen, M, Op. Cit., p. 131).

For Gamman and Makinen, the continued identification of women with the nurturing role, as well as the continued objectification of women's bodies, brings new pressures for women in relation to food.<sup>55</sup> Given

Gamman and Makinen's account, bulimic 'women 'pervert' the oral drive for sustenance to assuage narcissistic feelings of inadequacy in relation to their self-identity' (ibid, p. 139). Such a process functions 'in ways analogous to those identified in the models of sexual fetishism' (ibid). Though there are clear similarities between bulimia and traditional models of sexual fetishism – both use external objects as a means for sensual gratification precisely because such items allow the disavowal of uncomfortable realisations – there are aspects to Gamman and Makinen's account that remain problematic.

As Gamman and Makinen recognise, there are contradictory accounts as to whether bulimia should be considered a conservative or subversive response to traditional conceptions of femininity<sup>56</sup>. Though Gamman and Makinen are fully aware of these contradictory accounts of bulimia, the contradiction is discussed only in terms of highlighting the fact that object-relations psychoanalysts (those following a Kleinian model) have a clearer consensual explanation of bulimia as having 'a strong relationship to unconscious problems with separation' (ibid). For Gamman and Makinen, this is an important point as it identifies the weakness within sociological models that are 'unable to grasp the irrational displacements of the unconscious (the fetishism)' (ibid, p. 140). Because no attempt is made to fully resolve these contradictory viewpoints, we are left with an account that remains uncertain as to the cultural conditions that trigger the separation anxieties believed to underlie this food fetishism. As will be described, a Deleuzian model that accounts for the phenomenon in terms of an assemblage of pre-given biomedical discourses, social and cultural influences and transgressive lines of flight, will have the potential to understand bulimia from the viewpoint of relations immanent to particular circumstances.

Although Gamman and Makinen are quite specific in their criticisms of phallogocentric models of psychoanalysis, and the unhistorical accounts of fetishism that exist within such models<sup>57</sup>, there is no attempt to provide a more effective account of fetishism beyond a comparison of bulimia and Freudian conceptions of sexual fetishism. Gamman and Makinen criticise

phallogocentric models of psychoanalysis in much the same way as Derrida, Irigaray and Cixous - Freudian and Lacanian models of psychoanalysis are perceived as inextricably tied to metaphysical binary oppositions that align presence / having with the masculine and absence / lacking with the feminine. Gamman and Makinen argue that female fetishism has been previously neglected by both male and female critics because of their 'theoretical focus on 'Lack'' (ibid, p.206). Given this focus, Gamman and Makinen suggest 'that it is now necessary to take what is useful from Freud and Lacan (notions about subjectivity, ego identifications and the mirror phase, for example) and to be highly critical of the rest' (ibid). Though Gamman and Makinen recognise 'what is useful' within psychoanalysis, no attempt is made to develop these theories further other than to suggest that feminist critics should 'behave like theoretical guerrillas [in which to engage] in theoretical promiscuity – taking on board what is helpful and positive [...whilst] critically assessing the prescriptions that cannot even see, let alone explain female agency' (ibid).

As described, Gamman and Makinen continue to subscribe to a notion of desire premised on the idea of a 'rupture' or 'absence'. While Gamman and Makinen are critical of psychoanalytical models premised upon lack, their own work is complicit with this notion, despite shifting the emphasis away from the phallus towards maternal separation. On declaring that bulimia, as a proposed form of female fetishism, could be perceived as a response to separation anxiety, Gamman and Makinen retain the discussion of fetishism within a framework of absence. Whether the fetish is interpreted as the male child's disavowal of female castration - as in Freud - or is identified as the female infant's disavowal of its separation from the nourishing and nurturing maternal mother, both concepts are premised upon a notion in which the fetish becomes a substitute for that which is lost. At no point is either a positive theory of difference or feminine sexuality proposed that could account for female fetishism on its own terms. Such complicity leads Gamman and Makinen to describe fetishism as ultimately a conservative phenomenon in which 'oscillating continually between knowing and unknowing, doesn't exactly create a

positive or stable space that can easily accommodate creative advancement' (ibid, p.220-1). Given its final status as a compromise solution within the status quo, Gamman and Makinen suggest that the fetishist can console themselves with the fact that fetishism 'is a healthier compromise than whatever threatens the individual psyche (since it still allows for pleasure)' (ibid, p.220). For Gamman and Makinen, the fetishist – whether a bulimic or a subject classified within the traditional realms of psychoanalysis – has 'found a compromise with society's construction of the gendered self, and that is in itself a celebratory victory' (ibid, p.167). Given that such a compromise requires an oscillation between pre-given gender roles – between a traditional feminine role and a masculine one – one finds this 'celebratory victory' questionable in that it already precludes the possibility of generative identities.

According to Bray and Colebrook (1998), the idea that women's body images, and their associated eating disorders, are 'determined by a pre-castrated / castrated matrix and that women in general are coerced into relinquishing a sympathetic connection to a maternal body image reiterates a largely unchallenged Freudianism' (Bray / Colebrook 1998, p. 37). In *Cultures of Fetishism* (2006), Louise Kaplan recognizes the pitfalls of fetishizing the feminine pre-oedipal maternal space. Kaplan recognizes that there have been two fundamental flaws in psychoanalytic theories of sexual difference – 'the writing out of the mother in classical psychoanalysis and the disavowal of female sexuality' (Kaplan 2006, p.59). In an attempt to counter this, Kaplan recognizes, amongst others, her own complicity in emphasizing the 'vital importance of the infant's relationship with the mother' (ibid, p.60). In turn, this corrective strategy is recognized as having its own flaws; Kaplan states:

in this process of resurrecting and elevating the mother, we seem to have entombed the sexual woman. The glorification of the maternal principle has had the indirect effect of further obscuring the intricacies of female sexuality' (ibid).

The idealizing of the unconditional love that is the maternal principle, whether emphasizing the role of the semiotic (Kristeva) or the importance of the mother-child relationship in the weaning process (Klein and Gamman and Makinen), is found to be a fetishistic strategy that disavows the erotic powers of the sexual mother outside of this relationship. As Kaplan describes:

The idealized, unconditional love attributed to the primordial relationship with the active, caregiving mother is lost in the discovery of the reality of the mother's sexual and procreative powers. Indeed, the latter knowledge of the mother's sexuality threatens the image of the mother as redeemer. One outcome of this threatening near-knowledge is an attempt to reduce the sexual mother to a breast, a haven of milk and honey. With this disavowal of the mother's sexuality, the idealization of some, largely mythical, earlier unconditional love is preserved. (ibid)

Kaplan goes on to illustrate how various apocalyptic narratives fetishize the maternal whilst disavowing the more traumatic aspects of feminine sexuality. In each case, there appears an escape from a traumatic scene of destruction towards the 'Elysium fields or safe havens that represent the tender mother' (ibid, p.61).<sup>58</sup> From this point of view, Gamman and Makinen's view of female fetishism could be perceived as an instance of fetishism itself – bulimia becomes a strategy to disavow a separation from a maternal Eden, rather than a more complex phenomenon subject to a range of personal, medical and cultural strategies.

An alternate view of Bulimia could be speculated from the viewpoint of the Body Without Organs – here the fetishisation of food can be interpreted as a means to renegotiate subjectivity. By both bingeing and purging food, the bulimic generates expulsion and consumption machines upon the body without organs in which to

negotiate a subjectivity via integration and separation. As such, food becomes a fetish to be distributed upon the body without organs – an economy tied to other production machines, including those that discipline body image and expectations of gender. For Braziel, a Deleuzian reading of 'bulimia offers a way out of a self-abnegating discourse / disease by providing a space in which the corpulent body can be redefined' (Braziel 2001, p.245). Here, the bulimic body is not necessarily to be understood as a pathological symptom tied to a disavowal of separation from the pre-Oedipal maternal realm, it can be defined by a range of factors that influence and affect the body without organs; it becomes a 'spatium defined by the desires and intensities traversing it: all its food fluxes, rippling affects, and fleshy intensities' (ibid). Not that we should blur and confuse the distinctions between conditions, but bulimia as an affect upon the body without organs can be usefully compared to Deleuze's discussion of anorexia. According to Deleuze, the condition is

a question of food fluxes, but combined with other fluxes [...] The anorexic consists of a body without organs with voids and fullnesses [...] We should not even talk about alternation: void and fullness are like two demarcations of intensity; the point is always to float in one's own body. It is not a matter of a refusal of what the organism makes the body undergo. Not regression at all, but involution, involuted body. The anorexic void has nothing to do with lack, it is on the contrary a way of escaping the organic constraint of lack and hunger at the mechanical mealtime. There is a whole plane of construction of the anorexic, making oneself an anorganic body [...] Anorexia is a political system, a micro-politics: to escape from the norms of consumption in order not to be an object of consumption oneself. (Deleuze / Parnet 1987, p.109 – 10)

Food then, can be a fetishistic fragment circulated upon the body without organs in which to resist or accommodate a range of production machines that delineate the body as an object of consumption; it is not reducible to the Oedipal logic of lack with its corresponding opposition between the feminine maternal realm and the masculine Symbolic Order. Against the idea that eating disorders represent a 'repressed, silent, innocent, or negated feminine', a Deleuzean viewpoint would view the phenomenon as a 'site of practices, compartments, and contested articulations' (Bray / Colebrook 1998, p. 37). Here, an appeal to either phallic logic or a corresponding maternal realm is unwarranted because, from the point of view of the body without organs, thought cannot 'have an overarching identity, logic, or character (and therefore no privileged outside in general)'. As such, eating disorders can be understood 'in terms of bodily activity rather than in terms of a repressed or negated "normal" body' (ibid). Bray and Colebrook argue that such disorders might

be seen as productive, as forms of self-formation. This is not to valorize [them] as some privileged or authentic form of resistant behavior. On the contrary, the point would be to do away with notions of ownness, authenticity, autonomy, and the rhetoric of alienation. Anorexia [and bulimia] would be one form of self-formation among others, and- -as a series of interconnected practices- would need to be considered in terms of what it creates or invents. (ibid, p.58)

To move an interpretation away from privileged notions of the masculine and the feminine then, is to view such bodily practices as a flight from conventional forms of subjectivity. From this point of view, food fetishism as a form of self-production

might be better seen less as a failed rebellion or negation of an unquestioned ideal body than as the production of a "being otherwise." [...A] shattering of any general or totalizing account of

what constitutes a self or thought. (ibid)

The patient's body then is not to be perceived as 'stage or screen on which some predetermined cultural neurosis plays itself out yet one more time' (ibid, p.P62), it should be considered in terms of 'the connections it makes, the intensities of its actions, and the dynamism of its practices' (ibid, p. 63). To see the body and its relation to food as subject to difference and multiplicity is 'to forgo the possibility of deciding ethical questions in advance, according to a rubric of some general difference or negation' (ibid, p.64). As such, the fetishism of food, or any fetishism perceived as female or otherwise, cannot be evaluated in advance, its transgressive or conservative status is immanent to its position within a wider network of intensities and flows – in this case, a wider range of biomedical, social and cultural discourses surrounding the idea of food in relation to bodies and gender.

In *The Return of Female Fetishism and the Fiction of the Phallus* (1993), Anne McClintock concurs with Gamman and Makinen that weaning and separation is at least equally traumatic to the phenomenon of castration in the constitution of the self:

If castration is taken in the most abstracted sense as 'loss of being', or 'elision of the self', then the prolonged trauma of weaning [...] might serve as a far more fundamental trauma than castration.  
(McClintock 1993, p.14)

Moreover, in the production of a gendered self, McClintock declares that a multitude of cultural influences are arguably more influential than the threat of castration.

Arguably, a variety of semiotics – gendered dress codes, hair styles, colours, toys, permissible behaviours – play as important, if not a more important role, than the implausibly narrow account of a single, epochal metamorphosis based on the threat of anatomical loss. (ibid)

McClintock identifies the notion of a single masculine economy of desire within psychoanalysis as symptomatic of male anxiety for the potential loss of sovereignty and the fear that there might exist a feminine sexuality that is radically different. The dominant role of the phallic signifier within Lacanian theory is particularly singled out for criticism, largely due to its prevalence within feminist theories of sexuality and its subsequent hindrance of the development of an alternative to the monolithic phallic economy of desire. For McClintock, Lacan's 'return to Freud' authorizes a 'reinvention of the 'paternalist family' by appealing to a single, male narrative of origins – the paternal threat of castration' (ibid, p.12). As with Freud, the castration scenario posits a paternal intervention against incest as a universal law that consequently constitutes gendered subjectivity. By doing so, women are

thereby [...] denied social agency: we are seen to have no motivation for weaning or preventing incest, no social interest in guiding children into separation, no role in helping children negotiate the intricate dynamics of interdependence, nor any capacity for doing so. (ibid)

By designating males as having and women as lacking the phallus within the castration dynamic, women are erased as social and cultural agents. In fact, with the Symbolic being solely identified with *having* the phallus, the 'name of the father [becomes] equivalent to the entire symbolic realm, to culture itself. [Therefore the] dominant male culture

becomes, at a stroke, synonymous with all culture' (ibid, p.14). By perceiving the economy of the phallus as synonymous with culture, psychoanalysis crudely reduces all history to a monolithic, eternal event to which we are all subject. As McClintock points out:

By appealing in the singular, Lacan erases the theoretical possibility of multiple, contradictory, and historically changing symbols of desire [...] Committed to the economy-of-one, Lacan cannot account (either descriptively or analytically) for historical contradictions and imbalances in power [...] (ibid)

Such a crude reduction has consequences for subsequent social theory that is inspired by a Lacanian model. The theory of ideology proposed by Slavoj Žižek has a similar tendency to explain all historical trauma via the notion of castration and entry into the Symbolic.<sup>59</sup> If the phallus in Lacanian theory is a signifier and not therefore equivalent to the physical penis, then the use of a singular symbol to determine the inauguration of desire has the effect of denying a multiplicity and positioning all desire under the one mark of castration with its masculine overtones. McClintock states:

If the 'phallus' means 'mark of desire', and not the royal, fleshy penis, castration means something like 'elision of desire', or 'lack-of-having' in an abstract formal sense. In which case, the use of a single metaphor that (inevitably) denotes male sexual loss, to express deprivation or elision in general, is frankly phallogentric. Inaugurating desire under one structural mark disavows and annuls the differences of women's desires. (ibid, p.13)

Moreover, if the phallus denotes lack in a more general sense as 'lack-in-being', then it is hard to see why this 'polymorphous lack [...] should be referred to a single, male logic and an economy of one' (ibid).

Following Derrida's critique of phallogocentrism, McClintock recognises the monolithic phallic economy as symptomatic of a need to understand subjectivity through a repetition of identity-through-negation, in which the male retains sole agency through a guaranteed logic of presence that positions woman as its negative – as that which is lacking. McClintock wonders why subjectivity cannot be understood through a repetition of identity-through-difference:

There is no room in Lacan's narrow house for women as social agents, nor for mothers to and children to gradually recognize each other as both like and unlike, both desired and desiring (identity-through-difference) in ways that are not reducible to a single, grim, castrating phallic logic (identity-through-negation) (ibid, p.12)

Whereas McClintock denies that desire can be reduced to a singular masculine sexual economy, a more productive approach to the analysis of desire and the phenomenon of the fetish is not proposed. The analysis of female fetishism is discussed in negative terms – the failure of other theorists to escape the Lacanian narrative of presence and lack. The most that McClintock suggests is

[i]nstead of gathering these multifarious fetishes into a single primal scene, we might do better to open the genealogies of fetishism to more theoretically subtle and historically fruitful accounts. The fetishes of other cultures might then no longer have genuflect to the master narrative of the western family romance (ibid, p.21)

## Phallogocentrism, Sexual Difference and Deleuze

Our discussion of female fetishism has raised two issues. Firstly, an analysis that focuses upon the renegotiation of gender roles within a patriarchal society reduces the production of new subjectivities, lesbian or otherwise, to the limited roles within a restrictive phallogocentric economy – from this viewpoint, conformity, masquerade or parody appear to be the only options available. Secondly, an analysis that views female fetishism from a pre-oedipal, maternal perspective risks reducing the manifestation of new subjectivities to pathological origins tied to separation anxieties, themselves tied to a wider Oedipal logic of separation and lack. Feminists aligned to a French post-structuralist position have been critical of models of female desire and value that remain tied to a phallogocentric restrictive economy. It is worth considering such perspectives in that they illuminate the problem of remaining within such a restrictive economy and allow us to consider the viability of perceiving desire and value from the perspective of ‘woman’.

In an earlier section, the Derridean critique of the metaphysics of presence was outlined. Derrida criticizes logocentrism – understood as speech as the self-present guarantor of truth - and argues that the priority of either speech or writing must remain undecidable once discourse is recognized as a differential play of signs – this is Derrida’s famous proclamation: ‘*There is nothing outside of the text*’ (Derrida 1976, p.158). Derrida associates the metaphysics of presence associated with logocentrism with a notion of dualism. According to Derrida, dualism exists throughout western thought in its consistent tendency to generate meaning via a series of binary opposites which privileges one term whilst subordinating another. By doing this, western thought legitimates a notion of self-present truth by defining itself against an absent and lacking other. As we described earlier, Derrida recognizes this dualism within the restricted economy of the phallus – to describe the relation of binary opposites, with its associated presence and absence within this economy, Derrida creates a neologism: Phallogocentrism. This term describes the

privilege accorded to the phallus – sign of sexual difference – as a mark of presence within logocentric thought.

Derrida's critique of phallogocentrism informs the critique of feminine lack generated by a variety of writers, the most notable being Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. These writers attempt to generate a discourse, an economy of desire, that exists outside that based upon the binary oppositions that constitutes the normative phallic economy.

In dialogue with Derrida's thought, Helene Cixous proposes *écriture féminine* (feminine writing) as a means of subverting the patriarchal binary oppositions within phallogocentric thought. Cixous criticises phallogocentric binary oppositions - where the phallic signifier is set up as the active determining influence within a hierarchy that allocates passivity and absence to its opposite feminine other.<sup>60</sup>

The work of Kristeva can be viewed as an appeal to pre-oedipal relations with the maternal body in which to disrupt the authority of the phallogocentric Symbolic Order. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974), Julia Kristeva identifies a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic. For Kristeva, the semiotic is associated with the undifferentiated pre-language pulsions articulated within the dyadic *chora* of mother and child. The semiotic realm of the *chora* therefore exists prior to the Symbolic Order: it is perceived as anterior to the sign, representation and identity. Kristeva opposes a pre-Oedipal mother and child relationship to the Symbolic realm of the Father.

For Kristeva, the transition from the pre-Oedipal semiotic realm to the Symbolic occurs at the mirror stage where a child is alienated within an image. Kristeva refers to this as thethetic phase in which the subject must recognize themselves as a separate identity before any proposition or positionality can be deduced. According to Kristeva, the subject (either a woman or a man) can still allow the semiotic to be felt after entering the Symbolic – this, Kristeva suggests, is most apparent within modern literature.<sup>61</sup>

In *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974), Luce Irigaray utilizes the binary oppositions inherent within western philosophy and psychoanalysis as a means of subverting both the values and desire of a restrictive masculine economy that silences the feminine. In *The Sex Which Is Not One* (1977), Irigaray proposes a plural and multiple economy of the feminine in opposition to the male single economy of the same – this is achieved by appealing to women’s morphological difference to men.

Despite their intentions to subvert the categories of phallogentric thought, the work of these writers has been accused of being complicit with the gendered oppositions forged by phallogentrism due to their dialogue within the premises of Lacanian psychoanalysis. By conceiving *écriture féminine* as a fluid space to express multiple sexualities, outside of the single male economy, Cixous may be perceived as falling into the trap of constituting the very metaphysics of presence that is the subject of her critique. As Toril Moi states, Cixous’ writing is ‘[f]undamentally contradictory [...in that] femininity shifts back and forth from a Derridean emphasis on textuality as difference to a full-blown metaphysical account of writing as voice, presence and origin’ (Moi 1985, p. 119). By accepting a Lacanian account of subjectivity as constituted through a phallic signifier that privileges the male as having the phallus, Cixous could be subject to accusations of essentializing woman by positioning her outside the Symbolic Order. Cixous accepts the Lacanian distinction between the Imaginary and Symbolic Order and by privileging the female (maternal) body as a site from which multiple desires can flow, Cixous therefore equates the female body as aligned with the Imaginary realm. Such a move can be perceived as dangerous in that it again equates woman with a stereotypical feminine attribute: that of being irrational.<sup>62</sup>

Likewise, Kristeva’s position leaves the opposition between a masculine symbolic and feminine maternal intact. To claim, as Kristeva does, that neither Man or Woman exist, that they are positions which either gender can adopt, does not deny the fact that the semiotic is fundamentally a relation to the maternal and that the symbolic order is therefore an inescapable third term associated with the paternal father. By

subscribing to a psychoanalytic model, Kristeva could be accused of precluding any analysis that might recognize wider or subtler voices other than a paternal Symbolic which can only be disrupted, not overturned, by the pre-Oedipal pulsions of the semiotic.<sup>63</sup> As Toril Moi points out:

If the Kristevan subject is always already inserted in the symbolic order, how can such an implacably authoritarian, phallogocentric structure be broken up? It obviously cannot happen through a straightforward rejection of the symbolic order, since such a total failure to enter into human relations would, in Lacanian terms, make us psychotic. We have to accept our position as already inserted into an order that precedes us and from which there is no escape. There is no other space from which we can speak: if we are able to speak at all, it will have to be within the framework of symbolic language. (Moi 1985, p.170)

Another consequence of appealing to the 'feminine' in the terms laid out by phallogocentric discourse – that which remains in the pre-Oedipal realm – is that it risks defining woman as essentially irrational. By remaining outside the Symbolic, woman is positioned on the side of psychosis in which her condition can only be explained by recourse to the terms of phallogocentric discourse - as a consequence of Lacan's conception of the Imaginary and the Symbolic Order, a person that repudiates or finds themselves outside the Symbolic Order is subject to psychosis; Lacan refers to this condition as 'foreclosure':

It is an accident in the symbolic register and of what is accomplished in it, namely the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father in the place of the Other and in the failure of the paternal metaphor which I designate as the defect that gives psychosis its essential condition [...] (Lacan 2006,p.576)

According to Christine Battersby, the perceived failure of theories of feminine difference to move beyond the reified categories of a phallogentric order can be seen as symptomatic of a potentially flawed epistemology. Despite Lacan providing a means to understand a singular sexual economy as an effect of language, and the fact that Derrida proposes that such an economy is subject to the play of *différance* in which no metaphysics of presence can be substantiated, these writers can be viewed as also complicit with a need to exclude and contain the feminine, understood as a process of becoming which has the capacity to include Otherness. In her book *The Phenomenal Woman* (1998), Battersby indicates how Lacan's notion of the self and Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence are both tied to Kant's metaphysical model of the self<sup>64</sup>. According to Battersby, Lacan's theories are a psychological version of the 'moment whereby the Kantian transcendental subject establishes itself as self via a process of displacing the transcendental object' (Battersby 1998, p. 86). Battersby justifies this comparison by indicating that Lacan's concept of the Real can be viewed as analogous to Kant's 'noumenal' world in that it cannot be known. The alienating, yet necessary, entry into Lacan's Symbolic Order can then be viewed as analogous to Kant's filtering of the world through the categories of human understanding within the transcendental self – both decree the impossibility of the self having a self-present union with the world-as-it-is. For Kant, the world is relative to the categories, whereas for Lacan, entry in the Symbolic Order leaves the world radically lost to a network of signifiers and concepts. In the work of both Lacan and Kant, such a division between self and external other is needed before recognition of the self can occur. For Kant the self is 'not inherently solipsistic, as was the Cartesian soul. It always exists in relation to objects' (ibid, p.68). For Lacan, the concept of the self cannot exist until the subject breaks its imaginary unity with the world and enters the Symbolic Order.

According to Battersby, the constitution and understanding of the self within the work of both Kant and Lacan is similarly predicated upon the

exclusion of woman from an essentially masculine viewpoint. Everything that is woman – fluidity, multiplicity and flesh - is therefore situated outside the definition of self. In the work of Kant, the transcendental self acts as the determining source of all form within the world – as such, all that is knowable is governed by human understanding. Such a theoretical position relies upon a clear division between self and external object. It also relies upon a notion of external bodies as permanent entities that can be identified through the sovereignty of human understanding. A body that threatens the distinction between self and other, and which also demonstrates matter as self-forming beyond the realm of permanent forms, must therefore be excluded from Kant's system. In its capacity to give birth and contain otherness within itself, the female body is such a disruptive entity and has been systematically excluded from the masculine definition of 'personhood' as a realm of pure rationality.

In the work of Lacan, self-identity within society comes from our allocated position in relation to the masculine phallic signifier. Woman is positioned as lacking the phallus and is consequently excluded from the single male sexual economy, As such, Lacan follows Kant in similarly asserting a masculine definition of the self that simultaneously excludes and contains its other. The other is situated outside a system of the self by designating the other as lacking the presence of its own attributes. Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence can be similarly described as being caught up within a post-Kantian system of exclusion and containment. For Derrida, any form of judgment, analysis or criticism is subject to an unsubstantiated metaphysics of presence – including his own theory, which designates 'presence' as the defining characteristic of western metaphysics, identifying this as the permanent factor that persists throughout change. As such, Derrida's ideas are similarly subject to a process whereby otherness (that which is seen as absent or lacking) is prevented from having any active agency of its own outside of the privileged economy of 'presence':

Derrida is not unlike Lacan – or, indeed, Kant himself. Derrida's insistence that the history of metaphysics closes itself down into a single trajectory that privileges 'presence' does, in effect, fix otherness and fix becoming in ways that prevent a more radical engagement with an otherness that is not just 'feminine' excess. (ibid, p.95)

For Battersby, the metaphysical strategy of exclusion and containment, which is similarly evident in Kant, Lacan and Derrida's work, serves to 'render invisible an alternative metaphysics of the fleshy, and of a mode of otherness in which bodies, nature and matter are more than the negation of the masculinized 'I' (ibid). It is in opposition to a post-Kantian metaphysics of exclusion and containment, that Battersby advocates a metaphysics of the self which takes the female as its normative model. As we shall see, by appealing to notions of natality, nurturing, pregnancy, fleshiness and monstrosity, Battersby generates a notion of subjectivity as a process of becoming that is inclusive of both self and otherness.

To summarise, the ideas of Lacan and Derrida have been perceived as useful by some feminist writers with regard to the fact that presence and lack, inclusion and exclusion from the dominant sexual economy, can be understood as the effect of our positioning within language and is therefore understood to be a social construction rather than a natural given. Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, exposes phallogocentrism as a means of maintaining a single masculine sexual economy orientated around the phallic signifier whose presence determines the relationship between the sexes. The critique of lack instigated by writers attempting to find a feminine voice not subjugated to the phallic signifier has been found wanting at the point at which such voices remain within a phallogocentric discourse. Acceptance of the terms of Lacan's theory of subjectivity – namely, those who have the phallus and those that lack it – proves problematic for feminists at the point that

liberation from lack becomes complicit with patriarchal definitions of femininity - where the masculine 'I' defines reason, desire and subjectivity and woman is excluded and aligned with an unsymbolisable difference. Though Derrida exposes an unsubstantiated call to presence within these masculine definitions, his theories do little to provide an agency of difference in which desire is understood as something other than an otherness that is lacking.

### **Sexual Difference and Deleuze**

Irigaray's work diverges from Lacan, Derrida and other feminist writers in the suggestion that a separate, multiple economy could exist that is based upon woman's morphology. According to these writers there is only a pre-Oedipal maternal realm and a masculine Symbolic in phallogocentric discourse, no mention is made of the vaginal and placental economy of woman's morphology; this is precisely the blindspot of Oedipal logic, the zone designated as lacking. It is important to consider the possibility of a multiple economy – a *recognition* of sexual difference - in that it may recognise a desire outside the realm of a restrictive phallogocentric order, whilst offering an alternative view of difference to that of Deleuze and Guattari. If it is demonstrated that sexual difference is prior, then a multiple economy based upon feminine difference might reveal the blindspots in Deleuze and Guattari's work; this, in turn, might affect the credibility of a Deleuzian notion of the fetish, based on the idea of difference in general.

From the point of view of Irigaray, '[s]exual difference has been feigned by a single term producing itself as *subjectivity in general*' (Colebrook 2000, p. 111). Irigaray's work aims to expose the phallic logic within patriarchy and metaphysical thought, in which men and women are reduced to a repetition of the same: phallic presence or phallic lack. For Irigaray, 'sexual difference is not a topic to be introduced into metaphysics, but determines metaphysics as such' (ibid). From this point of view, the

transcendental subject with its categories and concepts that are used to reify the world, is symptomatic of a phallogentric viewpoint from which becoming and fluidity are negated. In *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974), Irigaray uses the metaphor of a speculum - a (usually male) gynaecologist's instrument used for penetrating and inspecting the cavities within a woman's body - to expose patriarchal discourse and its 'negation of the maternal ground' (ibid). Because of the concave shape of its mirror, the speculum reverses the image it reflects. The concave shape generates a hollow space that mimics the negative space of the woman's womb whilst also concentrating light upon a single focal point. This gynaecological instrument acts as an analogy to Irigaray's method. Irigaray positions the light, or focal point (male patriarchal enlightenment) within the feminine negative space of the speculum. This reflection of the masculine within the feminine also reverses the perceived historical order of philosophy – Irigaray's study starts with Freud and ends with Plato. By writing through the voices of male philosophical discourse, Irigaray uses this masculine 'instrument' of penetration against itself.

Irigaray points out that Freud's theory of sexual difference is based upon visibility. For Freud, the sexual economy is actively male, evident in the visibility of the phallic penis in the male that is lacking in the female. Irigaray paraphrases Freud by describing woman as that 'black box, strongbox, earth-abyss that remains outside' (Irigaray 1985a, p.20), a place in which 'illumination' of female sexuality cannot be found; therefore 'light must no doubt come from elsewhere' (ibid), namely the male phallic order. As such, sexuality is described from the viewpoint of a single economy, that of the same, in which all difference is interpreted from the perspective of the male phallus.

[...] for light to be or be spoken in the matter of (so-called) female sexuality, we can assume that difference is always already in operation [...] Out of this difference will be lifted one of the two terms [(the Phallus)...] and this one term will be constituted as

“origin,” as that by whose differentiation the other may be engendered and brought to light (ibid, p.21).

Irigaray creates a neologism for this economy of the same by fusing the French words for the same (homo) and man (homme) together to make the word *hom(m)osexualité*. According to Irigaray, this *hom(m)osexualité* economy constitutes woman as a man who is lacking: man minus the visible phallic penis; man minus the ability to represent themselves as man. Therefore the (fe)male becomes the negative of male ‘specularization’.

The ‘differentiation’ into two sexes derives from the a priori assumption of the same, since the little man that the little girl is, must become a man minus certain attributes whose paradigm is morphological-attributes capable of determining, of assuring, the reproduction-specularization of the same. A man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman (Irigaray 1985a, p.27).

Throughout *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray describes how the history of western philosophy is complicit with this economy of the same. Irigaray deliberately places Descartes at the centre of her *Speculum*, for it is this thinker within the western tradition that most confidently confirms his own subjective identity through the phallic signifier – the foundation stone to his philosophy is the ‘I’ generated through the Name-of-the-Father<sup>65</sup>, as in the *Cogito ergo Sum*: “I think therefore I am”. Irigaray traces the economy of the same back to the foundation of western thought through the writings of Plato. Irigaray describes how patriarchal concepts of truth and rationality are based upon associating the masculine with knowledge and light and the feminine with non-knowledge and the earth. To illustrate her point, Irigaray refers to Plato’s allegory of the cave in *The Republic*.

Within this allegory, the prisoner is brought out of the cave as a child is brought out of the womb – here the feminine is described in negative terms: the dark earthy cave represents the womb that excludes knowledge, whereas leaving the womb is equated with entering the light of masculine truth via a recognition of platonic eternal Forms.

“Jumping” out [...] of the vault [...] and into the eternally present ecstasy of the Sun (of the) Idea [,] into the peremptory affirmation that cognition and re-cognition can occur only through / in what has been defined as such by (the discourse of) truth. Truth is unveiled by / for him [...] with the full force of law. Passing from the fluid darkness, from the shimmering imprecision of reflections [...] to the neat, clear-cut, immutable, unambiguous categories that characterize, divide up, classify, and order everything [.] (ibid, p.280-1)

As such, the certainty of masculine knowledge is associated with the scopophilic – man is confident in his knowledge through the certainty of what is available to vision<sup>66</sup>. For Irigaray, the analogy of Plato’s cave with the womb, and its association with ignorance and mimicry, demonstrates western metaphysics orientation towards a hom(m)osexual economy of the same that rests upon a negation of our maternal origins in terms of being born from a mother. As Rachel Jones states:

By positing the eternal Forms as the only true reality and the origin of all that is, Plato’s metaphysics displaces our actual beginnings in birth. The ideal ‘father’ of visible offspring supplants birth from a mother. In this way, the horizon of metaphysical thought obscures the more primordial horizon that orients human beings in the world, namely, our relation to our maternal origins. (Jones 2011, p. 47)

In *The Sex Which Is Not One* (1977), Irigaray compares the specularisation of women by men to the fetishism of commodities analysed by Marx:

Participation in society requires that the body submits itself to a specularization, a speculation, that transforms it into a value-bearing object, a standardized sign, an exchangeable signifier, a “likeness” with reference to an authoritative model. A commodity – a woman – is divided into two irreconcilable “bodies”: her “natural” body and her socially valued, exchangeable body, which is a particularly mimetic expression of masculine values. (Irigaray 1985b, p.179-80)

Woman then, is fetishized and subject to equivalence and exchange from a masculine phallogocentric perspective, a separate economy of difference is disavowed outside a male economy of the same. In contrast to this specular male economy, Irigaray proposes a plural economy of the feminine. Irigaray illustrates how male sexuality invests in an economy of the same through the visibility and presence of the phallic signifier. This is analogous to the way commodities are invested via the visibility and presence of monetary value. In contrast to such a singular restrictive economy, the feminine body is recognized as offering an economy that is plural:

So woman does not have a sex organ? She has at least two of them, but they are not identifiable as ones. Indeed she has many more. Her sexuality, always at least double, goes even further: it is *plural*. (ibid, p.28)

Unlike the male sexual organ, woman’s sex is composed of many elements: lips, vagina, clitoris, cervix, uterus and breasts. As such, Irigaray believes woman’s sexual economy is multiple, diverse and endless:

Woman “touches herself” all the time, and moreover no one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact. Thus, within herself, she is already two – but not divisible into one(s) – that caress each other. (ibid, p.24)

Irigaray believes that this feminine economy, where multiple parts touch and embrace endlessly, requires an emphasis upon the sense of touch, rather than the sense of vision that is appropriate to the monolithic male organ. The prioritizing of the sense of vision in patriarchal culture is seen as yet another method for keeping woman passive:

[T]he predominance of the visual, and of the discrimination and individualization of form, is particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking, and her entry into a dominant scopic economy signifies, again her consignment to passivity [.] (ibid, p.25-6)

On conceiving feminine sexual economy as multiple, Irigaray proposes that such an economy is inclusive, unlike the exclusivity of the male economy which operates through an either / or model (either you *have* the phallus or you do not). This conception of a feminine economy allows Irigaray to suggest that women have potentially a separate relation to language which defies notions of identity and presence that would tie language to authority – hence Irigaray’s declaration that ‘there is simply no way I can give you an account of “speaking (as) woman”’; it is spoken, but not in meta-language’ (ibid, p.144). Such a language evades the specular logic that reifies concepts to objects in an economy of presence; hers is a language of tactility and fluidity in which words, concepts and ideas merge, mingle and separate in a never ending movement that has no centrifugal force. In woman’s language there is no presence or lack, only movement.

[Her] “style” does not privilege sight; instead, it takes each figure back to their source, which is amongst other things tactile [...] Simultaneity is its “proper” aspect – a proper(ty) that is never fixed in the possible identity-to-self of some form or other. It is always fluid, without neglecting the characteristics of fluids that are difficult to idealize: those rubbings between two infinitely near neighbours that create a dynamics. It’s “style” resists and explodes every firmly established form, figure, idea or concept. (ibid, p.79)

Irigaray’s work has been subject to a range of criticisms. If the specular effect of the phallic order dominates all discourse within patriarchal culture, how could the work of Irigaray escape its omnipresence or find a position from which to criticise it? By miming masculine perceptions of femininity, Irigaray can be perceived of viewing the feminine within patriarchy’s own terms; as Moi has argued, mimicry fails because it ceases to be perceived as such: it is no longer merely a mockery of the absurdities of the male, but a perfect reproduction of the logic of the Same’ (Moi 1985, p.142). By constructing a notion of the feminine upon female morphology, in much the same way that Lacan’s phallic signifier comes to represent the visible penis, Irigaray ‘s work has been accused of essentializing woman based upon her ‘given’ nature which, in Irigaray’s writing, appears to correspond with patriarchal notions of the feminine as fluid, intuitive, emotional and irrational. As Monique Plaza points out, by

prescribing woman’s social and intellectual existence from her ‘morphology’ [...Irigaray’s] method remains fundamentally and completely under the influence of patriarchal ideology. For one cannot describe morphology as though it presented itself to perception, without ideological mediation [...] Every mode of existence which ideology imputes to women as part of the Eternal

Feminine [...] is from now on woman's essence, woman's being. All that is woman comes to her in the last instances from her anatomical sex. (Plaza 1978, p. 31-2)

These criticisms can be considered as misguided. It is not the case that Irigaray merely takes the patriarchal view of woman and makes it a virtue based upon dubious ideas of essentialized notions of femininity. For Irigaray, the metaphysics of presence within the phallic economy should not be overturned by creating a simple reversal of given values within a restrictive economy based upon a transcendental signified, rather such a subversion occurs via the recognition of the multiple rather than the singular. As Clare Colebrook points out in relation to Irigaray:

Refiguring metaphysics demands refiguring sexual difference. No longer a relation between a subject who can adequately (re)present a transcendent object, an ethics of sexual difference would enable two transcendences or two modes of relation. This would take the form not of representation but of *recognition*. It would no longer be a question of the subject's relation to the given, but of a relation to another mode of transcendence, another mode of givenness. Irigaray's ethics of sexual difference is not just a critique of determined gender differences; it is the production and recognition of two ways in which determination might be given [...] (Colebrook Op Cit, p. 122)

In other words, the question of sexual difference is about the recognition of the other *as other*, not a negative reflection of an economy of the same. Such a recognition requires a relation to the specificity of the embodied other.

Relatedness or transcendence is no longer towards the given but to another subject. Autonomy is not self-authorship but the sense of the embodied specificity of my identity which is gained through recognition of the (differently) embodied other. (ibid, p. 123)

Given this, Irigaray is arguing less for an idea of an essential other and more for a notion of femininity theorized on its own terms rather than being described as the negative of something else.

Tina Chanter argues that the charge of essentialism against Irigaray is symptomatic of an 'outmoded idea of what feminism should be' (Chanter 1995, p.5). Such an outmoded view of feminism is perceived as downplaying sexual difference in favour of emphasizing gender equality. Important as the struggle of gender equality and equal legal rights have been, Chanter reminds us that it is 'a mistake to restrict feminism to such a goal' (ibid, p.7). Chanter draws our attention to the fact that such necessary struggles neglect the fact that the realm in which equality is fought is itself biased towards a phallogentric restrictive economy:

Insofar as women's struggle for equality with men accepts the terms of classical liberal theory it not only makes certain assumptions about the value of individualism and competition in a free-market economy, but it also assumes the neutrality of the social order [...] To the extent that feminism rehearses the rhetoric of a tradition that is built on the exclusion of women, it needs to be self-conscious and self-critical of the assumptions it makes in doing so. (ibid, p. 7-8)

As such, the challenge for Irigaray is to rethink the metaphysical terms on which a patriarchal social order is based. Reference to anatomical difference is therefore a means by which to recognize that other economies can exist outside phallogentrism. If our relation to others is

thought in terms of subjectivity, and if the subject is currently understood in patriarchal terms, then sexual difference provides us with possibilities for thinking subjectivity anew; Claire Colebrook points out:

Sexual difference, for Irigaray, is not a difference among others but responds to a certain problem: if we think in terms of a certain philosophical plane – that of the subject, and ethics as the recognition of other subjects – then sexual difference provides a way of thinking through possibilities *within this plane*. (Colebrook Op Cit, p.123-4)

Rather than reductively position woman as an essential other, such a reconfiguration of metaphysical terms aims to recognize woman in all her diversity; as Chanter describes:

In order to adequately confront diversity among women in addition to the differences between women and men, it is necessary, according to Irigaray's view, to rethink basic assumptions about sameness and difference, justice and equality, rationality and subjectivity, the whole and its parts, potentiality and actuality, form and matter, space and time (Chanter Op Cit, p.8)

The proposition that a different model of metaphysical thinking might exist based upon women's morphology potentially risks falling into the trap of appealing to a metaphysical origin that negates such radical transformations in value. Despite their differences, Claire Colebrook argues that Lacan, Derrida and Irigaray similarly focus on the given metaphysical *conditions* on which sexual difference is constructed, whereas Deleuze's philosophy of immanence allows us the opportunity to treat bodily difference as a novel problem in itself:

If philosophy is the question of the question (Derrida), an ethics of sexual difference would take the form of an enquiry into the condition of difference, difference in general. If philosophy has been a form of auto-representation (Irigaray), then philosophy's transformation will take the form of the recognition of an other: autonomous sexual difference. And if philosophy is an ethics of *amor fati* and the creation of new concepts, then sexual difference will be the task of thinking differently. (Colebrook Op Cit, p.125)

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of immanence, manifested within the theory of the body without organs, is constituted via an immanent relation of forces – as such any understanding in thought is also immanent to the circumstances any body finds itself in any given situation. As such, it is less about what a body *is* in metaphysical thought, but more about what a body *does* and can *become*. As Colebrook states:

It would not be a question of deciding a correct theory of the body: Lacanian sexual difference, Irigarayan recognition, Derridean questions [...] Thought takes place in a body, as a body, and so a theory of the body in general could not be a true response to the problem of the body [...] However, if sexual difference is not theorized from a metaphysics, but is confronted as a problem, then we might take the issues of sexual difference and use them to *think*. (ibid, p. 126)

To counter this line of thought, Irigaray would argue that any direct move towards a Deleuzian multiplicity without due consideration of sexual difference risks neglecting the values of femininity and ignoring the claims feminists might make in the name of women. As Dorethea Olkowski states, Irigaray is

concerned that without first rearticulating the difference between the sexes, women's pleasure(s) will be blocked or diminished in the rush towards multiplicity. In other words, what sense does feminism make without making the assertion of sexual difference pre-eminent? (Olkowski 2000, p.102-3)

From this viewpoint, Irigaray is reluctant to conceive identity as an open whole – such a move would diminish the recognition of values within the terms of embodied sex relations. Irigaray is therefore not essentialist in terms of seeing values as biologically determined, but essentialist in terms of positing values that depathologise woman as subject to patriarchal discourse.

[Irigaray stops] at the concept of an open whole, dismissing it on the grounds that it would rule out in advance any determination of values for terms and relations. Instead of conceptualizing relations as independent of terms and instead of conceptualizing the world as open and changing, Irigaray retains an essentialist (with respect to relations) and totalizing framework, even while insisting on fluidity. (ibid, p.104)

The different ontological positions of Deleuze and Irigaray cannot be resolved, despite having a shared concern for the abolition of patriarchal discourse and the predominance of a singular sexual economy. Whereas Deleuze perceives multiplicity as ontologically prior to sexual difference; Irigaray perceives birth and sexual difference to be our origin relation to the world. For Irigaray, birth from a mother constitutes an original relation between Being and beings that is disclosed in two different ways: we are born as either a different or similar sex in relation to our mother. As such, the challenge of sexual difference is to form a positive sense of subjectivity in relation to oneself and others, whilst neither

appropriating nor subjugating the other to form a singular hom(m)sexual economy; such a task requires the recognition of each sex in its own specificity and an appreciation of each sex on its own terms. Such a recognition requires an acknowledgement of the multiplicity of female sexuality and the irreducibility of relations between the sexes; as Rachel Jones states:

an ontology founded on 'being two' remains attentive to the incalculable difference that makes it impossible to quantify beings as two, if 'two' denotes anything like two ones, or a binary, doubling, or duality. In the end [...] the 'two' marks an incalculable difference between beings who are irreducible both to each other, and to two times one[.] (Jones 2011, p.232)

In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'becoming-woman' designates multiplicity, a becoming, prior to any other relations. According to this view, the fundamental challenge is not the forming of a positive relation to a sexed body that defies appropriation by the other, it is rather the production of fluid multiplicity, a becoming other, against the reductive patriarchal dualities that restrict the flow and reify identity. For Deleuze and Guattari, to become a girl is to become that which exists beyond patriarchal logic – it is therefore a concept that designates a process to be attained without the exclusion of either sex:

[T]he reconstruction of the body as a Body without Organs, the anorganism of the body, is inseparable from a becoming-woman, or the production of a molecular woman [...] becoming-woman or the molecular woman is the girl herself. The girl [...] is defined by a relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness, by a combination of atoms, an emission of particles: haecceity. She never ceases to roam upon a body without organs. She is an abstract line, or a line of flight. Thus girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between

orders, acts, ages, sexes; they produce *n* molecular sexes on the line of flight [...] (Deleuze / Guattari 1996, p.276-7)

Given the incommensurable positions of Deleuze and Irigaray with regards to ontology and sexual difference, one must recognize the dangers in either endorsing a positive account of sexual difference or conflating sexual difference into difference in general. For Irigaray, the affinity between the body without organs and becoming-woman can itself be perceived as symptomatic of the historical condition of women under patriarchy – outside of the predominant singular male economy, woman is denied any specific subjectivities and pleasures that she can call her own; as Olkowski points out:

For Irigaray the body without organs is no more than the historical condition of women – no singular organ dominates the woman's body, thus no pleasure belonging specifically to her – thus becoming-woman is a presumption, a fantasmatic position for a male subject who, once again, supplements his own pleasure. In other words, she takes becoming-woman to be another appropriation of the woman's body by the male. (Olkowski *Op Cit*, p.103)

In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari warn us against the potential reductive nature of positive accounts of sexual difference, whilst also recognizing the need for an acknowledgement of sex in its own specificity:

It is [...] indispensable for women to conduct a molar politics, with a view to winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity [...] But it is dangerous to confine oneself to such a subject, which does not function without drying up a spring or stopping a flow. (ibid, p.276)

Many accounts of desire and becoming are affected by biological anomalies or productive and artificial cybernetic encounters – in these cases, novel and disruptive modes of subjectivity manifest themselves and disturb old certainties. In these cases, discussing identity and desire from the point of view of given sexed subjectivities, morphological or otherwise, risks producing blindspots where other generative and productive possibilities might occur. One is reminded of Donna Haraway's declaration that '[c]yborg unities are monstrous and illegitimate' (Haraway 1985, p.154) and that the 'cyborg skips the step of original unity, of identification with nature' (ibid, p.151). For Haraway, the 'cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity' (ibid). In a footnote, Rachel Jones recognises that Irigaray does not sufficiently address the issue of those born intersexed (Jones Op Cit, p.252) – whereas it is suggested that 'those whose sexed specificity embodies both male and female could perhaps be seen as occupying a privileged (if highly complex) ethical position in terms of their embodiment of alterity' (ibid), such a position proves problematic for a notion of subjectivity based upon the ontological relation between two sexes. At the very least, this is an area requiring further exploration.

Whereas the work of Irigaray is invaluable in offering insight into the recovering and recognition of sexual specificity as sexual specificity, the work of Deleuze provides the tools to understand occurrences where an immanent productive process generates new subjectivities and desires via the play of difference. By providing a model of becoming in which notions of subjectivity and desire can be both territorialized (anti-production) and deterritorialized (desiring-production) without recourse to original identity, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the body without organs is versatile enough to incorporate notions of relatively stable entities (biological sex is such an entity) as well as those generated via novel immanent relations: it can therefore be, arguably, inclusive of sexual difference as well as difference in general.

The present study is concerned with a reconfiguration of the notion of fetishism beyond conventional notions of lack, disavowal and value. Due to the artificial and productive sense found contained within the idea, it has been proposed that the fetish is the archetype of value rather than a substitute. As such, the concept of the body without organs is deemed to correspond to the need for a model of the fetish that both generates and subverts the notion of value without appeal to a transcendental origin; the concept is therefore suitable for a notion that is required to account for difference in general.

From the point of view of fetishism, feminist critiques of the notion of lack have the benefit of drawing attention to the fact that it is not the absence of the maternal phallus that is ultimately disavowed in the fetish, but the idea of feminine difference. The economy of the fetish in traditional accounts is subject to the authority of phallic discourse – the disavowal of the maternal phallus acts as an alibi in which to contain an economy of desire within the terms of its economy. As Chanter states:

The trope of fetishism, then, operates as subordinate to phallic discourse, which is organized according to a logic of castration that confers a univocal value on the phallus. From this point of view, the theory of fetishism constitutes a defense against the proliferation of meanings, of which women become symbolic. It is women's morphological difference from men that challenges the masculine expectation that women's pleasure should be essentially the same as men's, and that it should be defined according to a narcissistic investment in a penis (or penis substitute). The fetish is produced in an attempt to ward off the threat that this difference presents [.] (Chanter 2008, p.12)

As inferred above, there is a case to be answered in which Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the Body Without Organs, with its corresponding notion of immanent desire, can be viewed as being

covertly gender biased in which male values are endorsed and femininity is ignored. Such a perception therefore risks aligning a Deleuzian notion of the fetish with the same phallogentric restrictive economy we are trying to avoid. According to Christine Battersby, the notion of desiring-production that generates the self via a process of becoming, disregards conceptions of the self based upon economies of reproduction, care and dependency – precisely those aspects traditionally associated with the female. In her book *The Phenomenal Woman* (1998), Christine Battersby reconstitutes metaphysics anew in which to generate a theory of subjectivity that moves beyond positions designated within a phallogentric Symbolic Order. Battersby generates this new theory of subjectivity by asking what would happen if we rethought identity in ways that take the female as norm? Through an appropriation of Kierkegaard's account of femininity, Battersby discusses five female attributes that provide a means for moving beyond the definition of the subject within traditional metaphysics: natality, nurturing, pregnancy, fleshiness and monstrosity. By appealing to these attributes, Battersby generates a notion of subjectivity as a process of becoming that is inclusive of both self and otherness.

Kierkegaard's notion of becoming, as the repetition and recognition of a novel set of patterns, appears to correspond with Deleuze's writing and presents a notion of subjectivity similar to that outlined in Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the Body Without Organs.<sup>67</sup> Despite similarities between the two positions, Battersby contends that Deleuze and Guattari are blind to material differences between the sexes – a neglect that risks ignoring economies of reproduction and corresponding relationships of dependency.

In response to such neglect within cultural discourse, Battersby proposes a conception of identity based upon the writings of Kierkegaard in which notions of birth and dependency affect our sense of self. For Kierkegaard,

the self is not fixed; but is itself only configured by a play of echoes; by patterns of relations; as a kind of harmonic or vibration produced by the intersection of present, future and past. There are no 'ultimates' or 'absolutes' [...] but there is nevertheless a (fluid, shifting, uncertain) 'real' that is composed by the way the self is positioned in the complex dynamics of multiple self / other relationships. (Battersby 1988, p.170)

According to Battersby's interpretation of Kierkegaard's *Stages on Life's Way* (1845), the best illustration of the self generated at the intersection of self / other is via an analogy with woman's condition. Starting from a typical viewpoint of woman as both a lack and an excess to the notion of the rational masculine self, Battersby refers to the character of Johannes the Seducer to demonstrate how woman can supply a definition of identity beyond such a conception without resorting to the idea of woman as pure difference, an unknowable excess that can only make itself known through disruptions within masculine discourse. As both excess and lack, woman is described as a fiction, a masquerade defined within a male economy of desire. As Battersby states, 'woman is trapped within the mirror of male desire. Even when alone and apparently careless of her appearance, she constructs herself via this internalized male gaze' (ibid, p.161). For one of Kierkegaard's characters, Victor Eremita, woman is not only a fiction, but exists outside masculine notions of time:

What woman lacks [...] is not only reflective consciousness, but the type of self-identity which can persist and develop through time. Woman is understood to be – and indeed, is educated into being – no more than a series of unrelated personae. [The] young girl first experiences herself as worthless; [...] then a 'marriageable' period in which she is [...] treated as all-important and powerful; then, finally, there is the period of being married and middle-aged during

which woman retreats back into insignificance. As such, there is no model of personal development or moral maturation that can encompass her life. (ibid, p.159)

Given this, Woman is then compared to a beautiful fruit in that she 'does not mature; but suddenly ripens, and then is over-ripe [...] she is provided with no stable standards of ethical (or monetary) value' (ibid). Woman's lack of a stable identity therefore places her outside Kantian ideas of a steadfast transcendental self that realizes itself and the world through linear time. Continuing the metaphor, Johannes the Seducer describes the artifice of woman as a display fruit: 'one of those artificially ripe [...] in a greengrocer's window [...] there to tempt the passer-by inside to buy something more real' (ibid, p.163). As such, 'Woman is a fiction: an idealized figure who 'bears a world of desire within her' [yet] is not just a fiction [...] she is also real' (ibid). Battersby elucidates this paradox. For woman, 'action emerges not out of autonomy but out of an acceptance of dependence [whilst being] not allowed to develop as a personality in time' (ibid). Therefore for woman to have value, she must maintain the 'play of forces of man's desire: unattainable, a fiction, but also real in her fluidity' (ibid, p. 164). Battersby states that if 'woman steps into the everyday – if she marries, develops, has children – the leap into infinitude will no longer be possible' (ibid). Woman must remain outside of masculine time in which to maintain her value, but this can only be achieved via the interrelationship of self and other. As such, Johannes describes woman as a 'workshop of possibilities' in which

both seducer and seduced are locked into a relationship of mutual dependence, within which each believes her/himself free; but in which what freedom there is is controlled and dependent on the gift / existence of the other. (ibid, p. 167-8)

The seducer and seduced therefore conduct a play of artifice outside the realm of fixed identities within the linear progression of time. Unlike conventional post-structuralist accounts, this play does not

take us into a Kantian realm of the noumenal. Instead, it takes us towards a different ordering of phenomena; in which depth is given to surfaces by temporal folds which are established via the jostling of competing narratives. (ibid, p.167).

Here 'reality is born from 'multiple possibilities, and in which 'self' and 'other' emerge together through repeated movements that never simply reproduce a 'given' that remains 'the same'' (ibid, p.168). Johannes' 'workshop of possibilities' therefore 'reverses the values of the Platonic [...] allowing infinity (being) to emerge from change and from continual motion' (ibid, p.162).

Battersby's interpretation of Kierkegaard offers a 'radical subversion of the concepts of autonomy, self-hood, rational personhood and masculinity – using 'woman' as a productive point of departure' (ibid, p. 175). Whereas Deleuze and Guattari similarly use the figure of 'woman' as a productive notion to subvert restrictive patriarchal notions of subjectivity, the means by which this is achieved is incommensurably different. For Battersby, woman is a 'workshop of possibilities' defined via a relationship of mutual dependency in which no identity is static. In contrast, for Deleuze, becoming-woman is not implicated within a relationship of mutual dependency, it is the reconstitution of the 'anorganism of the body' (the body without organs) (Deleuze / Guattari 1996, p. 276) within which a restoration of becoming occurs and static identities are deterritorialized. From this viewpoint, the girl does 'not become; it is becoming itself that is [the] girl' (ibid, p. 277).

Battersby criticizes Deleuze and Guattari by drawing attention to the notion of 'becoming-woman' within *A Thousand Plateaus*:

*Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980). According to Deleuze and Guattari, 'becoming-woman' involves a move away from static molar identities constituted within the paternal Symbolic Order, towards a molecular view of subjectivity in a dynamic state of becoming. On the surface, such a notion appears to mimic the generic post-structuralist view of woman as a site of difference, outside the knowable realm of male identity and singular sexual economy - despite the differences between Kristeva, Cixous and Irigary's work, this is a position which they all share. When the notion is positioned within the wider context of Deleuze and Guattari's work, the concept becomes an analogy in which the marginal position of women, excluded of agency within the phallogentric economy, stands for the realm of difference and becoming beyond static identity. As with Kristeva, the concept of woman can therefore be aligned with other marginal positions, including those occupied by men; unlike Kristeva, the feminine on this account does not subscribe to the notion of the inevitability of the Symbolic Order in opposition to a pre-oedipal semiotic realm.

As described, by perceiving identity as the outcome of desiring production, Deleuze and Guattari avoid the pitfall of designating identity as paternal and transgression as pre-oedipal and maternal. By describing desire as a productive surplus, identity also avoids being understood as an effect of lack. In both cases, Deleuze and Guattari produce an account of subjectivity that cannot be reduced to restrictive Oedipal relations. There appear to be two points of contention here revolving around Deleuze and Guattari's use of the feminine: firstly, by equating woman with wider marginal positions, the specificity of actual women in their material conditions is neglected – this position prevents women from having any recognizable political agency; secondly, by neglecting woman's specificity, Deleuze and Guattari's work unwittingly overlooks feminine attributes and succumbs to the conventional notion of subjectivity as masculine. As Battersby states:

Although Deleuze and Guattari offer a form of transcendental materialism that counters the emphasis on being and substance in Plato and Kant, their materialism – indeed their emphasis on ‘woman’ and the ‘girl’ – nevertheless blanks out material differences between the two sexes. ‘Becoming-woman’ does not involve the mature (fleshy) female body. The flows and intensities of desire seem gender-unspecific, but assume maleness as the only possible norm for an identity. (Battersby 1988, p.194)

Battersby recognizes that Deleuze and Guattari’s emphasis on desiring production prevents their theory from succumbing to the restrictive opposition between a paternal symbolic order and the unrepresentable pre-oedipal realm. However, their use of becoming-woman as an analogy for all that transgresses the dominant social order prevents the term from having any import in the understanding of the material conditions of women’s lives.

Although ‘woman’ is not simply that which falls outside the horizons of representation [...] and is instead an attainable intensity, there is nevertheless an abstraction from the repetitions and rhythms of embodied (sexually specific) lives. (ibid)

For Battersby then, to opt into a Deleuzean notion of identity and value would be to opt into a system in which

self is just a surface phenomenon, and hence agency (and also political agency) cannot be thought. It would be also to re-imagine the territories of productive labour, whilst simultaneously forgetting the rhythms of reproductive labour – the work involved in caring, protecting and sheltering dependents. (ibid, p.197)

These points of contention with regards to Deleuze and Guattari's immanent theory could also be applied to a revised notion of fetishism - whereas a conception of fetishism informed by the work of Deleuze and Guattari can be accused of neglecting the specificity of actual women's material conditions, the same can be applied to the specificity of actual occurrences of female fetishism. According to Battersby, Deleuze and Guattari cannot

consider the fact that the mother's relationship to her child might produce modes of 'belonging together' that are neither the bonding of two individuals nor a temporary grouping of fragments via 'assemblages' or 'packs'. (ibid, p. 194)

For Battersby, the metaphor of the 'pack' (as in 'wolf pack') and 'assemblage' to describe the ways in which heterogeneous elements combine to form new pathways upon the Body Without Organs makes the theory covertly complicit with a notion of identity which privileges male subjectivity. As Battersby states:

[T]he underpinning metaphor still suggests separate parts that need to be 'bundled' together. And this begs the question of whether this underlying heterogeneity of 'bits' – temporarily united as a 'pack' – might still be taking the male subject as norm. (ibid, p.193)

Here, the temporary unity of heterogeneous 'bits' appears to correspond to Kant's syntheses in which identities manifest themselves as 'closed 'unities' that are 'formed' by the imposition of linear space-time grids onto a material world' (ibid, p. 185), despite the fact that Deleuze and Guattari's theory seeks to overturn the emphasis on being and substance in both Plato and Kant. According to Battersby, this failure to dissociate their theory from a notion of male subjectivity and a

corresponding metaphysics of presence is due to the fact that economies of reproduction are ignored.<sup>68</sup>

By comparing the theories of Battersby and Deleuze and Guattari, it appears that Battersby's criticisms might be too severe. Firstly, Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of 'the pack' which 'suggests separate parts that need to be 'bundled' together' is no more a covert sympathy with residues of Kantian thought than Battersby's declaration that 'identity becomes a form of [...] possibilities that are perhaps most easily grasped as parallel to Kantian spatio-temporal 'realities'' (ibid, p. 174). Secondly, Battersby admits that Kierkegaard 'doesn't write about motherhood [but] frequently uses images of childhood, of wombs and of weaning in order to stress what is inherited from the past' (ibid, p. 149). In contrast to Battersby's discussion of Kierkegaard, Deleuze and Guattari's work has the merit of overtly aligning the Body Without Organs with maternity and natality by comparing it with an embryonic egg:

The BwO is the egg. But the egg is not regressive; on the contrary, it is perfectly contemporary, you always carry it with you as your milieu of experimentation, your associated milieu. The egg is the milieu of pure intensity, spatium not extension. Zero intensity as principle of production. (Deleuze / Guattari 1996, p.164)

The egg corresponds here to the Body Without Organs, as well as the milieu discussed in relation to Deleuze's concept of the impulse-image – identity and desire is therefore immanent to the relations in which they are determined. Notice that the egg as pure potential is referred to as the 'principle of production' – for Deleuze and Guattari, reproduction is a form of production and is a manifestation of a particular relation upon the Body Without Organs. Battersby makes no reference to Deleuze and Guattari's use of the egg as a metaphor. In light of this, Battersby's statement that the Body Without Organs is 'prior to difference, including

sexual difference' (Battersby Op Cit, p. 194), can be rephrased to state that the Body Without Organs is *inclusive* of difference, including that of sexual difference. There is no prior condition of the Body Without Organs, it is already inclusive and constituted by all given states – to describe it in terms of origins is to return it to the Platonic, a move that Deleuze and Guattari would directly oppose; as Deleuze and Guattari state:

The problem of whether there is a substance of all substances, a single substance for all attributes, becomes: Is there a totality of all BwO's? If the BwO is already a limit, what must we say of the totality of all BwO's? It is a problem not of the One and the Multiple but of a fusional multiplicity that effectively goes beyond any opposition between the one and the multiple. A formal multiplicity of substantial attributes that, as such, constitutes the ontological unity of substance. (Deleuze / Guattari Op Cit, p.154)

Despite the egg providing a metaphor for birth and becoming, Deleuze's theory could still be perceived as neglecting the role of the maternal in the generation of subjectivity and desire; it is true that the image of the egg remains silent with respect to the role of the mother - as such, it can be argued that Deleuze offers little more than Kierkegaard when considering motherhood. Despite this, given the coincidence of natality and production within Deleuze and Guattari's theory, it would be unfair to perceive the lack of emphasis upon the concept of 'reproduction' as somehow an indication that their work is blind to relations of birth and dependency, especially when Kierkegaard's stress on the feminine follows a similar pattern of using the convention of woman's marginal status as a metaphor for a realm of becoming beyond static identities. In fact, it could be argued that Deleuze and Guattari offer a more comprehensive theory of becoming that has the capacity to include sexual difference whilst moving beyond its confines. Whereas Battersby's interpretation of both Kierkegaard and Deleuze and Guattari

offers a view of subjectivity as a process of becoming, the former relies on a notion determined by conventions of a restricted femininity. Even if it exposes the fallacy of notions of stable masculine and feminine identities, a fluid subjectivity based on relations of dependency, that are tied to woman's subordination and lack of agency, is still complicit with its terms and, arguably, does not offer a useful method for accounting for either the persistence and transgressions of identity and value. Battersby makes no reference to the processes in which the Body Without Organs either repels or attracts desiring machines depending on the degree to which social forces and power relations are reified or transgressed. Deleuze and Guattari's use of machines as a metaphor intend to show the artificial and constructed nature of desire and value, whether in the form of reproductive or productive relations. As described above, Battersby claims that Deleuze and Guattari's model lacks depth and reduces identity and value to mere surface territories. This is to ignore the emphasis placed by Deleuze and Guattari on the conjunctive synthesis of consumption – consummation (the celibate machine). This synthesis of recognition generated via that recorded within disjunctive syntheses, allows the repetitions involved in desiring production to build upon connections already made within an organism – this adds depth to the notion of value and identity without having to resort to conventional models of female dependency and the fluid negotiations involved.

A comparison can be usefully made between a Kristevan and Deleuzian notion of fetishism within literature in which to identify how an alignment to feminine difference can be reinterpreted from an immanent perspective in which to avoid remaining within the binary terms of a restrictive economy. In one sense, Kristeva shares a similar concern as Deleuze in that objects and subjectivities are constituted and dispersed via the flux of intensities that have no inherent identity or stasis. As we shall see, despite this similarity, the differences between Deleuze and Kristeva

become apparent when comparing the notion of the Semiotic and the Body Without Organs in relation to fetishism.

For Kristeva, the irruption of the semiotic into the symbolic occurs via a traumatic relation with both the mirror stage and castration – the formative points at which we recognize ourselves as a separate identity within social relations. The semiotic's 'breach of the symbolic in so-called poetic practice' can be ascribed to 'disorders in the mirror stage that become marked scopophilia, the need for a mirror or an identifying addressee', or a resistance to castration 'thereby maintaining the phallic mother who usurps the place of the Other' (Kristeva 1974, p.113). As described earlier, the tendency to maintain the phallic mother is crucial to the causal mechanism of classical fetishism. According to Kristeva, fetishism should be understood as a compromise with the thetic because it displaces the symbolic that constitutes it onto the realm of the drives.

The instinctual chora articulates facilitations and stases, but fetishism is a telescoping of the symbolic's characteristic thetic moment and of one of those instinctually invested stases (bodies, parts of bodies, orifices, containing objects, and so forth). This stasis thus becomes the ersatz of the sign. Fetishism is a stasis that acts as a thesis. (ibid, p.115).

From this perspective, the fetish is therefore a sign constituted within the thetic moment that nevertheless remains attached to an object invested by the drives. Consequently, the intrusion of the semiotic *chora* disrupts the symbolic order and acts as its substitute. As such, modern poetry and literature can be perceived as analogous to the process of fetishism – as a semiotic substitute for the symbolic that corrupts its law whilst remaining within its signifying practice:

[S]ince the symbolic is corrupted so that an object – the book, the work – will result, isn't this object a substitute for the thetic phase? Doesn't it take the thetic's place by making its symbolicity opaque, by filling the thetic with its presence whose pretension to universality is matched only by its finite limits? In short, isn't art the fetish par excellence, one that badly camouflages its archaeology? (ibid)

Given that, for Kristeva, the semiotic is aligned with the pulsions within the maternal realm, the convergence of poetic creation with the processes of fetishism is perceived as a desire to disavow the symbolic in favour of a belief in the phallic mother. As Kristeva states:

At its base, isn't there a belief, ultimately maintained, that the mother is phallic, that the ego – never precisely identified – will never separate from her, and that no symbol is strong enough to sever this dependence? (ibid)

The compulsion to return to the semiotic, which is at the origin of the signifying process, means that a process of substitution occurs in which the symbolic order, which constitutes the thetic, is displaced.

In all its various vacillations, the thetic is displaced towards the stages previous to its positing or within the very stases of the semiotic [...] These movements, which can be designated as fetishism, show (human) language's characteristic tendency to return to the (animal) code, thereby breaching what Freud calls a 'primary repression'. (ibid, p.117)

Given this, Kristeva's notion of fetishism remains firmly tied to a metaphysics of presence in that the intrusion of the semiotic is always a desire to retain the notion of the phallic mother, which does not lack, and return to a state prior to the recognition of castration – the notion therefore subscribes to the usual singular phallic restrictive economy, in which the maternal realm is designated as its other. Kristeva's conception is ultimately a repetition of the classic fetish narrative in which the fetish is a substitute for a phallus that is perceived as lacking – it is a means of warding off castration which entry into the Symbolic order signifies. It is important to emphasize that Kristeva describes a *convergence* with fetishism – the intrusion of the semiotic is therefore not to be understood as identical to classical fetishism. What 'distinguishes the poetic function from the fetishist mechanism is that it maintains a signification' (ibid). According to Kristeva, though a text may transgress symbolic codes, it cannot avoid producing meaning. In Kristeva's view, the plurality of meanings generated by the semiotic within the symbolic, which disrupts its order, may not be equivalent to classical fetishism, but follows its process of substitution – the symbolic order is substituted for an object that disrupts its law via the intervention of the semiotic. Such a disruption appears in the form of a negation – not a negation of contradiction (as in a Hegelian *Aufhebung*), but a radical negativity of the thetic phase and its ensuing symbolic codes.

[The] explosion of the semiotic in the symbolic is far from a negation of negation, an *Aufhebung* that would suppress the contradiction generated by the thetic and establish in its place an ideal positivity, the restorer of pre-symbolic immediacy. It is, instead, a *transgression* of position, a reversed reactivation of the contradiction that instituted this very position. (ibid, p.119)

According to Kristeva, the regulation of the semiotic in the symbolic is symptomatic of the thetic break and inherent to language. Semiotic

transgressions may allow us to fetishize the various stases generated by the drives through the signifiers within language, but these very signifiers prevent these impulses from destroying the symbolic order and leading us into psychosis. Kristeva states:

What had seemed to be a process of fetishizing inherent in the way the text functions now seems a structurally necessary protection, one that serves to check negativity, confine it within stases and prevent it from sweeping away the symbolic position. (ibid, p.119)

Given that the symbolic remains intact and acts as a defense against the failure of the subject<sup>69</sup>, the semiotic manifests itself in language as a 'second-degree thetic' – what Kristeva describes as a 'resumption of the functioning characteristic of the semiotic *chora* within the signifying device of language' (ibid, p.103). In other words, the semiotic *chora*, manifested through the movement of the drives, disrupts the symbolic in which to recreate it anew. According to Kristeva, the semiotic *chora* follows the logic of the death drive that operates to destroy the tensions associated with stases which, in turn, regenerates the subject via the discharge of energy. According to Kristeva, the semiotic realm of the *chora* follows the logic of the death drive in that it constitutes a 'path of destruction, aggressivity and death' (ibid, p.95) in its aim to reduce states of tension. As Kristeva notes,

the term 'drive' denotes waves of attack against stases, which are themselves constituted by the repetition of [energy] charges; together, charges and stases lead to no identity (not even of the 'body proper') that could be seen as a result of their functioning. This is to say that the semiotic *chora* is no more than the place where the subject is both generated and negated, the place where

his unity succumbs before the process of charges and stases that produce him' (ibid).

From this perspective, the semiotic is a realm in which states of intensity are both gathered and dispersed; in which identity is constantly in flux.

In many respects the operations of the semiotic chora has an affinity to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Body Without Organs in which stases continually converge and dissipate. On closer examination, this relationship is found to be superficial – whereas Deleuze posits an eternal repetition of becoming without recourse to an origin, Kristeva's notion of the semiotic and symbolic remains firmly tied to a binary opposition in which the semiotic *chora* is positioned within the maternal pre-Oedipal realm, whilst the symbolic is associated with the paternal phallus. Catherine Driscoll describes this tendency within Kristeva's work to remain within the binary oppositions of a phallogocentric order:

All of Kristeva's analyses are negotiations of dualisms, and rely on a foundational, and sometimes apparently naturalized, dualist structure for subjectification and the linguistic order which constitutes it. Gender is central to that structure, and while Kristeva calls for the dissolution of gender she also relies on its inevitability for the structure of her analyses [...] Moreover, Kristeva explains such structures and breaches as exchanges between maternal and paternal, prelinguistic and linguistic oppositions. Indeed, the passionate moments of undoing or threatening order which she privileges require that order, exists within that order, and do not structurally challenge it. (Driscoll 2000, p.72)

Rather than perceiving disruptions within the symbolic order as a repetition of difference and becoming, Kristeva perceives a typical psychoanalytic move in which the logic of the death-drive within the operation of the semiotic *chora* is a repetition of the same: a compulsion to return to a perceived maternal origin from which we are alienated on entry into the symbolic. This has consequences for Kristeva's conception of the fetish. Given the dichotomy between the maternal and paternal realm, the fetish for Kristeva corresponds to the classical interpretation of the notion in which it is a substitute for the lost maternal phallus – as Kristeva states:

At its base, isn't there a belief, ultimately maintained, that the mother is phallic, that the ego – never precisely identified – will never separate from her, and that no symbol is strong enough to sever this dependence? (ibid, p.115)

As such, Kristeva's notion of the fetish falls into the familiar discourse of substitution and disavowal, in which the fetish remains a mere substitute for the sovereignty of the phallus and a disavowal of that which is lacking beyond its restrictive economy. Though an agency, in the form of the semiotic *chora*, is identified outside this restrictive economy, it can only articulate itself within the symbolic realm – though its law may be negated and subject to disruptions, its sovereignty is never threatened; it therefore produces a substitute for its law without supplanting its operation, it thus leaves the *chora* and the associated maternal realm (towards which the drives are directed) beyond representation – its effect is only manifest via symptomatic disruptions upon the symbolic plane.

[The semiotic] introduces into the symbolic order an asocial drive, one yet not harnessed by thethetic. When this practice, challenging

any stoppage, comes up, in its turn, against the produced object, it sets itself up as a substitute for the initially contested thetic, thus giving rise to [...] aesthetic fetishism. (ibid, p. 120)

Following this logic, such aesthetic fetishism that acts as a substitute for the symbolic, is to be understood as an attempt to preserve the phallus within the mother and remain within the maternal realm – as such, the disruptions from the semiotic *chora* are identified as a *feminine* intervention. With reference to the semiotic, Kristeva comments:

Indifferent to language, enigmatic and feminine, this space underlying the written is rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgement, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax. (ibid, p.97)

In contrast to Kristeva, our revised notion of fetishism via the work of Deleuze offers no substitute for an eternal and insurmountable symbolic order. The disruptions, absences and breaks that Kristeva interprets as an effect of the semiotic can be more satisfactorily formulated as an effect of desiring-machines that enact a becoming, rather than a wishful return to a maternal origin. Our earlier discussion of the death drive, difference and repetition demonstrated that a cycle of desire can exist without an appeal to lack and a self-present identity generated via the symbolic order. Unlike the psychoanalytic model of the death drive, desire has no essential need to return towards that which it perceives as being lost. To comprehend the unconscious as the eternal flux of desire, not anchored to prior representations and power relations, allows us to recognize disruptions within established discourses as desiring productions rather than an appeal to archaic maternal semiotic pulsions. Comprehending such aesthetic fetishism (as Kristeva would call it) from the viewpoint of desiring production has

two advantages. Firstly, desiring production allows the reader to ground such disruptions in relation to a diverse range of established social relations rather than appealing to a restrictive, mythical discourse of maternal, pre-Oedipal relations that are beyond representation. Secondly, by perceiving desire as a productive surplus, rather than being based on lack and insufficiency, desiring production allows us to perceive aesthetic fetishism not as a substitute for the symbolic order via a negation of its established laws, but as a productive transgression of its conventional limits. Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the writings of Kafka offer an illustration of this process.

Whereas Kafka is interpreted as an instance of 'feminine' writing in Kristeva (Kristeva 1974 / Kristeva 1980)– a negation of Symbolic law - in Deleuze and Guattari's work, his writing reflects a concern for productively transgressing the limits of a restrictive economy. According to their analysis, Kafka's writing generates a dialogue between the territorializing tendencies of the paranoid machine and the deterritorializing tendencies of desiring machines, demonstrating how this immanent schizo-law disassembles the paranoid law of the symbolic. Whereas Kristeva perceives disruptions to the symbolic order as a retrogressive return to a maternal semiotic, Deleuze and Guattari comprehend such disruptions as unconscious investments generated via the immanent productions of desiring machines. As Deleuze and Guattari describe:

A Kafka-machine is thus constituted by contents and expressions that have been formalized to diverse degrees by unformed materials that enter into it, and leave by passing through all possible states. To enter or leave the machine, to be in the machine, to walk around it, to approach it – these are all still components of the machine itself: these are states of desire, free of all interpretation. The line of escape is part of the machine.  
(Deleuze / Guattari 1986, p. 7)

For Deleuze and Guattari then, these disruptions and transgressions are not to be understood as a compromise, within an omnipresent symbolic order, they should rather be comprehended as disjunctions and connections made between the body, world and society as various machines. Examples are given of desire taking flight via paths that are less archetypal representations and more material lines of experimentation that transgress previous pathways (appeals towards typical symbolic and maternal signifiers are avoided) – as Deleuze and Guattari assert, ‘the archetype works by assimilation, homogenization, and thematics, whereas our method works only where a rupturing and heterogeneous line appears’ (ibid). The difference between the two positions becomes clear by comparing the analogy with sound. For Kristeva, the manifestation of the semiotic within the symbolic position ‘gives ‘music’ to literature [...] As a consequence, musicality is not without signification; indeed it is deployed within it’ (Kristeva 1974, p. 113-4). For Kristeva, such a manifestation comes from the feminine realm of the *chora* which can only signify via its effect upon the symbolic order. The ‘musicality’ that the semiotic gives to symbolic representation is therefore always tied to archetypal binary oppositions inaugurated by the Oedipal scene. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari view sound as a heterogeneous material capable of deterritorializing forms in which to become other – sound is a phenomenon without delineated boundaries, capable of affecting and infiltrating forms within both local and distant space. The occurrence of sound, as an unstructured material that traverses and infiltrates current zones and distant spaces, is described as a means by which paranoiac symbolic laws are escaped and deterritorialized:

What interests Kafka is a pure and intense sonorous material [...] – a deterritorialized musical sound, a cry that escapes signification,

composition, song, words – a sonority that ruptures in order to break away from a chain that is still all too signifying. (ibid, p.6)

Whereas Deleuze and Guattari consider the straightened head in Kafka's work as a line of flight from the symbolic law, it also illustrates the notion of the impulse-image when considered in conjunction with sound. Deleuze and Guattari state that

[sound] serves to express contents that will reveal themselves to be relatively less and less formalized; thus, the head that straightens up ceases to matter in itself and becomes formally no more than a deformable substance swept away by the flow of sonorous expression [...] it isn't a question of a well-formed vertical movement toward the sky or in front of one's self, it is no longer a question of breaking through the roof, but of intensely going "head over heels and away", no matter where, even without moving [...] but only a question of a line of escape or, rather, of a simple *way out* [...] as long as it is as little signifying as possible. (ibid)

In Kafka's writing, the head therefore gets carried away by sound, allowing the bodily fragment to become an impulse-image – a fetish 'composed of unformed matter, sketches or fragments, crossed by non-formal functions, acts, or energy dynamisms [...in which appear] heads without necks, eyes without faces, arms without shoulders, gestures without form' (Deleuze 2008, p.128); the head is no longer a conventional signifier within the symbolic order in the same way that the bent head appears in the formulation: 'bent head = a blocked, oppressed or oppressing, neutralized desire, with a minimum of connection' (Deleuze / Guattari 1986, p. 5). This example illustrates how a Deleuzian notion of the fetish serves to move beyond the retrogressive notion of Kristeva's aesthetic fetishism, in which

disruptions are interpreted as a maternal semiotic channeled via the symbol order – therefore reproducing the inevitability of the maternal / paternal opposition through an act of substitution. In contrast to this, Deleuze offers not the inevitable repetition of the same, but a repetition of difference in which immanent new connections are made without recourse to archetypes – such rhizomatic routes without origin avoids the trap of allegiance to privileged signifiers:

We will enter, then, by any point whatsoever; none matters more than another, and no entrance is more privileged even if it seems an impasse, a tight passage, a siphon. We will be trying only to discover what other points our entrance connects to, what crossroads and galleries one passes through to link two points, what the map of the rhizome is and how the map is modified if one enters by another point. Only the principle of multiple entrances prevents the introduction of the enemy, the Signifier and those attempts to interpret a work that is actually only open to experimentation. (ibid, p.3)

As a fragmented, fetishistic form akin to that of the impulse-image, becoming-animal, becoming-child, becoming-girl and becoming-woman are all fetishistic forms that manifest themselves amongst other possibilities upon the Body Without Organs – such manifestations generate a state from which other potential possibilities can derive.<sup>70</sup> A revised conception of the fetish from the viewpoint of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Body Without Organs has been found to offer a means to view fetishism, feminine or otherwise, from the viewpoint of immanent desire outside the realm of a singular, restricted economy of presence and lack. Such a perspective cannot be premised on a discourse of lack in which value is always retrogressive, predicated on an origin from which it is initiated. This viewpoint also avoids designating a notion of the fetish aligned to a maternal realm which

emanates from an essential distinction between the sexes, whether biologically or culturally determined. It is better to perceive the phallus, woman and the plethora of other objects of desire as fetishistic states, more or less stable depending on their position within social relations, than to fetishize such relations as origins, no matter how fluid, from which relations can be understood – to make an interpretation from the latter is to be blind to subtle and immanent pathways of desire that have the potential to generate value within a matrix of particular social relations. This is not to rule out that some fetishistic forms can be understood via established conventions, but it places these conventions amongst many other possibilities and states – the point is to understand value, whether unprecedented or conservative, as artificial and generated. The fetish is artifice, an archetype of value generated from productive desire. As we have argued, the notion of the female fetish, is best theorized as a novel flight of productive desire - a site of desiring production in which fragments are invested with value upon the Body Without Organs. To interpret the fetish in such a way is to be inclusive of those circumstances in which fetishistic value is a response to, and subversion of, occurrences of cultural lack, as well as the instances in which fetishistic value is the manifestation of novel pathways of desire outside the realm of restricted economies.

## Conclusion

This study has offered an original critique of the conventional view of fetishism within modernity via a consideration of the role of surplus and equivalence within the production of value. Rather than describing fetishism in terms of a disavowal of a self-present determination of value, this critique has recognized that what is ultimately denied within traditional accounts is the artificial surplus production upon which its value is premised.

By examining the roots of the concept in European cultural imperialism and its subsequent adoption in socio-economic and psychosexual theories, we have found the traditional discourse of fetishism to be a key term in distinguishing European rationality from its irrational and instinctive Other. The work of Foucault has provided a means to perceive how societies uphold a system of value by attributing a notion of otherness to that which threatens to disrupt its own legitimacy – this is achieved through a process of exclusion in which the other is positioned as lacking the presence of that which gives a system its legitimacy. Fetishism is a perfect example of this process. Rather than being an accurate representation of a non-western practice, it has been found that this Other to western culture is, in each case, a reflection of its own internal inconsistencies and anxieties towards that which cannot be assimilated within its own values. As Anne McClintock points out:

the 'sciences of man' – philosophy, Marxism and psychoanalysis – took shape around the invention of the 'primitive' fetish. Religion (the ordering of time and the transcendent), money (the ordering of the economy), and sexuality (the ordering of the body) arranged themselves around the social idea of racial fetishism, displacing what the modern imagination could not incorporate, onto the invented domain of the 'primitive'. Imperialism returned to haunt the

enterprise of modernity as its concealed but central logic.  
(McClintock 1993, p.3)

In both psychosexual and socio-economic realms, the notion of the fetish has therefore been used to designate a compromise solution to the problem of value – it secures a normative privileged signifier of value whilst simultaneously disavowing what is in excess to the perpetuation of European restricted economies of production and reproduction. As we have seen, both these economies function through the allocation of a universal privileged signifier that secures the normative propagation and flow of each: the phallus and money that determine equivalence for all value within each economy. As such, fetishistic value, whether in commodity or perverse form, has been deemed a substitute and disavowal of value determined by an origin elsewhere – whether in terms of labour time or phallic presence. By describing the surplus value upon which the commodity form is based and the concept of sexual drives upon which desire is premised, the values inherent to these economies are recognized as dependent on the production of an excess which manifests itself at a point beyond need. The privileged signifiers within the socio-economic and psychosexual realms can therefore be perceived as fetishes that secure the presence of value whilst disavowing that upon which it is based – surplus and difference. This artifice, which underlies the notion of fetishistic value, is contained within the etymology of the word – as described, the concept of fetishism relates to the Latin adjective *facticius*, which means to be “manufactured”. By referring to Derrida’s critique of the metaphysics of presence, the signifiers that constitute value in both socioeconomic and psychosexual economies have been recognized as being not only arbitrary and artificial, but also premised upon unsubstantiated myths of origins and presence that attempt to legitimate their agency. It has therefore been argued that the disavowal involved in fetishism is to be understood not as a substitute for a pre-given original value, as in traditional accounts of fetishism, but as a denial of the human agency involved in the artificial and arbitrary production of value within

both socio-economic and psychosexual economies. Such a disavowal of artifice is also perceived as an omission of the possibility that difference underlies the value of the fetish.

Against a traditional model of fetishism, an original account has been proposed in which the concept is perceived as an immanent productive process in which difference generates signifiers of value. As such, the fetish can be perceived as the means by which established measures of value are both endorsed and transgressed in relation to a restricted economy. This account supplements the Bataillean notion of the fetish as an untransposable object of desire. Whereas Bataille offers a means to view the fetish as an untransposable object that transgresses the profane world of the everyday, a Deleuzean notion is found to offer a means to resolve the contradiction in which fetishes can be perceived as both an instigator and transgressor of value.

By referring to the work of Jean Baudrillard, the disavowal of artifice and excess that we have identified as underlying restrictive economies was found to be premised upon a fundamental binary opposition that puts restricted economies of value into play - this binary is the opposition between life and death, in which life is recognized as a positive value and death is that which must be excluded. According to this view, the exclusion of death is the factor that determines the reduction of value to a play of equivalences within both psychosexual and socioeconomic realms. Such a play of equivalences, whether in monetary or phallic form, excludes death via an incessant cycle of accumulation, exchange and (re)production. In contrast to this, it has been argued that it is possible to perceive death as a complementary term within the life process – according to Bataille, there can be no movement or continuation in life without a recognition of death; it is the fusion with otherness that allows us to transcend our current state and ultimately reproduce, both of which require an acknowledgment of death. For Bataille, it is the consciousness of the relationship between birth and death that gives human sexuality its erotic sense – as such, it is the mode in which a given society postpones the inevitability of death that determines the type of taboos and transgressions to which it is subject.

For Bataille, a recovery of eroticism, transgression and symbolic exchange is essential if society is to forge relations between its members that do not revolve around utility and work within a restrictive economy – such a recovery therefore requires the reintegration of death as both a necessary and complementary component within the life process. As Baudrillard puts it, an *'infinitesimal injection of death would immediately create such excess and ambivalence that the play of value would completely collapse'* (Baudrillard 1993, p.154). From this perspective, any fetishistic disavowal of excess and sexual difference can be perceived as a means by which social relations of surplus production, waste, erotic transgression, death and loss are denied in favour of a notion of restricted value that revolves around utility, accumulation and reproduction. By understanding death and life as cyclical, the possibility of perceiving the fetish as an immanent productive process – an untransposable object of desire - becomes possible. Whereas traditional accounts of fetishism are premised on a repetitious appeal to an original state without tension (the death-instinct) prior to separation and castration, a cyclical relationship between life and death offers us a means to perceive a circuit of desire without an appeal to such origins. An examination of Bataille's notion of the general economy affords the possibility of comprehending exchange and value outside the logic of homogeneity and equivalence within restrictive economies. By expending surplus prodigally, the notion of the general economy illustrates a conception of production and desire beyond the realms of utility and reified value. According to this conception, production and desire is interpreted as that which transgresses the profane world of the everyday, offering us a means of communication with that which is in excess of ourselves and society – it therefore allows communication with death on the road to becoming Other. An examination of Bataille and Michel Leiris' conception of the fetish in relation to the general economy proposes that the fetish can be understood as an untransposable object of desire that bridges the two realms of life and death. Whereas a Bataillean conception of the fetish offers a notion that transgresses the profane world of restricted economies, it fails to explain and resolve the contradiction in

which the fetish can be perceived as both an instigator and transgressor of value – whereas fetishistic forms have been traditionally associated with a reifying tendency that reinforces an economy of the same, the fetish understood as an untransposable object of desire demonstrates an opposing transgressive tendency.

Deleuze's notion of difference and repetition has proved useful in generating an immanent notion of the fetish, rather than appealing to some origin that curtails the production of value. Deleuze's reversal of Platonism, in which relations of difference are endorsed in opposition to the notion of a foundational idea, allows us to consider a conception of the fetish as a value generated through immanent relations. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Body Without Organs has been found to provide the conceptual apparatus in which to generate a new model of fetishism without the need for origins, substitutions or disavowal. As a means of describing the immanent and cyclical relations of productive desire, the Body Without Organs provides a strategy to reintegrate death (anti-production) in a complementary relation to life in a process of becoming. An original contribution to the corpus of Deleuzian theory has been made via an understanding of fetishism from this viewpoint.

Whereas Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari have discussed fetishism in terms of a reifying tendency within restrictive economies, a wider consideration of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's work allows the notion to be considered as an immanent transgressive act. By examining Deleuze's writing on Masochism and the impulse-image in relation to the Body Without Organs, fetishism can be understood as a generative act of becoming in which intensive fragments are invested with value – the constancy of which is determined by the repetitions and barriers enacted upon the Body Without Organs by relatively stable or changing social relations. As such, the contradiction is resolved in which the fetish can be simultaneously perceived as both an instigator and transgressor of value.

A Deleuzian conception of fetishism, constituted upon difference and becoming, has been found to have greater efficacy than current

theories of fetishism in that it allows the fetish to be understood as either a transgressive or reified value. Contemporary accounts of fetishism have been found to subscribe to a notion of lack, despite the concept being subject to a crisis of legitimacy via a critique of the metaphysics of presence that excludes difference that does not conform to Western standards of value. By relying on traditional principles that have remained consistent within the notion, contemporary theories continue to subscribe to the reified oppositions that a restrictive economy puts in place; as such, these theories can be considered to be blind to the full potential of fetishism as a productive force.

This study has used the notion of female fetishism to highlight the inadequacy of traditional interpretations of fetishism – this example is a poignant one in that female fetishism should not be possible from the point of view of conventional accounts. Current interpretations of female fetishism have been found to continue to remain tied to a phallic discourse of presence and lack in which sexual difference is either an unaccounted Other outside the realm of phallogocentric discourse and reason (McClintock), a masquerade of gender roles within the terms of a restricted singular economy (Grosz and De Lauretis), or a refusal of separation-individuation involved in the process of castration (Gamman and Makinen). It has been argued that it is better to view fetishism - female or otherwise - as a site of desiring production. As we have seen, the *Body Without Organs* provides a model that allows us to understand the notion as a process of becoming: a repetition of difference. To interpret fetishes in such a way is to include instances in which fetishistic value is manifested as new pathways of desire beyond those allocated within restricted economies, as well as those circumstances in which it is understood as a means to reify and reproduce value. It is better to perceive objects of desire, fetishes, as more or less stable entities depending on their position within social relations, than to fetishize such relations as a permanent presence from which relations can be understood – as we have argued, to make an interpretation from the later ignores the potential of productive desire upon which all values and

differences are based. A Deleuzian conception of fetishism recognises the fetish as an act of artifice constituted through a process of desiring production; as such, fetishism should be understood as the archetype of value, rather than its substitute. It is wrong to understand it as anything else.

A Deleuzian concept of the fetish, constituted on difference and becoming, has the potential to rectify and supplement those theories that only interpret the fetish from a restricted and ossified point of view, in which it is perceived as solely a process of disavowal and / or substitution. In contrast to these theories, a Deleuzian notion allows us to interpret fetishism as an immanent productive process that has the potential to transgress and establish new values; as such, it allows us to interpret novel fetishistic investments as immanent and productive assemblages.

If we can now understand fetishism as an artificial process, in which immanent relations of difference have the capacity to produce untransposable and novel values, then we can propose that the fetish, as the archetype of value, is ineffable at the point at which it manifests itself. As such, this new theory of fetishism may have the capacity to explain those aesthetic experiences in which we are taken beyond conventional categories and expectations – in such cases, the participant is taken outside themselves and participates in a process in which new values are realized. An application of the theory to the analysis of contemporary visual art would be one example: the work of artists as diverse as Louise Bourgeois, Orlan and Marc Quinn require us to reassess and question conventional boundaries and require us to move beyond accepted categories that articulate and define our sense of selves. The overtly fetishistic themes of much postmodern work are problematized by the play of difference and multiplicity that refuse conventional notions of value. Such incongruous and ambiguous work disrupts interpretations based upon conventional theories of fetishism and is therefore more suited to an interpretation that perceives the fetish as a productive entity.

By understanding the fetish as the archetype of value, in which desiring-production immanently produces its own objects, the notion of the

fetish has clear implications for sexual politics in that it can incorporate conventional notions of subjectivity and sexuality, as well as new forms of sexuality and erotic practice that transgresses previous relations. Whereas, conventional forms of sexuality can be perceived as points of anti-production upon the body without organs, new forms of erotic practice can be perceived as lines of flight that constitute desiring-production. According to our new theory of fetishism, such lines of flight are ineffable at the point of formation and constitute a creative act – as such, the theory provides a radical ethics for sexual practice that resists any categorisation of ‘perversion’, whilst endorsing the deviation from convention as a legitimate creative principle. As alluded to earlier in relation to the work of Debra Curtis (Curtis 2004), it can be suggested that a Deleuzian theory of the fetish could be conducive to the analysis of new modes of desire instigated via the use of technologies that challenge and change our behaviour and practices. From this point of view, traditional theories of fetishism are potentially redundant when considering diverse assemblages of subjects, technology and practices that generate novel flights of desire not predicted upon established relations. By considering desire from the point of view of desiring-production, such new fetishistic configurations construct new values that are ineffable at the point of constitution. As such, the theory also has the capacity to contribute to cyborg theory, especially concerning the relationship between artifice and desire - the artifice characteristic of new desiring-productions inherently challenges conventional bodily boundaries and notions of subjectivity; again, such relations are ineffable at the point of constitution and, according to our theory, are legitimate in their expression of a primary creativity at the heart of desiring-production.

By understanding value as the product of an immanent process that has no recourse to a given origin, the theory may also contribute to an ethics of becoming, in which individual differences are endorsed in opposition to an instrumental reason that quantifies and measures the subject in relation to predefined values and categories; the theory therefore has implications for education, work and communities – by

understanding values as immanent to given relations which often transgress interpersonal boundaries and require the becoming subject to be actively involved, a collaborative process is required whereby non-hierarchical decisions and actions are allowed to be made that nurture novelty and multiplicity. Such a process opposes public opinion polls, league tables, targets and appraisal systems in which values are predefined in advance. The process therefore resists the priorities of a singular capitalist restrictive economy. The theory endorses the notion that greater potential can be achieved via processes of difference rather than standardization. The theory is radical in that it refuses to set out the stakes in advance – it requires movement and dialogue without reliance upon the safety net of established knowledge and categories. Culturally specific and shared discourses may exist in advance, but these will always be a starting point for a line of flight that takes subjects somewhere novel where new values are generated.

The theory also has implications for economics and ecology, by championing the idea of multiple rather than restrictive economies, the notion that all economic decisions have to be subject to the singular flow of capital can be put into question. Each economy, whether involving ecology or commodities, can be appreciated as having its own specific processes, movements and values, each with the capacity to become different and affect other economies in novel ways. By perceiving value as artificial, arbitrary and subject to transformation, our new theory of fetishism provides a means to expose illegitimate reified relations, whilst endorsing the possibility that new creative economic relations can be formed without an appeal to previous, conventional notions of value.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> For Freud's description of his patient, see Freud, S (1927) 'Fetishism' in Freud, S (2001) 'The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 21'. London: Vintage.

<sup>2</sup> For an example in which Freud substitutes the penis for a baby, see Freud, S (1918) "On the Transformation of Instinct as Exemplified in Anal Eroticism" in Freud, S ' The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 17'. London: Hogarth Press, p 128-9 and 132-3. For an example in which Freud substitutes a woman's body for the phallus, see Freud, S (1915) "On Narcissism: An Introduction" in Freud, S ' The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume 14'. London: Hogarth Press.

<sup>3</sup> The realization of a radical separation of self from an other that the recognition of the phallic signifier entails, means that the infant's satisfaction is now subject to what Lacan calls *Demand* – the infant can no longer attain instant gratification from its mother, but must request (demand) objects for its satisfaction through its use of language conventions. It is because needs are now subject to demand that desire in the child is initiated.

<sup>4</sup> See Foucault 1990, p.3-13, Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and Wilhelm Reich's *The Sexual Revolution* (1936).

<sup>5</sup> For Foucault, the maintenance of the bourgeois family model was primarily to secure the health and lineage of its own class and prevent its dissolution through so-called 'perversions' and non-functional forms of sexual activities. As Foucault states:

The primary concern was not repression of the sex of the classes to be exploited, but rather the body, vigor, longevity, progeniture, and descent of the classes that "ruled". This was the purpose for which the deployment of sexuality was first established, as a new distribution of pleasures, discourses, truths, and powers; it has to be seen as the self-affirmation of one class rather than the enslavement of another. (Foucault 1990, p.123)

As such, the repression of desire for the working classes and their subjection to technologies of sex was something that was transmitted to them after the consolidation of the bourgeois family and its corresponding sexual practices. This perspective contrasts with repressive hypotheses which view the repression of sexuality as something enforced upon workers in which to guarantee maximum productivity threatened by the temptations of surplus pleasures. For Foucault, the management of sexuality for the working classes

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only occurred at the point of conflict in which the interests of the bourgeoisie were threatened; he states:

Conflicts were necessary (in particular, conflicts over urban space: cohabitation, proximity, contamination, epidemics, such as the cholera outbreak of 1832, or again, prostitution and venereal diseases) in order for the proletariat to be granted a body and a sexuality; economic emergencies had to arise (the development of heavy industry with the need for a stable and competent labour force, the obligation to regulate the population flow and apply demographic controls); lastly, there had to be established a whole technology of control which made it possible to keep the body under surveillance [...] (ibid, p. 126)

<sup>6</sup> Hysteria as a medical condition has been increasingly discredited since the 19<sup>th</sup> century – this is largely due to the condition being considered an ‘excess’ of female sexuality beyond a normative male model. Male sexuality has traditionally perceives sex as the activity of penetrative coitus. Much of the sexual dissatisfaction that was considered an ‘excess’ to normative sexual relations was in fact a blindness to female sexual needs beyond functional reproductive sex. As Rachel Maines points out:

The historically androcentric and pro-natal model of healthy, “normal” heterosexuality is penetration of the vagina by the penis to male orgasm [...] Because the androcentric model of sexuality was thought necessary to the pro-natal and patriarchal institution of marriage and had been defended and justified by leaders of the Western medical establishment in all centuries at least since the time of Hippocrates, marriage did not always “cure” the “disease” represented by the ordinary and uncomfortably persistent functioning of women’s sexuality outside the dominant sexual paradigm. (Maines 1999, p.3)

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Shelton provides us with a range of examples from western culture in which the African women is exoticised – these include photographs, picture postcards and the literature of Raymond Roussel and William Seabrook (Shelton 1995, p. 27-28)

<sup>8</sup> Here, ‘man’ is understood as the humanist transcendental subject – the erasure of which has been equated with our entry into a postmodern period in which the subject is understood to be a product of social discourses and practices; as such, the subject can no longer be a guarantor of truth and knowledge – these domains are then relativized to cultural determinations.

<sup>9</sup> One is reminded of Marx’s statement within the *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845):

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The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a real practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question (Marx 1992, p.422).

<sup>10</sup> Marx points out that the problem of scarcity in Malthus and Ricardo was less a problem of population outstripping food supply and more an issue of there being more workers than capital needs. As Marx states:

[S]ince the demand for labour is determined not by the amount of capital as a whole, but by its variable constituent alone [the value of labour power], that demand falls progressively with the increase of total social capital [...] it falls relatively to the magnitude of the total social capital and at an accelerated rate' (Marx 1990, p. 781).

As such, capital accumulation inevitably leads to unemployment of a section of the labour force. In turn, this creation of a reserve army of unemployed serves the function of preventing wages from rising too high. He states that the 'general movement of wages are exclusively regulated by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army' (ibid, p.791).

<sup>11</sup> Foucault's notion of historically changing and discontinuous epistemes can be criticized in a variety of ways. Firstly, Foucault's notion of epistemes within *The Order of Things* can be perceived as part of a wider structuralist trend in which all notions and practices are viewed within the unity of a wider narrative and discourse – as such all agencies are unconsciously part of the presuppositions of this narrative. As Merquior describes, it was Foucault's ambition in *The Order of Things* to 'lay bare cultural codes by describing them in their forms and articulations [...] that put [his] archaeology, willy-nilly, in the company of structuralism [...]' (Merquior 1985, p. 56). As such, a contradiction exists within Foucault's thought – he wants to champion a post-structuralist notion of the relativity of truth subject to a given historical discourse, yet requires us to subscribe to a given critical methodology to achieve this. As Peter Dews states,

his theoretical premises render unavoidable the assumption that modes of experience, systems of meaning and objects of knowledge are entirely determined by 'rules of formation' or – later – by operations of power. Yet, in order to function as a political critique of these rules or operations, Foucault's

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work must appeal to some form of meaning, experience or knowledge which is not so determined' (Dews 1987, p.185).

Equally, the unity of Foucault's epistemes – determined by a structuralist concern for discursive practice – is blind to the nuances of continuity and discontinuity from past, present or future modes of thinking. Merquior describes a variety of historical inaccuracies and notions that contradict such unity – he states that, '*taken synchronically*, Foucault's epistemes – contrary to their allegedly massive unity – seem to encompass a lot of *heterogeneity*' (ibid, p. 67).

<sup>12</sup> See Rose, J (1982) "Feminine Sexuality: Introduction" in Vice, S, ed. (1996) "Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reader". Cambridge: Polity Press

<sup>13</sup> Grosz states that in 'relations governed by pure difference, *each* term is defined by all the others; there can be no privileged term which somehow dispenses with its (constitutive) structuring and value in relation to other terms' (Grosz 1990, p.124)

<sup>14</sup> Slavoj Žižek's allegiance to Lacanian principles has led to a form of cultural criticism that is both ahistorical whilst relying upon the notion of presence and lack that a phallic symbolic order entails. For Žižek our very existence as a desiring subject is dependent on our entry into the phallic symbolic order – for Žižek this is an eternal law which he describes as that which 'returns as the same through diverse historicizations / symbolizations' (Žižek 1989, p.50). By reducing our desire to an ahistorical, eternal sense of lack, Žižek's theory is subject to the same neglect of female agency and bias towards heterosexuality as the writings of Freud and Lacan. By subscribing to the Freudian / Lacanian view that women are the radical other, outside the phallic sexual economy, Žižek repeats the pattern of rendering women without an agency that they can consider their own. As Rosi Braidotti points out, Žižek's work 'represents an anti-feminist regression that reiterates the whole array of symbolic invisibility and specularly which feminists have been arguing against since the early days of Lacan's work' (Braidotti 2002, p. 54). Likewise, by viewing castration and its ensuing lack as an essential ingredient in the production of subjectivity, Žižek upholds not only a patriarchal perspective, but also a conventional heterosexual view of sexuality and the production of subjectivity. As Judith Butler indicates, Žižek 'tends to rely on an unproblematized sexual antagonism that unwittingly installs a heterosexual matrix as a permanent and incontestable structure of culture in which women operate as a "stain" in discourse' (Butler 1993, p. 21). As we shall see later, though Žižek's work can be perceived as being complicit with a phallic economy, it offers us a means to understanding all objects of desire, including the phallus, as fetishistic.

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<sup>15</sup> Marxist uses of the notion of fetishism to expose the irrational and superstitious at the heart of western thought have been subject to criticism due to their presumed subscription to the idea that the non-western Other is somehow more primitive and irrational than their western counterparts. Jean Baudrillard criticises Marx's adoption of the European notion of fetishism, with its connotations of superstition and irrationality that are believed to correspond to 'primitive' forms of African religion. In the chapter *Fetishism and Ideology: The Semiological Reduction* (1972), Baudrillard describes how the fetishism metaphor within the work of Marx corresponds to the Christian and humanist 'condemnation of primitive cults by a religion that claimed to be abstract and spiritual' (Baudrillard 1981, p.88). As such, the concept has never really 'shed this moral and rationalistic connotation [and has] since been the recurrent leitmotiv of the analysis of magical thinking, whether that of the Bantu tribes or that of modern metropolitan hordes submerged in their objects and their signs' (ibid). On this point, Baudrillard's analysis of the concept of fetishism does not differ from that described by William Pietz: in opposition to the intentionless objectivity known to western reason, fetishism designated a "primitive" condition where objects are assumed to have magical powers and meanings in which the human agency involved in their generation went without recognition. According to Baudrillard, this European notion of fetishism allows Marx to designate such concepts as "false consciousness" and "superstructure" - terms that rely on a notion of an underlying objectivity in which an object can be known:

Here we are interested in the extension of this fetishist metaphor in modern industrial society, in so far as it enmeshes critical analysis (liberal or Marxist) within the subtle trap of a rationalistic anthropology. What else is intended by the concept of "commodity fetishism" if not the notion of a false consciousness devoted to the worship of exchange value [...]? All of this presupposes the existence of an object in some "true", objective state: its use value? (ibid, p.89).

Baudrillard argues that the complicity of Marxism with this occidental concept has ideological consequences that render the concept of "commodity fetishism" redundant as a notion capable of analysing the value and meanings that we give to commodities. Baudrillard believes that by 'referring all the problems of "fetishism" back to superstructural mechanisms of false consciousness, Marxism eliminates any real chance it has of analyzing the *actual process of ideological labour*' (ibid). The theory of infrastructure and superstructure must therefore 'be exploded, and replaced by a more comprehensive theory of productive forces, since these are all structurally implicated in the capitalist system – and not only in some cases (i.e, material production), while merely superstructurally in others (i.e., ideological production)' (ibid, p.90). Therefore the problem for Baudrillard is how to structurally understand the process by which commodities

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acquire values without resort to notions of a rational subject capable of distilling “truth” from false consciousness. For Baudrillard, a solution to this problem would involve rejecting the idea of magical thinking or false consciousness altogether:

[In] order to reconstitute the process of fetishization in terms of structure, we would have to abandon the fetishist metaphor of the golden calf [...] and develop instead an articulation that avoids any projection of magical or transcendental animism, and thus the rationalist position of positing a false consciousness and a transcendental subject (ibid)

Baudrillard appears to have a one-sided view of Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism. It is true that Marx uses the metaphor of fetishism, along with its Eurocentric connotations, as a means of describing how objects appear to be imbued with values of their own, regardless of human agency. However, this does not mean that Marx used such a metaphor uncritically or that he championed a notion of innate human subjectivity behind the façade of false consciousness. As we have described, Marx’s use of fetishism acts as a trope to criticize the concept as part of a project that upholds the categories of western thought. It is precisely in Marx’s attempt to ground his analysis in the material practice of human beings within a specific social formation that his use of fetishism takes place. The use of this analogy is therefore directly opposed to Baudrillard’s claim that the concept of fetishism in Marx is but one more example of ‘occidental Christian and humanist ideology’ (Baudrillard 1981, p.88). The criticism of the practice of religious fetishism proves to be the same criticism of fetishistic worship within political economy - in the former, objects appeared to have innate powers which were in fact a projection of human intentionality, in the later capital appears to have innate causal powers of value when, in reality, it has no real power outside its *socially generated* power to command the labour activities of individuals. The point is that in both the sensuous realm of ideas (fetishism) and practice (production and exchange), socially constructed signs and values come to alienate and restrict human agency by bearing the seal of their own authority (monetary exchange value). Against Baudrillard’s claims, Marx is therefore criticising the categories of western thought by exposing the degree to which its assumed Other (fetishism) infects its own logic.

<sup>16</sup> Dawn Ades points out that the Surrealists identified this equivalence whilst criticising the hierarchies enforced by western imperialism. Within the exhibition *La Verite sur les Colonies* (The truth about the colonies), the Surrealists produced a display entitled ‘European Fetishes’ which contained ‘three statues including a Catholic image of the Virgin and Child, and a charity collecting box in the form of a black child’ (Ades 1995, p.68). As Ades points out, to describe these European objects as fetishes ‘expos[ed] the

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Western ideological assumptions behind the term, and by directing its object backwards, as it were, to Western things, serv[ed] to defamiliarise and denude them' (ibid).

<sup>17</sup> In Saussure's theory, meaning is constituted through the differential play of signifiers, each having an arbitrary relation to a signified. The explanation of Saussure's structuralist theory can be found in de Saussure, F (1959) "Course in General Linguistics", New York: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>18</sup> Levi-Strauss's analysis of Totemism can be found in Levi-Strauss, C (1989) "The Savage Mind", London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson. It is interesting to note that though Baudrillard does not comment upon it, "The savage Mind" overtly describes totemism as a sophisticated system used to make sense of the world, rather than the occidental perception of totemism as a primitive, superstitious belief system. In light of this, Baudrillard's use of structuralist methods seems all the more valid when considering Levi-Strauss's recognition of parity between western and non-western modes of thinking.

<sup>19</sup> Baudrillard's criticism of Marx in terms of a supposed appeal to a transparent use-value that the logic of the commodity then distorts via the instigation of false-consciousness, is based on a confusion between value and use-value within Marx's theory. The notion that Marx is complicit with a transcendental rational and unified subject that is somehow capable of distinguishing true social relations and conditions from a realm of false consciousness can be refuted by an appeal to Marx's own writing. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)*, Marx describes the universality and species-being of the human subject:

Humanity is a species-being, not only because he practically and theoretically makes the species – both its own and those of other things – its object, but also – and this is simply another way of saying the same thing – because it looks upon itself as the actual living species, because it looks upon itself as a *universal* and therefore free being [...] The universality of man manifests itself in practice in that universality which makes the whole of nature his *inorganic* body, (1) as a direct means of life, and (2) as the matter, the object, and the instruments of his life activity. (Marx 1992, p.327-8)

Here Marx indicates how humanity can be defined as making its species 'both practically and theoretically' its object which, in turn, makes the whole of nature its 'inorganic body'. The universality of humanity therefore consists of making both itself and nature the object and the 'instruments of [its] life activity'. Therefore, for Marx, the essence of humanity is a process of becoming in which we transform ourselves through our productive interaction with nature. As Peter Osborne recognises:

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For Marx, humans are involved in a quasi-metabolic interaction with nature. Their universality does not precede this interaction, but is its result [...] The human is in a constant state of becoming more than what it was before [...] Furthermore, this interaction with nature is so close, so existentially intimate, that nature is a kind of 'inorganic' extension of the human body. In labour, nature is a human prosthesis. (Osborne 2005, p.54).

Marx's view is contrary to a notion that species-being and universality should be understood as designating a static sense of human subjectivity that can judge the world from a transcendental point of view. Paradoxically, the essence of humanity turns out to be its capacity for transformation. As such, Baudrillard's accusation that Marx relies upon a notion of a rational unified subject is mistaken. It is not the case that Marx believed that a realm of given use-values underlay the system of arbitrary value that appears to be inherent to things in themselves as soon as they enter the market as commodities. As we have already seen, for Marx, commodities do not contain an atom of use-value when considered from the point of view of exchange. As far as Marx is concerned, use-values 'are only realized in use or in consumption' (Marx Op Cit, p. 126) and, when it comes to the exchange relation, 'one use-value is worth just as much as another, provided only that it is present in the appropriate quantity' (ibid, p.127). As such, the value perceived to be inherent to a commodity – that which makes it a fetish - is entirely separate from its use-value which is completely relative to its subjective interpretation at the point of consumption. Marx therefore makes no appeal to an object's given use when discussing it as a fetish, its use is purely relative to the consumer – ironically, the problem of standard, transparent use-values only occurs as an effect of reification in which quantitative sales - the concern of exchange value – attempts to dictate the qualitative use-values of a commodity via advertising and marketing; it is thus the priorities of the code that Baudrillard identifies within a restrictive economy which ultimately engineers a notion of given utility.

<sup>20</sup> See Baudrillard (2007) *Forget Foucault*. London: Semiotext(e).

<sup>21</sup> See Freud's *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905) in Freud, S (1986) 'The Essentials of Psychoanalysis: The definitive collection of Sigmund Freud's writing'. London: Penguin, p. 330-1. Freud identified an unrestricted realm of polymorphously perverse sexuality that exists within children before the onset of the Castration Complex. Here the 'mental dams against sexual excesses – shame, disgust and morality – have either not yet been constructed at all or are only in course of construction [...] (p.331).

<sup>22</sup> Whereas Marx saw this process at work in the commodity form, in which all objects appeared to have an inherent value within a singular economy, Freud and his heirs perceive this process in the refusal to recognize sexual difference via the illusionary belief

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in a maternal phallus and its corresponding phallic economy. Though the two types of economy both describe this process, psychoanalysis fails to give due consideration to the realm of production which allows for the possibility of an economy of exchange to take place; by prioritizing, *a priori*, the agents within an exchange dynamic without giving due consideration to the processes of production that underlie such a relation, psychoanalysis finds itself complicit with a phallic economy – it does this by assuming, and artificially installing, a phallus in the body of woman – the site of sexual difference. In contrast to this, Marx places production at the heart of his theory and sees the commodity-as-fetish as the means by which relations of production are reified.

<sup>23</sup> See Freud (1927), p. 157.

<sup>24</sup> As Lacan points out:

If it is true that the signifier is the first mark of the subject, how can we fail to recognise here – from the very fact that this game is accompanied by one of the first oppositions to appear – that it is in the object to which the opposition is applied in act, the reel, that we must designate the subject [...] The activity as a whole symbolises repetition, but not at all that of some need that might demand the return of the mother [...] It is the repetition of the mother's departure as cause of a Spaltung in the subject – overcome by the alternating game, *fort-da* [...] It is aimed at what, essentially, is not there, qua represented [.]. (Lacan 1991, p.62-3)

<sup>25</sup> Though Freud views the sexual instinct as initially being 'without an object, that is, auto-erotic' (Freud 1905, p. 366) and considers the possibility that 'any organ [...] can function as an erotogenic zone' (ibid), these zones are always already described in terms of lack – at 'its origin [the erotogenic zone] attaches itself to one of the vital somatic functions' (ibid, p. 322) in which the 'need for repeating [...] becomes detached from the need of taking nourishment' (ibid, p.322). Though such a detachment is 'convenient, because it makes him/her independent of the external world' (ibid, p.322), such auto-erotic practices, in which a child chooses another part of their body for replicating a sensation– and thus a 'second erotogenic zone' (ibid) is born - this body part, or zone, are considered as an 'inferior kind' (ibid) no doubt because it acts as a substitute for that which it gained from its mother. This sense of lack orientated towards the mother is then destined to find its pinnacle within the Oedipus complex in which the child is radically disconnected from the mother via the influence of the father.

<sup>26</sup> For a summary of the differences between Lacan's concept of Need, Demand and Desire, see Grosz 1990a, p. 59 – 67.

<sup>27</sup> This paradoxical and impossible road of desire, in which the goal – to get to a beyond of the signifier – is established via the very thing that one aims to escape, leads Lacan to set in opposition the pleasure principle and his notion of *jouissance*. Whereas the pleasure principle requires us to enjoy as little as possible - for Freud the pleasure

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principle is 'a lowering of tension – that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure' (Freud 1920, p.218) - via the channels stipulated within the symbolic order, what the subject truly wants is access to that excess of enjoyment beyond the symbolic order that is prohibited by the Super-Ego as the Name-of-the-Father. Jouissance is the term used by Lacan to describe this excess beyond the pleasure principle. According to Lacan, Jouissance is experienced as both pleasure and suffering in that it subjects the individual to more enjoyment than it is typically expected to endure. This desire for jouissance is the goal of the death drive in that jouissance is the path towards death: the dissolution of our subjectivity. The Super-Ego – that which has the phallus and is the Symbolic Law – compels us to emulate the father in which to attain the enjoyment he receives which we view as having been denied us; as Lacan points out: 'Nothing forces anyone to enjoy except the superego. The superego is the imperative of jouissance – Enjoy!' (Lacan 2000,p.3). As we attempt to meet the demands of the superego (not to commit incest with our mother), we are simultaneously subject to feelings of guilt because we are trying to obtain that which we resent the father for having – as Sean Homer points out 'we are not simply guilty if we break the law and commit incest, but rather we are always already guilty of the *desire* to commit incest' (2005, p.59). This view of the superego is informed by the myth of the primal horde in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Freud speculates about the origin of the paternal law against incest. Freud describes a scene in which the father has sole access to women which he denies his sons. Out of jealousy, the brothers band together and murder their father. Freud describes the consequences of such an act:

Though the brothers had banded together in order to overcome their father [...e]ach of them would have wished, like his father, to have all the women to himself. The new [social] organisation would have collapsed in a struggle of all against all, for none of them was of such over-mastering strength as to be able to take on his father's part[.] Thus the brothers had no alternative if they were to live together, but [...] to institute the law against incest. (Freud 1999, p.144)

Despite any evidence to verify this myth – as Freud points out, this 'earliest state of society has never been an object of observation' (ibid, 141) - it does serve the function of illustrating the dual function of the superego: to command us to enjoy (in this case, the women) and also to inflict guilt (for desiring that which belongs to the father). Žižek points out that the more we attempt to meet the prohibitive demands of the superego, the greater we feel its pressure due to it being founded upon the desire it seeks to exclude. Paradoxically then, the more we attempt to meet its demands, the more guilty we feel. (Žižek 1994, p.67).

<sup>28</sup> For Žižek, both instances of psychosexual fetishism and commodity fetishism can be understood from the perspective of the *objet petit a* and the superego. The ideology

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behind our beliefs and desires 'exercises its force only in so far as it is experienced, in the unconscious economy of the subject, as a traumatic, senseless injunction' (Žižek 1989, p.43). Žižek's point is that it does not matter whether or not the meaning or truth value of our beliefs and desires lack foundation, what is important is that the authority of the letter is put in place. Entering the Symbolic Order requires our subjection to the phallic signifier and being positioned as either *having* (male) or *being* (female) the phallus. As such, the value of the phallic signifier – the key to desire and our entry into the Symbolic Order – lies not in its essential truth value, meaning or ethical stance, but in the very fact that it is an essential injunction that determines our subjectivity. Žižek believes that beyond the Symbolic Order there is no truth to be found, there is only the Real – that realm which Lacan designates as the unknowable. As such, the symbolic law – the traumatic enunciation that requires no foundation or truth, yet which delivers us from the Real – is precisely the condition for subjectivity and ideology.

'External' obedience to the Law is thus not submission to external pressure [...] but obedience to the Command in so far as it is 'incomprehensible', not understood; in so far as it retains a 'traumatic', 'irrational' character: far from hiding its full authority, this traumatic, non-integrated character of the Law is a *positive condition of it*. (ibid p.37)

Given that on this account, there is no truth beyond the law, Žižek contends that the 'function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself' (ibid p.45). On considering this, Žižek points out that it is impossible to free ourselves from the law and see reality as it really is; instead we must break the grip of the law and its ideology by confronting the reality of our desires as manifested within our dreams – this is analogous to the way the patient in psychoanalysis becomes cured of his/her neurosis by gaining an awareness of the mechanisms of desire at work within their dreams.

In vain do we try to break out of the ideological dream by 'opening our eyes and trying to see reality as it is', by throwing away the ideological spectacles [...] as the subjects of a look which views the facts as they are, we remain throughout 'the consciousness of our ideological dream'. The only way to break the power of our ideological dream is to confront the Real of our desire which announces itself in this dream. (ibid, p.48)

<sup>29</sup> Žižek describes how the *objet petit a* relates to the fetishisation of commodities within contemporary consumerist ideology through the phenomenon of Coca-Cola – a commodity which Žižek views as the 'ultimate capitalist merchandise' (Žižek 2001, p.22) in that it is 'surplus-enjoyment personified' (ibid). Žižek states that the surplus-enjoyment personified by Coca-Cola is symptomatic of the fact that – in Marxist terms – it transcends any immediate use-value:

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[Coke's] strange taste does not seem to provide any particular satisfaction; it is not directly pleasing and endearing; however, it is precisely as such, as transcending any immediate use-value [...] that Coke functions as the direct embodiment of 'it': of the pure surplus of enjoyment over standard satisfactions, of the mysterious and elusive X we are all after in our compulsive consumption of merchandise (ibid, p.22).

<sup>30</sup> For Bataille, the recovery of eroticism was essential. This could only be achieved via a reengagement with the realm of the sacred in which intimate communication with the world could take place. The libertinism of erotic play experienced within our postmodern world could not be perceived as a substitute. According to Bataille, libertinism was nothing other than a further profanation of our bodies as things utilized as objects of pleasure – it therefore failed to allow transgression to occur. As Bataille states, in 'an entirely profane world nothing would be left but the animal mechanism' (Bataille 1998, p.128).

<sup>31</sup> In particular, Bataille refers to the practice of the *potlatch* by North Western American Indians to illustrate the notion of an expenditure outside of notions of accumulation. For Bataille, variations of the practice of the *potlatch*, identified by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss, can be found amongst the peoples of the Tlingit, the Haida, the Tsimshian, the Kwakiutl and the Tchoukchi. The *potlatch* manifests itself in the form of the gift; it excludes 'all bargaining and, in general, [...] constituted by a considerable gift of riches, offered openly and with the goal of humiliating, defying, and *obligating* a rival' (ibid). In order to reply to the obligation and challenge, the rival must respond with a 'more valuable gift, in other words, to return with interest' (ibid). Bataille points out that gifting is not the only form of the potlatch, that it is also possible to 'defy rivals through the spectacular destruction of wealth' (ibid). Such a phenomenon allows Bataille to make an analogy between the potlatch and religious forms of sacrifice.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Richardson indicates that is unlikely that the potlatch was established on an economy of expenditure and waste. Richardson points out that

the potlatch [...] represented an extremely efficient use of resources in which waste was anathema. The most complex form of the potlatch, that of the Kwakiutl, was certainly not performed for the purposes of the destruction of wealth, but for its maintenance and distribution. In so far as it contained excessive elements these were incidental. (Richardson 1994, p.82)

Likewise, Richardson indicates how Bataille's references to practices in Aztec culture, which orientate around the sun and sacrifice, are problematic. in *The Accursed*

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*Share* (1949), Bataille refers to such practices in which to illustrate the idea of excess, waste and the sacred within a general economy. Firstly, Richardson criticizes Bataille's use of the sun as an analogy of the propensity of all things to uselessly expend their energy. According to Richardson,

[t]he earth does not itself produce any energy independently of the sun, whose bounteous nature is a pre-requisite for earthly existence. Without the sun, the world itself could not even exist as a physical entity. Does this not mean that the nature of the sun is fundamentally different to ours? [...] Unlike the sun, the condition of the world's existence is dependence: to sustain itself it needs to receive energy [...] In so far as it has an energy reserve, it is only what has been given to it, not what is sovereignly present within it and that it is able to dispense when and how it chooses. (ibid, p. 78)

If Bataille's use of the sun is found to be questionable in terms of an analogy to describe the propensity of all things to expend energy uselessly, then the meaning ascribed to sacrifice in relation to the sun in Aztec culture is also found wanting. For Richardson, the 'whole basis of Aztec society appears founded upon the understanding that the sun did indeed require something in return for its gift' (ibid, p.79). Contrary to Bataille's notion that sacrifice provided an opportunity to expend a surplus uselessly, Richardson points out that sacrifice 'derived not so much from an inner need for expenditure in itself as from an overwhelming need to expiate a direct sense of guilt and allay an overwhelming fear of retribution' (ibid). Therefore sacrifice appears to 'have been more a means by which to expel, rather than confront death' (ibid). As such,

One has to wonder [...] if Aztec sacrifice did not serve precisely a homogenizing process within their given society. As such it might be considered [...] to be an example of sacrifice being turned against itself and gaining a profane quality, and its purpose may have been to bind together the homogenous elements of Aztec society in a conclusive way, so serving the taboo (ibid, p.80)

For Richardson, though Bataille's use of ethnographic data has questionable accuracy, this does not bring his central argument into question. Richardson makes reference to the contrast between Spanish and Aztec expansion to point out the opposing homogeneous and heterogeneous natures of each society. On the one hand, the fact that Aztec sacrifice was performed 'in public and in full view [...] testifies to the strength of the social fabric and only takes place within societies which are founded around intimacy and heterogeneity' (ibid, p.83). On the other hand, the massacres performed by imperialistic Spanish expansion demonstrate the

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characteristics of societies which have a weak social fabric and consequently tend to reduce themselves to homogeneity. Instead of being placed at the heart of society, violence is now hidden away (ibid).

In such homogeneous societies then, violence must be hidden away and any sacred quality attached to sacrifice and destruction is removed. To identify with the victim would be to make the act criminal. Both the victim and violence must become the Other that lack value. As Richardson states:

[S]acrifice can be seen [...] as the experience of self-sufficient societies that cohere in a heterogeneous way. With the inauguration of massacre, however, cruelty and degradation become everyday norms: it is the consequence of the determination to reduce everything to utilitarian value, to reduce the world to the nature of a thing. (ibid, p.84-5)

<sup>33</sup> Bataille gives the following description of this method:

When one says that heterology scientifically considers questions of heterogeneity, one does not mean that heterology is, in the usual sense of such a formula, the science of the heterogeneous. The heterogeneous is even resolutely placed outside the reach of scientific knowledge, which by definition is applicable to homogeneous elements. Above all, heterology is opposed to any homogeneous representation of the world, in other words, to any philosophical system [...Heterology] leads to the complete reversal of the philosophical process, which ceases to be an instrument of appropriation, and now serves excretion; it introduces the demands for the violent gratifications implied by social life. (Bataille 1930, p.97)

Heterology then, 'stands for the way of looking at what is not normally considered, especially in the practices of either philosophy or science, these being matters pertaining to the sacred, horror, excretion, violent sexuality, states of excess' (Hegarty Op Cit, p.27). Heterology therefore not only considers what has been excluded within a social discourse, but also how the excluded comes to be marginalized within the homogeneous order. This method places Bataille in a paradoxical situation in which he is committed to systematically write against systems. As is evident in the introduction to *The Accursed Share* (1949), this paradox does not escape Bataille's notice:

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Writing this book in which I was saying that energy finally can only be wasted, I myself was using my energy, my time, working; my research answered in a fundamental way the desire to add to the amount of wealth acquired for mankind. Should I say that under these conditions I sometimes could only respond to the truth of my book and could not go on writing it? (Bataille 1989, p.11)

Denis Hollier points out that heterological practice should therefore be considered critical in two senses:

[Heterology] is constantly in a critical position, to the extent that it does not accept the fabric in which, nonetheless, it is forced to produce itself; it is critical of this fabric but its criticism is by definition nonviable, its opportunities remain the critical thing. Heterology is the inscription in the logos itself of its other (heteros), an inscription that can only be sustained by insistently refusing its own mono and homological reduction (Hollier 1998, p.114)

As we shall see, the paradoxical nature of heterological thought has implications for our later consideration of Bataille in relation to the fetish.

<sup>34</sup> See Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). For Protestantism, a person was religiously compelled to labour hard for the good of society as an act of individual conscience; individuals were also forbidden from wastefully using money on luxuries due to the fact that such expenditure was perceived as a sin. The outcome of such a contradiction, in which one labours hard but is prevented from exuberant expenditure, was the accumulation and investment of money. As Weber states, when 'asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate world morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order' (Weber 2003, p.181).

<sup>35</sup> One is reminded of an earlier observation in which *Minkondi* fetishes are associated precisely with communication with death – a correspondence therefore exists between a concept of fetishism and forms of society not based upon the exclusion of the dead.

<sup>36</sup> Firstly, Pietz perceives the desire invested in the fetish as a moment of crisis in which the identity of the self is disrupted. Pietz makes reference to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Body Without Organs in which to explain this phenomenon – a concept that we shall be discussing later. Pietz states:

The fetish is, then, first of all, something intensely personal, whose truth is experienced as a substantial movement from "inside" the self (the self totalized through an impassioned body, a "Body Without Organs") into the self-limited

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morphology of a material object situated in space “outside” [...]he fetish object “corresponds” by “recalling” the amorous flow or sense of being touched within the embodied self as this was made conscious in singular moments of “crisis” in which the identity of the self is called into question [...] (ibid, p.11-12)

As will be explained later, the Body Without Organs describes a process in which new identities are forged or dispersed depending on the various material, biological and social intensities situated within and upon the body.

Secondly, Deleuze’s notion of territorialization clearly corresponds to Pietz’s use of the concept within his categories for the fetish. For Deleuze, territorialization ‘programs desire to valorize certain organs and objects at the expense of others [whilst deterritorialization designates] the process of freeing desire from established organs and objects’ (Holland 1999, p.19). As we have mentioned, for Pietz the category of territorialization performs the similar function of focusing desire upon an object or sign within a particular context, it therefore ‘acts as a material space gathering an otherwise unconnected multiplicity into the unity of [an] enduring singularity’ (Pietz Op Cit, p. 15).

<sup>37</sup> According to this view, copies can be judged by analogy and internal resemblance with the ideal. Finally, there is the simulacra which can be described as the copy of a copy – for example, if I was to paint a picture of a particular dog, this would constitute a copy of a copy and would therefore be twice removed from the ideal notion of this animal; as such, simulacra are viewed as inferior in that they construct an image through their resemblance to the differences inherent to copies, referring instead to external resemblance rather than any internal principle.

<sup>38</sup> Deleuze describes the passive synthesis as follows:

It is in this present that time is deployed. To it belong both the past and the future: the past in so far as the preceding instants are retained in the contraction; the future because its expectation is anticipated in this same contraction. The past and the future do not designate instants distinct from a supposed present instant, but rather the dimensions of the present itself in so far as it is a contraction of instants. The present does not have to go outside itself in order to pass from past to future. (Deleuze 2004, p 91)

<sup>39</sup> Deleuze considers Kant’s view of time to be an active synthesis because in order to make meaning of past events, there must be an active process, which is identified by Kant as memory. Unlike the passive synthesis of habit, the active synthesis does not relate to a present in that memory retrospectively perceives passing moments – as such, memory relates to a past that has never been present; it is a form in itself of phenomenon that never existed before its operations.

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<sup>40</sup> In her essay *Women's Time* (1979), Kristeva similarly draws our attention to a time outside of a linear conception. Kristeva recognizes a feminine, maternal time of *repetition* and *eternity* that opposes a paternal notion of linear time; she states that

female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains repetition and eternity from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality [...] whose regularity and unison with what is experienced as extra-subjective time, cosmic time, occasional vertiginous visions and unnameable *jouissance*. On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) [...] all encompassing and infinite like imaginary space [...] (Kristeva 1979, p. 191)

In opposition to this maternal conception is the notion of linear time, associated with the paternal realm due to its correspondence with the symbolic realm. As Kristeva describes,

[linear] temporality renders explicit a rupture, an expectation or an anguish which other temporalities work to conceal [...]his linear time is that of language considered as the enunciation of sentences (noun + verb; topic-comment; beginning-end), and that this time rests on its own stumbling block, which is also the stumbling block of that enunciation – death. (ibid, p. 192)

Linear time is therefore aligned with the rupture and separation that constitutes entry into the symbolic order – an entry that requires the recognition of lack, the sacrifice of the maternal realm and the relinquishing of incestuous desire; it therefore signals the death of the plenitude and fluidity associated with the feminine. Kristeva describes our subjection to the symbolic order a submission to ‘obsessional time’, recognizing in the mastery of time the true structure of the slave’ (ibid). To deny such tutelage, via the surfacing of maternal pulsions, is therefore also to rebut linear time; as Kristeva points out, the ‘hysteric (either male or female) who suffers from reminiscences would, rather, recognize his or her self in the anterior temporal modalities: cyclical or monumental’ (ibid). This has a bearing on the notion of fetishism – as we shall see, for Kristeva, the disavowal of the symbolic, with its corresponding notions of castration and lack, is symptomatic of the surfacing of the maternal semiotic realm into signifying practice. Such disruptions convey the compulsion of the death-drive to return to a maternal realm of plenitude before the onset of symbolic lack. As described later, Kristeva repeats the typical narrative of a desire to return to maternal origins, along with a strict separation of the paternal and

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maternal realms – any ‘perversion’ or negation of the symbolic within signifying practice will therefore be deemed as nothing more than a substitute of its inevitable law. A Deleuzian notion of time as an eternal return of difference, is therefore in direct contrast to this – rather than fall into the impasse of an omnipresent symbolic law and the perpetual dichotomy of maternal and paternal realms, Deleuze offers us a rhizomatic notion of time in which linearity and universality are replaced by an immanent process in which a plurality of new connections and deterritorializations become manifest.

<sup>41</sup> Deleuze and Guattari borrow the term from Antonin Artaud’s radio play *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* (1947):

When you will have made him a Body Without Organs,  
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions  
and restored him to his true freedom. (Artaud 1947, p 571)

Contained within these lines from the play, there is the sense that the Body Without Organs is a body of possibilities, outside of conventional habits or regressions to prior states.

<sup>42</sup> An example of this would be the breast as an energy-source-machine which the mouth as organ-machine interrupts, diverting its flow.

<sup>43</sup> This recognition manifests itself through the consumption of the pleasure generated through the production and recording process. Deleuze and Guattari point out: It is a strange subject [...] with no fixed identity [...] being defined by the share of the product it takes for itself [...] being born of the states that it consumes and being reborn with each new state. “It’s me, and so it’s mine...” Even suffering, as Marx says, is a form of self enjoyment. Doubtless all desiring-production is, in and of itself, immediately consumption and consummation, and therefore, “sensual pleasure”. (ibid, p.16)

<sup>44</sup> In *Coldness and Cruelty* (1967), Deleuze describes fetishism in essentially Freudian terms:

[It is] first of all a disavowal (“No, the woman does not lack a penis”); secondly it is a defensive neutralization ([...] the knowledge of the situation as it is persists, but in a suspended, neutralized form); in the third place it is a protective and idealizing neutralization (for the belief in a female phallus is itself experienced as a protest of the ideal against the real; it remains suspended or neutralized in the ideal, the better to shield itself against the painful awareness of reality). (Deleuze 1989, p. 31-2).

According to Freud’s latter view of Masochism (described in *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (1924)), this psychological phenomenon is found to have primacy over

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sadism, of which it is usually associated with, in that it serves the function of eroticising tension (Freud 1924, p. 155-170). By eroticising pain, masochism allows us to find pleasure in un-pleasure, it therefore negotiates a space between erotic desire and the guilt experienced in the wish to defy the incest taboo instigated by the father.

<sup>45</sup> Whereas the masochist attempts to control a relationship through a contractual agreement in which to attain a dream of absolute submission / denial of subjectivity, the fact that such an agreement relies upon mutual dependence makes any truly dominant / submissive binary identity impossible; in this sense, the disavowal typically recognized in fetishism can be interpreted as serving the function of masking the intersubjective relation between both parties.

<sup>46</sup> The autonomy of the affect-image from character and plot within a cinematic scene places greater emphasis upon stylistic features in the generation of meaning and effect within a film – as such, the affect-image is a conceptual tool that widens the scope of analysis beyond typical structuralist interpretations.

<sup>47</sup> Lacan refers to Klein's notion of partial objects on numerous occasions when discussing the fragmented perception of the body prior to Oedipalisation (Lacan 2006, p.55, 286, 513).

<sup>48</sup> For Klein these two earlier phases of psycho-sexual development signal the generation of the super-ego, not as the effect of the father, but as the effect of the interventions of the mother – as Klein states, the mother 'has frustrated his oral desires, and now [...] she also interferes with his anal pleasures' (Klein 1928, p.73). For Klein, it is the negotiation of part objects in the mother–child relationship – what Klein calls the 'feminine' phase – that is central to the process of individuation that prepares the constitution of the self during the Oedipal stage. Klein believes that the child fears retribution from the mother for wanting to appropriate and destroy her – the child already perceives the castrating power of the mother in her ability to remove its faeces; as such, 'by means of the anal frustrations which she inflicts does she pave the way for the castration complex: in terms of psychic reality she is also already the castrator' (Klein 1928, p. 74). During the Oedipal development of the child, the fear of the mother is accentuated 'because there is combined with it an intense dread of castration by the father' (ibid).

<sup>49</sup> Lacan refers to Klein's notion of partial objects on numerous occasions when discussing the fragmented perception of the body prior to Oedipalisation (Lacan 2006, p.55, 286, 513).

<sup>50</sup> Kaplan's five principles of the fetishism strategy can be described as follows. Firstly:

*Fetishism is a mental strategy or defense that enables a human being to transform something or someone with its own enigmatic energy and immaterial essence into something or someone that is material and tangibly real, a form of being that makes something or someone controllable. (ibid, p. 5)*

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To elucidate this first principle, Kaplan refers to the tendency in modernity to reduce everything and everyone into a commodity. With reference to Marx, Kaplan recognizes the reifying process in which, through the provision of surplus labour for the capitalist, '*the worker is transmogrified into a commodity*' (ibid, p.6).

Secondly:

*Fetishism transforms ambiguity and uncertainty into something knowable and certain and in doing so snuffs out any sparks of creativity that might ignite the fires of rebellion.* (ibid, p.6)

According to Kaplan, this second principle is a subtle variation of the first. Here, the 'material object, the fetish, is employed to still and silence, bind and dominate, smother and squelch the frighteningly uncontrollable and unknowable energies of someone or something [...]' (ibid). One can surmise that money and the phallus, as knowable and certain signifiers of value, both fall into this category. Deviations from these signifiers is then to be perceived as either a perversion, lacking utility or unproductive. The various other 'substitute' material fetishes would also fall into this category.

Thirdly:

*Fetishism brings certain details into the foreground of experience in order to mask and disguise other features that are thus cast into the shadows and margins and background.* (ibid)

For Kaplan, this principle is associated with masquerade. According to this principle, the '*presence of the erotic surface disguises and covers over the absences that would otherwise remind us of something traumatic*' (ibid). The obvious example in conventional psychoanalytic theory for this would be the use of the fetish to mask the perceived lack of the phallus in woman. As in Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), the body of the Hollywood female star can also be perceived as a seamless fetishistic façade that disavows the trauma of castration. According to Mulvey, the controlling gaze of the male, in which there is a 'direct scopophilic contact with the female form displayed for his enjoyment' (Mulvey 2009, p. 21), is further complicated through the unconscious threat of castration that the male perceives, but disavows; as Mulvey states, 'the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified' (ibid, p.22). As such, there are two avenues for the gaze in which to escape from castration anxiety:

[P]reoccupation with the reenactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counter-balanced by the devaluation, punishment, or saving of the guilty object (an avenue typified by the concerns of

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the film noir); or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous (hence overevaluation, the cult of the female star). (ibid, p. 22)

Kaplan states that the 'dramatic and vivid visibility of the fetish object serves to dazzle and confuse, blinding the viewer from other potentially more troubling implications that are thus cast into the shadows' (ibid).

Fourthly:

*The more dangerous and unpredictable the threat of desire, the more deadened or distanced from human experience the fetish object must be.* (ibid, p.7)

According to this view, part of the function of fetishism is to ossify and deaden an experience in which to control an experience and quell any uncertainty. For Kaplan, when the '*sexual object is alive, with all manner of threateningly, dangerously unpredictable vitalities, the desire he or she arouses must be invested in an object that is knowable and predictable*' (ibid, p.7). One can assume that the abstractions constituted by the objectification of economic value within money and erotic value within the phallus are examples of this tendency to deaden vitalities and the potential of human interaction.

Finally:

*The death drive tints itself in erotic colour. The impression of erogenous colour draws a mask right on the skin.* (ibid, p.8)

Kaplan's last principle of the fetishism strategy draws our attention to the relationship between fetishism and death. As referred to earlier, for Kaplan the death drive is perceived as a phenomenon at the heart of fetishism. Behind the fetish is always the repetitive desire to return to a state of death in which neither tension or lack exists. Because such a desire is unconscious, it never manifests itself and is only apprehended via a series of erotic masks (fetishes) that act as monuments to death in an attempt to control and ossify value and desire.

<sup>51</sup> For Kaplan, the fetishism strategy is viewed as a cunning mechanism to delude the analyst and analysand and should therefore be carefully scrutinized. For Kaplan, some models of psychoanalysis are exemplars of the fetishism strategy within therapeutic practice - the tendency to tie manifest and latent images to preconceived meanings is perceived as a means to deaden the vitality of a therapy session. Kaplan states:

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'Knowingness, a variant of certainty, inevitably deadens the vitality of the clinical situation. It is the core of the fetishism strategy in psychoanalysis' (Kaplan 2006, p.124).

<sup>52</sup> In *Fetishism and Curiosity* (1996), Mulvey maintains that much of our cultural forms can be understood, in terms of affect and content, at which the disavowal inherent to fetishism comes into play. At such points there is an 'oscillation between what is seen and what threatens to erupt into knowledge' (ibid, p14). Mulvey uses the genre of horror movies as a particularly good example of how the process of disavowal can break down. Within such films, the perfect exterior sheen of 'feminine beauty collapses to reveal the uncanny, abject, maternal body' (ibid). In such circumstances, 'it is as though the fetish itself has failed' (ibid). As such, an 'aesthetics of disavowal [...] is an attempt to rearticulate those black holes of political repression, class and woman, in the Symbolic Order' (Mulvey 1996, p15).

<sup>53</sup> In his article for the *Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association*, entitled *Fetishism* (1953), Robert Bak relates the object fixation that occurs during the constitution of a fetish to separation anxiety. On recognising the fact that, for Freud, the castration complex is the stage of development that the male child 'detaches himself from the mother and turns towards the father' (Gamman / Makinen 1994, p. 113), Bak divides the fear of castration and fear of separation into discrete processes. By focusing upon the process of individuation – where the child comes to recognise their own identity through the process of separation from the mother – Bak identifies fetishism as a means to undo 'the separation from the mother [by] clinging to [a] symbolic substitute' (ibid). For Bak, the mother that the child strives to cling to is the 'pre-phallic mother who is thus seen as unthreatening to the little penis' (ibid). As such, Bak situates fetishism in between both separation and castration anxiety, allowing a shift of emphasis from an understanding of fetishism as solely the effect of castration anxiety.

While outlining his theory of the 'transitional object' (Winnicott, D.W 1975), Winnicott discusses the situation in which such an object may develop into a fetish. Winnicott describes the process in which the infant develops 'from a sensation of being magically a part of the maternal breast, through to an awareness of itself within an outside environment, via the safety or comfort of a transitional object' (ibid). Winnicott goes on to argue that such a transitional object may develop into a fetish. Here again, fetishism is recognised as an effect of the separation anxiety associated with the mother.

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Gamman and Makinen point out that, for Greenacre, it is a 'disturbance in the separation process during the first two years which forms the potential for a later fetish fixation' (ibid, p.114). Greenacre goes on to suggest that during the castration complex, the potential fetishist 'regresses to the feeling / thought of the mother's breast as both a direct comfort and a substitute for the castrated penis' (ibid). Such an explanation acknowledges, in relation to the mother, a strong oral component in the constitution of a fetish. For Greenacre, the breast becomes 'the model for the transitional object used by the child to bridge the gap between the 'I' and the external world' (ibid). A disruption in object relations between mother and child leads to a weak body image that, in turn, results to acute anxiety during the castration complex. Given this situation, Greenacre proposes that the fetish develops as a stop-gap to 'enable sexual performance, despite the low body-image' (ibid). Greenacre thus expands our notion of fetishism by relating it not only to separation anxiety, but also to the oral stage of development and our relation to transitional objects. By perceiving the oral stage of development and transitional objects as constituting elements within fetishism – both of which are prior to the Oedipal stage - Greenacre identifies a model of fetishism that could be available to both genders.

Gamman and Makinen make reference to Masud Khan's *Alienation in Perversion* (1979). Khan believes that a fetish can be constituted if a child is subject to the 'excessive impingement' of the phallic mother – under such circumstances, the infant creates an internal object 'instead of developing via the transitional object' (ibid, p. 116). Khan proposes that the phallic mother should not be viewed as a construct that denies sexual difference, but should be perceived as our desire to 'merge with / possess the mother' (ibid). As such, the phallic mother is less about denying sexual difference and more about denying individuation:

'What is [...] being rejected here is the 'trauma' of seeing the female genitals, in classic male castration anxiety. Instead, the image of the phallic mother is more an excited fixation on desire and fear of annihilation through individuation (ibid).

For Gamman and Makinen, Khan's theory offers further support for the notion that fetishism is more symptomatic of separation anxiety than the fear of castration.

<sup>54</sup> Gamman and Makinen argue that just as the sexual fetishist is specific about their 'chosen' objects, the bulimic tends to be particular about their choice of foodstuff – the chosen food is usually both high in calories and fat; it is the taboo foods that threaten the feminine body ideal. Whereas the sexual fetishist uses a specific object to disavow the castrated status of women, the bulimic fetishes food as a way 'to disavow harsher anxieties' (Gamman / Makinen 1994, p.124). The bulimic firstly binges to gain direct sensual pleasure then, secondly, purges as a means of denying

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the threat of consuming food. For Gamman and Makinen, this practice 'parallels the process whereby the fetish object allows the fetishist to experience direct genital gratification, while unconsciously denying the 'threat of castration' (ibid). The split in the female ego that exists within eating disorders is explained in Kleinian terms: it is perceived as being related to the breast as part object. Gamman and Makinen refer to the fact that there is a strong tendency within bulimics to have had domineering mothers during their childhood development (ibid p. 129-30). Within such relationships, there is a failure to give up the desire for the breast: the need 'to incorporate it, be sure of it' (ibid, p. 130). Mintz argues that for bulimics, 'the gorging of food and laxatives reflects a loss of impulse control and is related to unsatisfied infantile yearnings for food, closeness and security' (Mintz 1988, p. 87).

<sup>55</sup> According to Gamman and Makinen, women know 'from cultural messages about what it means to be a woman, that they must exercise restraint around food' (Gamman / Makinen 1994, pg 148) and, as such, food often 'provokes more [...] fantasies and conversations than sex and is perceived as just as alluring and dangerous' (ibid). Gamman and Makinen claim that the consumer market is aware of such conflicting pressures and that it is typical to find in women's magazines '[...]lavish recipes and images of food [that] are packaged alongside pages which explain how diet or keeping fit can discover your new 'self'' (ibid, p. 148). For Gamman and Makinen, this ambivalent relation to food, combined with an equally ambivalent relationship to identity and individuation, explains both how and why food comes to be considered a fetish for the bulimic.

<sup>56</sup> According to the view in Marlene Boskind-Lodahl's *Cinderella's Stepsisters: A Feminist Perspective on Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia* (1976) the 'anorexic's painful emaciation could be seen to be refusing to injest the feminine role. [In contrast] the bulimic, a more secret syndrome hidden behind the façade of a successful, coping woman of acceptable size, could be seen as accommodating the societal role' (Gamman / Makinen 1994, p. 128). In opposition to this perspective, Suja Srikameswaran, Pierre Leichner and Dan Harper's research in *Sex Role Ideology among women with Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia* (1984) claims that women with bulimia were more feminist in their views than those with anorexia (1984, p.42). Gamman and Makinen believe that the 'anorexic's debilitation, and refusal to abandon the 'child' role, could as easily be read as a bid for dependency [upon the mother]' (Op Cit., p. 129). In contrast, the bulimic can be seen to challenge traditional passive female roles:

Her less debilitating compromise, or disavowal mechanism, allows many to have successful, high-flying careers both as professionals and as feminist activists. Many bulimic feminists are well aware of the significance of slender images in

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contributing to some women having problems with food, and this points to a view that eating disorders arise from irrational unconscious anxieties (ibid).

<sup>57</sup> As an example of the historically evolving nature of fetishism, Gamman and Makinen point out that the common fetishisation of the 'sabot' shoe, worn by female servants during the nineteenth century, was replaced by the high heel shoe during the nineteen-fifties and sixties. Gamman and Makinen describe this development of shoe fetishism by referring to Emily Apter's *Splitting Hairs: Female Fetishism and Post Partum Sentimentality in the Fin de Siecle* in Hunt, L, ed. (1990) "Eroticism and the Body Politic" , Baltimore: John Hopkins Press.

<sup>58</sup> Kaplan refers to a range of films in her interpretation of apocalyptic narratives, including *Niagara* (1953), *The Misfits* (1961), *Thelma and Louise* (1991) and *The Matrix* (1999); she states:

Like the winged creatures in biblical renditions of apocalypse, the motor launches (*Niagara*), pick-up trucks (*The Misfits*), the enchanted convertible in *Thelma and Louise*, or any other moving vehicles that regularly appear in contemporary apocalyptic narratives, such as the amazing, technologically proficient, digitally created space-ships designed for *The Matrix* and other sci-fi films, represent a "method of escape from a scene of destruction" and on the path to the Elysium fields or safe havens that represent the tender mother' (Kaplan 2006, p.61)

<sup>59</sup> For Žižek our very existence as a desiring subject is dependent on our entry into the symbolic order – for Žižek this is an eternal law which he describes as that which 'returns as the same through diverse historicizations / symbolizations' (Žižek 1989, p.50). By reducing our desire to an ahistorical, eternal sense of lack, Žižek's theory is subject to the same neglect of female agency and bias towards heterosexuality as the writings of Freud and Lacan. By subscribing to the Freudian / Lacanian view that women are the radical other, outside the phallic sexual economy, Žižek repeats the pattern of rendering women without an agency that they can consider their own. As Rosi Braidotti points out, Žižek's work 'represents an anti-feminist regression that reiterates the whole array of symbolic invisibility and specularity which feminists have been arguing against since the early days of Lacan's work' (Braidotti 2002, p. 54). Likewise, by viewing castration and its ensuing lack as an essential ingredient in the production of subjectivity, Žižek upholds not only a patriarchal perspective, but also a conventional heterosexual view of sexuality and the production of subjectivity. As Judith Butler indicates, Žižek 'tends to rely on an unproblematized sexual antagonism that unwittingly installs a heterosexual matrix as a permanent and incontestable structure of culture in which women operate as a "stain" in discourse' (Butler 1993, p. 21).

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<sup>60</sup> In her essay “Sorties” (1975), Cixous states:

Organisation by hierarchy makes all conceptual organizations subject to man. Male privilege, shown in the opposition between *activity* and *passivity*, which he uses to sustain himself. Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition: activity / passivity (Cixous 1986, p.64)

The male phallic signifier therefore establishes itself as present and active, whilst determining its other as passive; it can therefore only flourish by destroying the presence of its opposite which could threaten the omnipresence of its own economic system.

Either woman is passive or she does not exist. What is left of her is unthinkable, unthought. Which certainly means that she is not thought, that she does not enter into the oppositions [...] (ibid, p.65)

Cixous is able to conceptualise *écriture féminine* precisely because patriarchal binary oppositions exclude the feminine from its framework. For Cixous, *écriture féminine* is writing that undermines and destabilises the hierarchical phallogocentric system of binary oppositions. Cixous’ method for destabilising presence and the accompanying binary oppositions corresponds to Derrida’s conception of writing as *différance*. By combining the sense of difference and deferral within this neologism, the concept of *différance* illustrates how meaning is constructed through a process of deferral – where meaning is never truly present or absent, but determined by reference (deferral) to the absent signifiers that constitute its difference within a system of language. By exposing the effects of *différance* within writing, Derrida prevents binary oppositions from establishing their self-present foundations. Cixous repeats this move by declaring *écriture féminine* bisexual – not bisexual in a conventional sense, where difference is not recognised and both sexes are desired through the same economy, but bisexuality as radical difference. This other bisexuality is the ‘non-exclusion of difference or of a sex [and is] the multiplication of the effects of desire’s inscription on every part of the body and the other body’ (ibid, p.155). In other words, whereas desire has previously been defined in terms of the presence of the phallus and its lack within the female sex, for Cixous, *écriture féminine* allows desire to flow from the anatomy of both sexes without positing the presence or absence of either sex.

Cixous’ *écriture féminine* appears to deny the presence and lack inherent within a male sexual economy. Cixous’ assault upon a phallogocentric metaphysics of presence extends to a refusal of the feminine as a positive identity for meaning. Cixous is aware

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that any such endorsement risks repeating the phallogocentric process of exclusion within a single sanctioned economy. As such, Cixous rejects the possibility of defining *écriture féminine* – such a definition would reduce feminine writing to a static form and betray its essential fluidity. As Cixous states:

[...] this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded – which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system [...] (Cixous 1980, p.253)

Cixous' work finds itself ironically repeating the patriarchal characterisation of femininity in its attempt to undermine the single phallic economy. This is symptomatic of the concurrence of Cixous' notion of the feminine with Lacan's conviction that all that is outside the phallic economy (Symbolic Order) remains in the unspeakable realm of the Imaginary - where all difference is abolished and a fundamental unity exists. It is therefore no coincidence that Cixous' conception of *écriture féminine* as a space beyond monosexual difference corresponds with the conventional alignment of femininity with fluidity, fertility and the irrational. This correspondence is evident in the fact that Cixous makes analogies with the maternal body, and the all-encompassing unity it offers within the Imaginary, when describing and practicing *écriture féminine*. In her essay *Coming to Writing* (1977), Cixous makes explicit reference to the all-encompassing maternal body and its capacity to give birth:

I have the tireless love of a mother, that is why I am everywhere, my cosmic belly, I work on my world-wide unconscious, I throw death out, it comes back, we begin again, I am pregnant with beginnings. (Cixous 1991, p. 53)

Cixous explicitly connects *écriture féminine* with the female body by suggesting that such writing emanates from an embodied woman's voice: 'writing and voice ... are woven together [...] She physically materializes what she's thinking; she signifies it with her whole body' (Cixous 1985, p. 170).

<sup>61</sup> In *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974), Julia Kristeva identifies a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic. For Kristeva, the semiotic is associated with the undifferentiated pre-language pulsions articulated within the dyadic *chora* of mother and child. The *chora* (from the Greek word meaning womb and enclosed space) is to be understood as the ephemeral movements and positions articulated within the mother-child relationship, such heterogeneous pulsions are dyadic in that

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they follow patterns of expulsion and introjection associated with the mother child relationship. As such, the semiotic realm of the *chora* exists prior to the Symbolic Order: it is anterior to the sign, representation and identity.

The *chora* is not yet a position that represents something for someone (i.e., it is not a sign); nor is it a position (i.e., it is not yet a signifier either); it is, however, generated in order to attain to this signifying position. Neither model nor copy, the *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm. (Kristeva, J 1974, p.94)

Kristeva opposes a pre-Oedipal mother and child relationship to the Symbolic realm of the Father.

For Kristeva, the transition from the pre-Oedipal semiotic realm to the Symbolic occurs at the mirror stage where 'in order to capture his image unified in a mirror, the child must remain separate from it' (ibid, p.100). Kristeva refers to this as the thetic phase in which the subject must recognize themselves as a separate identity before any proposition or positionality can be deduced. Kristeva states:

All enunciation, whether of a word or of a sentence, is thetic. It requires an identification; in other words, the subject must separate from and through his image, from and through his objects. (ibid, p.98)

As such, for Kristeva, there is no sign 'that is not thetic and every sign is already the germ of a sentence attributing a signifier to an object' (ibid, p.99). From this perspective, the sign can be 'conceived as the voice [...] projected from the agitated body (from the semiotic *chora*) on to the facing *imago* or on to the object which simultaneously detach from the surrounding continuity' (ibid, p.100). The alienation of the self, that occurs via an identification with an external image, is completed through the process of castration and entry into the Symbolic Order. There is within Kristeva's notion of development and identity a division between the feminine maternal and the male paternal realm. As Kristeva states:

The discovery of castration [...] detaches the subject from his dependence on the mother, and the perception of this lack makes the phallic function a symbolic

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function – *the* symbolic function. This is a decisive moment fraught with consequences: the subject, finding his identity in the symbolic, *separates* from his fusion with the mother, *confines* his *jouissance* to the genital and transfers semiotic motility on to the symbolic order. (ibid, p.101)

The semiotic realm then, corresponds to the maternal, whereas the Symbolic corresponds to the phallic genital realm. On entering the Symbolic realm, the subject (either a woman or a man) can still allow the semiotic to continue to make itself felt. According to Kristeva, this is most apparent within modern literature.

[W]hen poetic language – especially modern poetic language – transgresses grammatical rules, the *positing* of the symbolic (which mimesis has always explored) finds itself subverted, not only of its possibilities of [...] denotation (which mimesis has always contested), but also as a possessor of *meaning* (which is always grammatical, indeed more precisely, syntactic). In imitating the constitution of the symbolic as meaning, poetic mimesis is led to dissolve not only the denotative function but also the specifically thetic function of *positing* the subject. (ibid, p. 109)

The semiotic then, has the potential to disrupt the Symbolic order via the use of signifiers that do not follow typical grammatical rules or conventional meanings. In doing this, the semiotic has the potential to unsettle customary conceptions, social relations and notions of subjectivity. By advocating the semiotic as a potentially subversive agency, Kristeva valorises the pre-oedipal phase as a means to disrupt the phallic Symbolic order. By upsetting established conventions within the Symbolic order, the pulsions within the semiotic forge the possibility of generating new meanings – at this point, such notions enter the realm of the symbolic. As Kristeva points out,

poetic language puts the subject in process/on trial through a network of marks and semiotic facilitations. But the moment it stops being mere instinctual glossolalia and becomes part of the linguistic order, poetry meets up with denotation and enunciation – verisimilitude and the subject – and, through them, the social. (ibid, p.110)

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Though the semiotic disrupts symbolic conventions, the fact that it occurs within language means that the thetic break remains intact. What is called into question though, is the reified, transcendental truth value associated with such symbolic conventions.

Mimesis and the poetic language inseparable from it tend, rather, to prevent the thetic from becoming theological; in other words, they prevent the imposition of the thetic from hiding the semiotic process that produces it, and they bar it from inducing the subject, reified as a transcendental ego, to function solely within the systems of science and monotheistic religion. (ibid)

Kristeva contends that, along with the unconscious processes of displacement and condensation, the tendency for the modern novel to combine different sign systems via the same signifying material of language, is an effect of a semiotic polyvalence which both shatters and generates objects in a manner that operates outside of a self-identical closed symbolic system. Kristeva refers to this process of combination as a *transposition* in that the passage from 'one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic – of enunciation and denotative positionality' (ibid, p.111). Here, objects are 'never single, complete and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated' (ibid). As such, Kristeva proposes that by making an intrusion into the symbolic realm, the semiotic intervenes in the realm of the ideological. Rather than taking a typical ideological position that follows a given convention, the semiotic confronts ideology by undermining the self-certainty of all reified positions – it does this by unfolding the thetic process and repeating the means by which the split occurs; it therefore does not deny ideology, but is 'rather the enemy within and without, recognizing both its necessity and its pretensions' (ibid, p.112).

By positioning the semiotic *chora* within the *feminine* realm, Kristeva ultimately presents a definition of the feminine as unrepresentable. In fact for Kristeva, both the concepts of male and female, with all their corresponding traits, are constructs generated within the symbolic order – give this, all attempts to represent the realm outside the symbolic as essentially feminine are destined to repeat the dichotomies within its order, hence the proclamation: "There is no such thing as Woman'. Indeed, she does *not* exist with a capital 'W', possessor of some mythical unity' (Kristeva 1979, p.205). Despite Kristeva's insistence that, as a construct within the symbolic order, Woman does not exist, her reference to the realm beyond the symbolic as maternal affirms the male / female dichotomy whilst wishing to subvert it. This impasse within Kristeva's thought is no more apparent than in both her political and aesthetic

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positions. Against the tendency for both first and second wave feminism to essentialize gender positions – whether in the form of extending male values and gains (individualism, humanism, pay, suffrage and working conditions and positions) to women or by endorsing feminine values to an oppressive masculine order – Kristeva champions the notion of an aesthetic practice which can be ‘summarized as an *interiorization of the founding separation of the socio-symbolic contract*, as an introduction of its cutting edge into the very interior of every identity whether subjective, sexual, ideological, or so forth’ (ibid, p.210). This attempt to subvert given gender relations via a dialogue between maternal semiotic and paternal symbolic positions ultimately affirms the necessity of the sacrificial break that entry into the paternal symbolic order requires. This position assumes that the break which the symbolic order entails is a necessity - as such, attempts to subvert its law via either the assumption of the feminine into the symbolic position, or its radical negation will inevitably lead to either an inverted oppressive order or a tumultuous chaotic state akin to psychosis. As such, a play within the potentialities of roles is deemed a preferred compromise, whilst retaining the guise of a radical liberating position. As Kristeva points out:

[T]he habitual and increasingly explicit attempt to fabricate a scapegoat victim as foundress of a society or a counter-society may be replaced by the analysis of the potentialities of victim/executioner which characterize each identity, each subject, each sex. (ibid).

<sup>62</sup> As a consequence of Lacan’s conception of the Imaginary and the Symbolic Order, a person that repudiates or finds themselves outside the Symbolic Order is subject to psychosis – Lacan refers to this condition as ‘foreclosure’:

It is an accident in the symbolic register and of what is accomplished in it, namely the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father in the place of the Other and in the failure of the paternal metaphor which I designate as the defect that gives psychosis its essential condition [...] (Lacan 2006,p.576)

To place woman outside the Symbolic Order places her within the space of the irrational, whilst resorting to a metaphysics of presence to explain her predicament.

<sup>63</sup> Kristeva herself recognizes the precariousness of this position. An appeal to negativity, as an eruption of the semiotic, in which to avoid the essentialised and equally tyrannical orders of the masculine or feminine, risks leading the subject into a dead-end from which it is impossible to speak. Kristeva speculates on the relation between suicide and those

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female authors whose impossible position on the border between male discourse and maternal semiotic expression lead, quite literally, to death.

It is not certain that anyone here and now is capable of this [...The ego] is a fragile envelope, incapable of staving off the irruption of this conflict, of this love which had bound the little girl to her mother, and which then, like black lava, had lain in wait for her all along the path of her desperate attempts to identify with the symbolic paternal order. Once the moorings of the word, the ego, the superego, begin to slip, life itself can't hang on: death quietly moves in. (Kristeva 1974b, p.156-7)

If disruptions within the symbolic order are perceived as a '*negativity* masking the death-drive which Kristeva sees as perhaps the most fundamental semiotic pulsion' (Moi 1985, p. 119), then, as we shall see, there should not be too great a distance to travel to revise Kristeva's position in which to avoid the trappings of a psychoanalytic symbolic order and its reified gendered positions.

<sup>64</sup> Battersby positions Kant's thought, rather than Descartes, as the model for metaphysical thinking within modernity. Through Kant's 'Copernican revolution', the self in modernity becomes the centre of all knowable reality. In Kant's *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), the world that can be known to us is given through the categories of human understanding which interprets information through the filters of space and time. As the spatial-temporal world is known through the categories of human understanding, the noumenal world (the world as it is) cannot be known, leaving the phenomenal world as relative to the imagination of the transcendental self. Battersby outlines Kant's criticism of Descartes metaphysics of self - the Cartesian *Cogito ergo Sum* ("I think therefore I am") - by indicating how the self is 'neither transparent to itself nor indubitable. In so far as the unity of the self is a necessary (a priori) supposition [...] it is only given in relation to the space-time world' (Battersby 1998, p.84). Unlike the Cartesian rational subject - self-centred and transparent to itself - Kant's transcendental self cannot be known to itself in any direct manner, it requires a transcendental object (not-self) from which to distinguish itself against. Two things follow from this: firstly, any perception of the Kantian self is relational to the objects it perceives and, secondly, for the Kantian self to exist, it must involve bodies.

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In the Kantian world, if the self dreams itself and is conscious of its dream, it has also to dream something other than self. And that something has to be spatial: it has to involve bodies. (ibid)

The problem within traditional metaphysical notions of the self is not that they assume self-certainty – as we have described, Kant’s metaphysics denounces the certainty of Descartes *Cogito ergo Sum* – what Battersby wants to draw our attention to is the gender-blindness within post-Kantian metaphysical definitions of the self. For Kant, that which is external to the self is strictly spatial, whereas that which is internal – the transcendental self – is strictly temporal. Because the recognition of the transcendental self relies upon the differentiation of itself from external objects, the body is placed within the paradoxical situation of being ‘neither self nor not-self’ (ibid, p.70) – it is outside, yet necessary for the constitution of the self. The body therefore disturbs the distinction between the spatial and temporal realms within Kant’s metaphysics of the self. This contradiction is particularly apparent when Kant makes reference to the internal body. When discussing aberrant bodies with unusual arrangements of internal organs, Kant indicates that, though these bodily differences are recognised by the senses, the transcendental self cannot explain these differences through its internal representations of what constitutes a self.

[...] Kant treats space and time in ways that mean that the ego is located inside the bodily container, and all that is ‘other’ is outside – in space. Indeed, the container is described in ways that mean that inner bodily spaces cannot make a difference in terms of identity (ibid, p. 67).

This problematic is further accentuated if the internal bodily space of a pregnant woman is considered - here the identity of selves (mother and unborn child) are mutually implicated in ways that completely upset Kant’s conception of self as given through the internal / temporal and spatial / outside distinction. As Battersby points out, ‘Kant has a model of selfhood that means he is unable to think otherness within the self, the foetus within the womb – or even the relation between the inside and outside of the body’ (ibid, p.71). Kant’s metaphysics rely upon a notion of matter that is inert – such a notion is essential if Kant is to have a stable conception of the self that can both recognise and position itself in relation to objects within the world.

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Identity – at least in the realm of phenomenal reality – entails constructing self against an inert matter [...] This is essential to Kant's system, since he has argued that the unitary self can only be established by reference to *permanent* bodies in space. Thus even introspection – 'inner' experience which is temporal – 'depends upon something permanent which is not in me, and consequently can be only in something outside me'. Temporal self-awareness is made dependent on a spatial construction of permanent bodies in space[.] (ibid, p.69)

The issue of the internal body threatens the concept of a transcendental self that determines the inert forms of objects within the known world – if the internal body is capable of containing otherness within it, then the notion that the mind of the transcendental self constructs reality, rather than matter being animate and self forming, is put into question. As Battersby points out, 'if matter can form itself, why must Kant treat all form as if imposed by the structures of the human mind?' (ibid, p.74) If Kant's system is to retain its integrity, the female form, as an overt body with the potential to contain otherness within it, must be excluded from an account of a body as container for the transcendental self - the body of the transcendental self must therefore be male in its attributes.

The self is constructed as a homogeneous unity through its differentiation from the 'object'. As such, it seals over fractures within the self and treats the body as closed in ways that prevent Kant from thinking determinate biological principles that could account for sexual difference – or the growth of another self within the womb. (ibid, p.73)

Battersby demonstrates the ways in which Kant's metaphysics of self both excludes and contains feminine attributes within its system. The excluded feminine is situated outside the system in relation to a masculine notion of the self. As such, the perception of the male self both constitutes the known world, whilst also defining that which cannot be known: the feminine. Battersby draws our attention to Kant's description of 'nature' as a 'mother', as well as his reference to the goddess 'Isis' who is hidden behind veils. On the one hand, Kant is depicting nature as an entity capable of generating and giving birth to all that is, whereas, on the other hand, this feminine force is something that must remain veiled and is therefore unknowable. Woman is therefore positioned both inside and outside the categories of understanding that constitute the self.

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In Kant's mind-constructed reality, the 'I' keeps itself at a regulated – and respectful – distance from the 'object' and 'nature' which acts as a kind of unknowable 'excess'. Nature, matter and the 'transcendental object' are feminized; but the 'I' is masculinized in ways that position women as both 'inside' and 'outside' the 'universal' structures that govern the self (ibid, p.79)

This situating of woman as not fully self is also evident in Kant's description of human behaviour. Kant divides human behaviour into three main types: 'Animality' describes the sphere of human behaviour that is instinctual and purely biological; 'Humanity' describes the capacity to judge, reason and set goals in relation to the self and the rest of the world; lastly, the highest form of human behaviour is 'personhood' in which the self exercises both free-will and pure rationality. The fact that 'personhood' reflects the attributes of a masculine transcendental self – namely, its definition as a realm of pure rationality, giving form to both itself and external others – means that those attributes usually associated with the feminine – characteristics that involve an organic engagement with others: empathy, nurturing and caring – are denigrated and positioned outside the realm of full 'personhood'. As Battersby states, '[r]eading Kant's remarks about women [...] in the light of [...] these] division[s] it becomes clear that for Kant women are fully animal and also human; but he is much more ambivalent about their status as persons' (ibid, p.64).

To summarise, the problem with the Kantian transcendental self is 'not its inability to bring mind and matter into relationship, but rather that the self is established via an oppositional relationship to matter – a matter, moreover, which is dead, and which is hence incapable of birth or of 'morphing' into new shapes and identities' (ibid, p. 61). The demotion of women and the feminine within the Kantian system is therefore to be understood as a means of preventing the sovereignty of the masculine self from being infected or disrupted by the animated process of birthing and transformation.

<sup>65</sup> Lacan points out that when we say 'I am' we are admitting to the fact we have entered the Symbolic Order that is inaugurated through the phallic signifier. When we enter the Symbolic Order, we suffer the loss of our imaginary identity with the mother and the world. Lacan paraphrases Descartes by adding a supplement to his Cogito Ergo Sum – he states that "I am what I think', therefore I am: divide the 'I am' of existence from the 'I am' of meaning. This splitting must be taken as being principle, and as the first outline of primal repression'(Lacan 1980, p.37). Therefore, for Lacan, the self-assured subject only comes into existence by submitting to the Other of the Symbolic Order. Descartes does not recognise that his proof of subjective existence, on which he bases his claims to truth,

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are an effect of acquiring language which, in turn, is to become lost to the speech of the other and to be subject to a radical break with the world.

<sup>66</sup> Following Lacan, Irigaray believes that anything outside the economy of the phallic order - that which exceeds its own reflection – has been placed beyond representation – for Irigaray, that which is beyond representation is femininity / woman. Irigaray therefore believes that woman can only find expression in three ways: adopting the role of the mystic, mimic her position within masculine discourse as a man lacking or, thirdly, speak outside masculine rationality through the morphology specific to woman's body. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray locates mysticism as a sanctioned space in which subject and Other mingle 'one term into another' and where there is a 'contempt for form as such, [and a] mistrust for understanding [...] and the dry desolation of reason' (Irigaray 1985a, p.191). Religious mysticism provided a space for the most profound revelations to occur, in which 'the poorest in science and the most ignorant [women] were the most eloquent' (ibid, p.192). By mimicking the suffering of Christ, woman could create a space where her own pleasure could unfold – a space in which similar symptoms to hysteria could be observed.

If woman is that which cannot be represented, then perhaps woman must resort to mimicking male discourse in which to point to a feminine space beyond it. This mimetic method is evidently used by Irigaray within the *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Irigaray quotes large sections from such writers as Freud, Plato, Kant and Hegel – each an example of male authority within philosophical discourse. For Irigaray, it is important not to pose the question "What is woman?" as to do this positions woman within the dictates of male Symbolic Order. It is better to mimic male discourse in a way that reveals the feminine blindspot that can exceed and disturb their logic: the feminine is to be found exactly where male logic cannot see.

[T]hey do not claim to be rivaling men in constructing a logic of the feminine [...] They should not put it, then, in the form "What is woman?" but rather, repeating / interpreting the way in which, within discourse, the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image of the subject, they should signify that with respect to this logic a *disruptive excess* is possible on the feminine side. (Irigaray 1985b, p.78)

<sup>67</sup> As with Deleuze, Battersby's conception of becoming shares a similar concern for repetition. By making reference to the work of Kierkegaard, the concept of self is informed by an analogy with sound – identity is defined in terms of patterns and rhythms that form a score that we recognize as a self. Battersby draws attention to our relationship with the world via the sense of sound, rather than the typical emphasis

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placed on the visual when defining the relationship between the world and ourselves. This acts as a strategy in which to define a metaphysics of becoming from a metaphysics of presence in which the world is understood in terms of static models. According to Battersby, the emphasis on the visual within philosophy 'seems to have contributed to the long-standing appeal of the notion that the mind perceives and thinks by 'bundling' diverse and discontinuous images and concepts' (Battersby 1998, p.179). Against this notion, our experience of sound is described in terms of a continuous experience of difference in which memory, repetition, pattern and disruption play an active part in recognition. For Battersby, sound keeps us in a

continuous dynamic relationship with an environment which is indefinite and outside the circle of vision, surrounding us on all sides. There are no easily recognizable edges or centres to the sound that comes at us. Hearing favours the ever present, the unavoidable and the continuously evolving; we have to be trained to artificially divide this potential into 'moments' or 'sound bites'. Thus, hearing suggests a model of identity that does not operate in terms of discrete units. Our ears let the outside world (the 'other') inside the screen of the 'I', whilst filtering into background 'noise' and rendering inconspicuous that part of 'otherness' that cannot also be used by the 'I'. (ibid, p.178)

As with Deleuze and Guattari's description of the effect of sound in the writing of Kafka, sound has no clearly discernible boundaries, is continuously changing and can affect bodies not in an immediate proximity to its source. By considering the implications of sound in understanding our relationship with the world, Battersby is able to critique Kant's understanding of subjectivity. As discussed, Battersby is critical of Kant's notion of the transcendental self in terms of the fact that it equates the feminine with nature and defines it as unknowable – as such, 'personhood' is built around a masculine model in which the self is placed in opposition to an inert matter and notions of birthing and transformation (becoming) are excluded. Battersby draws our attention to the fact that Kant trivializes sound in favour of vision. For Battersby, 'Kant's world is above all a *visual* world' (ibid, p. 179) in which his three stages of synthesis designate a 'temporal continuity of the 'I' and the spatial stability of the 'not-I' (ibid, p. 179-80). Music for Kant is described as 'a 'play' from bodily sensations to aesthetic ideas, but the pleasure in this 'play' comes from the fact that aesthetic ideas double back onto the body with 'concentrated' force' (ibid, p.181). As such, the 'unity' of music is 'primarily bodily, and not imposed by the mind in the manner of the 'syntheses' of sight' (ibid). Vision is therefore privileged in that it allows us to synthesize discreet objects (that have been seen) into mental concepts, whereas

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music, as sound, may provoke these concepts in which to amplify them, but has no means in which to form them in itself – sound and music therefore remain an affection of the body, whilst sight gives us the means to generate mental concepts.

Battersby refutes Kant's denigration of sound. As the above implies, sound has the potential to provide a notion of identity that is generated in a dynamic, evolving relationship with the world. Here identity depends upon the recognition of patterns formed by repetitions and reminiscences that discern a composition from an otherwise continuous noise. Such a conception perceives identity not as a linear temporal recognition of the self and the world via the recollection of static objects in space; memory and repetition is instead interpreted anew depending on the patterns and rhythms such recollections find themselves entwined with in the present. As Battersby states:

[I]dentity is maintained by the way the embodied 'I' responds to that which seeps into it from outside and the way it focuses on rhythms, harmonies, dissonances, resonances and other vibrations that sound patterns produce. The tension between memory, anticipation, habit and desire that enables us to distinguish music from that which simply recedes into background noise also involves bodily habits and expectations, as well as the cogito itself. (ibid, p.181)

As such, repetition 'does not simply involve the recurrence of the same: it is not a mere 'retake' of the past' (ibid, p.183). Battersby makes reference to Kierkegaard's *Repetition* (1843) in which to point to a mode of subjectivity determined by echo and repetition, in which new patterns of becoming occur:

Kierkegaard provides us with a model of the self that can allow self-shaping, whilst also limiting the power of the subject, and positing a self that is shaped by forces outside it. Kierkegaard shows that musical repetition can mark out depths, as well as surfaces. Like an echo machine in a recording studio, Kierkegaard's recollection – and time itself – loops round on itself, and in ways that allow new patternings and novelty to emerge from the thematic resonances and auditory 'fuzz'. (ibid, p. 183)

What is posited here then is a 'mode of time which would proceed via echo – and repetition – and which is non-linear in the Kantian sense' (ibid). In summary, via the writing of Kierkegaard, Battersby is able to constitute a notion of subjectivity that is

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neither 'fully autonomous nor completely determined, the self is produced relationally: in the resonances between self and other; in a 'present' that is a generative caesura between future and past' (ibid, p. 184).

The idea of echo, repetition and becoming in the work of Kierkegaard, which allows a recollection that forms new patternings and novelty, is also recognized in the work of Deleuze and Guattari via a similar analogy with sound and music. For Deleuze and Guattari, the musician 'affirms the power of becoming' (Deleuze / Guattari 1996, p. 297) because their use of the refrain proceeds within a multilineal system in which 'everything happens at once' (ibid). The deterritorialization of the refrain within music 'propels itself by its own nonlocalizable middle (milieu) [...] It is a Body Without Organs, an antimemory pervading musical organization [...]' (ibid). As such, progress and continuity exist without a strict linear relation between past and present.

<sup>68</sup> Battersby recognizes that Deleuze and Guattari reverse the notion of alienated man within traditional Marxism – instead of seeing man as a unified, centred subject unable to realize his potential due to capitalist relations, Deleuze and Guattari contend that man is precisely alienated from his potential by perceiving himself as such a unified individual within capitalism. Despite this reversal, Battersby points out that Deleuze and Guattari share a similar blindspot with Marxism by neglecting the realm of reproduction and care within their theory.

[A]s in classic Marxism, questions of reproductive relationships continue to be subordinated to relationships of production and capital [...] Thus, when Deleuze and Guattari develop the image of the 'Body Without Organs' as a counter to the organic model of the (privatized) body and the (centred) self, they present this undifferentiated and 'organless' body as the flow of energies and drives that ontologically precedes the shaping of the individual into an 'organic' whole. This body is presented as if it were prior to difference, including sexual difference. (Battersby 1988, p. 194)

<sup>69</sup> In support of this position, Kristeva points to the fact that all known archaic societies are founded upon a symbolic break that instigates a taboo – as we have seen this, this is clearly evident in Freud's appeal to a primordial myth that instigates the law against incest.

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In all known archaic societies, this founding break, of the symbolic order is represented by murder – the killing of a man, a slave, a prisoner, an animal. Freud reveals this founding break and generalizes from it when he emphasizes that society is founded on a complicity in the common crime. (Kristeva 1974, p. 119)

<sup>70</sup> As Phillip Goodchild points out:

If all becoming proceeds by way of a becoming-woman, then it involves the constitution of a multiplicity of phantasms as erogenous zones that are no longer localized on a specific organ. When Deleuze and Guattari write about becoming-woman, they mean that one learns to add the affect of a woman, which might include Irigaray's list of capacities for sexual multiplicity, for living as a body, for laughing, touching and caressing [...], to one's own collective assemblage, whether one is male or female. Similarly, becoming child is learning to acquire the subjective apprehensions of a child, including sexual fascination with the surrounding world, and particularly with animals, their affects, smells, and expressions, following trajectories of subjectivity that exist in the milieu, rather than in a unique person. If all becoming proceeds by way of a becoming-girl, this is because the girl is the one whose desire is stolen from her first of all in order to impose a history or morality in the form of a specific role or identity [...] Nothing remains as a spectator outside the planes of thought, imagination, or desire: each moment or mode of existence through which the girl passes is an erogenous zone; everything can be affected.

Becoming also proceeds by way of a becoming-animal [...] Animals are characterized by their capacity to express their territories, apart from signification, through rhythms, sounds, colours, and smells as various contents [...] When Deleuze and Guattari write about 'becoming animal', therefore, they refer to this function of expressing territories. (Goodchild 1996, p.171).