

Arguing with the Phallus

Feminist, Queer and Postcolonial Theory

A Psychoanalytic Contribution

Jan Campbell



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For Mike and Esmé 

INTRODUCTION

Psychoanalysis, Postmodernism and the Bodily Imaginary

Psychoanalysis, in both its clinical and its academic expressions, has undergone much change in the last decade. Clinical psychoanalysis, historically situated within medical practice in both Britain and the USA, has become marginalised in terms of the National Health Service, giving way to the more 'scientifically' accountable narratives of cognitive and behavioural psychology. Indeed, as clinical psychology looks set to take over 'psychological services' in the NHS, the practice of psychoanalysis and analytical psychotherapy has become increasingly privatised, with analytical therapists having increasingly to compete with the mushrooming service provision of counselling and bodily therapies (the latter most basically characterised by weekly workouts at the gym). The reluctance of the clinical psychoanalytic profession to see itself either institutionally or in market terms has led, it could be argued, to a failure in adapting to and negotiating with the consumer society of late capitalism. Of course many critics and analysts would argue, quite correctly, that psychoanalysis has been one of the major discourses to interrogate and critique the sick narcissism of our late capitalist and Western world. The difficulty for psychoanalysis, however, is often its negative approach to contemporary modernity and subjectivity. Freud's view of the psyche and the unconscious is far from optimistic. The unconscious desire that underpins or, more accurately, deconstructs our postmodern identities is a psychic negativity revealing the narcissistic, divided and alienated roots of contemporary being.

It seems then, for psychoanalysis, that the only positive alternative to our unconscious negativity is the law. Return from abject narcissism and borderline psychosis means the upholding of Oedipal law, and the ethical and religious principles that accompany this kind of patriarchal and colonial society. From Freud to Lacan and Kristeva, the Oedipal law is our only hope of a 'civilised' society; without it we are left to the ravages of our narcissistic

and 'primitive' imaginaries that occlude ethics and difference with uncontainable aggressive identifications. One of the political premises of this book is that psychoanalysis needs to develop more positive ways of conceptualising and practising the imaginary. Of course the immediate problem with this statement is the assumption that psychoanalysis is a homogeneous entity, when it is actually made up of numerous discourses and identities. And there is also the additional assumption that all psychoanalytic discourses view the unconscious as a negativity, when in fact quite often they do not. The Oedipal narrative in the work of Freud and Lacan, however, signals an unconscious that is negative, placed in a binary opposition and repressed under the symbolic. Although both Freud and Lacan continually suggest the postmodern and deconstructive ways in which the Oedipal narrative and myth does not work, they do not posit an alternative at either an imaginary or a symbolic level. As such the Oedipal narrative remains a modernist, colonial and masculine myth that has been deconstructed in various postmodern forms, but still needs reimagining and rereading in a more active fashion.

The project of this book is to explore a more positive, postmodern psychoanalysis in terms of a bodily imaginary that will remember and resituate the Oedipal myth: a cultural rememory and reimagination of the Oedipal imaginary and symbolic. The importance of reworking the psychoanalytic heritage in this way is the need to find political and more embodied narratives, which will not repress issues of race, class, sexuality and gender into an abject relation under the phallic signifier. On a more institutional level, it is important to find ways of answering and redressing the move away from psychoanalysis in the clinical domain. If cognitive and behavioural psychology have seriously critiqued (even debunked) psychoanalysis for its unscientific and unquantifiable methods, then humanistic therapies have been equally scathing of psychoanalysis's negative emphasis, its obsession with the past and its preoccupation with issues of power: the analyst as interpreter, parent, or knowledgeable master of the clinical situation. Of course these are stereotypes that are sadly too often acted out in real life, but nevertheless do a disservice to the majority of ethically minded practitioners. There is an issue of power and responsibility at stake, however, if we continually refuse to remember and recreate the old modernist narratives of Oedipal psychoanalysis. This means more than linguistic deconstruction! In the consulting room, anyway, ethics is an embodied affair that tells the stories of bodily experiences and everyday lives. The creative art of psychoanalysis as popular memory rereads lived history and moves the imaginary and symbolic into more negotiable postmodern stories and forms.

Psychoanalysis has always been political, in both a conservative and a radical sense. But the more Marxist engagements with psychoanalysis have in the past twenty years died away, making room for the more sophisticated rhetoric of poststructuralist critique. One of the problems with this move (which I have

documented elsewhere) is the increasing valuation of theory and language over experience and history (Campbell, 1998). Another important difficulty has been the subsequent division between practice and theory, with the clinicians not understanding, or indeed seeing the relevance of, a poststructuralist theory that linguistically and conceptually seems to transcend lived experience. On the other hand are the academics who remain ruled by the latest theories of Oedipal disjunction between the social and the psychic, and who in some ways seem too straitjacketed by the theory to connect their ideas with the politics of everyday life. Without the practice to remember and reimagine the theory, the theory becomes dead history. Within academia, this perhaps is most evident within literary and film studies, where the emphasis on textual analysis and the textual spectator at the expense of more embodied and 'real' audiences and readers has led to a gradual disappointment and turning away from psychoanalysis as simply another, ahistorical grand narrative.

There is, then, a prevailing need to situate psychoanalysis in and connect it to the cultures of everyday life and to connect theory to bodily experience and practice. Although psychoanalytic theory has made efforts, in the last decade, to connect with political events and practice, it is interesting to note that, whereas Lacanian and poststructuralist analysis seem to end up merely deconstructing dominant Oedipal narratives, it is the more practice-orientated work of Jungian and intersubjective psychoanalysis that actually tries to remember the psychoanalytic heritage in terms of resistant tales and new narrative identities. Having said this, it is important to acknowledge the skill and the political vision, with which Lacanian thinkers like Jacqueline Rose have attempted to understand the Oedipal ambivalence at stake in contemporary social orders such as Thatcherism (Rose, 1993). Rose shows brilliantly how the abject violence inherent in Thatcherism works most destructively when it is embodied at the pinnacle of symbolic, repressive law. It is only by recognising the violence of our unconscious, as a society, that we can begin to withdraw our projections and act more ethically. The acknowledgement of complexity that informs Rose's work is important. What is more troubling, however, is her insistence that the death drive evident in the work of Lacan and Freud is the most persuasive psychoanalytic argument, albeit a negative one.

Rose privileges the ambivalence of Freud's death drive over what she sees as the more destructive idealisations of Wilhelm Reich's bodily id. But the difficulty of Reich's ideas, as this book will suggest, lies not with his political vision of a creative bodily unconscious (as an alternative to the Oedipal death drive), but with his insistent refusal of the imaginary. While Rose has produced some of the best political and psychoanalytic work utilising Oedipal theory, there is no consideration of more positive forms of the unconscious within her project. If, as her more Kleinian essays seem to suggest, freedom from violence means only a withdrawal of our darker, but sexually gratifying projections,

then what is gained is autonomy, but always from an ultimately negative unconscious. But unconscious projections are creative as well as destructive. And it is within the analytic session that this becomes most crucial, since learning to own destructive urges also leads to the manifestation of a much more creative, unconscious life. Self-healing, learning to love oneself, rather than depending on or withholding from others, is about accepting ambivalence *and* learning to inhabit a more creative, imaginative world. In so doing, the subject achieves a more fluid relation between registers of the imaginary, symbolic and real. Contemporary studies by Andrew Samuels, Stephen Frosh and Christopher Bollas all point to the different political and creative ways in which Jungian and intersubjective psychoanalysis is currently being thought through in more positive configurations of citizenship and ethical subjectivity (Samuels, 1993; Bollas, 1995; Frosh, 1998).

What is the relevance, one might ask, of linking the Stephen Lawrence case or the war in Kosovo with psychoanalysis? We are living in a moment when nationalism and nation states seem to have receded in favour of a local and global economic market, only to become reinscribed in an ever more virulent fashion. Nationalism returns, then, in local heritage culture or the everyday violence of racism. On an international level Europe is perceived as part of one Western nation: its force, NATO, alternates bombing with acting as a world (national) peacekeeping agency. The racist rhetoric of British nationality and racism – structurally embedded in our institutions and clearly revealed in the Stephen Lawrence case – and the nationalistic ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo show a violence that is both social and psychic and can be analysed in fairly conventional psychoanalytic terms. But there is a confusion if you start to analyse these conflicts in terms of an Oedipal narrative or symbolic. For example, in an Oedipal analysis you might equate the racist thugs who murdered Stephen Lawrence with an aggressive imaginary. But where, then, do you place the ethical Oedipal law – surely not with the Metropolitan Police? Or how do you evaluate the Oedipal intervention of Blair and Clinton leading to war with Iraq and Serbia, and equate this with their absolute refusal to take up this so-called ‘ethical’ position of paternal law in relation to the genocide in Rwanda? One of the key concepts of this book is that the kind of ethical symbolic you rely on to narrate your world depends on the situated bodily imaginary that supports it. For the symbolic is only a social reproduction of the imaginary at an institutional level. And if we only have recourse to certain (Oedipal) stories, then there is no real social or symbolic reproduction. What we are left with is an Oedipal imaginary masquerading at a symbolic and linguistic level, carrying all the force of ethical law but at the same time colonising all other imaginary tales under one symbolic.

The question of race and nationalism does not merely challenge the epistemological and ontological roots of psychoanalytic theory and discourse;

it threatens to expose its supposed neutral, philosophical and theoretical paradigm of psychoanalysis as nothing more or less than white ethnography. Mary Ann Doane suggests as much: 'Psychoanalysis can ... be seen as a quite elaborate form of ethnography – as a writing of the ethnicity of the white western psyche' (Doane, 1991: 11). What then of psychoanalysis as a theory or as a knowledge discourse? In understanding psychoanalysis as experience, situated historically and geographically in space and place, we also have to acknowledge its practice. It is only by representing the bodily and experiential life stories that the analysand brings to the therapeutic session that we can evaluate and historicise the theory. Freud's concepts were rooted in empirical case histories. These analytic cases – Dora, The Wolfman, Little Hans – are all stories that have to be situated in a particular time and place. Freud's theory of the Oedipal complex, or Lacan's, cannot serve contemporary interpretations of social identities unless more experiential practices of story telling are connected to these institutionalised discourses.

Several critics have suggested psychoanalysis as a form of narrative or story telling that bridges the gap between experience and language, history and the text, the body and discursive knowledge. My own work has argued for psychoanalytic concepts as narrative forms (Campbell, 1996, 1998). Peter Brooks, a literary theorist, challenges the linguistic bias of contemporary psychoanalytic theory within the academy. If the earlier psychoanalytic criticism in literary studies has been involved with over-psychologising the author or the characters in the text, then the more recent deconstructive versions of psychoanalysis claim it within an exclusively linguistic frame. For Brooks, this linguistic emphasis refuses 'to make the crossover between rhetoric and reference', which for him is the major reason for using psychoanalysis in the first place. I want to suggest that narrative is a much more useful model of representation than Oedipal linguistics for the understanding of psychoanalysis (Brooks, 1994: 26). Narrative is a much more fluid term and can be distinguished from linguistic structural definitions because it incorporates more primary, experiential stories as well as a secondary discourse of mental representation and language. These experiential stories are linked to Freud's notion of the primary processes, the bodily and affectual drives of the id, but they also refer to myths and dreams. Comprehending psychoanalysis as various forms of narrative, stories and ethnography brings me to a discussion of contemporary arguments between psychoanalysis and postmodernism.

Postmodernism and psychoanalysis ■■■■■

Postmodernism and its meaning have been the subject of intense debate for several decades now. Some critics take postmodernism as an historical break with the period of modernism both in terms of ideas and aesthetics. Others see

postmodernism as very much a continuation of modernist art and ideas. Jurgen Habermas, the social philosopher, argues that the project of modernity is still relevant today, and that its values of ethics, rationality and justice, developed in relation to the Enlightenment, are still pertinent to contemporary society. Habermas's defence of modernism, accentuating ideals of social justice and the public sphere, echoes the earlier Marxism of the Frankfurt School in its strident critique of modern mass popular culture and its commodified forms. Postmodernists counter this rather pessimistic view of contemporary consumer society, seeking instead to mark the end of the grand narratives of the Enlightenment. 'Truth', 'history' and 'reality' are the universalising truth claims problematised by postmodernity, where the textual world of late capitalist consumption and advanced technology swaps the real of history for images, arbitrary signifiers and simulacra. Two of the most notable postmodern theorists, Jean François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, argue that 'authentic' notions of identity and society have made way for notions of textual worlds and fictional selves.

Baudrillard's critique of Marxism suggests that in late capitalist society the distinction between surface and depth, or between image and reality, has imploded or collapsed. The ensuing hyperreality means that signs no longer relate to real-life referents; instead, autonomous and floating chains of signifiers signal a never-ending simulacrum of images and imitations (Baudrillard, 1981). The real is lost forever, along with meaningful experience. Reality is merely a relative term, internal to the media. Baudrillard has emphasised this point most controversially by his famous statement that the Gulf War in 1991 was unreal, a television spectacle. Lyotard also critiques Marxism, but from a different position. Lyotard, influenced by Nietzsche, problematises Marxism's definition of history, that it is available to consciousness. Lyotard's notion of the 'figural' is of a three-dimensional, spatial and visual plane of desire that interacts with the semiotic and discursive landscape of language and conscious representation (Lyotard, 1971). The figural, for Lyotard, is the realm of the unconscious and multiple differences that have been repressed and foreclosed by the master narrative of modernism. A postmodern aesthetics that partakes in this expression of libidinal figural desire and difference can help displace the totalising closures of modernist thinking. In his famous text, *The Postmodern Condition* (1984), Lyotard claims that the seemingly neutral and universal 'truth claims' of modernist reason are in fact nothing more than contextualised and situated 'language games' (Lyotard, 1984). These language games, in line with other postmodern decentrings of both language and history, are seen as constituting micro-narratives and politics.

How, then, is psychoanalysis understood in terms of the postmodern world? Freud's work, I will argue, is ambivalent, incorporating a modernist Oedipal narrative and a more postmodern understanding of the subject where the

unconscious disrupts any notion of stable or unitary identity and any unmediated access to the reality of the historical event. Freud originally theorised neurosis and hysteria as symptoms resulting from the repression of child sexual seduction or abuse: the repression, then, of a real historical event (see Chapter 2). His subsequent abandonment of the seduction theory developed from an increasing realisation that he could not distinguish between the truth and fiction of his patient's memories. The patient's real did not necessarily coincide with the real historical event, because the trauma was repressed and not remembered at the time; it was only recalled subsequently, many years later, in the therapy session. Freud names this delayed experience of trauma 'deferred action' or *nachträglichkeit*, and his most famous case history in relation to these ideas is *The Wolfman*. In his analysis of this patient, Freud hypothesises that the Wolfman's trauma was located primarily at the age of eighteen months, witnessing a primal scene of parental sex. This scene only became traumatic through a later seduction of the wolfman by his sister. It is only experienced by the patient in terms of his dream of wolves. Memory is not simply factual recall but also a fantasy or fiction, a story that is recreated or constructed to incorporate lost traumatic events (Freud: SE17).

Freud's account of deferred action has been taken up by postmodernists, who argue that the 'real' of history can never be accessed as a truth or a reality, but is only available as a text or fiction. Lacan's work emphasises this point, that identity is only ever imaginary and the traumatic 'real' can never be represented. But the impossibility of remembering the real of history raises ethical problems. What does it mean to say the real twentieth-century Jewish Holocaust is inaccessible, only a fiction? The restoration of memory in the case of the Wolfman is problematic, as Tina Papoulias points out, because the traumatic scene or experience was only ever 'virtual, not an actual past' (Papoulias, 1998:153). As she goes on to note, Freud subsequently does discuss his ideas of repressed trauma in terms of treating shell-shocked victims of the First World War. These soldiers, unable to recollect overwhelming experiences of trauma, were compelled to repeat and re-enact the horror of war over and over again in dreams and hallucinations. There is, then, a distinction between these two examples of repressed trauma, for in the Wolfman's case history the traumatic memory of the primal scene is a fantasy; the event is never recollected by the Wolfman and only hypothesised by Freud the analyst. In the case of the shell-shocked war victims, the traumatic experiences may not be available to memory but historically can be acknowledged consciously. But Freud's seeming confusion about what was real and what was fantasy actually fitted with his abandonment of the seduction theory: his realisation that what we remember, our histories, are always a mixture of the real and the imaginary.

Critics of the Oedipal theory have argued that Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory has meant that psychoanalysis has ignored the real sexual

abuse of many patients. But perhaps the significance of traumatic memory does not lie in a debate about the real: Freud never doubted, for example, that the Wolfman's dreams of his primal scene were rooted in reality. Possibly the importance of traumatic memory lies in the explanation of unconscious fantasy. Jung always criticised Freud for a literal reduction of fantasy and the unconscious to sexual desire. Memories of the primal scene, for Jung, were not necessarily located in literal parental sex or incest, but were much more symbolic. The primal scene in a Jungian understanding is a symbolic representation of how the historical relationship between your parents is carried and experienced by you, internally and unconsciously. This is a mixture of the real and the imaginary and, of course, connects to ancestors: the parents' familial past. A Jungian reading of the Wolfman's primal scene would just as likely root the trauma in conflict between parents and a traumatic unconscious that has been passed on, communicated from parent to child, but never made conscious.

This understanding of the historical transmission of the unconscious underlies Laplanche's rereading of Freud's seduction theory. Laplanche postulated that the seduction theory was not so much the real event, but the experience of an enigmatic and unconscious message, passed on from parent to child (Laplanche, 1987). Although Laplanche historicises the unconscious by making it the repressed desire of the parent that organises the internal world of the child (history is passed on through the unconscious of the other), there are difficulties with his theory, as Anthony Elliott and Jacqueline Rose have both suggested (Elliott, 1994:112). Both Rose and Elliott note that because Laplanche roots the origin of the child's unconscious world in the adult's enigmatic signification and sexual repression, everything is seen to originate in the external world and the child becomes some sort of passive tableau or slate, totally at the mercy of the parent's repressed sexuality. Nevertheless, Laplanche's work is important in terms of postmodern debate, because he provides a narrative of how psychic lives are transmitted historically. The idea that the unconscious is communicated and passed on between people also seems to suggest that our origins lie in the social field rather than in a simplified explanation of Oedipal familial repression. Indeed, Wilhelm Reich's explanation of Oedipal repression as an effect of social repression should not be forgotten. But is the *repression* of sexual desire, or indeed the return of the repressed, the most useful model for understanding contemporary postmodernism? In many ways the idea that history can be understood as repressed desire implies some kind of modernist master narrative that is preserved, waiting in the wings for representation and resolution. In the view of Laplanche and Pontalis, psychoanalysis is less concerned with discovering what is hidden than with interpretation or working through of the remembered element in terms of a network of meaningful relations for the subject (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988). But is symbolic elaboration or

rememory of the past merely to be understood in terms of Freud's framework of mental representation and repression? Laplanche's work suggests a world of pre-verbal unconscious experience full of meaning and 'enigmatic signification', which remains at odds with the distinction drawn by Freud and Lacan between primary pre-Oedipal experience and secondary Oedipal processes of language and cultural representation.

Most psychoanalytic interpretations of postmodernism have been in terms of frameworks of (repressed) desire. Lacan's work has been most famously lauded as the psychoanalytic theory of the postmodern because of his deconstructive notion of the subject as merely an imaginary fiction covering over the interminable negative lack or absence that characterises desire. An example of this is Frederic Jameson's work, *The Political Unconscious*, which resituates Freudian concepts of the return of the repressed at a collective level (Jameson, 1981). Ideology becomes the repression of revolution, and the repressive force that obscures historical change. For Lacan, however, it is the repressive and prohibitive force of paternal language and the symbolic, inscribing the subject within culture in terms of arbitrary signifying chains.

In a similar attempt to read the present psychoanalytically, Deleuze and Guattari understand the Oedipal narrative as a master discourse of modernism and celebrate its overturning through their *Anti-Oedipus*: the positive flows and intensities of schizophrenic desire (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984). So whereas Lacan posits desire as negative in terms of lack, Deleuze and Guattari articulate schizophrenic desire as a positive and anarchistic rebellion against capitalist hegemony and power. Through capitalism there has been a destruction of bourgeois culture and symbolic community, putting in its place commodified forms of exchange. Schizophrenic desire, like the commodity, knows no limit; capitalism not only deterritorialises old historical forms such as traditional bourgeois society, but also reterritorialises contemporary culture through repressive myths of the Oedipal family. The revolutionary alternative to capitalist hegemony is therefore a deterritorialisation of the social infrastructure through the liberation of pure productive desire. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'schizoanalysis' is precisely this liberation of unfettered, multiple and schizophrenic desire.

Jameson, however, takes a less positive view of the relation between schizophrenia and postmodernism. Whilst he acknowledges that schizophrenia does characterise the fragmentary nature of identity under postmodernity, he warns against celebrating it. To do so would merely confirm the dominant cultural logic of late capitalism. This warning that schizophrenic identity might be one of the less desirable faces of our postmodern, late capitalist world is also investigated by Louis A. Sass, who sees the illness schizophrenia as a symptom of our modern world. But unlike so many psychoanalytic thinkers who ascribe schizophrenia to some infantile world of the maternal imaginary before

language and culture, Sass understands schizophrenia as a kind of hyper-reflexivity, an extreme detachment from arenas of self-experience and desire. So instead of locating the schizophrenic in some instinctual, unthinking space of symbiotic bodily fusion, Sass puts forward the idea that schizophrenia is a flattening out of affect: an extreme alienation from bodily or intersubjective experience (Sass, 1992). Maybe the difference between the more negative view of schizophrenia taken by Jameson and Sass is the realisation that psychotic illness is about isolation from the world and the social. The utopian vision of 'schizoanalysis' in Deleuze and Guattari does not acknowledge the importance of mediating the relationship between desire and the social in terms of the imaginary. Without such mediation, desire is not liberated into the social, but walled off from it, as an insular and psychotic space of the real.

Liotard is also wary of celebrating desire over cultural forms and signification. He understands all societies to mediate between levels of desire and social discourse. In this way he acknowledges both a negative concept of desire, where language and representation are figurative of the lost object, and a positive notion of the libido as a primary process and energising force that breaks through and disrupts language. It is important to note that Lyotard conceptualises desire as a force prior to representation and in this he radically departs from Lacanian thinking. Arguing that the dream work can paint but it can't think, Lyotard theorises desire not as a language or text but as an internalised object or thing. Disguised or condensed from the beginning, desire is a force scrambling signs, condensing them, squeezing signifier and signified together. Desire cannot be seen in this account to correspond to Lacan's description of the unconscious as structured like language. Rather, desire is something which transgresses and changes language, collapsing words into things. As an internalised object or thing, unconscious desire is opposite to language:

Desire is a scrambled text from the outset. The disguise does not result from the alleged deceiving intent of desire; the work itself is disguise because it is violence perpetrated on linguistic space. There is no need to imagine that the id has an idea at the back of its head. 'The dream-work does not think.' The mobility of the primary process is deceptive in itself; it is what deceives, what sends the 'faculties' using articulated language into a spin: the figural versus the mind (Lyotard, 1991: 25).

In *Economie Libidinale* Lyotard suggests that desire is infiltrated as a libidinal intensity in and around all cultural objects and forms. Unlike Deleuze and Guattari's Reichian notion of capitalist society repressing bodily desire, Lyotard sees desire as always already realised everywhere. Late capitalism does not need to be emancipated through desiring machines because it is already a gigantic machine of desire. The problem with Lyotard's position is that

although he adds the sober brakes to Deleuze and Guattari's utopian view of a radical schizophrenic unconscious, his understanding of the operations of desire within postmodern capitalism is ultimately devoid of any political or historical orientation. By separating the libidinal energy of desire from discursive representation, making the latter simply an effect of the former, Lyotard deprives psychoanalysis of any dynamic or dialogic negotiation of power. His universalisation of libidinal intensities lying at the root of cultural life leaves any agenda for effecting political change in discursive and social structures untouched. Implicit in Lyotard's thinking is a separation between the discursive and the affectual, mirroring all the Oedipal splits between language, experience, theory and history that a radical psychoanalysis needs to challenge. Although Lyotard's notion of the unconscious as a figural image or an internal object radically and convincingly displaces Lacan's argument of a linguistic unconscious, he ends by simply reversing the hierarchical balance. Whereas, for Lacan, society is fixed in terms of one universal symbolic, in Lyotard the imaginary becomes equally totalistic and determining.

The figural, experiential unconscious

However, Lyotard's figural unconscious is very like the figural unconscious in Cornelius Castoriadis's work, the difference being that for Castoriadis the figural unconscious is not separate from representation and language but is representative from the beginning: 'The unconscious exists only as an indissociably representative/affective/intentional flux' (Castoriadis, 1987: 274). As I will discuss in Chapter 6, Castoriadis perceives the relation between desire and the social in terms of primary and secondary identification. It is the secondary identification and reproduction of individual desire within a social setting that moves private fantasy into the realms of a social imaginary. And it is the social institution of such desire that then becomes regulated as the symbolic. The radical nature of Castoriadis's work is that he refuses the break between desire and representation, but still holds on to a tension between individual imaginative fantasy and the socio-symbolic. Although Castoriadis does not offer a particularly complicated analysis of how desire becomes social, he specifically analyses the difference of desire in terms of space and place. Analysing the unconscious in terms of the spatial and temporal location it inhabits, Castoriadis continually stresses the importance of private, creative imagination and the social and political community.

The significance of a figural unconscious is that it represents unconscious experience. As we shall see in Chapter 2, Freud was characteristically vague about the more primary processes and ideas of unconscious experience. These ideas have been developed most recently and fruitfully by Christopher Bollas. In his exploration of the world of unconscious self-experience, Bollas differs

from the Lacanian and Freudian excavation of the desiring subject. Unconscious self-experience, too complex and dynamic to be defined as a self state, Bollas describes as an 'aesthetic intelligence', a sense of the self, an inner object relation, where knowing the self cannot be thought, but can be felt (Bollas, 1995:166). This unconscious work of self-experience 'gives birth to the spirit of place within the individual, which is felt when it is there and terrifyingly missed when it seems to have departed' (Bollas, 1995: 166). According to Bollas, self-experience lies beyond representation: 'In the Lacanian lexicon it could be assigned to the real'(Bollas, 1995: 147). But the real for Bollas is not simply an arena of trauma. It can be traumatic if the elaborative passage between the real and the imaginary and symbolic is shut down, for example in the case of child sexual abuse where the child's experience of self is destroyed. The real for Bollas is a bodily and creative place of self-experience, and Bollas's notion of an experiential real which is not necessarily deadly, but potentially transformative is very similar to Luce Irigaray's resituating of the positive connection between the real and the imaginary in terms of a 'female imaginary'.

In Chapter 4, I put Irigaray's and Christopher Bollas's ideas into a dialogue, arguing for a more experiential and bodily imaginary. This bodily imaginary can, within the transference, transform the traumatic real into the registers of the imaginary and symbolic. For Bollas, the historian's text and the psychoanalyst's reconstructions can both be understood as a psychic function, where the imaginary and symbolic work upon the real, 'creating a space in the mind that gives special significance to the real' (Bollas, 1995: 143). Bollas links his theory of an experiential unconscious to Freud's notion of screen memories. Unconscious material, lost through trauma, can be liberated through tapping screen memories that yield inner images, between analyst and client. These creative images thus convert the destruction of the past into new stories of meaning (see Chapter 4). A postmodern concept of the bodily imaginary then focuses on this notion of the image which negotiates between unconscious experience and narrative, because, I suggest, the notion of an experiential figural unconscious as a bodily imaginary offers a more historical account of psychoanalysis, opening up not just the symbolic, but also the imaginary, to situated and creative change.

In Bollas's model, traumatic forgetting can be reversed in the analytic session through revisiting screen memories which contain 'condensed psychically intense experience in a single object'. These screen memories contain forgotten memories which, once tapped, can liberate self-experiences into new visions. When these screen memories are revisited and elaborated in the analytical arena, trauma becomes converted to the play of a generative unconscious. For Bollas, the idea 'that the artist transforms trauma and psychic pain into an artistic object is a common psychoanalytic perspective on the nature of creativity' (Bollas, 1993: 79). However, the artist's internal abstract picture is

characterised by Bollas as an internal object, rather than an internal representation or structure which is mentally sensed. The past is therefore liberated and transformed through the unconscious work of an object rather than a mental (and linguistic) representation. These internal objects as screen memories are captured by the image. Bollas cites imagist theory and the poetry of Seamus Heaney to illustrate 'inner images of psychic procreativity', which produce the shared generative structure between analyst and analysand (Bollas, 1993: 84). Inner images create a transference and countertransference between clinician and patient which, like the narrative act between the historian and his material, convert the destruction of the past and the self into new narrative meaning:

Each time a historian approaches his material or the analyst listens to his patient, his prejudices are *destroyed* by the action of reading or listening. Each also taps the screen memories of the other; the clinician directs the patient to liberate himself from the bleakness of ordinary trauma – the deserts of time gone by – to gain access to unconscious meaning stored all the while in the secret subterranean source of the screen memory. (Bollas, 1995: 141)

Bollas provides an explanation of the psychic rememory of history which is not based on the return of the repressed but, nevertheless, is identical to Freud's coining of the term *nachträglichkeit*:

in psychoanalysis this past, transformed into history, gives the real a place that is open to the continuously transformative workings of the imaginary and symbolic, the very movement that Freud termed *nachträglichkeit*. (Bollas, 1995: 143)

Bollas's theorisation of psychic history, which is based on a return and recreation of a lost, internal (maternal) object, understands the past as trauma which has been self-destructively obliterated through amnesia. This is very different from an account of psychic history based on linguistic repression by the phallus, where a lost maternal history is only ever restored or represented by the necessity of its unspeakability in relation to paternal mental representation and language. In a phallic account narrative is understood as a reflection of *unconscious mental structures*. However, narrative in Bollas's account is a vehicle for the mediation and elaboration of the image and the internalised object, between the experiential real event and language.

In Bollas's view unconscious self-experience, as a more generative and creative unconscious, inhabits a different and earlier structure from the secondary Oedipal, or phallic, mental structures focused on by Freud and Lacan. However, my argument for a postmodern bodily imaginary, following Irigaray, does not recognise a hierarchical division between the Oedipal and the pre-Oedipal. The body as a lived body within culture is always within

language, and the bodily unconscious or imaginary carries an historically transmitted form, as pre-linguistic stories, that is not fixed like the biologically determined Jungian archetype, but is like it in being a mythic, creative form. Following Frantz Fanon, I argue for this archetype in terms of a cultural unconscious, not a collective one. The imaginary is then elaborated through story telling, according to the different localised space and place in which it is situated. And it is the rereading or rememory of myths and archetypal stories through an imaginal, bodily imaginary that enables a cultural unconscious. This cultural rememory of myth is the work and practice of psychoanalysis, but it is also the rereading of dead traditions in terms of living history. Such a popular practice of rememory can be found in the writing and reading of literature, in the production and consumption of film and in the ethnographies of cultural history.

In *Arguing with the Phallus*, I read Oedipal psychoanalysis as an ethnography of the white, Western psyche, and put forward a rereading of this phallic, symbolic law through a notion of the bodily imaginary. This bodily imaginary can be understood in terms of complex, theoretical mappings of the symbolic, imaginary and real, but it also has to be understood, in a very ordinary sense, as an act of imagination. Rememory of the imaginative image, through story telling, then, mobilises the bodily imaginary as a social narrative. This more corporeal imaginary is mapped in *Arguing with the Phallus* in relation to feminist, queer and postcolonial theory to argue for the presence of situated imaginaries which can represent and elaborate positive forms of identification and desire, for women, for Asian and Black communities, and for gays and lesbians. Throughout this book runs the premise that the bodily imaginary becomes a symbolic one when it has become socially and institutionally reproduced. In other words, the imaginary becomes symbolic when it has been made law. Of course this symbolic is reproduced historically, but it is not immutable. The notion that the symbolic is a universally fixed phallic one is a pessimism, giving ultimate power to the globalising reach of a masculine, Western imaginary, and denying the possibilities and the histories of other more marginal stories and identities in both their imaginary and symbolic forms. The final chapter focuses, therefore, on the work of the bodily imaginary in terms of a cultural rememory¹ of myth, using particular writers such as Toni Morrison and Walter Benjamin. Morrison's and Benjamin's writings enable us to perceive, not just the work of psychoanalysis as popular memory and ethnography, but also how different ethnographies and historical works of rememory are equally valid narratives of a cultural unconscious.

¹ My term 'rememory' is derived from the meaning in Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*, where memory, together with imagination, recreates a narrative of the past.

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