



**ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER
IN WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES**

**Traces of the Heroine's Journey: The Poetics of Parturition and
Death With-in the Matrixial Encounter.**

M. A. Thesis

Author: Sanjita Majumder.

Main supervisor: Emilia María Duran Almarza; Universidad de Oviedo

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Oviedo, 14 June 2012



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M. A. Thesis

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TITLE: Traces of the Heroines Journey: The Poetics of Parturition and Death With-in the Matrixial Encounter

KEY WORDS: Psychoanalysis; Maternity; Trauma of Birth; The Uncanny; The Matrixial Borderspace; Feminist Aesthetics; Pre-Linguistic/Pre verbal Subjectivity; Language; Poetics.

MAIN SUPERVISOR: EMILIA MARIA DURAN ALMARZA

1. Spanish summary

En esta tesis me acerco a la teoría estética post-estructuralista de Bracha L. Ettinger y su concepto del “espacio liminal matricial”, proponiendo una articulación feminista del útero y el estadio intra-uterino en el imaginario simbólico del pensamiento psicoanalítico de Otto Rank y Sigmund Freud. Se examina también la idea de la artista femenina en relación a las representaciones del cuerpo maternal arcaico dentro del marco binarista y fálico del psicoanálisis tradicional, así como a la inversión en la asociación de la metáforas del útero como espacio creador de vida vs. la tumba como contenedor de muerte.

En su obra *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Ettinger propone un espacio pre-natal e intra-uterino físico e imaginario como un modelo alternativo que puede co-existir con el modelo fálico propuesto por Lacan. Desde mi punto de vista, el modelo matricial da valor a una subjetividad específicamente femenina en la medida en que abre puertas a la creatividad en relación a las diferencias sexuales. La teorización del encuentro matricial abre nuevas líneas que facilitan el luto por la ejecución de madre arcaica primordial.

En el último capítulo se analizará el poema “Incubatory”, de Christine Hume, incluido en su reciente colección *Shot* (2010), que se centra en temas similares de gestación y parto. En esta parte se defiende que la poética de Hume permite el establecimiento de un diálogo constructivo entre el sujeto artístico femenino (Yo) y el sujeto no-nato (el Otro) estableciendo fronteras entre lo vivo y lo no vivo.

2. English summary

In the thesis I approach the post-structuralist aesthetic theory, of the *Matrixial Borderspace* by Bracha L. Ettinger through a feminist articulation of the implications of the 'womb' and 'intra-uterine' stage within symbolic and psychoanalytic thought primarily through works of Otto Rank and Sigmund Freud. I also examine the idea of the female artist in relation to representations of the archaic maternal body in the 'death dealing' and 'life giving' tomb/womb inversion with in the binary and split phallic psychoanalytic models.

In *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Ettinger proposes a pre-natal and intra-uterine environment (psychical/imaginary space) as an alternate model existing alongside Jacques Lacan's phallic model. I argue that the Matrixial model adds valence to a specific feminine subjectivity by paving new in-roads for creativity in relation to sex differences. In my view the theorization of the Matrixial Encounter opens new grounds that facilitates the mourning of the foreclosed primordial archaic m/other.

In the final chapter of the thesis I go on to analyze the poem "Incubatory" by Christine Hume, in her recent collection *Shot* (2010), which invoke similar themes of gestation and parturition. I argue that Hume poetics allows a constructive dialogue between the female artistic subject (I) and the unborn (Other) by tracing borders between the not-yet living and life.

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Abstract

In the thesis I approach the post-structuralist aesthetic theory, of the *Matrixial Borderspace* by Bracha L. Ettinger through a feminist articulation of the implications of the ‘womb’ and ‘intra-uterine’ stage within symbolic and psychoanalytic thought primarily through works of Otto Rank and Sigmund Freud. I also examine the idea of the female artist in relation to representations of the archaic maternal body in the ‘death dealing’ and ‘life giving’ tomb/womb inversion within the binary and split phallic psychoanalytic models.

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Introduction

The content of the thesis is the result of an effort at critically examining the psychoanalytic conception of birth and death of the female/feminine subjectivity, focusing on its relation to creativity and artwork. The invoking a generalized view to introduce this work needs clarification in the sense of the impingements that weighs on any presentation of subjectivity through a generalized lens. In my defense, a generalized sketch allows a direct approach to the core of what has crystallized to form this work. On the outset, an “objective” view on the study of “subjectivity” is a yoking together of two expressions semantically incompatible and it is this very incompatibility that signals to the interstice which opens up when language, as a rational tool is used for purposes of constructing and studying subjectivity. The incompatibility between language and subjectivity allots centre stage to the questioning of whether language as an objective device can wholly determine and contain subjectivity. While arguing that language cannot achieve this feat, I have turned towards theories that attempt to examine how subjectivity eludes discourses using alternate means. The main idea connecting each chapter in the thesis is the underlying theme of the “womb” as a conceptual space in psychoanalytic thought, as a symbolic space in view of its representative function for femininity and the female subject, as a linguistic space in its use of in art work and, finally, as a political space for female reproductive rights.

I arrived at the idea of the “Heroine’s Journey” as suggested in the title of the thesis through my interest in the work of Otto Rank (1884-1939). In his final work *Art*

and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development,¹ Rank examines the urge for creativity in the “Artist” in relation to the idea of cultural “Heroism”. Rank’s inquisition in this book lead me to question what “creativity” and “heroism” implies when analyzed within a systematized framework of the Artist as hero/heroine in relation to their work of art. Using a gendered perspective to this query lead me to asking whether artwork could be gendered. Could Rank’s idea of artistic creativity implicate and further be constituted in a specifically feminine/female position where the Artist as the Heroine exists alongside the Artist as the Hero? I am aware of the essentialist underpinnings of forwarding an argument in the suggestion that the definition of an “Artist” can vary in the view of sex difference. In order to exempt myself from forwarding an essentialist discourse, my intention has been to examine and question creative differences as where and how “feminine” creativity differs from a “masculine” creativity in view of the association of reproduction, birth and gestation alongside art and language. I have also realized that heaping together a broad range of artwork under the single term “art-work” can be problematic. I would like to defend the idea of artwork as a cumulative in this thesis, because my focus remains on examining the conceptualization of the creative drive behind the artwork, in its symbolic and metaphoric association with the idea of producing life (giving birth). I have attempted to examine the aspect of how creativity is conceptualized in relation to the idea of sexuality. Further, I am interested in how ideas of “creativity” and “sexuality” intersect in the Freudian psychoanalytic concepts of sublimation and the Rankian concept of the human denial of procreation.

¹ Rank, Otto. *Art and Artist: The Creative Urge and Personality Development*. Charles Atkinson (Trans.), Norton & Company, New York /London, 1989.

The theoretical mainstay I have chosen in this thesis relies on the feminist aesthetic inquiry of Bracha L. Ettinger in the *The Matrixial Borderspace*² and on Elissa Marder's essay "The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt,"³. Feminist aesthetic theory facilitates the examination of different aesthetic categories and the way gender influences ideas about art, the artist and aesthetic value in the theoretical framework of Ettinger's Matrixial Borderspace, which primarily engages with the work of Jacques Lacan. Marder provides in her essay an astute criticism of the psychoanalytic concepts devised by Sigmund Freud in relation to death and creativity through a gendered lens. In the thesis I begin with the examination of two theoretical concepts devised by Otto Rank in the *Trauma of Birth* (1924) and *Beyond Psychology* (1941). In *The Trauma of Birth*, Rank argues that the subject is first and foremost constructed in the trauma of birth, which later becomes a paradigm for all other traumas in life. In *Beyond Psychology*, Rank goes on to stress the importance of an inclusive stance towards what constitutes the "irrational" in human nature as a part of the established social order. Rank elaborates that undertaking a psychoanalytic study implies at the task of rationally explaining the "irrational roots of human behavior" through language⁴. In Rank's words,

The linguistic inability to express the irrational verbally only reflects the deepest human problem, the clash between the two worlds in which man attempts to live simultaneously, the natural world and the man-made world.

² Ettinger, Bracha. *The Matrixial Borderspace*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

³ Marder, Elissa. "The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt", *Parallax 15* (2009), Pg 5-20.

⁴ Otto Rank, "Preface," *Beyond Psychology*. New York: Dover Publications, 1958, Pg 11.

Man in his development of civilization has practically made over the universe or at least the earth, in terms of his self only to fail.⁵

Therefore, for Rank, the irrational basis of human nature lies beyond any theorization using language, precisely because language is a mean through which thoughts are communicated rationally and hence, the need for a new vocabulary to find expression for an irrational language. Here, Rank explains that irrationality is simply what is natural and what is unnatural is the culturally constructed “rationale”, as a tool that is relative in time and attempts to fashion everything in culturally deterministic terms. The two theoretical concepts of Rank, the “trauma of birth” and “beyond psychology” facilitate a sort of convergence for the two vital ideas driving this thesis: on the one hand, the subject constructed in the “trauma of birth” directly connects subjectivity to what constitutes the archaic maternal body and serves as an excellent basis for further exploring arguments forwarded by Ettinger in relation to artwork and the period of gestation. On the other hand, Rank’s perspective on the “irrational” directs me to what constitutes the “pre-verbal stage” or the “intra-uterine phase” in feminist psychoanalytic theory. I also look at how the theoretical foundation of the “trauma of birth” diffracts from that of Freudian theories where subjectivity constructed wholly through the sexual development of the child in the Oedipal theory. It is also sets itself apart from the Lacanian perspective, where subjectivity comes into being only through an introduction to language, which constitutes the “Symbolic Order”.

The main questions posed in relation to the different psychoanalytic concepts opened up here are: how is female corporeality in the period of gestation represented in

⁵ Otto Rank, “Preface,” *Beyond Psychology*. New York: Dover Publications, 1958:Pg 13.

language and cultural outputs? How the is the attempt to articulate the period of gestation a particularly feminine approach to creativity? Further, if inscribing the period of gestation in artwork is a feminine form of artistic and literary representation, where is this form located in the psychoanalytic theorization of sublimation via art? Finally, what qualitative gender differences unfold in view of the artist, in relation to a distilled textual art form such as poetics? In the final section of the thesis, I apply different psychoanalytic and aesthetic theories to the poetics of Christine Hume, in order to explore the boundaries of language in discourses centered on the “pre-verbal stage” through the poetic voice of the mother as “I”/Subject and the unborn fetus as the “Other”/Object.

Through my interpretations of the psychoanalytic theories of Rank and Freud in the framework of a gendered articulation forwarded by Ettinger and Marder, I further attempt to examine the conceptualization of “pre-verbal” subjectivity formation and the use of language in a form of poetics through Christine Hume’s poem “Incubatory”. Using this particular poem, I examine the interstice of pre-verbal subjectivity—as a space where language cannot express because it does not exist—and as a symbolic representation of a form of poetics or art work that seeks to express, paradoxically, the very inability to express.

A Brief Introduction to the work of Bracha L. Ettinger:

Bracha L. Ettinger, is an Israeli-French feminist philosopher, practicing psychoanalyst and artist, who works on maternal subjectivity, female sexuality and psychoanalysis in the interstices of art and aesthetics. In the context of the thesis,

Ettinger's conceptualization of the "Matrixial Encounter-Event" as symbolic "thinking apparatus beyond/ beside the phallus"⁶ enables the linking of psychoanalytic theorization of the maternal in the "pre-linguistic" stage to the Rankian concept of the "irrational". Rank's theory of the "irrational" as inherent other-ness is similar to the pre-verbal stage/subject as both are conceptualized beyond language.

Ettinger's main contribution to feminist psychoanalysis has been the animation of the feminine-maternal "womb" model within the structural paradigm of Lacan's symbolic, imaginary and the real. She proposes a pre-natal and intra-uterine environment (psychical/imaginary space) as an alternate model existing alongside Lacan's phallic symbolic model. In Ettinger's model, the *matrix*, that stands for "womb" in Latin, corresponds as the representative symbol for the female/feminine subject, positioned beside and not beyond the phallus. In the "Introduction" to *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Griselda Pollock comments that Bracha Ettinger's matrixial theory makes room for a feminine distinction in the unconscious that corresponds to the phallus/castration symbol. Pollock further adds that:

Stretching from the irrecoverable trauma of the Real to phantasy (where trauma insists on repetition without ever representing itself), transsubjectivity rises from the Real into the Imaginary and the Symbolic through a new vocabulary: *Matrix*, *metramorphosis*, *mamalanguage*, *borderlinking*, *borderspacing*.⁷

⁶ Pollock, Griselda. "Femininity: Aporia or Sexual Difference?", *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Ettinger, Bracha. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 12-1,3.

⁷ Pollock, Griselda. "Femininity: Aporia or Sexual Difference?" ,*The Matrixial Borderspace*, Ettinger, Bracha. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 10-1,1.

Pollock argues that the vocabulary Ettinger intersperses in her conceptualization of the matrixial theory articulates what is at stake for the female subjectivity by emphasizing that the “originary feminine difference that doesn’t confront, submit to or fight phallic difference”⁸ exists alongside the phallic model instead of beyond it. In my interpretation of Ettinger’s work, the Matrixial Borderspace is a constructive project that resituates the originary feminine difference within the existent phallic symbolic modes of cultural representation. The concept of “Metramorphosis” as “co-affectivity” and sharing on the level of the borders between the subject and the Other is a productive counterpart to other subversive measures adopted by different feminist theorists towards phallic symbolic modes of psychoanalytic representation. On these grounds, I will not seek to elaborate on the contributions of numerous other feminist psychoanalytic theorists on the subject of maternity and the pre-linguistic subjectivity. As Ettinger explains, in the Matrixial borderspace,

This feminine different—difference is not a configuration of dependency derived from disguising oneself in a phallic masque (Joan Rivière’s femininity as masquerade or parody and irony in Judith Butler). Nor is it a revolt or a struggle with the phallic texture (the feminine as the moment of rupture and negativity in Julia Kristeva). We can advance in this way of thinking only if we free ourselves from the compulsion not only to disqualify

⁸ Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 183.

as mystical or psychotic whatever lies beyond the phallic border, but also to grasp that the borderline itself can become transgressive [...].⁹

Despite the authority of theorists like Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva and Joan Rivière in the study of gender and female subjectivity, I will not refer to their work primarily because all of them theoretically draw attention to the counter-intuitivism of studying any mode of subjective formation before and beyond language. For each of them, the subject does not and cannot exist prior to its initiation into the symbolic order through the acquisition of language and this, on the outset, diffracts from Ettinger's arguments for representation of the subject prior to language acquisition. Instead, I will remain focused on psychoanalytic theories and interpretations, such as those of Elissa Marder, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, which seek to emphasize the topography of "symbolic" representations of subjectivity as equally significant to a subjectivity constructed through language. In my view, Ettinger's feminist aesthetic theory supports a distinction between the male and female subject as artist, as she points out that,

If the elimination of the archaic m/Other as the source of life is in the service of male narcissism, then for the female narcissistic development such an elimination is dangerous: it is precisely what constitutes her as the sacrifice. If creativity is to be rethought through the feminine, it should not, in my view follow the pattern of the hero. If it does, the sacrifice component will destroy

⁹ Ettinger, Bracha. "Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006:Pg 177.

the she-hero not even from the outside but from within, because her mode of differentiating will be extinguished.¹⁰

In the essay “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event”, Ettinger goes as far as to close her argument stating that within the schema of the artist as woman/female, “only a dead woman-artist, or a woman-artist who is in principle out of the procreation cycle, can become such a ‘genius’ and represent the creative symbolic begetter.”¹¹ Further, through Elissa Marder’s essay on death, I attempt to re-constitute what the “dead woman-artist” represents in examining the idea of mourning, as the unacknowledged death of the female artist comes to substitute an un-mourned maternal loss in cultural and symbolic representations. I conclude the thesis with a rigorous analysis of the poem “Incubatory”, which is part of Christine Hume’s recently published collection of poems *Shot* (2010).

An Outline of the Research:

I will briefly outline the three sections that comprise the research to allow an easier navigation through this body of work:

In the first section, “A Feminist Approach to the work of Otto Rank”, I analyze the impact of gender on the Rankian perspective of the irrational that lies beyond language tracing its co-ordinates with the “pre-linguistic stage” in psychoanalytic theorization. I argue that both the “irrational” and the pre-linguistic stage have latent

¹⁰ Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” *The Matrixial Borderspace*,. University of Minnesota Press, 2006,Pg 175.

¹¹ *Ibid.*,173.

connections to the conceptualization of archaic maternal femininity. In the second half of this section, I elaborate on the “Hero’s Journey” in Otto Rank’s *Myth and Birth of the Hero* in the attempt to address the question—How does the gestation period, as a symbolic representation of the pre-linguistic stage ripple on to effecting the female artistic subjectivity (I) in dialogue with the pre-natal (Other) both involved in the process of coalescence and simultaneous dissonance; as “one” and yet “separate” identities.

In the second section “A Feminist Perspective on the Work of Sigmund Freud”, I examine Elissa Marder’s essay, “The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt”, which approaches questions of what it means to give birth and give death, as well as the relation between “maternity” and “death” in the psyche, symbolized as the womb/tomb dyad. Marder conceptualizes the maternal crypt as the “un-mourned loss” encapsulated in a non-space beyond the reach of language. For Marder, reviewing symbolic representations of maternity are of significance because they broaden feminist psychoanalytic criticism through the causal effect that they have on social realities and political ideologies. In the beginning of the essay, Marder points out the lack of transparency in any attempt to establish a connection between the psychic representations of death and maternity and contemporary social realities. Marder argues that a vital and latent bond exists between social realities and psychic representations and that the delving into earlier representations of death and maternity in the psyche opens new grounds for a particular feminine form of aesthetic representation. I draw out Marder’s feminist critique of Freud’s concept of death as sexed in his essays *The Uncanny* and *The Theme of the Three Caskets* both of which are conceptualized via analysis of semantics and literature.

In the final section, “Analysis of Christine Hume, ‘Incubatory’, I examine the poetics of parturition as a dialogue between the subject “I” and the “Other” using Bracha Ettinger’s aesthetic theory of the Matrixial Borderspace as an alternate model of a pre-natal and intra-uterine (psychic/imaginary) space existing alongside Lacan’s phallic symbolic model (i.e. the womb as another signifier alongside the phallus). In the analysis of Christine Hume’s work, I will argue that Hume’s poetics of maternity and parturition refuses to fall within the constructed binary of “life giving” and “death dealing” archaic mother. Instead, it challenges the clichéd portrayal of tenderness and traditional matronly tropes and dismantles previously assembled ideas on maternity.

Chapter 1. A Feminist Approach to the Work of Otto Rank

1.1. An Introduction to Otto Rank and Ernest Becker in the Denial of Death

In the following chapter, I examine Rank's theory of *The Trauma of Birth* (1924) and some of his arguments in relation to sexuality in his book *Beyond Psychology* (1941). In contemporary psychoanalytic studies, Ernest Becker's Pulitzer Prize winning book *The Denial of Death* (1973) draws attention to the post-Freudian work of Otto Rank merging it with the existential theology of Søren Kierkegaard. In the book, Becker revives the Rankian argument for a coalition between psychological and mythical religious perspectives. In the Preface, Becker introduces the work of Rank work as follows:

You cannot merely praise much of his [Rank's] work because in its stunning brilliance it is often fantastic, gratuitous, superlative; the insights seem like a gift beyond what is necessary. I suppose part of the reason—in addition to his genius—was that Rank's thought always spanned several fields of knowledge [...]. Living as we do in an era of hyper-specialization we have lost the expectation of this kind of delight.¹²

Further into the preface, Becker highlights Ira Progoff's description of one of Rank's shortcomings. In his opinion, "Rank is very diffuse, very hard to read, so rich that

¹² Becker, Ernest. *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1973, Pg 23.

he is almost inaccessible to the general reader.”¹³ Becker cites Progoff’s observation of the inaccessibility of Rank’s work as one of the reason for venturing into *The Denial of Death* project, as his own attempt to get Rank to a larger audience that could appreciate his contribution in the field of psychoanalytic study. Rank’s work is indeed “diffuse” and hard to compile under the banner of a specialized discipline as it goes on to span a vast range of topics, issues and ideas. In this first chapter, I will allude to Becker’s interpretations of Rank in *The Denial of Death*, which, in my view, contributes amply in drawing attention to the underpinnings of Rank’s ideology. Becker interpretation of Rank serves as a comprehensive base for this chapter allowing me to trace and forward a gendered outlook on Rank’s theories. The general purview of Becker’s interpretation re-creates the intellectual atmosphere of the period positioning Rank’s theoretical insights alongside his contemporaries and facilitates a strong foundation to venture into a feminist criticism of what constituted the Rankian system of thinking.

I will begin with a focus on the implications of the Rankian system of “dualist ontological motive” through a gendered lens using arguments propounded by Helene Cixous on the functioning of engendered binary practices. I will also apply Rank’s ideas as they resonate with Becker denominations on Rank’s work. For Rank, the “dualist ontological motive” stood for the dual motives of every human subject with regards to the “fear of life” and the “fear of death”. Becker situates the dual motive alongside the existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger in the early 20th century thinking, as he mentions,

¹³ Becker, Ernest. *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1973, Pg 24.

At about the same time that Rank wrote, Heidegger brought these fears to the centre of existential philosophy. He argued that the basic anxiety of man is the anxiety *about* being-in-the-world, as well as anxiety *of* being-in-the-world. That is, both fear of death and fear of life, of experience and individuation.¹⁴ [Italics in original]

For Rank, human anxiety was the outcome of the force exerted in the polarity between “fear of death” as individuation and the “fear of life” in the fear of experience. I will elaborate on the consequences of Rank’s theory in early 20th century psychoanalytic thinking, in order to contextualize his work in the period in which they were produced. Otto Rank was one Freud’s most intimate associates for nearly twenty years (1905-1926). Rank was a member of an early circle of the Psychoanalytic Society, the so-called “Praetorian Guard”, that included Sandor Ferenczi, Ernest Jones, Hans Sachs, Nicholas Abraham, and later Max Eitingon, and he was pre-maturely excluded from the Freudian circle after publishing *The Trauma of Birth*, which was severely criticized as an “attempt to be original and in doing so even exaggerated with psychoanalytic reductionism.”¹⁵ The premise of *The Trauma of Birth* rests on the postulate that all anxieties are derived from the original infant fright upon emerging from the womb. For Rank, the experience of birth was “universally” traumatic, which allowed him to position the birth trauma as the “ultimate biological basis of the psychological.”¹⁶ Rank’s hypothesis was that, since all anxieties emerge from the trauma of birth, as a consequence, so does all neurosis, but the

¹⁴ Becker, Ernest. “Human Character as a Vital Lie,” in *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1973, Pg 79.

¹⁵ Becker, Ernest. *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1973, Pg 25.

¹⁶ Rank, Otto. “Preface,” in *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Robert Brunner, 1952, Pg XIII.

degree of neurosis in the individual is determined by nurture (culture) and not nature. It thus served to openly challenge Freud, for whom the Oedipal model was the biological and universal basis for subject formation. It took Freud some time to realize that Rank was attempting to replace his theory of castration with the trauma of birth as the basis of the unconscious and, hence, after a period of initial praise for the book, Freud retracted his recommendations for it.

Much later in his career, in a series of *American Lectures*,¹⁷ Rank attributed Freud's denial of the trauma of separation from the mother in parturition to the fact that the conceptual axis of the trauma of birth threatened Freudian castration theory "as the pillar of the sexual etiology of neuroses"¹⁸. At the time *The Trauma of Birth* was published, Freud's objection to it was that being born is not experienced subjectively as a separation from the mother, since the fetus is a completely narcissistic creature completely unaware of her/his existence. Otto Rank conceded that Freud was right in the opinion that psychoanalytic thinking indeed knew little or nothing about the subjectivity of the newborn to draw any suitable conclusion. But the same would hold true for a child in the early years of life, and yet, it did not stop Freud from projecting too much adultism, especially adult sexuality, onto the child. Ernest Becker's speculation on Rank's abrupt exclusion from the close-knit Freudian circle is similar to Rank's views on his own exclusion. Becker notes that the psychoanalytic circle never forgave Rank for turning away from Freud in "diminishing their own immortality symbol. But Rank had his own, unique, and perfectly thought-out system of ideas."¹⁹

¹⁷ Kramer, Robert. Ed. *A Psychology of Difference: The American Lectures: Otto Rank*, Foreword by Rollo May., Princeton University Press, 1996. 112-130.

¹⁸ Ibid., 112.

¹⁹ Becker, Ernest. "Preface," in *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1973.

Becker points out that, in the later years, Freud realized that the causal factors for human anxiety weren't just instinctual urges and inner drives of the subject but a human perplexity about nature itself and, therefore, the fear of castration was analogous to the fear of death. In my view, Rank's system of ideas has its roots in the ideology that Rank held with regards to psychoanalytic study itself, for him,

Every system of psychology is just as much an expression of the existing social order [...]. Psychology in other words is not an objective instrument, like a telescope or a microscope which can be applied for the purpose of observation to the reactions of individuals or groups of people; it is not a science beyond or above civilization that it presumes to explain.²⁰

Rank's strong criticism of Freudian psychoanalysis arrives from the same disbelief in the assumed scientific truism that psychoanalysis laid claims to. According to Rank, the relevant question to pose for psychoanalytic study was not why people take up such unprofitable and unfit ways to live their lives but to fix empirical observations to a broader understanding of human nature itself. For Rank, the Freudian psychotherapy was a tool to resituate the "ill" back into the margins of acceptable societal norms²¹. Therefore, if the basic philosophy behind Freudian psychotherapy was to adjust deviates back towards living a productive life in society, then, in converse, the laws applied to allow the adjustment were determined by the same society whose folds the patients were returned to. In Rank's view, society or civilization was not, therefore, above criticism.

²⁰ Otto Rank, "Psychology and Social Change," in *Beyond Psychology*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1958, Pg 27.

²¹ *Ibid.*,28.

It serves well in the feminist approach to psychoanalysis to point out that a majority of Freud's patients were "hysterical and neurotic" women whom Freud cured of their individual miseries, orienting them back towards productive living in the early 20th century Western patriarchal society. Rank's position against Freud shows that he understood well how all epoch-making theories owed their popularity to the ideological conception of universality. In Rank's words, "they reach beyond scientific predictability into realms of dogmatic certainty, they become substitutes for religious beliefs."²² Rank ideological foothold was strongly rooted in the favor of a "psychology of difference", which takes into account intersections of race, gender, ethnicity and development psychology in children and against any kind of covert dogmatism in the approach to psychoanalysis as an incontestable scientific truth. One can argue that Rank was no different from Freud, since he too universalized the "trauma of birth", locating the origins of anxiety in the birth act itself. Furthermore, it could follow that, perhaps, Rank only succeeded in driving the originary cause of anxiety to the act of being born from the Freudian theory of early sexual development. But Rank's perspective holds valence through the outcome in shifting anxiety to the birth act because one could now claim that the degree of anxiety was determined wholly by culture and not the universal Oedipal factor, which varies in relation to kinship, customs, rites and rituals in different societies. Rank's theory of the trauma of birth also draws attention to the need for an acknowledgement of cultural differences and the criticism of inequality inherent in every society. Once the inner sexual drives of the child were challenged as a universal constant,

²²Otto Rank, "Psychology and Social Change," in *Beyond Psychology*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1958, Pg, 33.

it became clear that sexual development in early adolescence is by and large dependent on interactions with cultural factors.

1.1.1 The Artist as Cultural Hero against Nature and Procreation:

In this subsection, I will examine the Artist as the Hero and as a representative figure for culture, who comes to stand in opposition to nature and procreation, within the distinction between Nature and Culture. In *The Trauma of Birth*, Rank points out that culture, as a phenomenon, was the striving to overcome the primal birth anxiety.²³ Becker observes that Rank had realized that “Culture in its construct opposes nature and transcends it. Culture is in its most intimate intent a heroic denial of creatureliness”.²⁴ Thus, any human aspirations to “cosmic heroism” will ensure the “continuation of the project of denying creatureliness”.²⁵ This Rankian realization, in Becker’s view, was also one of the reasons why he deserved more credit than Freud. Rank, in encompassing the paradoxical duality of the human condition caught between culture and nature, emphasized the active “heroism” factor required to accomplish any denial of animal-ness. Rank’s system of thinking allows one to understand that the fear of death was as much, if not more, the originary cause of anxiety where Freud’s theory of the fear of castration, on the other hand, remains sexually reductive in its attempt to explain the modern human’s moral dependence on another as a result of the Oedipus complex.

²³ Rank, Otto. “The Artistic Idealization,” in *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Robert Brunner, 1952, Pg 143.

²⁴ Becker, Ernest. “Otto Rank and the Closure of Psychoanalysis on Kierkegaard,” in *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1973, Pg 184.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 187.

In order to argue for the implications of gender difference in the schema of the “fear of death” as the originary cause of anxiety, I will refer to an insight Becker provides to illustrate the Rankian dualism from the perspective of a child. This insight provides a great deal of clarity on what the paradox of dual ontological motive infers. Becker argues that “the child stands right at the crossroads of human dualism. He discovers that he has a fallible body, and he is learning that there is a whole cultural world-view that will permit him to triumph over it.”²⁶ An interstice for feminist contention begins to emerge in the picture on a close examination of the implications of gender difference, when applied to what Becker explains here. There is no doubt that Becker is referring to the “male child” or, perhaps Becker does not take into account the sex of the child while talking about the cultural worldview that will permit *him* to triumph over *his* fallible body [italics for emphasis] thus reducing the human subject in his text to a ‘he’ child.

First, the child discovers that she/he has a fallible body (i.e. discovers death) and then goes on to discover a whole cultural world-view that will permit her/him to “triumph” over the body. The cultural world-view that Becker is referring to here, which allows the child to triumph over its body directs us to the idea of “immortality” which can be further translated into what Becker calls active “heroism” as the denial of animal-ness. Thus animal-ness, in its association with mortality, has to be overcome through the active heroism that aspires towards immortality. The artist fits therefore the hero archetype in her/his striving for the promised cultural immortality, through the eternal preservation of her/his creation through cultural history. Thus, it is the “heroism” propagated by culture

²⁶ Becker Ernest, “Otto Rank and the Closure of Psychoanalysis on Kierkegaard,” in *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1973, Pg 189.

that permits the hero to triumph over his fallible body, in so far as the impetus through which heroism maintains its momentum is the denial of mortality.

In this view of cultural heroism, the first question that would rise in a feminist context would be: where is the “female” positioned in the hero equation? Second, what implications does a dichotomous view of culture (immortal) in opposition to nature (mortal) have for the female subject? Hélène Cixous’s essay, “Sorties: Out and Out: Attack/ Ways out/Forays”²⁷ examines this to a certain extent in order to arrive at an alternate model for the self/other discourses in logocentric enterprises. Cixous begins her essay by marking out binary practices in the framework of the male (superior) represented as active and the female (inferior) represented as passive. In this paradigm Cixous, inserts logos/pathos, mind/body, speaking/writing and *parole/écriture*. The schema of the “dual ontological” motive of the subject also elementally belongs to the same engendered binary practice of the culture (active) and nature (passive) hierarchy. Further, in Becker’s interpretation, the cultural worldview is wholly man-made or masculine following an active principle and feminine passivity in its animal-ness is associated with nature. For Becker, cultural worldviews are designed to triumph over corporeality. Thus, even in its design, the dual ontological motive of the human subject relies on binary representations of women in body and nature as inferior to men in mind and culture as shown by Cixous. The inequality becomes even more evident as Becker begins probing the idea of sexuality and the problem it poses for human “creatureliness”. In the act of sex, as Becker elaborates,

²⁷ Cixous, Hélène, Clément, Catherine. *The Newly born Woman* ; translation by Betsy Wing, Introduction by Sandra M. Gilbert, Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2001. Pg 63-130.

Things are no longer disjointed and grotesque: everything is “natural,” functional, expressed as it should be—and so it is stilled and justified. All the more is guilt wiped away when the *body* finds its natural usage in the production of child. Nature herself then proclaims one’s innocence, how fitting it is that one should have a body, be basically a procreative animal. But we also know from experience that things don’t work so smoothly or unambiguously. The reason is not far to seek: it is right at the heart of the paradox of the creature. *Sex is of the body, and the body is of death*²⁸ [emphasis added].

We can infer from this quote that it is not the male body that finds its natural usage in the production of children. Hence, Becker is referring to a female body that finds utility in the production of child “as nature intended it to be”. There is no point in denying the biological procreative capacity of the female, but a feminist argument rises as we take femaleness into consideration in the schema of aspirations to cosmic heroism (i.e. the active desire for immortality) because we consider the female subject no different from the male subject with regards to aspiring for cultural heroism. In so far, we note that Becker’s “cosmic heroism” is primarily modeled for a male subject and for this heroism to be accomplished, the body of the Other that is female corporeality becomes the prime antagonist. The body with its “natural usage in the production of child” keeps the female body tied to passivity through the discourse that this is what nature apparently intended for her, while man goes on to achieve cultural and cosmic heroism.

²⁸ Becker Ernest, “Otto Rank and the Closure of Psychoanalysis on Kierkegaard,” in *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1973, Pg 188.

In the context of this thesis, I find it necessary to point out that Becker cultural worldview focuses precisely on the exaggerated corporeality of the female (pregnant) body, which becomes a symbolic reminder of man's "creaturelyness" and his mortality. The corporeal aspect of the female body in the process of gestation comes into sharp focus, thus allowing the male subject to differentiate his own body from that of the female body, as one that comes to stand the path of his culturally carved immortality project.

Questioning the basis of this undermining of female corporeality leads me to refer to Rank's study of sexuality and the role of "sex" in "primitive societies" in the essay, "The Creation of the Sexual Self"²⁹. We no longer have access to what Rank has to say about these so-called "primitive societies" and Rank's postulates can only be verified through existent data and narratives seeking to explain sexual behaviors and gender roles of the past. The term "primitive societies" carries with it the weight of criticism directed against the construction of the "myth of the native" by Western epistemology and, further, the existent data is rife with biased views in relation to gender roles. All the same, in the context of interpreting Rank's work in the thesis, I would defend my reliance on his representation of "primitive societies" as deriving from a different view, as a reflection on the relativity of what constitutes "man-made" rationale. It enables me to approach the idea that, what in the outset seems "irrational" in one society could very well have been rational in a different time/civilization. I am aware that the conceptualization of "primitive thought" within the Rankian system can in itself be examined as a result of cumulative knowledge produced by a particular epoch (early 20th

²⁹ Rank, Otto. "The Creation of The Sexual-Self," in *Beyond Psychology*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1941, Pg 202-234.

Century) invested in the idea of a universal 'human' psyche. The examination of Rank's sequential expositions on "primitive societies" reflects an earlier cultural construction of what sexuality and the mother/maternal function comes to represent in its association with nature.

Rank draws attention to the fact that in "primitive societies", the understanding of the sexual role of the male was strictly divorced from the procreative function of the woman. The primitive man did not establish a connection between the sexual role of the male and female pregnancy that followed the sexual act. According to Rank, this was how the primitive man solved his urge for immortality, through a firm belief in supernatural ideologies, such as the impregnation of the women in the clan signified the "reviving of the spirits of the dead symbolized in the totem of the clan."³⁰ Hence we see that, from the beginning, man denounces his own role in the procreative function. Becker articulates the basis of the enigma of man denouncement of his own procreative ability in the chapter, "Otto Rank and the Closure of Psychoanalysis on Kierkegaard" as the fear of death. He points out that what lies at the heart of man's sexual self-denial and also existent taboos surrounding sex in human societies from time immemorial is the simple philosophical-biological argument that animals that procreate in nature die. Becker states that "Nature conquers death not by creating eternal organisms but making it possible for ephemeral ones to procreate",³¹ implying that a relatively short life span is somehow connected with the procreative ability. For Becker, man goes on to be burdened with the realization that "sex in the species consciousness implies death, a defeat of his individual

³⁰ Rank, Otto. "The Creation of The Sexual-Self," in *Beyond Psychology*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1941, Pg 203.

³¹ Becker Ernest, "Otto Rank and the Closure of Psychoanalysis on Kierkegaard," in *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1973, Pg 188.

personality”³². Further, connecting the sexual act to death implies that the female biological capacity to reproduce not only reminds men of their own animal existence standing in the way of heroism but also points to the limitations of their existence (their mortality), in as much as procreating marks the completion of his biological task leading to death. Thus, the codes of sexual self-denial of the male also rest on allowing men to displace his own corporeal existence onto the Other, the woman. The female body comes to symbolize, on the one hand, everything natural and yet, at the same, time “unnatural” in its relation to the man-made cultural and symbolic existence because it threatens to debunk the myth of man’s cosmic heroism; i.e., his desire for immortality.

Hélène Cixous observed that all philosophical discourses, as a part of the phallogocentric order, are constructed on the subordination of the feminine to the masculine to the extent that the subordination is made to appear as a necessary condition for the machinery to function. Where the woman is not subordinated or represented as passive, she is completely absent, “unthought”³³. The woman does not even enter into the construct of binary oppositions and this is even more pronounced in man’s relation to death. Cixous illustrates this using “Mallarmé’s tragic dream”³⁴ of the father’s lament for his dead son, where the mystery of paternity elicits from the father a “mourning of mournings”. The father, when faced with the death of his cherished son, finds himself in a spiritual crisis, whereas the role of the mother is non-existent in the face of the father’s great loss. There is no need for the mother as long as there is motherliness, and the father can take over this role, in relation to the son. Cixous refers to this as follows: “A man’s

³² Becker Ernest, “Otto Rank and the Closure of Psychoanalysis on Kierkegaard,” in *The Denial of Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1973, Pg 188.

³³ Cixous, Hélène, Clément, Catherine. *The Newly born Woman* ; translation by Betsy Wing, Introduction by Sandra M. Gilbert, Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2001. Pg 64-65.

³⁴ Ibid.,64-65.

dreams when faced with death always threatens him differently than it threatens women”³⁵, showing that questions of death have been interpreted by men claiming to understand the confounding effects of what lies beyond the known only through his otherness, namely women. This goes to saying that Becker’s position with regards to “sex is of the body” but the “body is of death” has a lot at stake for the cosmic hero and very different implications if a heroine replaces the hero.

Cixous also adds that patriarchal societies can accomplish the abasement of the corporeality in the symbolic order only by displacing it onto women, by severing women’s relation to intellectual existence and cultural exchange. After women have been excluded from the public domain, patriarchy further proceeds to use them as commodities in the cultural distribution established by men.³⁶ Cixous demonstrates this use of women as commodities through the trajectory of the “woman’s voyage: as a body”³⁷ beginning from the “bridebed” to the “childbed” to the “deathbed”. By way of concluding the essay, Cixous asserts that the only way a woman can reclaim herself is through an identification with experiences that lie beyond language. Through the recognition of a “*jouissance*” that does not eliminate the difference but adds more to the contours of femininity one can expect to disentangle the binary reductions of the phallogocentric order. In the range of philosophical enquiry of feminist embodiment in aesthetic and arts, Cixous proposed that literary expressions of women’s life experiences should be presented in linguistic styles that offer an alternative to the standard linear temporal development of plot and objective use of language. Cixous’ own literary style relies heavily on drawing attention to female

³⁵ Cixous, Hélène, Clément, Catherine. *The Newly born Woman* ; translation by Betsy Wing, Introduction by Sandra M. Gilbert, Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2001. Pg 64-65

³⁶ Ibid.,66.

³⁷ Ibid.,66.

corporeality making use of excessive word play, to the point of incoherence, as opposed to the standardized patriarchal use of language that invokes economy and restraint.

1.2. The Heroine's Journey: Bracha Ettinger Weaving the Woman Artist

The term "Hero's Journey" is borrowed from Joseph Campbell's book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*³⁸ that traces and compiles underlying patterns in different narratives found around the world, schematizing it in the form of the protagonist undertaking a heroic journey. For the purpose of establishing an argument in the feminist context constructively, I propose an alternate "Heroine Journey" in order to draw out the implications for female subjectivity constructed within the paradigm of the hero myth through the psychoanalytic conceptions of Bracha Ettinger's theory of the *Matrixial Borderspace*. In this chapter, using Ettinger's essay "Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event",³⁹ I will draw out the implications of Rank's *Myth and Birth of the Hero*⁴⁰ elaborating on his early psychoanalytic models in relation to Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, all of which depend on the foreclosure of the primordial archaic mother for subjectivity to enter into cultural/symbolic order.

³⁸ Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Rollingen Series XVII, New World Library Novato, California, III Edition 2008.

³⁹ Ettinger, Bracha. "Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 172-200.

⁴⁰ Rank, Otto. Trans., Robbins.F and Jelliffe.E Smith. *The Myth and Birth of the Hero: A Psychological Interpretation of Mythology* (1914), BiblioBazaar, 2008.

In the *Trauma of Birth*, Otto Rank observed that, in the end-phase of the “analytic situation”,⁴¹ the process of healing is often represented in the unconscious through the typical “birth symbolism”⁴² as a rebirth fantasy that signals the patients desire for recovery. Rank adds that this unconscious newborn/rebirth fantasy in some cases also features the re-enacting of the earliest physiological reaction to the mother’s womb. The fantasy almost always “infantile” in nature evokes a “fixation on the mother”⁴³. Rank’s explanation for this observable repetition of the physiological relation to the womb during the final stage of the analysis is that, “It is possible, however, that I may be driving back the Ego of the patient to earlier and yet earlier libido positions, so that finally it would not be surprising if, in the terminal stage of the analysis, the last flight of the libido were to the intra-uterine stage.”⁴⁴ With this, Rank posits, in the theory of birth trauma, that the real transference libido for both sexes is the “mother libido” as it existed in the pre-natal physiological connection between mother and child.⁴⁵ To sum up the observations, we see that, according to Rank, the patient in the period before termination of the therapy repeats unconsciously as it were the period of gestation. In the analytic situation, the analyst is placed in the position of the mother and in relation to the analysand as the unborn fetus. In the end, Rank adds that the job of the analyst is to sever the patient’s primal fixation on the mother, which the analysand was unable to achieve on her/his own in the first place. Thus, for Rank, the analytic situation itself comes to represent or mimic the act of parturition.

⁴¹ Analytic Situation referring to the duration (period) where in the patient undergoes analysis or the process of analysis in psychotherapy

⁴² Rank, Otto. “The Analytic Situation,” in *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Robert Brunner, 1952, Pg 3.

⁴³ Rank, Otto. “The Analytic Situation,” in *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Robert Brunner, 1952, Pg, 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid.,5.

⁴⁵ Ibid.,6.

In view of gender differences and the feminist psychoanalytic context, the acknowledgement and commentary upon implications of severing the subject's fixation on the archaic mother becomes a significant move. The generalized feminist contention against the foreclosure of the archaic mother can be proven by the strength of criticism directed at phallus-centric psychoanalytic theorization of the maternal function and the mother. In these so-called "phallic psychoanalytic models", the foreclosing of procreation dominoes onto the repression of the archaic maternal, which is then posited as an absolute condition for psychoanalysis to make any kind of coherent progress towards understanding subjectivity. From a feminist perspective, it is not very difficult to underscore the implication of the foreclosing of the archaic maternal as solely beneficial to the male/masculine subject. It has been only a few decades since feminist psychoanalytic study has undertaken the attempt to re-conceptualize how the elimination of relations to the archaic mother affects and informs sex differences and the construction of feminine subjectivity. Since it is beyond the scope of my topic to examine the broad range of theories that seek to reconstitute female subjectivity in the current trend of psychoanalytic theory and practice, I will remain focused on the female subject as the Artist and the feminine in relation to heroism through a broader elaboration of Ettinger's ideas. But keeping in mind the broad range of criticism directed at the early 20th century psychoanalytic models, I would like to clarify that my reading of Rank's theory is to criticize it from a feminist perspective and, at the same time, it is also an attempt to distinguish it from the Freudian and Lacanian perspective. In the essay, "The With-in visible Screen"⁴⁶ under the sub-section "An Erotic Encounter of Grains"⁴⁷ Ettinger

⁴⁶ Ettinger, Bracha. "The With-in visible Screen," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

mentions that, almost a century ago, it was Otto Rank who had first come close to an understanding of the primacy of the relation to the mother in subject formation through his work on the trauma of birth. Freud denied the significance of the relation to the archaic mother and Lacan recognized it but posited that the foreclosure of the archaic maternal was necessary for the speaking subject to come into existence. Ettinger's theoretical elaborations comprise mainly of arguments directed towards the psychoanalytic reading of Lacan. Thus, in the essay, she also refers to Lacan's description of Rank's *Trauma of Birth* as follows: "There is no other trauma: Man is born misunderstood [...] that is what he has transmitted to you by 'giving you life' [...]. There is no other trauma of birth than of *being* born desired. Desired or not, it's all the same since it's by-speaking-being (*parl'etre*)"⁴⁸ [emphasis added]. What Lacan elucidates here is that Rank's trauma of birth is no more than the trauma of being born a subject always desired by the Other. But, for Lacan, desired or not, "man" exists only because he speaks (language). Thus, according to Lacan, subjectivity comes into *being* only through an introduction into the Symbolic Order, and the severing of a pre-verbal relation to the m/other is a price that the speaking subject must pay to come into being and, further, in order to continue existing. In so far, Lacan doesn't deny the trauma of separation from the mother at birth, but asserts that all links to that which represents the archaic maternal must be foreclosed for the subject to come into being within the social order. Ettinger

⁴⁷ Ettinger, Bracha. "The With-in visible Screen," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg,104.

⁴⁸ Ibid.,105.

points out that, “Lacan warned that whosoever dares to deal with the matter of prenatal could not be called psychoanalyst and would have to be excommunicated”⁴⁹.

In the previous section, we found in the French Feminist criticism of Hélène Cixous that the abasement of the feminine principle to the masculine is made to appear as a condition necessary for the machinery’s functioning. Similarly, in Lacan’s definition, the pre-requisite or rather absolute necessity to foreclose the subject’s pre-verbal relation to the maternal figure can be interpreted as a condition for psychoanalysis to function as a practice. Further, the Lacanian positing of the foreclosure of the maternal as a condition whose terms when not met doesn’t allow the subject to come into any form of existence also highlights the split binary mode of the either/or principle inherent in phallogentric models. As Ettinger draws attention to the similarity between Lacan’s repeated claims of the senselessness of the prenatal where “the field of psychoanalysis itself depends on the foreclosure of procreation”⁵⁰ and the Freudian denial of the womb necessary for the male child’s sexual development, we observe that both the Freudian model and the Lacanian psychoanalysis operate wholly in a binary mode.

In comparison, Rank refrains from positing any such absolute condition for the functioning of psychoanalysis. While examining Rank’s theory of the trauma of birth, I am continually struck by its resonance with Ettinger’s Matrixial Borderspace. The two theories diffract on the outset as Rank deems the need to sever relation with the Other, while Ettinger’s theory of the matrixial, in forwarding a feminist agenda, outlines implications of female bodily specificity in the process of subject formation. In the

⁴⁹Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 180.

⁵⁰ Ibid.,180.

feminist framework, Ettinger goes on to additionally emphasize the encounter with the Other in terms of co-sharing the trauma of the archaic mother instead of severing ties with her. But Ettinger can be placed alongside Rank in her extensive examination of subject formation in relation to art-work and the artist.

Further, Rank also emphasized that the characteristic quality of the birth act is that it is a transitional phenomenon *par excellence*, and it is this transitional quality that determines its traumatic character. As Rank explains, “In parturition, one might say, the ego finds its first object only to lose it again immediately—and this may possibly explain many peculiarities (anxieties) of our psychological life.”⁵¹ Rank deems the analytic situation itself a transit space and acknowledges the loss of the archaic mother. Ettinger’s matrixial theory, furthering the feminist psychoanalytic cause is similarly topographically designed as an Encounter-event space, a zone of transition where the ‘I’ encounters and partakes in the trauma of the Other. Ettinger uses the phrase “matrixial fading-in-transformation”⁵², to construct a mode of existence that is founded on the idea of “jointness-in-separation” instead of on a phallic binary model that insists on being/non being and presence/absence. Ettinger emphasizes that the permeability between the borders of subject and object (i.e. jointness-in-separation) allows a link to the cordoned off originary feminine, hinting at co-existence and co-emergence in the transit encounter between the mother and the other (m/other). The encounter also signals the transmission of the “trauma, *jouissance* and phantasy”⁵³ that results in the formation of assembled hybrid subject-object relations,

⁵¹ Kramer, Robert. Ed. “The Anxiety Problem,” in *A Psychology of Difference: The American Lectures: Otto Rank*, Foreword by Rollo May. Princeton University Press, 1996.

⁵² Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 181.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 180.

which can work in favor of disrupting the binary phallic model. For Ettinger, the co-emergence and transmissibility transposed onto Artist implies a form of co-poiesis “where no ‘hero’ can become creative alone.”⁵⁴

1.2.1 The Imaginary- A Heroine’s Journey.

In this subsection, I will elaborate upon the repercussions of primary repression of the archaic maternal in the imaginative sphere through the representation of the maternal in artwork. As mentioned above, Joseph Campbell examined various narratives and myths to extract a blueprint which he calls the “Hero’s Journey”. Before writing *The Trauma of Birth*, Otto Rank explored similar motifs of “Infant Exposure” as a recurring theme in different mythological stories around the world. In his book, *The Myth and Birth of the Hero* (1914), Rank examines the myth of Heracles, Telephos, Romulus and Remus and more importantly, Oedipus, in order to derive that the theme of infant exposure symbolically represents the re-birth of the hero. In all of the myths, a special child/hero is born in the face of a grave threat issued by the omnipotent father or a paternal figure like the uncle, and this follows an exposure of the infant into water or the wilderness inside a container like a casket or a box from wherein he is rescued and brought up by either

⁵⁴ Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg,180.

animals or the lowly shepherd/fishermen and their wives. In Rank's analysis, the container or caskets symbolically represent the womb. The exposed child is usually suckled by wild animals and remains feral till folks belonging to the lower strata of the society rescue him. The wild animals, like a doe, wolf or a she-bear usually take on the maternal function in nourishing the abandoned child.

Ettinger begins the essay "Weaving the Woman Artist within the Matrixial Encounter-Event" invoking Otto Rank in *Myth and Birth of the Hero*. She points out that Rank observed that, in the birth of a mythical hero, the role of the woman is a minor one since the lowly mother is often represented by the figure of the animal. Ettinger uses this as an entry into the argument stating that, in the hero's journey, the woman is first portrayed as a "copulating animal" and then as a "nursing animal"⁵⁵. As Rank examines, the first glimpse we get of the hero's mother in the myths is before she has conceived the hero in the process of being courted by the father. Hence, she is portrayed as a "copulating" being, as an attractive object for the father. With the conception of the hero, a threat is issued by a paternal figure and now the mother has to expose the infant who is then nurtured by wild animals. Hence, we see the mother replaced by a nursing animal. Ettinger points out that the period between copulating and nursing is represented as a void, "the unspeakable" and it is this "*evacuated possibility* that holds the Genius-Hero complex together" [emphasis added] ⁵⁶. The real mother gives birth to the hero but the period of gestation is excluded from the narratives and the nurturing of the newly born is taken over by wild female animals. Ettinger etymologically traces the word "genius" as

⁵⁵ Ettinger, Bracha. "Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 173.

⁵⁶ Ibid.,173.

literally meaning the self-begetter (creator) to show the purpose the erased gestation period serves. The representation of the period of gestation as unspeakable facilitates the smooth transition for the male subject struggling with the Oedipal rivalry to finally becoming his own begetter or Genius. It is only through the erasure of what Ettinger terms “woman-becoming-mother” that the “hero-son-god”, torn between rivalry and admiration towards his “hero-father-god”, gives birth to himself.⁵⁷ Thus, Ettinger concludes that, “For the hero to be born of himself, the archaic becoming-mother must melt into obscurity and senselessness as a Thing of no human significance”⁵⁸. The woman-becoming mother is neither killed nor absent; instead, she is rendered “senseless”, “obscure”, and with “no human significance”.

In situating the Matrixial Encounter in the womb and emphasizing the period of gestation, Ettinger attempts to re-establish the vitality of the pre-linguistic stage in its relation to the m/other. The Matrixial model, unlike other phallic models, does not rely on severing the woman-m/other in order to come into existence. For Ettinger, the matrixial stratum emerges foremost in the “experience related to the womb as inside or outside me”⁵⁹ and is bound by the prenatal encounter that inscribes as a dialogue the desire of the woman-becoming m/other. In Ettinger’s view, the difference between the phallic model and the matrixial womb model is that, within the phallic paradigm,

Each imaginary other to which the I relates, including the exiled, is a parasite destined for annihilation either by assimilation or by banishment. In the

⁵⁷ Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg,173.

⁵⁸ Ibid.,173.

⁵⁹ Ibid.,193.

matrix, the stranger is neither cut out from the system nor assimilated to it, it cannot be articulated as a parasite and cannot be rejected.⁶⁰

As Ettinger points out, the implications of an exclusive phallic desire in the matrixial encounter means the reduction of libido to the male signifier, a phallic libido that annihilates any supplementary feminine eroticism (*jouissance*). The Matrixial does not adhere to the either/or pattern of phallic psychoanalytic models but claims for an inclusion of the “womb” to be positioned “beside” and not “beyond” the phallus in the symbolic and cultural representation. While articulating the perils of Lacanian insistence on the foreclosure of the primordial feminine difference for a feminine subjectivity, Ettinger says that, for the male subject, the woman can always be the radical Other but “for the woman ‘Woman’ cannot remain the other, as she can for a man”⁶¹. This is because the woman, in Other-ing, “Woman” is absent from her own subjectivity. If at the heart of subjectivity is the knowledge of the self, then Woman, in as a failure at understanding her own subjectivity, remains incomplete in the phallic paradigm. To combat this radical other-ing and the undermining of feminine subjectivity, Ettinger proposes “*ab-present: a pres-absence*” between the female subject and her border-Other⁶² [italics in original]. In re-articulating the potential of feminine subjectivity to broaden the existent knowledge on male or female subjectivity, Ettinger directs us towards the ethical implications of what the archaic m/other represents in her ability of

⁶⁰ Ettinger, Bracha. “The With-in visible Screen,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 110,1.

⁶¹ Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 191.

⁶² *Ibid.*,191.

transform things with-in subjectivity. In her view, “[I]t is that human possibility which consists of saying that the life of the other human being is more important than my own.”⁶³

1.2.2. The Real- Female Corporeal.

So far, we have been discussing the implications of repressing of the archaic maternal in the imaginary, and symbolic realm, and, in this subsection, I shift focus to the corporeal aspect of femininity/femaleness.

Ettinger elaborates that the matrixial in the real calls for the shifting of the female corporeality, the period of gestation and the act of parturition from nature to culture. In the chapter entitled “The Artistic Idealization”⁶⁴ in *The Trauma of Birth*, Rank reflects on the human body and the idealizing tendency of artistic representations to soften using aesthetic treatment, “the all too clear approach to the primal condition, lending it also the character of punishment”⁶⁵. Rank follows that tendency to idealize a distilled

⁶³ Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg, 189.

⁶⁴ Rank, Otto. “The Artistic Idealization,” in *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Robert Brunner, 1952, Pg 141-166.

⁶⁵ Rank, Otto. “The Artistic Idealization,” in *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Robert Brunner, 1952, Pg, 141.

representation of man's attempt to override nature through a denial of natural bodily existence. Rank uses Lucas Cranach's representation of *The Crucifixion* (1538), reproduced below, to note that Christ's idealized position, nailed to the cross indicates a defense mechanism against man's animal nature and yet, at the same time, it hints at the idea of punishment, through the exclusion from this animal-ness. Rank indicates that the other two sinners return back to their characteristic embryonic position on the cross while Christ remains nailed in defiance of the embryonic position.

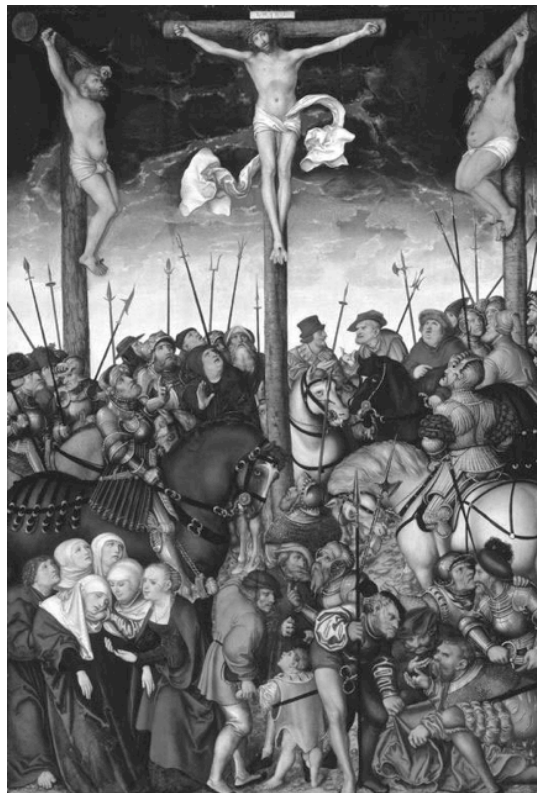


Fig. 1

Rank is suggesting a two-fold manifestation of the human denial of animal-ness through the trajectory in that, (1) man initially denies the animal nature; (2) then goes on to associate this denial of nature with the idea of punishment for the exclusion from his/her

own animal nature (hinting at an underlying guilt). We glean that, on one hand, sublimation through art rests on the human denial of animal nature but the same denial of animal-ness always elicits the idea of guilt and subsequent punishment by way of exclusion from animal nature. In the context of the image, Rank draws attention to the fact that it is the sinners (human-mortal) that return back to the embryonic position but Christ (hero-god-immortal) remains in defiance of his animal nature. Thus, observing the privileging of cultural and symbolic representation can be attained only through the defiance and further repression of human animal nature which illicit guilt or, as we see in the next case, fear (anxiety).

In the same essay, Rank goes on to explain how the “anxiety of death” and the “denial of nature” found an indisputable climax in the Greek civilization by drawing on a series of intermediary links between the “half-animal-gods” and the “human-gods”.⁶⁶ Rank illustrates that, in the history of human civilization, it was the Greeks who first freed themselves from the womb. This tendency appears in the transition from gods that embodied half-animal to gods that wholly embody the human form. To trace this freedom from the womb (anxiety of death) through artistic representation, Rank uses the image of the Sphinx, which he calls the “nuclear symbol of primal anxiety.”⁶⁷ For Rank, the anxiety associated with the Sphinx originates from the trauma of birth because the role of the Sphinx clearly represents that of the hero, who is on the way back to the mother and has to re-live his birth anxiety. Rank uses as example the Terracotta Relief of Tenos, reproduced below, which shows the Sphinx as the goddess of death trying to swallow the hero with a human upper half of the body growing out of a animal lower maternal one.

⁶⁶ Rank, Otto. “The Artistic Idealization,” in *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Robert Brunner, 1952, Pg 147.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*,143.

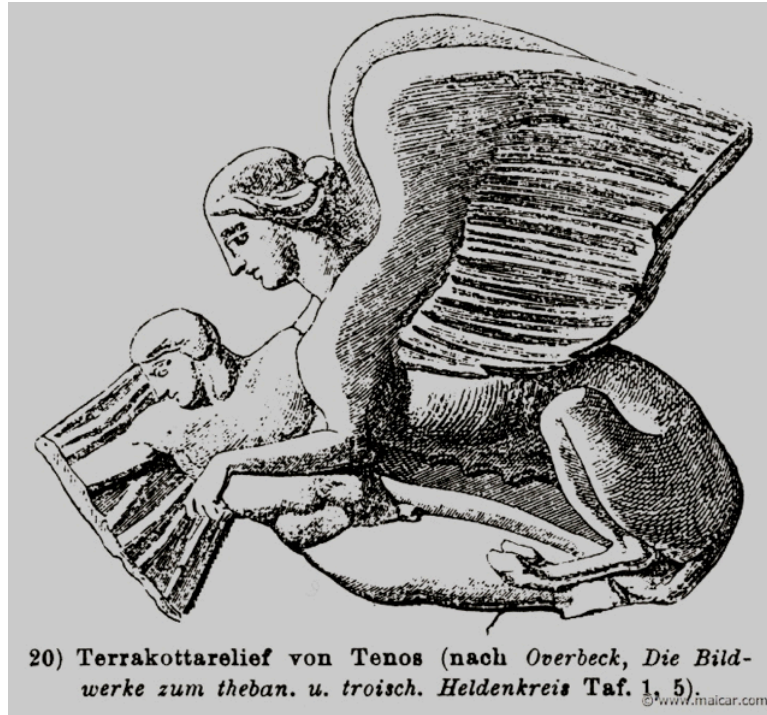


Fig .2.

Rank’s theory of the Sphinx as the representation of the primal birth trauma draws out a direct symbolic association of the *animal* with the *mother* making way for the female corporeal embodiment in the animal figure in the schema of the cultural (masculine) denial of the animal-ness. For Rank, the portrayal of the Sphinx as “man-swallowing” is related to the “infantile fear of animals”⁶⁸ through designating the ambivalent attitude of children and their fear of being swallowed by large animals to the trauma of birth. Rank posits that this infantile fear can be interpreted as the unconscious fear of being engulfed once again into the grave of the mother’s body. The image of the Sphinx comes to be one of the earliest symbolic representations of the archaic maternal womb/tomb, perfectly

⁶⁸ Rank, Otto. “Artistic Idealization,” in *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Robert Brunner, 1952, Pg 144.

encapsulating the binary of a life giving and death dealing archaic mother. If we examine Rank's interpretation of the Sphinx, similar to the analytic situation, the Sphinx itself comes to mimic the act of parturition in its representation of hero's trial on the way back to the mother through re-living birth anxiety. The Sphinx, in conforming to the character of the "man-swallowing" strangler represents the latent wish of the subject to return back to the maternal body, which Rank describes as "the struggle against it, (parturition) in that the human upper body grows out of an animal-like (maternal) lower body without finally being able to free itself from it."⁶⁹ Rank concludes that the basis of all art lies in a similar anxiety/struggle rising from freeing one-self from the maternal body.

A gendered interpretation of what Rank posits yields a different conclusion. As Ettinger views the male Artist through the matrixial filter, she mentions that "Men enter in contact with the *matrixial* time and site through transference relations and via art, when they are affected, like women, by joining-in-difference with others."⁷⁰ What would then constitute the female artists' transference relation through art? In case of the female subject, Ettinger highlights that that the difference arises from the idea that, even without art, women are in touch with the matrixial merely by being biologically able to procreate. For both the male and female subject, the Matrixial Encounter is an event that once occurred in the past, but the female subject, as a the owner/bearer of the womb, becomes the potential "site" for a repetition of the Matrixial Encounter in the future, implying that she has a "double access to the matrixial sphere" in the real. In Ettinger's words,

⁶⁹ Rank, Otto. "Artistic Idealization," in *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Robert Brunner, 1952, Pg. 145.

⁷⁰ Ettinger, Bracha. "Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 182.

On the one hand, they experience the womb as an archaic out-side and past-site, as out of chronological time and of appropriated space, or as anterior. This is true for male subjects as well. But female subjects also experience the womb as an in-side and future-site as well, as an actual, potential or virtual space and as a future and possible, or potential, posterior time.⁷¹

One can argue that perhaps not all women want to procreate and Ettinger's view that "women" as a category having double access to the matrixial in view of a biological capacity to reproduce has an essentialist undertone with regards to women. Ettinger clarifies that in the schema of the Matrixial Encounter-Event, the womb is not biological or literal; instead, it is a corollary to the male sexual organ, the penis, that stands in as a symbolic representation for phallic structures. Structurally positioning the womb beside instead of beyond the phallus serves as a mean to differentiate the feminine from the masculine subjectivity in the realms of the "symbolic", which should not be implicated by any literal reading of the womb in relation to women and cultural/ideological restraints over their reproductive capacity. The political feminist agency in striving for the female subject's rights over their own reproductive capacity in the social context should not be confused with the efforts to represent and resituate the womb in the symbolic.

Ettinger elucidates that within the phallic paradigm, "Anyone, male or female, who takes upon himself or herself this hero configuration becomes by definition a *man* who eliminates the archaic Woman-m/Other. The price to be paid is very high if you are a

⁷¹ Ettinger, Bracha. "Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg,181.

female artist whose sexuality fits badly into Oedipal father-son circulations” [emphasis added].⁷² The argument illuminates upon what is at stake for the female artist and, relationally, female subjectivity if an essentialist attitude to a certain measure (indirectly) is not adopted through the altering of the structural paradigm of psychoanalysis as “womb” alongside the “penis”. In phallic psychoanalytic models, the subject “I”, before entering the symbolic order (i.e. pre-linguistic stage) is merely unformed organic matter. On the initiation into the symbolic order, it differentiates between the “I” and the “Other” and this question of difference is first posed in its relation to the mother (m/Other). The male subject can differentiate from the Other in view of sex difference (i.e. biological procreative ability) in so far as his relation to the archaic maternal entails only looking back at a past shared relation of one-ness with the archaic mother. In case of the female subject, in view of the “womb” as a potential site in the future for a similar shared relation to the Other, a radical other-ing of the archaic maternal has further implications. If all human subjects (male and female) pose the question of difference first and foremost in relation the archaic m/other, then there are significant issues at stake in this especially for feminine subjectivity that is constructed on the basis of eradicating a vital role such as the maternal function.

In view of what is to be gained from the repression of the archaic maternal for the male subject, I will refer to *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development*⁷³, where Rank investigates the idea of “heroism” in relation to the Artist. The central theme examined in the book is that, although art, like religion, can be interpreted as an

⁷² Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 174,8.

⁷³ Rank, Otto. *Art and Artist: The Creative Urge and Personality Development*. Charles Atkinson (Trans.), Norton & Company, New York /London, 1989.

expression of the desire to immortality, in art, the ego's will to cosmic heroism is retained in its original individualistic, pre-social, pre-linguistic, "narcissistic" form. Therefore, through the creation of art, the artist, in a way, always attempts to regain or repossess the omnipotence of the primal narcissism. In view of female artists and what is at stake for them, Ettinger explains that,

If the elimination of the archaic m/Other as the source of life is in the service of male narcissism, then for the female narcissistic development such an elimination is dangerous: it is precisely what constitutes her as the sacrifice. If creativity is to be rethought through the feminine, it should not, in my view follow the pattern of the hero. If it does, the sacrifice component will destroy the she-hero- not even from the outside but from within, because her mode of differentiating will be extinguished.⁷⁴

As mentioned earlier, Ettinger closes the argument by stating that within the schema of the "Hero's Journey", only a "dead woman-artist", or a woman-artist outside the procreative cycle, can achieve the status of "genius". In the following section, I will further examine the idea of the dead woman artist in connection with the materiality of the maternal body, as a womb/tomb inversion.

⁷⁴ Ettinger, Bracha. "Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 175.

Chapter 2: A Feminist Perspective on the work of Sigmund Freud

2.1. The Aesthetic of the Freudian Repression.

In the essay “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter Event”,⁷⁵ Bracha L. Ettinger briefly touches upon what constitutes the feminine in aesthetic and beauty ideals in relation to Rank as she mentions that,

If, as Rank and Lacan show, the aesthetic question engages both death and beauty-ideal, and if the ‘source of the beauty-ideals lie in the contemporary ideas of the soul’ psyche or spirit, then in the *feminine* the soul does not only ‘arise from the problem of death’ and the artist does not only ‘desire to transform death into life’ or into immortality.⁷⁶ [italics in original]

In this part, I will draw out what Ettinger implies when she concludes that the feminine soul does not *only* rise from the problem of mortality and the female artist *does not only* “desire to transform death into life”. In tallying the views of Rank and Freud on beauty ideals and its relation to death and consequently immortal “soul” ideologies, I will further examine the qualitative gender differences that issue from the process of sublimation via art. I will also examine what additional perspectives on sublimation results in a feminist interpretation of Freud’s primary repression as the repression of the archaic mother and

⁷⁵ Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*,196.

Rank's ideas on the soul motives of "primitive societies" as a projection of the maternal function onto the totem animal.

In the quote above, Ettinger is gesturing towards the previously discussed Rankian position on aesthetic idealization, which aims at the softening of the human primal condition and can be interpreted as the masculine denial of animal-ness or, in Becker's terms, "creatureliness". In the previous chapter, we traced the denial of man's animal-ness and its relation to the denial of what constitutes the archaic maternal in psychoanalytic thinking and the hero's imaginary journey. Following Rank, it is the re-working of the anxiety of parturition in the hero's return to the tomb of the mother's body (i.e. death) from which aesthetic ideals derive. Ettinger puts it differently in the claim that Rank and Lacan are both pointing towards the idea that aesthetic representation of beauty is in its core an attempt to overcome the "fear of death" through the erasure of human corporeality in its relation to death. Hence, for Lacan and Rank all aesthetic representations are clearly conceived through underlying *soul* (immortality) ideologies, which are culturally derived. Keeping the above in mind, if we turn to the Freudian view on beauty ideals and aesthetics in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), he elaborates that,

All that seems certain [of beauty ideals] is its derivation from the field of sexual feeling. The love of beauty seems a perfect example of an impulse inhibited in its aim. 'Beauty' and 'attraction' are originally attributes of the sexual object.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey Norton, 1961, Pg 29-30

For Freud, aesthetic representations or artwork are the result of a successfully carried out sublimation of the sexual impulses and, conversely, the artist derives sexual satisfaction from contemplating and representing aesthetic beauty in the form of art. Where Rank deems the core of aesthetic ideals to be the denial of materiality of the body, through a reflection on the immaterial “soul” ideologies, Freud makes his way from the opposite end of the scale focusing on the role of sexuality in relation to the materiality of the body, which is sublimated in aesthetic and beauty ideals in art work. In the process of conceptualizing beauty ideals through sexuality, Freud defines the defense mechanism of “Sublimation”⁷⁸ that evades repression and results in creative outputs by the genius. In the following paragraph, I will briefly sum up Freud’s ideas on “repression” and “sublimation” in the attempt to extrapolate what a feminist articulation of sublimation implies for female subjectivity.

In his essay on “Repression”⁷⁹ (1915), Freud explains that “Repression is a preliminary phase of condemnation, something between flight [external] and condemnation [internal]”⁸⁰[text in bracket added]. The motive for repression is the avoidance of pain because, despite the pleasure principle involved in the satisfaction of instincts, there are particular instances when satisfaction of instinct will cause pain instead of pleasure. With the idea of repression in place, Freud then infers the postulate of a “primal repression”⁸¹ as the “first unconscious nucleus” where the originary repression occurs. In Freud’s theory of repression, the illusory strength of the instinct derives from the polar forces

⁷⁸ Freud Sigmund “Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood” in *The Complete Works, of Sigmund Freud*, Ivan Smith, Kindle edition, Pg 2242-2304.

⁷⁹ ⁷⁹Freud, Sigmund. “Repression” in *The Major Works Of Sigmund Freud*, William Benton Publisher, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1952,Pg 423.

⁸⁰ Freud, Sigmund. “Repression” in *The Major Works Of Sigmund Freud*, William Benton Publisher, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1952,Pg, 422.

⁸¹ *Ibid*,423.

exerting between uninhibited development in phantasy, on one hand, and the damming-up of real satisfaction on the other. Freud terms this phenomenon “repression proper”⁸². The primal repression also functions like a centrifugal gravitational force that attracts and allows all repression proper to congeal around its vicinity. Freud’s description of the conditions leading to repression is rather poetic in nature, as he says:

The instinct-presentation develops in a more unchecked and luxuriant fashion if it is withdrawn from conscious influence. It ramifies like a fungus, so to speak, in the *dark*, and takes on extreme form of expression, which when translated and revealed [...] not merely seem alien to him but terrify him.⁸³

[emphasis added]

I would like to clarify that, in drawing an analogy between feminist positions on Freud’s “primal repression” and the aesthetics of Freud’s description of the process of repression, my aim is to highlight some of the more nuanced aspects of this argument. In Freud’s expression of the features of the “repressed instinct”, one can envision what is repressed as some organic matter thriving luxuriantly in the dark. On a close examination of the latter, one cannot fail to detect its resonance with a fetus in the womb, in the intra-uterine phase. The darkness of the womb where the subject exists like organic matter (pre-consciousness) is akin to this repressed instinct that luxuriates in the dark. Feminist psychoanalytic thinking designates to the Freudian concept of primal repression a repression of the maternal prohibited knowledge that was once known by every subject.

⁸² Freud, Sigmund. “Repression” in *The Major Works Of Sigmund Freud*, William Benton Publisher, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1952, Pg, 423.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 423.

In the same context, Ettinger has aptly observed that, “In psychoanalytic thinking, whatever hides behind originary repression is in a way a ‘woman’, related to the feminine ‘dark-continent’, to the prehistory of the subject embedded in relations with the Mother.”⁸⁴ In Ettinger’s theory of the matrixial, the intra-uterine stage symbolizes a contact point between the I and the Other through a blurring of boundaries between subject/object, I/the Other. Instead, what entails in Freudian psychoanalytic models is that with-in the intra-uterine stage, although the Other has come into a form of animal organic existence yet simultaneously does not exist. For Ettinger, in the artistic subjectivity, the repressed event strives unsuccessfully for memory and it is through artwork that “the painful encapsulation partially cracks open [...]. A memory enfolded by its amnesia.”⁸⁵ Further, Ettinger’s matrixial theory posits that, for Freud, it is precisely the mode of fragmentation in intra-uterine existence, which in its undeniable relation to the maternal function, on suddenly re-appearing, becomes “*terrifying*” [emphasis added]. The conceptual axis of the essay *The Uncanny* (1919) by Freud elaborates on the psychic phenomenon of the re-appearance of what was once known but is now prohibited and terrifying for the subject.

In a different essay on *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* (1910), Freud argues that, in certain exceptional cases, a subject is altogether able to escape repression by channelizing the strength of the illusory repressed instinct into creating works of art through the process of sublimation. At this juncture, a significant question guiding me through this section of the thesis begins to emerge. On understanding the gendered implications of what is “primal repression” for Freud (i.e. the foreclosure of the

⁸⁴Ettinger, Bracha. “The *Hiemlich*,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 163.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*,163.

primordial m/other), what would be the possible gendered interpretation of the process of sublimation in artwork? What qualitative gender differences rises from Freudian primal repression as the repression of the archaic maternal in its relation to process of sublimation? Etymologically, the word “sublimation” derives from late 14th century Latin in the context of alchemy, interpreted as the “process of purifying by heating into a vapor”; for “refinement”; literally a “lifting up, deliverance.” Freud borrows the term “sublimation” as a metaphor to illuminate this psychoanalytic concept, and it allows us to envision sublimation as a mechanism where the instinct escapes repression by evaporating and, hence, leaving no trace at all of its physical/material existence except in the artists’ work. The basic clause in the etymology of the word “sublimation” is sufficient to draw attention to the idea that materiality/corporeality is excluded from its conception from the very beginning. In my reading, the feminist articulation of what sublimation constitutes for the feminine can be traced in Ettinger’s suggestion that within the matrixial, some “erotic antenna of the psyche transmits to and receives from the other, through phantasy echoes of an archaic partial relations and of feminine *jouissance*, which is beside and yet beyond the phallic one.”⁸⁶ In so far as Freud’s concept of sublimation focuses on the processed remains of a successfully evaded repression through channelizing the force of instinct into works of art, the evasion still doesn’t by-pass the “primal repression”, which in remaining prohibited continues to signal the repression of the archaic maternal. Ettinger’s proposal for the “erotic antenna of the psyche” is an attempt to harness the potential communicative psychic force through a shared “traumatic *jouissance*” between the Subject and the Other and thus enables opening grounds for

⁸⁶ Ettinger, Bracha. “With-In-Visible Screen,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg, 99.

conceptualizing what a feminine kind of sublimation would need to include within its perimeters in order to by-pass the censors raised by the repression of the originary feminine in phallic psychoanalytic models. In Ettinger's view of art work, what differentiates a matrixial artistic endeavor from Artists oriented in the phallic mode is that, within the matrixial, the work of art is an attempt to represent and capture the archaic m/other whom the subject has long been separated from. Similarly, exported onto art in the form of poetics, the matrixial poetics is in unison with the idea of giving a voice through language to the inability to confine the contours of feminine corporeality into a dichotomously presented inside and outside binary.

To add depth to the argument of what constitutes qualitative differences between the "masculine" soul and a "feminine" soul through Rank, we need to further examine his conceptions of the symbolic mother in "primitive belief", where the tribe project their ideas of immaterial "soul" onto the body of the totem animal along with a displacement of the maternal function. In view of the valence of sublimation as the immaterial nature that transcends corporeal aspects through artwork, the argument presented here draws out Ettinger's views on the feminine soul, which might not be as "immaterial" as it first appears to be. In essay, "The Creation of the Sexual Self"⁸⁷ Rank emphasized that "primitive men" believed that man and the totem animal he fed on were identical, "one flesh, so to speak, just as mother and child". Rank consolidated his hypothesis of the "soul motives"⁸⁸ of primitive thinking in relation to maternal functions through a reference to hunt motifs discovered as rock-engravings in Africa by Leo Froebenius. The engraving depicts a hunter aiming at his prey (totem animal) and is linked to a praying

⁸⁷ Rank, Otto. "The Creation of The Sexual-Self, "in *Beyond Psychology*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1941, Pg, 202-234.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

woman, through a curved line running from his navel to her womb. Rank's theory follows that the praying woman in the image represents the symbolic mother who sanctions the killing of the totem animal "on whom he feeds as he fed on her [the mother]" [text in bracket added]⁸⁹. On interpreting Rank through a feminist perspective, firstly we can observe that the primitive human belief in the totem animal possessing a soul does not derive from the fact the animals actually have a soul but because they believed in their own soul. Primitive humans also believed that the soul could exist separately from the body and hence, the totem animal comes to represent the receptacle for their souls. This displacement of the "soul" onto the totem animal, according to Rank, was the reason for "his tender-hearted"⁹⁰ concern with regards to the killing of the totem animal; but the primitive man overcomes this moral resistance to the killing through the symbolic mother who grants sanction for the killing and thus allows the primitive man to feed the totem animal, nourishing them as a child would in relation to its mother. The perspective that Rank omits and here it adds to the feminist criticism of Rank's position as that which is implicit in the primitive man's "soulful motives" is that "he", as Rank argues, has not merely projected onto the archaic maternal a part of his own identity through allowing her the moral power of sanctioning the killing but that "he" has also further projected the maternal function onto the totem animal: when he kills the totem animal and consumes it, he does so believing that the animal is in turn nourishing him like a mother would her child. On acknowledging this, we can further illustrate how the maternal comes to be relegated to the domain of the animal embodying maternal features. Assessing Ettinger's intervention on the qualitative differences in "soul" ideologies for

⁸⁹ Rank, Otto. "The Creation of The Sexual-Self," in *Beyond Psychology*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1941, Pg, 210.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 210.

each sex against the dominant male-centric view of aesthetics ideals and death, we see why, in the feminine, the soul doesn't only "arise from the problem of death" or why the female artist "does not *only* desire to transform death into life" or immortality [emphasis added]. In Ettinger's view, within the matrixial, "The artist desires to transform death, nonlife, not-yet-life and no more life into art [...] through the m/Other's transformative potentiality"⁹¹ instead of cordoning it or displacing it on to nature/culture and mind/body binaries.

To further illuminate the need for a feminist perspective on the psyche of the creative artist, a shift is required in the understanding that the feminine "soul" is not as immaterial as it might appear to be because there seems to be a long trend of associating female corporeality animal-nature. In Ettinger's view, the feminine soul cannot wholly rise in the denial of her animal-ness, in view of her ability to biologically procreate. Where the masculine soul can work through the displacement and externalization of the relation to the archaic mother, the feminine soul resorts to internalizing the relation to the archaic mother in her grappling with problems that issue from her biological ability to co-merging and co-fade with life/not-yet-life during the period of gestation. In the framework of aesthetic creativity, this implies that the feminine artist does not merely desire to transform death into life through artwork. It implies that death can become a mere by-product and by this I mean that the feminine can approach the idea of soul through art or poetics only as a negation.

From a theoretical standpoint, Ettinger's theory of the Matrixial Borderspace itself can be criticized for an insistence on the feminine as "negation". There is room for the

⁹¹ Ettinger, Bracha. "Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 197.

argument that, by strategically placing the “womb” beside the “phallus” in the Real, the matrix could potentially reinforce the position of the feminine as the negative or lack. Earlier I elaborated on Ettinger differentiation of the matrixial borderspace from phallic models as a space where the “Other” cannot be articulated either as “parasite” or “rejected as the non-I” but, on the contrary, it is “neither cut out from the system” and nor “assimilated within it”⁹². One can argue that, in the matrixial, “*to- be*” implies existing in a state of limbo, an in-activity that never comes to any particular resolution about the Other. In contrast, the phallic model remains an active one because, in articulating it, defines and positions the Other in relation to itself. In this line of argument, Ettinger points out that the prospect of remaining in suspension by neither “articulating nor rejecting the other”⁹³ works profitably in the process of creative artwork and should by no means be confused for “agency” of the female artist. The Matrixial is conducive to the analysis of creativity and artwork, which according to Ettinger, are a part active and part receptive endeavor. The matrixial thinking apparatus is misinterpreted if one takes it literally and seeks to apply it to the idea of women as active political subjects with autonomous rights over their procreative abilities and individual choices in relation to their bodies and wombs.

In my reading, however, the insights from the matrixial theory can also contribute to reinforce and enrich the agency of women as political subjects. I will provide an example to draw out how the symbolic representation of the womb attempts to

⁹² Refer Pg 40.

⁹³ Ettinger, Bracha. “With-In-Visible Screen,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 110.

relationally influence social reality. For instance, in an interview with Blake Bronson Bartlett⁹⁴, Christine Hume mentions that,

When I am talking to my pre-verbal baby, I lend her a language that I can understand – I provide both sides of the conversation. This is not only a falsification of her voice but it's a failure to recognize her language and her inclination towards imitation of nonspeech, onomatopoeia and non English sounds, sounds that have no representative function, but are not meaningless. Think of Jakobson's "apex of babble," an infant's vast capacity of sound that must be partially lost to learn a single language. The loss of limitless phonetic arsenals is the price my child must pay for the papers that grant her citizenship in the community of English-speakers.

Daniel Heller-Roaze, in *Echolalias: On the Forgetting of Language*⁹⁵ cites Roman Jakobson in *Child Language, Aphasia, and Phonological Universals*⁹⁶, where Jakobson reports that, "As infants approach the point at which they will begin to form their first recognizable words, they have at their disposal capacities for articulation that not even the most gifted polyglot adults could hope to rival."⁹⁷ Jakobson then coins the term "apex of babble"⁹⁸ for this phase in the child's linguistic development. Daniel Heller-Roaze elaborates that the apex of babble does not last and neither recurs in any other later

⁹⁴ Bronson-Bartlett, Blake. Interview with Christine Hume, Seneca Review, Spring 2011, Volume 40, http://www.hws.edu/academics/senecareview/40_2/hume_interview.pdf (accessed March 2012)

⁹⁵ Heller-Roazen, Daniel, *Echolalias: On the Forgetting of Language*, Zone Books, 2008.

⁹⁶ Jakobson, Roman. *Child Language, Aphasia, and Phonological Universals*, Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Mouton Publishers, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1986.

⁹⁷ Heller-Roazen, Daniel, *Echolalias: On the Forgetting of Language*, Zone Books, 2008, Pg 9

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*,9.

phases of life. For the simple functional reason, that the infant develops what Jakobson calls the “atrophy of the phonic abilities”⁹⁹ because in preparation for a language that must be acquired, the child needs to focus on the useful sounds of the tongue. Therefore, the rich resource of phonemes once at the infant disposal at the apex of babble has to be forsaken. Here, The phenomenon of the “apex of babble provides a distinction between nature and culture in the figure of the baby, who prior to language acquisition has at its disposal an inexhaustible reserve of phonetic capacity. The ability to produce the phonemes are then restricted by the mother tongue, that serves the functional purpose of survival in its immediate environment.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, in the theoretical models of Rank, Freud and Lacan the foreclosure of the archaic maternal can be analogously viewed as an atrophy of the rich resources that the feminine and maternal psyche has to offer, which is then restricted to the subject constructed within the phallic paradigm, in the mode of adjustments to a patriarchal environment. The symbolic representation of the maternal can bring about the consciousness of this unharnessed maternal space, in order to diversify feminine creative abilities, which can help active political subjects make informed choices.

⁹⁹ Heller-Roazen, Daniel, *Echolalias: On the Forgetting of Language*, Zone Books, 2008, Pg 11.

¹⁰⁰ I owe this perspective to Eszter Timar.

2.2. The Womb/Tomb Inversion: Elissa Marder and the Sex of Death

In the present section, I will trace Freud's study of *The Uncanny*¹⁰¹ (1919) keeping in view Freud's earlier theorization of *The Unconscious* (1915). My interest lies in offering a gendered criticism of death in the works of Freud that Elissa Marder forwards in the essay "The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt".¹⁰² Freud describes the "uncanny" as "that species of frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar [to the subject]."¹⁰³ Freud further questions the necessary conditions for the "familiar" to turn into uncanny or frightful. After a thorough investigation of the etymological roots of the German equivalent for "uncanny", Freud concludes that the word *unheimlich*, derives from *Heimlich* and is a sort-of antonym for the same. Where the meaning of *Heimlich* varies between tame (i.e. not wild), belonging to the family (domestic sphere, familiar, tranquil etc.). The second etymological resonance of the word "*heimlich*" is with idea that something is concealed, kept hidden, secrecy and mystery. According to Freud, since *unheimlich* is an event that occurs only by embodying the clause of hidden-ness existent in *Heimlich*, it is in the second meaning of *heimlich* that *unheimlich* no longer remains an antonym. In other words, in *unheimlich*, we see that an additional characteristic of "re-appearance" is added to what is hidden, and the signifier *unheimlich*, in a sense, takes over the signifier *heimlich* by default in adding a reiterative quality to it. At this juncture, *heimlich* and *unheimlich* no longer remain opposites but the meaning of both signifiers becomes ambivalent as they merge into each another. An equation for this would be [*Unheimlich* = Re-appearance + *Heimlich*], implying that it is

¹⁰¹ Freud, Sigmund, *The Uncanny*, Trans. David Mcintock, Penguin Books, Pg 123-162.

¹⁰² Marder, Elissa. *The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt*, Parallax 15 (2009): Pg 5-20.

¹⁰³ Freud, Sigmund, *The Uncanny*, Trans, David Mcintock, Penguin Books, Pg 124.

at the juncture of re-appearance that *heimlich* and *unheimlich* merge. Therefore, which can be interpreted as *unheimlich* is not the same event as the *heimlich*, but a new event that remembers the old one.

The etymological route that Freud takes to unravel the *unheimlich* and *heimlich* in “The Uncanny” compares to a similar Freudian conceptual representation two years earlier in his study of the unconscious. If *Heimlich* signifies the concealed or hidden within the subject, then, in its basic attributes, it resembles the *unconscious*, which is similarly concealed from the subject’s consciousness. Where, in the *unheimlich*, we observe the perpetual dread of the re-appearance of something that was once familiar, and the “re-appear(ce)” being that which precisely constitutes the uncanny, this repetition seems to correspond with the symptoms of neurosis that, as Freud describes, arise from repressions in the unconscious. The uncanny is akin to neurosis in that it implies the repression of a traumatic event that the subject is fixated at in the unconscious.

In his 18th *Lecture: Fixation upon Traumas: The Unconscious*,¹⁰⁴ Freud diagnoses that, in the case of obsessional neurosis, there is always a link between the repetitive act and the point in the unconscious where the patient has remained fixated at the moment of trauma. Freud credits Joseph Breuer with the discovery that “Not merely is the meaning of the symptom invariably unconscious; there also exists a connection of substitutive nature between the two”¹⁰⁵. For Freud, the existence of the symptom becomes witness to the presence of an “unconscious activity”¹⁰⁶ in the human subject which clinical psychology hadn’t so far addressed. Freud then goes on to draw attention to the idea that,

¹⁰⁴Freud, Sigmund. “General Theory of the Neurosis” in *The Major Works Of Sigmund Freud*, William Benton Publisher, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1952.

¹⁰⁵ Freud, Sigmund. “General Theory of the Neurosis” in *The Major Works Of Sigmund Freud*, William Benton Publisher, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1952, Pg 560.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*,560.

for psychoanalytic therapy to be successfully realized, the analysand must discover the hitherto unrealized connection between the symptomatic repetitive act and the antecedent fixation on trauma in the unconscious that has so far remained hidden (through repression). In the same essay, Freud includes the case study of two women suffering from obsessional neurosis in his attempt to conceptualize trauma and its relation to the unconscious. In his examination, Freud argues that the patient(s) had not forgotten their past but they could not see the connection between a previous event and the symptomatic repetitions of it in the present. In Freud's words, "[they] did not see what impulse led [them] to do it"¹⁰⁷ because both patient(s) could not derive at the *connecting link* between the trauma experienced in the past and its re-appearance in the form of an obsessional act in the present. For Freud, the connecting link between the two was clearly evident to the observing analyst, whose task was to bring it forth to the patient's consciousness.

Within the Freudian conceptual framework of trauma and its relation to the unconscious, the "hidden link" is the main clause on which any neurosis maintains itself. Hence, the Freudian solution that no sooner is the connection between the past and its symptomatic repetition in the present grasped by the patient (with the help of the analyst), they would be cured of their obsession. In a similar way, the uncanny, as a re-appearance of what was once familiar for the subject intersects with the re-appearance of the hidden trauma as symptoms in neurosis. As in obsessional neurosis, the subject, unable to find any link between the repetitive act and the trauma, remains in a denial of their condition, whereas, in what is uncanny, the past (trauma) is the re-appearance of a dead object as the

¹⁰⁷ Freud, Sigmund. "General Theory of the Neurosis" in *The Major Works Of Sigmund Freud*, William Benton Publisher, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1952, Pg, 559.

status of ambiguity between animate and inanimate, thus producing the quality of an uncanny dread.

From a feminist perspective, the uncanny, as the concealed re-appearing repression which is no longer remembered could be interpreted as the long forgotten archaic m/Other, as suggested in Ettinger's *matrixal* theory. Following Freud's psychoanalytic theorization, what emerges in the foreclosure of what she terms the "archaic becoming- m/Other" are the traces of the remnants of what was once the subject's archaic m/other. In her essay "The *Heimlich*", Ettinger's introduces the concept of "co/in-habit(u)ation"¹⁰⁸ as a means to resituate Freud's *Unheimlich*, as a "co/in-habit(u)ation" where homely and inhabitation is constructed in one and the same move by an absence/presence that repeatedly processes the event. In co/in-habit(u)ation, subjectivity, while transgressing boundaries, moves in spasms of appearance and disappearance and further co-spasms with several partially formed subjectivities. In this way, the *Unheimlich* is transformed from the "no-place of nomadic existence" into a "homeplace by virtue of *recycling-in transformation* of grains of hybrid shared mental objects, and of reiterated co-affecting."¹⁰⁹

We observe that, for Freud, both in the Uncanny and in obsessional neurosis, the re-appearing of the familiar and the symptom exist only in relation to the primary repression of the archaic maternal and the originary antecedent trauma. Ettinger clarifies that each return (re-appearance) is not just in relation to the originary trauma/repression and neither is it a repetition of the event. Since it is marked by a disappearing and a renewed appearing, the event is therefore processed each time it appears/disappears. For

¹⁰⁸ Ettinger, Bracha. "The *Heimlich*," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 159.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

the purposes of artwork, this implies the possibility of the suspension of subjectivity between the appearing and disappearing thus allowing the subject to co-inhabit and co-merge with the Other/object through the signaled co-spasming between diffracted subjectivity.

In another essay titled “Transcriptum: Memory Tracing In/For/With the Other”¹¹⁰, Ettinger further goes on to explain the residue that incurs in the foreclosure of the originary repression for both Freud and Lacan. On the one hand, in view of Freud’s uncanny aesthetic effects, it would be impossible to “process one’s own phantom into a memory”¹¹¹ because, for him, the remains of the archaic maternal is of no coherence given that, in order to think that the memory can be represented, one has to assume that the originary repression can be by-passed. It becomes even more impossible for Lacan, as in his view materials that have never been repressed by the conscious subject cannot return from the “unconscious structured as language”.¹¹² In the Lacanian framework, what is repressed appears in the Real as hallucinations. For Ettinger, however, the characteristic residue of the primary repression of the archaic mother appear akin to dread (Freud) and hallucinations (Lacan) both in relation to death and haunting by the dead.

In the essay “The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt”, first published in 2009, Elissa Marder posits that, in the Freudian psychoanalytic model the repression of the originary feminine can only re-surface in its relation to *death*. According to Marder, three of Freud’s essay, “The Theme of the Three Caskets” (1913), “The Uncanny” (1919) and “Medusa’s Head” (1940), directly deal with the themes of death in connection with the

¹¹⁰ Ettinger, Bracha. “Transcriptum: Memory Tracing In/For/With the Other,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 163-169.

¹¹¹ Ibid.,164.

¹¹² Ibid.,164.

maternal figure. In the following sub-section, I will examine Marder's views on the general strains of the Freudian theorization of death through which she forwards the hypothesis that, for Freud, the idea of death itself is sexed. Marder asserts that Freud's most significant contribution was the "fundamental insights" he provides on the "extreme difficulty that the psyche undergoes in its attempts to assimilate the idea of death" and that any "knowledge of death is painfully acquired over time. Religion comes into being as part of the process of learning about death and art provides a means of representing it."¹¹³ In her view, for Freud, the difficulty with any conceptualizing of death lies in his idea that "at the level of the unconscious death does not exist."¹¹⁴ Marder draws attention to this Freudian insight on death as non-existent in the unconscious in the essay "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915) where Freud argues that,

It is indeed impossible to imagine our own death; and whenever we attempt to do so we can perceive that we are in fact still present as spectators. Hence the psycho-analytic school could venture on the assertion that at bottom no one believes in his own death.¹¹⁵

According to Marder, one can trace two basic trajectories in Freud's conceptualization of death. The first one runs in the direction of the masculine model within the familiar framework of the paternal Oedipus complex¹¹⁶. The second and less familiar path of death in Freud's work is "death as radically uncanny" in its association with the maternal

¹¹³ Marder, Elissa. *The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt*, Parallax 15 (2009), Pg 10.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁶ Freud's earlier writing on *Totem and Taboo* (where the totem animal that symbolizes the primal father is devoured by the brothers to mourn the loss of the father)

function, in which, according to Marder “feminine death is indistinguishable from birth and is conceptualized as a traumatic repetition of it”¹¹⁷. As Marder points out, death in relation to the first Freudian Oedipal model meets feminist criticism at the position of the female subject as passive in the active/passive binary; or, if femininity is not passive, then it is wholly absent in the dichotomous breakdown of masculine v/s feminine. In a previous chapter, I highlighted the French Feminist, Hélène Cixous’ intervention regarding death and mourning in what she calls “phallogocentric models” and its relation to the female subject¹¹⁸. Therefore, in the current chapter, I will remain focused on Marder’s articulation of the “uncanny” maternal death and the “failed mourning”¹¹⁹ she associated with it.

2.2.1 Elissa Marder and The Maternal Crypt

Marder’s articulation of the uncanny maternal death illuminates that in psychoanalytic models centered on the phallus there is an existent and undeniable relation to the “anxieties surrounding the maternal function”¹²⁰ which can be symbolically represented through the *womb*. In this sense the “womb” can symbolically function as a preserving site for an “unmourned loss” of the subject. In its foundational level, Marder essay lights upon the idea that the “womb” comes to symbolically represent a potential site for repression. Interestingly, Marder re-animates the “womb” corresponding to Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok’s formulations of the “intrapsychic crypt” in *The Wolfman’s*

¹¹⁷ Marder, Elissa. *The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt*, Parallax 15 (2009), Pg 15.

¹¹⁸ Refer Chp 1.1, Pg 25-30.

¹¹⁹ Marder, Elissa. *The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt*, Parallax 15 (2009), Pg, 8.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*,13.

Magic Word: A Cryptonymy, where there occurs a “magical” incorporation of words of the “un-mourned Other” which gets secretly entombed within the structure of the subject’s psyche. Here the paradox lies in the simultaneously existence of the unmourned Other “within” (inside) and “yet not with-in” (outside) the psyche of the subject. Marder elaborates that Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok’s sketch of features of “pathological mourning”, which entails “the mourners attempt to counteract the primal and traumatic void of speech by swallowing the lost loved object instead. The mouth that is empty of speech stuffs itself with the dead Other[...].”¹²¹ Here the inability to express loss through language leads to the fantasy of eating/swallowing the lost or dead object and hence the “crypt” in its elementary sense becomes the “silent witness to an unspeakable loss”.¹²² Marder exports the topographical gene of Abraham and Torok’s “intra-psychic crypt” onto the psycho-dynamics of what she calls “the failed mourning”¹²³ embedded with in the maternal function. Hence, the belly, in the act of swallowing the unmourned maternal function, becomes the site of the paradoxical “womb-tomb”¹²⁴. The implications of considering sex difference or gender position within this “womb-tomb” is not determined by the sex of the subject, whether male or female. Marder asserts that what is of significance here is the “questions raised by the crypt (concerning secret relations to the living dead others that inhabit me without my knowledge)”¹²⁵. The crypt built out of the unmourned maternal function in the case of female subjectivity has different implications, in light of her biological reproductive capacity and maternal function in relation to child rearing unlike the male subject. In this case, it does not go to imply that

¹²¹ Marder, Elissa. *The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt*, Parallax 15 (2009), Pg 13.

¹²² *Ibid.*,13.

¹²³ *Ibid.*,8.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*,13.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

the female subject's functional role in the social order is to reproduce and remain tied to the domestic spheres of motherhood and child rearing but rather the need for improving the existent body of knowledge on what the mother means in the psyche. The construction of subjectivity, by remaining unaware of the implications of the originary repression of the archaic maternal, has potential repercussions for the idea of maternity constructed in the social and political domain.

In Freud's essay, "The Uncanny" there appears a definite reference to what Marder calls the "womb-tomb" inversion as,

Some would award the crown of uncanny to the idea of being buried alive, only apparently dead. However psychoanalysis has taught us that this terrifying fantasy is merely a variant of another, which was originally not at all frightening, but relied on a certain lasciviousness; this was the fantasy of living in the womb.¹²⁶

In the lines above, Freud refers to the uncanny-ness associated with "being buried alive", which is only a guise for an earlier fantasy, dealing with the subject's desire to live in the womb, which also signals a desire for the maternal body. In Marder's interpretation, underlying the fear of being buried alive is "an unconscious wish to *repeat* and *undo* the act of being born by copulating with the mother [*italics in original*]."¹²⁷ Marder concludes that the impossibility of the unconscious wish to repeat and undo the birth act becomes "evidence to the fact that we can never be 'present' to our own birth and therefore that

¹²⁶ Freud, Sigmund, *The Uncanny*, Penguin Modern Classics, Introduction by Hugh Haughton., Translated by David McLintock, Penguin Books, Pg 150.

¹²⁷ Marder, Elissa. *The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt*, Parallax 15 (2009), Pg 15.

the presumed incontestable ‘reality’ of our birth is in its own way as remote and inconceivable to us as our future death.”¹²⁸ Here Marder alludes that any conception of *death* can only extend itself as far as the *birth* of the subject, because both death and birth are equally “inconceivable” and “remote” to the subject, as they acquire all ideas of birth and death over time and through culture.

Conversely, it also makes all conceptualizations surrounding “birth” and “death” of the subject contestable. So far as the unconscious does not recognize death and hence all ideas of death are acquired by the subject over time, Marder points out that Freud then further goes on to argue in *The Theme of the Three Caskets* (1913) that the “tenacious refusal to accept the reality of death also enables him to transform the fact of death into a figure of love in his imagination.”¹²⁹ Marder explains that in the final passage of his essay examining death in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, Freud writes:

Lear carries Cordelia’s dead body on to the stage. Cordelia is death. If we reverse the situation it becomes intelligible and familiar to us. She is the Death-goddess [...]. Eternal myth clothed in the primaeval myth, bids the old man renounce love, choose death and make friends with the necessity of dying.¹³⁰

In the context of *King Lear*, Marder elucidates that, “Cordelia becomes the bearer of Lear’s death. She contains it for him by rendering it intelligible and meaningful. But as

¹²⁸ Marder, Elissa. *The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt*, Parallax 15 (2009), Pg, 15.

¹²⁹ Ibid.,16.

¹³⁰ Ibid.,16.

she *is* Death, she herself cannot die.”¹³¹ For the female subject constructed within this Freudian model of replacement by opposites in the unconscious, death becomes a substitute for love, alluding to the implication that in relation to “death”, the feminine is allowed no death of her own and neither can her death be mourned as she comes to embody death itself. Death for the female subject becomes an act of giving meaning to the death of the male subject by “rendering it intelligible” for him.

Further, in the view of what lies after death, as the “soul” in relation to sex difference within the context of Marder’s “intrapsychic womb/tomb” inversion becomes evident only as we subtract the first Freudian trajectory of death (the Oedipal Model) from the latter uncanny maternal one. In explaining the Freudian Oedipal model through the concept of the “intrapsychic tomb”, Marder elaborates,

The totem is a mirror inversion of the crypt: the totem defies death and safeguards the soul by separating it from the life of the subject and placing it in an external, living, receptacle whereas the crypt defies death by safeguarding the life of the dead other in a secret internal-external receptacle lodged deep within the recesses of the psyche [...]. In the case of the totem as in the case of the crypt there can be no mourning as such, because in these uncanny maternal spaces, there is no place for death; death can neither be assimilated or represented.¹³²

¹³¹ Marder, Elissa. *The Sex of Death and the Maternal Crypt*, Parallax 15 (2009), Pg,16.

¹³² *Ibid.*,14.

The first Freudian paternal Oedipal model of death derives from the function of the totem animal in primitive societies, in which the idea of “soul” was externalized or “displaced” onto the totem animal in order to preserve it. In the second uncanny maternal model, death comes to rely on the internalization in the form of a “crypt” within the psyche. In Marder’s positivist gesture, it is the “safeguarding the life” of the Other inside the inaccessible structure of the tomb (crypt) with-in the psyche. The comparative difference between the two models of death, one representing the masculine paternal “death” and the other the feminine uncanny death, suggests a qualitative difference in the implications for gender in the process of “externalization” or displacement of death and the “internalization” safeguarding of death.

I will digress in the attempt to bring out the implications for the female/feminine subject through the concept of a “*Dys-appearing Body*”, as explained by Drew Leder in *The Absent Body*¹³³. Leder articulates the concept of the “dys-appearing Body” as “the body [that] appears as thematic focus, but precisely as in a *dys* state—*dys* from the Greek prefix signifying “bad”, “hard” or “ill”¹³⁴[text in bracket added]. Leder also adds that “conversely, thematizing the body itself can bring about dysfunction” and hence dys-appearance as a phenomenon is “bi-directional”¹³⁵. Leder elaborates that the perceptual dys-appearance has a philosophic significance, as it denotes the Cartesian epistemological distrust of the body, because the body is remembered only at times of error. The internalization of death in the feminine uncanny model leads to a similar dysfunctional body, as the female corporeality comes to embody “death” itself. On relationally placing the female dysfunctional body as that which internalizes the dead

¹³³ Leder, Drew. *The Absent Body*, The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

Other beside Leder's conception of the "dys-appearing body" perhaps we can similarly allude that death, when "internalized" symbolically in the female corporeal, leads to the female corporeal aspect re-appearing bi-directionally in relation to "death". This has definite repercussions and more at stake for female/feminine subjectivity, as the female corporeal aspect first appears as the thematic focus in embodying death itself and further, in converse, the internalization of the death leads to the effacement of the female corporeality as the re-appearing dysfunctional body. In the case of male corporeality, the body is unmarked by dysfunction in relation to "death" as it functions through displacement, an externalization onto the Other, the Woman.

Further, in the context of Cartesian epistemology when applied to thought and language, Leder explains that the sign is always understood through the distinction between the "signifier" and "meaning/referent" in a "from-to" structure of embodiment¹³⁶. The focus is not the physical presence of the sign but the attending "from" it, "to" what is intended signification. In the process, the signifier undergoes a form of focal disappearance which leads to Leder's conclusion that, "the body of the sign is thus self-effacing. It can seem an immaterial thing"¹³⁷ Here, Leder highlights that in the use of language (in thought, speech, reading, writing) the role of the body is minimal and thus the body of language is compatible with positioning the corporeal in a secondary or supportive role. But contrary to the secondary role of the body in language, Leder goes on to add that, "the revelatory power of the body rests precisely upon its self-effacement", further adding that, "as the royal road to truth, this road seems to lead away from the body. When the body re-claims attention it is in the guise of an obstacle in the

¹³⁶ Leder, Drew. "The Immaterial Body" in *The Absent Body*, The University of Chicago Press, 1990. Pg. 121.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

path.”¹³⁸ In the framework of the Cartesian mind/body dualism, the body always claims attention or reveals itself through “self-effacement” because of its position as the obstacle in the way of the mind. Leder suggests that the body completely falls out of the picture and it re-appears more pronouncedly as textual “self-effacement”.

The poetics of Christine Hume viewed through the lens of Cartesian duality, where in, the maternal (gestating) body comes to be a hindrance in the planes of existing wholly in the mind (language) becomes evident through Mathias Svalinas’ observations in a review of *Shot*. He mentions that,

The mother’s body becomes a place of dread and awkwardness in relation to the child, mirroring the anxiety of the insomnia that permeates the book [...]. The language of the mothering experience is mixed with not only the negative diction, but a nasty suppurating body. The body becomes something unseeable or indefinable, “some blank world” without a stable basis.¹³⁹

The diction of the mothering experience in the poetics of Hume, in relation to the gestating body, is textually represented as a fragmented component comprising of parts and organs giving rise to an under-statis, which constantly alludes to an impending self-destruction. I will conclude this section invoking Ettinger’s perspective in the essay “Transcriptum: Memory Tracing In/For/ With Other”, which explores a similar topography of incorporation and internalization in relation to art-work in what she calls

¹³⁸ Leder, Drew. “The Immaterial Body” in *The Absent Body*, The University of Chicago Press, 1990. Pg, 133.

¹³⁹ Svalina, Mathias. All Eyes Begin in the Night: Review of *Shot* by Christine Hume, *Denver Quarterly*, Volume 45, Number 4, Pg 81.

the post-traumatic era. Ettinger emphasizes that thinking along the lines of memory and art involves an articulation of the relation between art and trauma in the form of “an out-of-sight in a kind of outside that is captured inside- in an “eximate” unconscious space unreachable by memory”¹⁴⁰. For Ettinger, the work of art can only be born through this amnesia and the work of the artist is to bring to the foreground an art which attempts at encapsulating the amnesia of the originary repression of the archaic maternal. Ettinger’s device of “*metramorphosis*”¹⁴¹ sums up this kind of endeavor, one that allows boundaries to turn into thresholds, where the “I” and “non-I” can engage in dialogue, following which a struggle for oblivion (amnesia) to become memory could ensue. Ettinger’s theory highlights the capacity for exchange and co-sharing between I and Other by stressing on the “latency” of this capacity for every subject, as the temporality of a shared “eximate” unconscious memory of the archaic mother exists for every subject in view of a shared space and time in the past with the archaic- becoming-m/other.

¹⁴⁰ Ettinger, Bracha. “Transcriptum : Memory Tracing In/For/ With Other,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 162.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

Chapter 3: The Matrixial Borderspace in the Analysis of “Incubatory”

3.1. The Perceptual Matrixial Encounter-Event: Myth of Eurydice

Ettinger conceptualizes the gaze in the matrix, through the essay “The With-In-Visible Screen”¹⁴² engaging with the Lacanian perceptual perspective where she elaborates that,

Lacan is following Maurice Merleau-Ponty while departing from or even opposing him when he states that the gaze is prior to and split from the eyes of the seer, that my existence as a visible being looked at from all directions in “the spectacle of the world” is prior to and split from my existence as a seeing being.¹⁴³

For Lacan, the “being-looked-at-gaze” of the pre-oedipal stage is a double move that precedes and is split off from the subject as they are initiated into the Symbolic Order through language. The “screen” becomes a divide between the *passive* pre-oedipal subject looked at from all directions and the *active* subject, who can return the gaze only after the introduction into the symbolic order. Thus, according to Lacan, the gaze comes to symbolize a lack, “a hole in my-self who thinks through the chains of the signifier”,¹⁴⁴ because, for him, the gaze of the Other can only be imagined by the self and even then it “meets only substitutes” (what Lacan calls *objet a*) and never the real Other. Ettinger

¹⁴² Ettinger, Bracha. “With-In-Visible Screen,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 93-118.

¹⁴³ Ibid.,97.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.,97.

points out that there are two ways of understanding the “screen”, one, following Lacan, where the screen is a separation, and the second, following, Merleau Ponty, where the screen becomes a contact point between the subject and the Other. Ettinger highlights that Lacan agrees with Merleau Ponty on the single idea that at the point of contact between the act of “looking” and “being looked at” a nameless substance called “voyure”¹⁴⁵ rises, and at this juncture the subject is also visible as object, but Lacan insists that this point is illusory and every encounter is a miss.

In the essay, Ettinger clarifies that conceptualizing the gaze in theory is different from the conceptualization of it in artwork, since the artist doesn’t attempt to provide “optical-geometric perspectives” like the theoretician but instead reproduces her/his desire through the painting. Within the matrixial sphere, artwork comes to represent a gaze searching for the archaic mother, from which every subject has been separated. In this sense, the viewer of the artwork (spectator’s gaze) can glean meaning from the gaze portrayed in the artistic representation only if no conscious attempt is made to capture it (i.e. no attempt to make meaning of what is perceived). Ettinger’s suggestion seems to be that some “erotic antenna of the psyche” transmits and receives from the Other, in phantasy “echoes of a archaic partial relationship of feminine *jouissance*, besides the phallic one.”¹⁴⁶ Which can be deduced as Ettinger’s attempt at articulating the feature of transmission of feminine *jouissance* between erotic antennas of the psyche, as one that has the potential to by-pass censors raised by castration anxiety (regarding the archaic maternal) in psychoanalytic models centered on the phallus. Ettinger’s conceptualization of the “erotic antenna of the psyche” in a manner also attempts to combat the element of

¹⁴⁵ Ettinger, Bracha. “With-In-Visible Screen,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 97.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*,99.

castration anxiety, common to any transference that occurs in the subject's relation to artwork within the phallic models. Applying Ettinger's perceptual concept of the "screen" as a contact point and the transmission of *jouissance* through the "erotic antenna of the psyche" between the Object/Other and the Subject/I to the intra-uterine stage has allowed me to focus on the pre-verbal fetus as the object/Other and the mother as the subject/I and to further interpret, in the poem "Incubatory" the interaction between the mother and the Other as an exchange between the m/Other, understanding "m/Other" as in the mother who is and is not the Other at the same time.

Ettinger emphasizes that, in psychoanalytic thinking, any alternate model which, like the matrixial, seeks to re-situate the archaic maternal alongside phallic is threatening because it seeks to theorize the human subject from a point in time where human subjectivity is absent. In the Real, if the matrixial entails looking backward to the intra-uterine stage at a time where subjectivity itself is absent it also implies being open to a fragmented world-view from where the threat of annihilation is not far (i.e. no subjectivity cannot exist in such state of passivity without disintegration, namely psychosis.) In the '*Matrixial Gaze*' it is the concept of "Metramorphosis" that facilitates the "nonpsychotic yet *beyond-the phallus* connection between the feminine and creation."¹⁴⁷ [italics in original] I will examine Ettinger's reanimation of the myth of Eurydice in order to elucidate through the narrative of the myth the criticism she attempts to direct at the privileging of sight or the "gaze" in the Lacanian phallic model. According to the legend, the death of Eurydice causes her lover Orpheus such immeasurable sorrow that he plays dirges that makes all god and nymphs weep and they

¹⁴⁷ Ettinger, Bracha. "The Matrixial Gaze," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 63.

suggest that he go to the underworld to retrieve her. Orpheus finds Hades and Persephone in the underworld, who agree to release Eurydice on the condition that Orpheus should walk in front of her and not look back at any cost till they have both reached the upper world. As they near the upper world, Orpheus begins to doubt whether Eurydice is behind him and, in his anxiety, he turns around to *gaze* at her face only to find her vanishing back into the darkness of the under-world. In view of the myth, Ettinger conceptualizes that “The phallic gaze alleges that *something was there* and is now lost. The matrixial gaze indicates that *something happened* and the event has passed, and also *someones were there* but the *someones have already changed*”¹⁴⁸ [italics in original]. The narrative, in a certain manner, elucidates the idea that, from Orpheus’ perspective, Eurydice is present in the memory of the loss but no longer exists, but through the Matrixial conceptual tool the loss of Eurydice is acknowledged in an alternation of absence and presence.

Further, transposing the ethical perspective of the matrixial onto the domain of creativity and sex differences in the different “gaze” models, we can observe that the feminine creativity does not play the active voyeuristic role alone (like the male subject), because in her witnessing of the trauma relegated to the archaic m/other she partakes in the psychic space that belongs to the archaic m/other in her capacity to reproduce. In converse, it can be added that she participates actively through her passive becoming one with the archaic m/Other’s “traumatic *jouissance*” instead of foreclosing it like the phallic subject. As Judith Butler, mentions about “Bracha’s Eurydice” in the “Introduction” to the Matrixial Borderspace,

¹⁴⁸ Ettinger, Bracha. “With-In-Visible Screen,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 118.

If one is to see Eurydice, one must ask about the site of not-knowing that forms the contour of that experience, that conditions the possibility of her beauty [...]. One must find the history of what she cannot narrate, the history of her muteness, if one is to recognize her. This is not to supply the key, to fill the gap [...] but to find relevant remnants that form the broken landscape that she (the matrixial) is.¹⁴⁹

Thus, the matrixial does not serve as a tool to fill the gap or substitute the loss of what was separated from the m/other but instead becomes the means to uncover remnants from a past where the subject was “one” with the m/other. Ettinger emphasizes that, in psychic border-linking, the matrixial voice lends itself more easily to the task of connecting the subject to the m/other than the touch or gaze:

Contrary to touch, where sensitivity operates on the borders and “membranes” of the body, and contrary to the gaze, where it operates from a distance, in the case of the voice it first operates through sound itself and then through the resonance, in an outside that is an immediate inside. The inside is multiplied, again by resonance, and connects to the outside in another mode.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Butler, Judith. Foreword ‘Bracha’s Eurydice’ in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Ettinger Bracha. University of Minnesota Press, 2006.x,xi.

¹⁵⁰Ettinger, Bracha. “Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 181-182.

Ettinger illuminates through Lacan's *Lectures* (1962) where he maintains that the gaze corresponds to the scopophilic drive and the Voice to the invocatory drive. Ettinger mentions that "Lacan speaks of the birth trauma as the first moment of anxiety [following Rank], and of the voice as the most primitive object"¹⁵¹ but again the voice as the archaic object is structured with in the paradigm of having/not having and lack-absence of the phallus in the Other. According to Ettinger, it is the matrixial voice resonating through the "matrixial cavity of passage"¹⁵², that she equates with the womb, that structures the co-poetic poles of the "I" and the "Other".

3.2. Analysis of "Incubatory" *Shot*, Christine Hume :

In the following section, I will examine the poetics of Christine Hume focusing on the poem titled "Incubatory", which comprises of twelve verses in her recently published book of poems *Shot*¹⁵³ (2010). I will argue that the endeavor of Hume's poetics in transcribing the memory of the period of gestation in the poem subverts or ruptures the established binary reductions in the framework of the I/Other, mind/body and the physicalist/metaphysical divide.

Christine Hume is the author of three books of poetry, *Musca Domestica* (2000), *Alaskaphrenia* (2004), *Lullaby: Speculations on the First Active Sense* (2007) and is currently the coordinator of the Creative Writing Program at Eastern Michigan

¹⁵¹ Ettinger, Bracha. "Weaving a Woman Artist with-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg,184.

¹⁵² Ibid.,184.

¹⁵³ Hume, Christine. *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010.

University. Hume hosts an Internet radio show, *Poetry Radio* which features contemporary and historic performance arts, sound poetry, audio narratives and collaborations between writers and musicians. The themes of most episodes on the radio show dwell on traditions of cross-pollination between poetry and the musical. For instance, the first show, aired on February 2010 and titled “Music Inspired Poetry”, dealt with the genre of blues poems. Hume’s own performed poetry aims at an integration of textual content with sound sculptures, which gives us a glimpse into the kind of poetics Hume herself aspires to. The limitations of language are always looming at the fore of Hume’s poetry, and as a distilled art form, poetry, which relies more on language than prosaic or dramatic texts is scrutinized for its inadequacy to convey meaning. Hume’s poetics moves beyond the restrictions of language leading to the incorporation of sounds intonations and visual images.

In his review of the collection *Shot*, Mathias Svalina, expresses that, in an innovative and experimental way Hume’s book, approaches the physical and psychological transformations of becoming a new mother as “one both individual and one always in-relation” to the Other.¹⁵⁴ The poetic voice in the book works her way through a transforming maternal body using recurring themes of darkness and insomnia. Insomnia is represented as a bodily malfunction where sleeplessness evokes the opening up of a dark interiority within the maternal body drawing attention to the speaker alternating the range between “pregnancy” and “motherhood”, as being one with the “enshrouded body of the fetus and then the darkness of relation to a suddenly separate entity”¹⁵⁵. Svalina also situates Hume’s poetics within the Romantic tradition as “Hume works through the

¹⁵⁴ Svalina, Mathias. All Eyes Begin in the Night: Review of Shot by Christine Hume, Denver Quarterly, Volume 45, Number 4, Pg 78-85.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 79.

Romantic elements of transformation without relying on cliché structural elements of reflection and epiphany.”¹⁵⁶

In the analysis, I will attempt to bring into focus the sharp relief between the divisions of one-ness and separation, living and the not-yet living through an imagined dialogue blurring the boundaries between the to-be mother and the unborn fetus in order to argue that the premise of Hume’s poetry diversifies modes of thinking about Subject (I) and Object (Other) relations.

In his “Introduction to Poetics,” Tzvetan Todorov explains that Poetics, “[does] not seek to name meaning, but [aim]s at a knowledge of the general laws that preside over the birth of each work. But in contradistinction to sciences as psychology, sociology etc., it seeks these laws within literature itself.”¹⁵⁷ Todorov differentiates “Poetics” from “interpretation”, where a close reading of the literary text is sufficient for analysis. He also differentiates “Poetics” from other sciences where the laws of psychoanalytic theories and general laws are extended to literary texts but the same holds that these laws cannot be called laws of literature. Todorov positions “Poetics” within the domain of science, but with a focus on the science of literature. I would further like to clarify, as Todorov mentions, that “Poetics” differs from other sciences in that my application of psychoanalytic theory to the following verses in the poem my intention is to show the compatibility of Hume’s poetics to the feminist psychoanalytic models I examine earlier in relation to Rank and Freud.

¹⁵⁶ Svalina, Mathias. All Eyes Begin in the Night: Review of Shot by Christine Hume, Denver Quarterly, Volume 45, Number 4, Pg,79.

¹⁵⁷ Todorov Tzvetan, Introduction to Poetics, Translated by Richard Howard, University of Minnesota Press, 6.

The general laws driving the work of Hume in *Shot* can be interpreted as transformations that the female subject undergoes physically during the period of gestation and psychologically in the process of a becoming-motherhood. While tracing the trajectory of Hume's poetics, I will rely on an earlier interview published in the *Seneca Review*¹⁵⁸, in order to add more to the contours of the analysis and so as not to offer a close reading of the text alone. I will begin the analysis with the diffracted dialogue between the mother and Other in the poem "Incubatory" through an examination of Bracha Ettinger's theory of the pre-maternal and the pre-natal gaze and voice, which in breaking from language is reconstituted and (re)enacted in it.

"Incubatory" is composed of twelve verses and is a dialogue between the mother-to-be and the unborn fetus. I will analyze the poem through the different psychoanalytic models opened up so far, interpreting the verses through Ettinger's insights in the Matrixial Borderspace. The poem is comprised of a diffracted set of dialogic conversations, each of them beginning with the mother posing a question to which the unborn fetus (Other) replies. I will look at the ongoing poetic conversation between the mother and the Other from three perspectives; from that of the mother; that of the unborn fetus as the Other; and finally, the m/other as the blurring of boundaries between the mother and the Other.

In examining the poem, I will focus on the construction of subjectivity through the "I" as representing the female/feminine subjectivity and further symbolically representing a feminine form of art, where as the "Other" is interpreted as the object,

¹⁵⁸ Bronson-Bartlett, Blake. Interview with Christine Hume, *Seneca Review*, Spring 2011, Volume 40, http://www.hws.edu/academics/senecareview/40_2/hume_interview.pdf (accessed March 2012).

lying beyond subjectivity, in order to delineate differences between subject/object relations.

Are you comfortable?

I move inside night but am not its inside. I jerk and ex-

*cise, I do not express. Outside is not made of the same dark as inside.*¹⁵⁹

We can interpret this first question posed by the mother to the fetus (Other), as a slight resistance towards the fetus (Other), as she begins her address with a formal and polite concern directed towards the well being of the unborn fetus. The formal tone of the mother's query comes to be further highlighted in the contrast exerted by the rhetoric of the fetus's reply. The fetus dialogue is not constructed in the form of a reply to the mother's inquiries instead it is structured in the form of monologue or an inner dialogue which renders it the quality of familiarity, to whomever it is addressed. The familiarity of the fetus' reply serves to further highlight the wariness in the question posed by the mother. The literary trope used by Hume to render the fetus a voice akin to a monologue can be interpreted as that of a reversal where the unborn "object" (Other) is given the voice of "subject(ivity)" through prolonged inner monologues, which through a sustained familiarity and inclusiveness addresses the readers. Where as, the subject's (mother) queries, in all of the dialogues in "Incubatory" only comprises of a single sentence addressed exclusively to the object (fetus). Here we see, that in contradistinction to the ideas of the subject constructed through language, the subject/I (mother) is restricted in her address to only the Object/ Other (fetus) whereas, the Object/Other (fetus) is allotted

¹⁵⁹ Hume, Christine. "Incubatory," *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg 1.

a wider range of addressee's through its subjective voice.

In the logic of subjectivity constructed wholly by language, the fetus as the not-yet subject or yet-to-be subject cannot possibly respond to the queries addressed to it by the mother. Thus, in the second interpretation the voice of the fetus, is the projection of the doubts and concerns of the becoming-mother as the Other. In my reading, I will borrow Ettinger's term "m/Other" to denote points in the analysis where the voice of the fetus (Other) is interpreted as the projection of the mother. In my analysis of the voice of the m/Other I will argue that, the Other (fetus) falls completely out of the picture but continues to re-appear in the slash or interstices between what constitutes the m/Other.

In the verse, the reply of the Other, conveys that it moves inside night but is not made up of the same *matter* as night. On one hand, the Other's imagined oneness with night is hinted at while it moves inside the dark recesses of night and yet a distinction between the Other and night is maintained through the *materiality* of which the Other is constructed in. The darkness of the unborn somehow is not the same as being-one with the darkness of night through which we can alight upon the idea of separate-yet-one. This separate-yet-oneness resonates with Ettinger's conception of "co/in-habit(u)ation" discussed earlier, where subjectivity, in transgressing boundaries, moves in spasms of appearance and disappearance. The unborn claims to move abruptly, in jerking and excising, by disallowing and stopping, but it does not "express". In the Lacanian interpretation, it is the unborn fetus' lack of access to language that marks its inability to express itself. But on examining the lines above, we observe that the Other doesn't acknowledge a lack and instead, there is a marked resistance to language and this refusal to express implies an active choice. Further, in resorting to the actions of jerking and

excising, the fetus manages to establish a link of communication between itself and the maternal body. In my reading, this is a keen insight by Hume on the idea that language has limitations and one must voluntarily refuse to grant language the monolithic status it has in constructing subjectivity.

In the last sentence, we see that the Other goes on to explain that the outside is not made of the same dark as inside, which leads us to two significant questions posed in the study of subjectivity and its relation to the Other: On the one hand, how does the Other differentiate between the darkness of the inside and the darkness that lies outside since it doesn't know what lies outside?; secondly, how can it distinguish between 'inside' and 'outside' if it has no access to language? In the theoretical examination of various psychoanalytic models in the previous sections of the thesis, we observed the limitations of different phallogentric conceptualizations of subjectivity, whether it is by the intervention of the law of the father (Freud) or the introduction into the Symbolic Order (Lacan) in Ettinger's articulation of the matrixial theory. The Lacanian model intimates that any feeling of separation and one-ness that the subject experiences on looking back at the intra-uterine or pre-verbal stage exists only as an imitation, and hence illusory, of the real experience. As the field that constitutes the Other is wholly imagined, it therefore serves no purpose in elucidating on subject formation. In the Lacanian paradigm, there is no room for the Other to intuit what lies outside or to distinguish whether it is or isn't the same as inside given the foreclosure of the originary feminine as an absolute clause for subjectivity to come into being.

Interpreting the fetus' dialogue as the voice of the m/Other, we observe the mother in the process of constructing the unformed subjectivity of the Other even before

it has entered the discourse. It is the m/Other, through the voice of the fetus, who grasps and presents the diffracted outside-inside and the separate-yet-one existence in her interpolation between pre-verbal existence (other) and culturally determined subjectivity (mother). Further, the range of issues broached in the context of the voice of the m/Other also includes the ethical impingements on the mother, who finds herself responsible for the life of the unborn Other and as an Artist, it represents the ethical responsibility of each subject towards the 'object'/Other.

Can you open your eyes?

My looking does not bound back to me. It wanders

further circles of eon in attempt to put the moon out of my moth-mind.¹⁶⁰

In this verse, the mother begins by asks the fetus if it can open its eyes, to which the fetus replies that its *gaze* does not return to itself, but instead wanders in circles through ages in an attempt to put the “moon” out of its “moth-mind”. In the use of “moth-mind” we find a metaphor drawn from the moth, in it appears the gesture of the unborn Other akin to a moth attracted to a flame in the dark. Then, in the next sentence, we observe the gaze of the unborn searching for a “different” kind of light, because simultaneously, the Other claims the need to forget the light of the moon. The moon, in its symbolic association with femininity and cyclical repetitions, renders the dialogue a repetitive and cyclical theme in the contradiction that exists between searching for (remembering) and at the same time trying to put out of one’s mind (forgetting) the light of the moon. A different

¹⁶⁰ Hume, Christine. “Incubatory,” *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg 2.

facet of the intra-uterine phase, apart from the aspect of fusion and separation, comes to be highlighted in the fetus (Other) witnessing the memory of luminescence in the dark of the womb and then wandering through eons trying to put it outside of its memory. The material aspect of separation and fusion extends itself in memory and forgetting as the Other will forever in a double move paradoxically try to forget the reminiscent memories of the archaic m/other.

In the previous dialogue, we come across a similar differentiating feature between two kinds of darkness in the sentence, “*the darkness outside is not the same as the darkness inside.*” In the present verse, the fetus replies that its gaze does not return to itself, and as such, we can interpret the gaze of the Other in Ettinger’s matrixial conceptualization of the perceptual dimension. Lacan maintains that the pre-oedipal gaze is separated from the gaze of the subject by a screen where the “looked at” and passive unformed pre-oedipal body cannot gaze back given its inability to exist as whole in an autonomous identifiable subjectivity. When constructed with in this phallic model, the Other’s gaze doesn’t return to itself because it doesn’t exist (yet), and therefore the Other can only be looked at as an object that has no subjectivity of its own. Ettinger, however, emphasizes that the Other’s subjectivity rests in the boundaries between one-ness and separation with the mother, and therefore, in the matrixial sphere, the screen can also represent a contact point between the gaze of the Other and the mother instead of a screen that separates the gaze in the binary active/passive mode.

In the next verse, of “Incubatory” we witness the mother’s queries beginning to probe the unborn fetus with genuine concern:

Can you hear my lullabies?

*As when you descend into the ocean, you find yourself immersed in song; my whole body, made of water and umber, reverberates self-melodies.*¹⁶¹

The fetus describes the effect of the lullabies as being immersed in the ocean, and its “whole” body immersed in water. What *wholeness* can the Other be referring to? Through Ettinger, we can interpret this as the ‘w/whole’ in the half formed state of existence, part water and part umber (burnt brown), which reverberates with the melodies of the m/Other that become “self-melodies”. In the use of melodies, we observe a form of communication that encompasses language but that also goes beyond language as it includes a richer variety of intonations and sounds than spoken language. Ettinger emphasizes that the voice, as a medium of communication, lends itself best to the concept of border-linking by the virtue of echoes and resonates that auditory stimulus invokes. For Ettinger, the gaze, as visual stimulus functions to objectify the Other and distance the subject from it, whereas, the touch as sensory stimulus operates on the boundaries and at a surface level creating the dichotomy of inside and outside. Thus, it is the voice that allows the transgressing of boundaries and distances by creating a link between the subject and the Other.

What do you hear of our talk?

*Blood fastens to all language at once, alive and lying; all tongues lapping one another, dousing for routes into bodies*¹⁶².

¹⁶¹ Hume, Christine. “Incubatory,” *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg 3.

If we note the usage of plural (our) in the mother's address to the fetus, it is unclear whether the "our" stands for talks between mother and child or what the fetus overhears while the mother addresses other people. The address of "our" serves to indicate that the "I" (mother) is aware of her subjectivity as a separate existence in the presence of other subjects (who is not the Other, but others), whereas the fetus (Other) in the pre-verbal stage doesn't possess the capacity to distinguish between itself and not-itself. Thus, the fetus cannot distinguish between what the mother says to it or what she does not, because making meaning is beyond its capacity. For the partly formed "object", everything is noise; or perhaps not even "noise" as the Other doesn't possess language.

In a feminist articulation, we can interpret in the reply of the fetus precisely the expression of language bound through a physiological experience as "*blood fastens to all language at once.*" Although the pre-verbal Other cannot distinguish between language and not-language, its reactions are relationally elicited by the maternal bodily activities and functions. This illustrates that the Other directly establishes a connection with the corporeal instead of relying on a mediation through language in order to communicate. Thus, in this particular verse we also find the crystallizing of a contradiction in the m/Other's voice: where the Other is able to retain a link to the material bodily existence, the subject's (mother) language in turn becomes an instrument which only serves to extinguishes and dilutes routes to the corporeal.

Why do you kick at words?

¹⁶² Hume, Christine. "Incubatory," *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg 4.

*To get your songs off my hands, I wade through their
falls and uplifts. I dreamt a dog was trying to dig me out.*¹⁶³

The mother asks why the Other repels words, to which the fetus replies “*to get your song off my hands*”. We observe a consistent aim of the fetus (Other) to get rid of the in-between state of existence it finds itself in. Previously, the fetus maintained that “*I move inside night but I am not its inside*”¹⁶⁴ in an attempt to distinguish between its own darkness inside night separate from the darkness of the night inside the womb and then through the “gaze” it attempts to put the “moon” out of its “moth-mind” and through the “voice” it refuses to express, which can be represented as the blurring boundaries between, the mother and Other. We meet the same principle in each of the verses where an ambiguity surrounds which wants to get rid of what and whom in the continuous exchange of the desire to remain “whole” with the mother and the need to “separate” from the Other.

In the essay “The *With-In-Visible Screen*”, Ettinger argues that a feminine perspective in artwork is “neither consigned to a model of male ‘castration’ [...] nor reduced to pure bodily experience.”¹⁶⁵ Ettinger proposes an alternate “matrixial aesthetic” and “poetic principle” that has the latent capacity of co-sharing and exchange between “I” and “non-I” in their ability to co-exist without rigid definitions. The capacity of co-sharing is latent in every subject owing to the shared relation of one-ness and separation with the *archaic-becoming-m/other-to-be* some time their past. From one perspective,

¹⁶³ Hume, Christine. “Incubatory,” *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg 5

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶⁵ Ettinger, Bracha. “The With-In-Visible Screen,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 93.

Ettinger's views on the matrixial aesthetics can be perceived as the essentializing, the human subject under the category of the "universal" subject formed in relation to the period of gestation and shared time in the womb with the m/other. With the advent of technology the period of gestation in the womb is no longer a universal constant and further the period of gestation in womb differ and encompass a wide range of experiences that go on to determine subjectivity.

Ettinger uses the "matrixial" as a symbolic representation that derives from the objective reality of the period of gestation, which is more or less constant for every human subject. She further emphasizes that the period of gestation, as a transitional and transformational phenomenon, allows her to establish a certain momentum (moving back and forth) and the blurring of boundaries between the "I" and the "Other", thus disrupting existent binary modes of I/Other, inside/outside, subject/object. This facilitates the matrixial to become an interstice for the meeting of two opposing definitions. In the dialogue, where, the marked blurring of boundaries between who wants to get rid of whom can be interpreted similarly as that state of being (existence) which is transitional and transformational. It can be read as an interstice for the meeting of one subject with an unformed Other (subject-to-be) who are fused, co-joined. This precipice of fusion and separation which deals out ambiguities and disrupts binary views is further re-iterated in the process of creating art-work, particularly in the relation of the artist to her/his work of art. In the last sentence of the verse, the fetus (Other) adds that as it wades through the up and down of sounds that constitute the mother's melodies, it dreams that a dog is trying to dig it out of the womb. As I have already pointed out in previous chapters, the idea of being buried in the womb is presented through Elissa Marder's analysis of death in the

work of Freud, as well as in Otto Rank's corporeal representations of the maternal body as the womb/tomb inversion of the Sphinx. If as Marder pointed out, in the symbolic act of swallowing the Other, the mourning subject attempts to counteract a traumatic void that speech has failed to represent, leading to an incorporation of the Other within the self, in Hume's poem, the fetus' dream of a dog trying to dig it out from the womb would signal a similar incorporation of the Other in the maternal body. The "kick(ing)" and the "dig(ing)" in the dialogue above adds weight to the idea of resistance towards being incorporated by the mother as the "unmourned" Other.

Furthermore, in the essay "A Poetics of Psychoanalysis : *The Lost Object: Me*"¹⁶⁶, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok formulate the mechanism of "Endocryptic Identification" which "consists of exchanging one's own identity for a phantasmic identification with the 'life' beyond the grave--of an object lost as a result of some metapsychological traumatism."¹⁶⁷ The process of endocryptic identification emphasizes that the subject "I" exchanges its own identity for a covert identification with the dead Other/Object in the grave. Thus, the subject installs the grave of the Other within her/his psyche so that the dead Other remains preserved intact and unmourned. In this kind of phantasmic identification, it is no longer a question of the object that doesn't exist but instead it is as if the "subject, consequently, now appears to be painfully missed by the *object*"¹⁶⁸. Therefore, the object/Other becomes the active principle in missing the subject while the subject itself cannot miss (mourn) the loss of the encrypted object. In the

¹⁶⁶ Abraham, Nicholas. Torok, Maria., *A Poetics of Psychoanalysis: "The Lost Object: Me"*, Substance 13 (1984): University of Wisconsin Press, Journal Division, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3684812> (accessed : 3/04/2012), Pg 3-18.

¹⁶⁷ Abraham, Nicholas. Torok, Maria., *A Poetics of Psychoanalysis: "The Lost Object: Me"*, Substance 13 (1984): University of Wisconsin Press, Journal Division, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3684812> (accessed : 3/04/2012), Pg ,5.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.,5.

dialogue above, the reversal of the “I” (mother) being missed by the buried “Other” can be interpreted in the context of “endocryptic identification”, since the subjective poetic voice of the Other (fetus) actively articulates the ambiguities of separation and oneness. The subject (mother), on the other hand, in being passively missed by the Other, cannot articulate any of her doubts except in the form of queries addressed to the fetus.

In the essay “Transcriptum: Memory Tracing In/ For/ With the Other” Ettinger elaborates that “as long as the Crypt does not collapse, there will be neither melancholy nor a process of mourning: no memory and no forgetting.”¹⁶⁹ In the verse above, the Other’s consistent interpolations between “remembering” and “forgetting” can be interpreted through Ettinger’s concept of “Transcriptum” as an art object that encapsulates in the form of paradox the “possibility” of sharing the memory of the period of gestation only through an emphasis on the “impossibility” of sharing it. In the production of art-work, when the incorporated memory of the archaic becoming m/other emerges, in a double move, it captures “both the scar and the wound, the amnesia and its memory, and it makes sense as an impossibility, as the impossibility of not-sharing the memory of oblivion of the veiled Event.”¹⁷⁰ Thus, the “Transcriptum” becomes an event, or work of art that attempts to shatter the crypt of the unmourned Other by rendering the memory of the loss, a concrete body and voice in artistic representation.

In his review of *Shot*, Mathias Svalina mentions that the ontology of “Incubatory”, being a “polyphonic text is self-pleading with the self, attempting to escape

¹⁶⁹ Ettinger, Bracha. “Transcriptum: Memory Tracing In/ For/ With the Other,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 166.

¹⁷⁰ Ettinger, Bracha. “Transcriptum: Memory Tracing In/ For/ With the Other,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg, 167.

it own clutch. Through this textualizing, the speaker wants language to *contain the uncontainable* lived experience” [emphasis added].¹⁷¹ Svalina aptly captures the self-effacement in the body in the text, as the Other in always trying to escape the clutches of the mother somehow always finds itself back to the m/Other and the mother, as the one who contains the Other. However, the Other in not content with being wanting to contained as an ‘unmourned loss’ constantly splits off to form the m/Other.

Why do you punch and undulate?

I hear myself coming from your thoughts.

*If I want to listen, I turn left; if I want to speak, I go right to bone.*¹⁷²

In this verse, the mother asks the fetus why it punches and undulates, and in doing so, the question also carries with it an aggression directed towards the maternal body to which, the fetus replies because it is hears itself coming from the mothers thoughts. (i.e. the Other being constructed by the mother). If we look at the following from the Lacanian perspective, the Other is always wholly constructed by the language of the subject/self, the “I” (in the context of the poem, the mother) prior to its initiation into the Symbolic Order. In the pre-linguistic stage, there is no distinction between the subjectivity of the mother and the Other. In the verse above however, the fetus once again challenges the assumed fusion between the mother and itself, as it replies that when it wants to hear itself it turns left and when it wants to communicate with the mother, it establishes a route of communication directly to the mother’s body and hence “*If I want to speak I go*

¹⁷¹ Svalina, Mathias. All Eyes Begin in the Night: Review of Shot by Christine Hume, Denver Quarterly, Volume 45, Number 4, Pg. 80.

¹⁷² Hume, Christine. “Incubatory,” *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg 6.

right to bone.” We observe that the body becomes the site for a communication that precedes words (language). The idea of subjectivity, constructed wholly through language overlooks the aspect of the materiality of the body and different modes of communication that perhaps precedes and even exceeds what can be achieved through discourse and language. It goes to show the inherent limitations of the Lacanian model that posits that subjectivity is structurally determined only through the language that constructs it. Furthermore, the assumed fusion of the mother and the unborn in intra-uterine existence has been elaborated upon in the essay “*On Maternity*”¹⁷³ by Luce Irigaray. Irigaray critiques female corporeality constructed through cultural determinism in the form of a conversation between herself and Hélène Rouche. Rouche, who had previously conducted a study into the singularity of the mother-child relation in the uterus, provides some keen insights on the patterns of misconstrued patriarchal notions regarding the imagined state of this fusion. Rouche emphasizes that there is “never a fusion between the maternal and embryonic tissues” because of the mediatory role played by the placenta, which regulates the harmonic survival of both the mother and fetus. She clarifies that though the placenta is a tissue formed by the embryo, it behaves completely independent of it, and its role is determined as one that neither belongs to the mother nor to the unborn fetus, serving as a mediator between both. In her view,

This relative autonomy of the placenta, its regulatory functions ensuring the growth of the one in the body of the other, cannot be reduced either to a mechanism of fusion (an ineffable mixture of the bodies or blood of mother

¹⁷³ Irigaray, Luce. “On the Maternal Order.” In *Je, Tu, Nous*, Alison Martin (Trans). New York: Routledge, 1993.

and fetus), or, conversely, to one of aggression (the fetus as foreign body devouring from the inside).¹⁷⁴

Here Rouche points out the other end of the assumed fusion, which is of complete Othering. She argues that if it is not the assumed fusion of the materials constituting the mother and fetus then the opposite, a resistance to the fusion, comes to be visible in the imagined aggression directed towards the maternal body. Where, the fetus (Other) is a foreign object devouring nutrients from the maternal body. We also observe that biological evidence, on the contrary, demonstrates that the assumed fusion in the intra-uterine phase is a myth and that all conceptions of “one” or the “other” are similarly culturally determined simplifications of complex biological realities based on a mode of meaning making that compartmentalizes and generalizes the multifarious way in which nature functions. As also Ettinger points out, those psychoanalytic models that function through the dichotomy of “one” or the “other” dynamically perform through either “assimilation” or “annihilation” of the Other. In those terms, the Other has to either be fused with the subject or turn into an aggressor to the subject (devouring, living off) which must then be destroyed on this pretext.

Further, in the ethical view of what does it imply to be a subject (mother) constructing the Other or the Other (unborn fetus) being constructed by the mother? In the verse that follows, the mother begins with the query “Can you bear the sound of my voice?”¹⁷⁵ as an articulation of the doubt regarding the possibility that the to-be-subject/not-yet-subject might not altogether want to be constructed by the existent subject

¹⁷⁴ Irigaray, Luce. “On the Maternal Order.” In *Je, Tu, Nous*, Alison Martin (Trans). New York: Routledge, 1993, Pg 42.

¹⁷⁵ Hume, Christine. “Incubatory,” *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg.7.

(mother). For my analysis, I will refer to an earlier interview between Christine Hume and Blake Bronson Bartlett where Hume explains the dynamics of the relation of the writer to language as that of a failure. She goes on to say that, “when I read my poem aloud in front of an audience, I am aware of this: I am lending to my writing a voice that always seems to fail the language.”¹⁷⁶ Hume demonstration of the ethical dilemma of representation of subjectivity wholly through language can be interpreted as the voice of the m/Other, where the mother regularly meets with the inadequacy of language in constructing the Other. Yet, by the very means of articulating a form of poetics where language falls short at every point, as it must in any imagined dialogue between the mother and her unborn fetus, Hume manages to illustrate not only the writers relation to language as that of failure but to an extent every subjects relation to language as that of a failure.

Hume further draws an analogy between her poetics as a failure of language to her own daughter who hasn't acquired language yet, when she explains that,

When I am talking to my pre-verbal baby, I lend her a language that I can understand—I provide both sides of the conversation. This is not only a falsification of her voice but it's a failure to recognize her language and her inclination towards imitation of non speech, onomatopoeia and non English sounds, sounds that have no representative function, but are not meaningless.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Bronson-Bartlett, Blake. Interview with Christine Hume, *Seneca Review*, Spring 2011, Volume 40, http://www.hws.edu/academics/senecareview/40_2/hume_interview.pdf (accessed March 2012)

¹⁷⁷ Bronson-Bartlett, Blake. Interview with Christine Hume, *Seneca Review*, Spring 2011, Volume 40, http://www.hws.edu/academics/senecareview/40_2/hume_interview.pdf (accessed March 2012)

In her recognition of the limitations of motherhood, we see the resonates of the doubt that the m/Other articulates in the verse about the mother constructing the Other through her own language. It also directly draws out the connections between the inadequacy of language and the ethical implications of constructing an/Other through language. As the Other is constructed through the language of a subject who provides both sides of the conversation, the voice of the Other is *silenced* and *unrecognized* beyond the demarcations laid down by language or other cultural factors.

Why are you lonely?

From now on the noise you travel through will be my voice seeking you. It arranges my loneliness excruciating in twos. Pairs of anything become ears-the ones bound by shared mistake, the ones that won't work without you.

Are you lonely?

*Something shit on my shadow. My shadow sat on its stolen body.*¹⁷⁸

In this verse the mother for the first time addresses her state of one-ness with the fetus-to-be, lonely (alone) in opposition to being together. The use of the word “noise” hints at intrusion and interruption that breaks the silence, becoming a reminder of the fetus (Other) seeking the mother in its aloneness. We can observe an attempted play with opposites and pairs for even loneliness comes to be arranged “excruciatingly in twos”.

¹⁷⁸ Hume, Christine. “Incubatory,” *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg 8.

Through most of the dialogue we see a similar re-arrangement of immaterial substances in parts of two. If in an earlier dialogue there were two kinds of darkness, now there are two parts of loneliness. Here, the fetus further alludes that “pairs of anything become ears”, as mentioned earlier in Ettinger’s view the voice lends itself to border- linking the subject to the Other better than the eyes (gaze) or the skin (touch)¹⁷⁹. Similarly, in this verse ears become means by which immateriality is grasped in the voice, not as language but through its intonations and resonates. In what comprises the longest dialogue in the poem, the mother repeats the question, this time to directly confirm whether the Other is lonely or not. To this the fetus (Other) replies that, “My shadow sat on its stolen body.” We observe that the fetus (Other) once again evokes an immaterial shadow, as that which appears in place of the body as it is stolen.

In the essay, “The Creation of the Sexual Self” Rank argues that the idea of the “shadow” as the double was the earliest manifestation of the primitive man’s soul ideology. Rank describes the animation of shadow as the “first supernatural philosophy of life immortal” and points out that the shadow was a belief in the “immortal soul in its naivest form”¹⁸⁰. The shadow, in the context of the m/Other as the immaterial double can be associated with the Other, as it is unformed matter (not formed material existence) but nonetheless carries the essence of life replacing the disappearing materiality of the mother’s body. In my reading, this verse illuminates upon the relation between the materiality of the maternal body and the immateriality of the concept of the unborn fetus. The same can also be interpreted as the fetus (like a shadow) has stolen or taken possession of the mother’s body, as it absorbs nourishment from it. In the essay “On

¹⁷⁹ Refer Pg 80.

¹⁸⁰ Rank, Otto. “ The Creation of The Sexual-Self, ”in *Beyond Psychology*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1941, Pg 204.

Maternity” under the subtitle, “Cultural Amnesia” Luce Irigaray asks Rouche to elaborate on her previously published paper that highlights the consequences of ignoring placental economy in relation to “mother tongue” (language). Rouche argues that in psychoanalytic theorization, the imagined (misinterpreted) organic fusion between the unborn fetus and the pregnant mother is extended further onto the subjectivity of the unborn fetus, which is wholly dependent on the mother and exists in the state of a not yet formed autonomous subjectivity. A rupture between the co-existent fusion of mother and child is brought about “in the name of the father” through the child’s introduction to the symbolic order of language. Rouche states that, “I am not accusing these forms of the imaginary of being wrong but of being the only ways of theorizing what exists before language.”¹⁸¹ What Rouche criticizes is that the “materiality of the relationship to the maternal body having disappeared, language remains that inexhaustible ‘womb’ for the use that’s made of her.”¹⁸² In the modes of theorization which foreclose the maternal (pre-verbal) and where subjectivity comes into existence only through language, the materiality of the relation to the maternal body has to fade into oblivion because of the intervention of language but yet somehow language continues to remain inexhaustible, as it is renewed rediscovered and continues expand in the cumulating of its usage. Thus, the materiality of the maternal body in a way comes to be sacrificed to inherit language, and this language some how seems to be inexhaustible.

How many senses grow from my fears?

¹⁸¹ Irigaray, Luce. “On the Maternal Order.” In *Je, Tu, Nous*, Alison Martin (Trans). New York: Rutledge, 1993, Pg 42.

¹⁸² Irigaray, Luce. “On the Maternal Order.” In *Je, Tu, Nous*, Alison Martin (Trans). New York: Rutledge, 1993, Pg 43.

*I know beyond doubt that electric-
ity cannot steal the night from your organs. Your body's nocturamas are
countless and okay. Except some skull pockets that burn without warning.*¹⁸³

In this verse, themes of materiality of the maternal body and the immateriality of the intra-utero existence is invoked as the fetus replies that it knows beyond doubt that electricity cannot steal the 'night' from the mother's organs. There is no language but electric signals and there are no bodies but organs, all of which are fragments and separate. The body's "nocturamas" (a large zoo pen where animals are kept at night) are as countless as the affects, the reactions of the body. The themes of "night" and "darkness" are invoked throughout the twelve verses. These repetitive motifs of night and darkness can be interpreted alongside the repetitive features in Freud's Uncanny and the Unconscious explored in Chapter 2. , In her essay "The *Heimlich*,"¹⁸⁴ Ettinger explains that, in the Freudian model, as the primal repression of the m/other tries to enter consciousness it only finds momentary relief in the "symptomatic repetitions" and, further, "subterfuge in artwork, where its painful encapsulation is partially shattered".¹⁸⁵ The rhythmic and cyclical alternations between absence-presence, one-ness-separation, light and darkness in the poem creates a similar pattern, thus allowing the "co/inhabit(u)ation"¹⁸⁶ of the mother and the Other through partially fragmented subjectivities that process the event repeatedly but renewed each time in the process. The repetitions of

¹⁸³Hume, Christine. "Incubatory," *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg 9.

¹⁸⁴ Ettinger, Bracha. "The *Hiemlich*," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 157-160.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁸⁶ Ettinger, Bracha. "The *Hiemlich*," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 159.

the themes of darkness and light (day and night) and presence and absence in the poetics of Hume can be interpreted as the same cyclical alternations that creates similar pattern of repetition as expressed through art.

Furthermore, one can also interpret the aesthetics of darkness and night through Rank's conceptualization, where night symbolizes a desire for a union with the m/other. Rank elucidates on the symbolism of night in *The Trauma of Birth*, as the mother in association with darkness (intuition/irrational) in opposition to the clarity of light (day, reason, rationale). On the cyclical renewals and the ideas of re-birth Rank explains that, "Not only because the sun rises does the hero identify himself with it, but because it disappears everyday afresh into the underworld and so corresponds to the primal wish for union with the mother = night."¹⁸⁷ The hero identifies himself with the paternal sun, that rises (renews) itself through disappearing each night into the underworld (darkness) and this alludes to the hero's desire for the union with the mother who embodies this darkness. The hero (father-son-god) is allowed the rebirth through the cyclical disappearance into the darkness that constitutes the mother and the repetitive cycle of appearance (day) and disappearance (night) ensues. In the case of the heroine, Ettinger points out that each renewal comprises the partial fragmentation of shared co-subjectivities between the (female/feminine) self and the Other (the archaic becoming m/Other) which gets further encapsulated in the artwork. For the feminine/female subjectivity, each appearance after the disappearance into night (darkness) is a renewal instead of cyclical repetition as each disappearance has the latent capacity to allow the feminine/female subject to border-link with the Other/Object.

¹⁸⁷ Rank, Otto. "The Artistic Idealization," in *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Robert Brunner, 1952, Pg 151.

Will you raise your own kind?

Air woke up inside night, it ate away my tail. A

*slow pulse absorbed my gills. After that, I turned away from the dark, but felt
it hot*

*on my neck. I kept my nightshirt shut. I had to quarantine myself so as not to
inherit its haunted rooms.*¹⁸⁸

In the final few culminating dialogues of the poem we observe how the boundaries between the mother and the Other (m/Other) begin to dissolve or collapse, and at the same time, the separation between the mother and the Other has begun. Here, the mother asks the fetus, if it would consider raising its own kind? The query temporally addresses a potential future for the fetus (Other). The fetus replies in the past tense, it says that air woke up inside night and a slow pulse absorbs the gills. In a different verse ¹⁸⁹Hume draws a comparison between the “womb” and the ocean where the fetus adds that it places “ears like traps on the amniotic shores”¹⁹⁰, the amniotic fluid comes to be depicted as the shores of the infinite ocean womb. In the present verse as it begins separating from the mother, the fetus (Other) first speaks of the air that wakes up inside night and the beating of a pulse that absorbs its gills. The metaphor is drawn from a fish being drawn out of the boundless water world of the womb. After the transformation or separation, the fetus turns away from the dark (womb). The use of “night-shirt” and “skin” hints at boundaries and membranes (shields/screens) of the body, which have to be pulled in

¹⁸⁸ Hume, Christine. “Incubatory,” *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg 10

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

between the immaterial darkness and unutterable silence of the womb and the subject, after separation from the state of one-ness has occurred. Hence the Other's emphasis on "quarantining" itself so as not to inherit the haunted room. The idea of the womb as a "haunted rooms" refers back to Ettinger as she mentions that, for Lacan and Freud, the repression of the archaic maternal can only rise in the negative fields of hallucinations and haunting. For Lacan, what was formed pre-consciousness cannot emerge from the unconscious in the structure of language and hence they can appear only as hallucinations.¹⁹¹ Ettinger also emphasizes that the return of the repressed archaic maternal has to be foreclosed (or quarantined) and yet, what is hidden behind the screen of "phantasmatic vision" finds incarnation in the art objects and art events since "art is the processing of a Thing that engenders the becoming into subject existence of an-Other"¹⁹². Here Ettinger means that the negative fields linked to the return of the repression of the archaic mother, the "phantasmatic vision" as the residue of this repression, can be incarnated and further processed through a work of art. Which can further result in shared co-effective reactions from different subjects (viewing the artwork) and further the processing of the phantom of the Other in a diffraction of I/Other, subject/object relations.

Where is the nutrient in it?

One third of your darkness reflects back. It listens

¹⁹¹ Refer Pg 65.

¹⁹² Ettinger, Bracha. "Transcriptum: Memory Tracing In/ For/ With the Other," in *The Matrixial Borderspace*, Introduction by Pollock, Griselda., ed. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Butler, Judith. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, Pg 164.

*to itself. Black syllables hatch. They flit into a tree. And again. Windwhipped hives, organizing.*¹⁹³

The fetus replies that a third of the mother's darkness reflects back and it listens to itself as "Black syllables hatch". Here we observe that in the Other's use of the word "syllables", which is the unit that organizes speech sounds and then further "wind-whipped hives", which draws attention to the intricate and organized construction of compartments in the bee hive, this can be interpreted as alluding to organized and man-made culture that similarly creates and compartmentalizes meaning. The black units organizing speech sounds is no sooner born (as it hatches) before it is sacrificed to the rigidity and compartmentalization of fixed words and vocabulary which constitute the language that creates definitions and fixed meanings through organizing knowledge in the form of binaries.

What will leaving be like?

*All I know fits through one night, down one hole,
everywhere coming from all times until memory is mine. Forgetting inserts
itself to the nth. Then it will become your clock, and birds will climb into your
mirror.*¹⁹⁴

In the final dialogue, the mother points towards the pending but inevitable separation between the two. The fetus replies that, coming into consciousness, the beginning, the

¹⁹³ Hume, Christine. "Incubatory," *Shot*. Counterpath Press Denver, Colorado, 2010, Pg 11.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

final separation, all of it fits into one night (down one hole) and “everywhere coming from all times until memory is mine” that everything collides into one point, at the juncture where outside becomes inside and inside becomes outside. The blurring of boundaries between life and death, beginning and the end, remembering and forgetting after which ‘time’ will arrange itself according to culture and the eternity of the ocean womb in no longer existing, thus the ‘birds will climb into your mirror’ – The culmination into the final no sense of crystallizes in this poetic gesture. In all the cultural construction of ‘sense’ (i.e. meaning) there will nonetheless remain a thing of senselessness for the subject seeking (reminiscing) the relics of the archaic m/other.

Conclusion:

In the thesis, I have attempted to engage with the founding theoretical concepts of early 20th Century psychoanalytic thinking in relation to conceptual representations of the mother and implications of maternity. In the examination of Otto Rank's symbolic representation of the mother in the *Trauma of Birth* and further through his conceptualization of sexuality and maternity in relation to artistic representation in *Beyond Psychology* has led to the broader understanding, that theoretical conceptions deriving from the ideological constraints of early modernity needed to posit a "universal" biological human psyche so in order to exert that cultural achievements exceed nature and biology. The traditional association of the "Mother" figure with Nature, in Rank's work paves way for our present understanding of nature as not prior to culture, or in opposition to culture but as more complex interchangeable phenomenon. I owe this understanding to Eszter Timar, and her perspective on the clash between 'humanism' and 'primitivism' in relation to the Rankian system of thinking as Rank's theorization reflects a body of knowledge with regards to an early infant stage of the birth of psychoanalysis itself.

I hope to have contributed to a feminist psychoanalytic interpretation in the examination of his work, since Rank himself is quite obscure in the field of psychoanalytic studies. Rank appears in the theory of the *Matrixial Borderspace* by Bracha Ettinger only in relation to the significance of the period of gestation as a silenced and evacuated event in

the narrative of the hero. I have attempted to contribute, in a sense a compilation of Ettinger's references to Rank's work in the "Matrixial Borderspace", which Ettinger seldom does, except in the relation to the female subject in her position as the Artist. In the process of delving into the ideas proposed in the Matrixial, I feel, perhaps the matrixial theory could gain much impetus from a better understanding of Rank's work.

Apart from the work of Freud and Rank, I have also had to address the work of Jacques Lacan, since Ettinger primarily depends on the Lacanian perspective to ground her theoretical ideas in the Matrixial Encounter-Event. I have further attempted to apply the conceptual axis of the various psychoanalytic models to an analysis of the poetics of Christine Hume. In the final analysis, where the focus has been directed to the role of language in subject formation, I am indebted to Liamar Almarza Duran's perspective on the illumination that in order to argue for a feminine creativity in language use one must first address and acknowledge the essentialist ideology driving the idea that a feminine/female creativity differs from a masculine/male creativity. I would like to conclude, by elaborating on a few ideas on extending this work further: as in the thesis the "womb" as a symbolic representation and the "pre-linguistic" stage as linguistic representative device has served to narrow down the conceptual field of theories I have focused on with regards to a subjectivity that is constructed prior to language acquisition. In the future, I would perhaps direct more focus on the idea of "trauma" in relation to gender and art-work.

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Appendix :

Fig. 1 Cranach, Lucas. *The Crucifixion*, 1538, oil on panel, 119.4 x 82.5cm (47 x 32 1/2 in), http://www.artinthepicture.com/paintings/Lucas_Cranach-the-Elder/The-Crucifixion/ (accessed April 10,2012)

Fig . 2 Roscher, Heinrich Wilhelm., Sphinx. Terracotta relief. (Göttingen, 1845-Dresden, 1923), *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechisches und römischen Mythologie*, 1884, <http://www.maicar.com/GML/000PhotoArchive/Roscher%20IV/slides/RIV-1370.html> (accessed April 10, 2012).