

Torn Halves: Political Conflict in Literary and Cultural Theory

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Chapter 5

The Dangerous Liaisons of Psychoanalysis

In psychoanalysis nothing is true
except the exaggerations.
—Theodor Adorno

Psychoanalysis: a theory of the practice of torn halves—not only in society at large but also within the cultures of institutions. Like literature and criticism, to which it is so uneasily affiliated, the danger for psychoanalysis comes from the fact that it refuses to respect its own limits, and continually threatens to overflow its boundaries, to migrate and to mix, to metamorphosise itself into different disciplines, to move from sameness into difference. Literary theory, Marxism, and feminism are particularly vulnerable to its vampiric proclivities; the consequence is always that the transferential method, the introduction of psychoanalysis into other forms of thought as other, transforms them. The effect of the recent use of psychoanalysis in these disciplines has been to

produce a certain theoretical and political radicalization which contrasts markedly to the more pessimistic or repressive nature of psychoanalysis' own account of literature, culture, gender and race. Psychoanalysis therefore provides an example within contemporary theory of the New Historicist argument about 'subversion' and 'containment': what it shows is that the two currents do not necessarily occur within the same historical practice, as well as the lack of fixity of political identity. Unlike history, which inclines towards a narrative with an ending, psychoanalysis acts out its tensions in a state of permanent, hybridized dislocation. Society's relation to psychoanalysis remains fundamentally uneasy, and this is never likely to change because psychoanalysis, as Karl Kraus pointed out, is itself the disease for which it purports to be the cure.

If the culture of institutions is determined by conflict, if it lives out the incompatibility between subversion and containment, its inside and its outside, then this goes some way to accounting for the current influence of psychoanalysis—not as a body of knowledge but as a theoretical method. Psychoanalysis is the discipline whose method can apparently always be transferred to others and used by them. This is because it has itself no content—notoriously, no empirical substance that can be proved from outside itself; it is rather a theory of the necessity but incompatibility of the inside and outside, of mind and world. To this extent, psychoanalysis enacts a theory of the institution: the polar division on which cultural theory, like psychoanalysis, is based and on whose tension it thrives reproduces the institution's own inside-outside structure. At the same time, psychoanalysis' preoccupation with narcissism and speculation impersonates the way in which institutional

theory, like psychoanalysis, works as a mirror of itself. In doing so it enables a re-assessment of the political claims that are made for the antithetical forces and power structures articulated in contemporary cultural analysis, which amount less to subversion than dislocation. The point about subversion and containment is that it operates via a dissonance—it never simultaneously functions as the one and the other within the same cultural practice. Psychoanalysis offers a method in which the analysis seems to repeat the object of analysis, but progresses via a certain disjunction within that specularly and thus transforms itself into a heuristic device, through a structure of supplementation and hence, transformation.

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Psychoanalysis, which could be described as a theory of unhappy relationships, has itself a long history of unhappy relationships. In the first place there is the history of the tense relations between psychoanalysts themselves, the psychoanalytic politics that have been charted by Paul Roazen, Sherry Turkle and others.¹ In the second place, psychoanalysis has a history of relationships with other disciplines; but while it has always exercised a fascination for other forms of thought in the human sciences, liaisons have tended to be short and not always sweet. You could say that psychoanalysis, though now at the grand old age of almost a hundred, still finds it hard to settle down. I want to look at three of psychoanalysis' alliances: those with literary criticism, with feminism, and with Marxism. For even if it hasn't yet settled down, psychoanalysis has in the last twenty

years undergone a sort of sea-change and entered into a new kind of affiliation that has almost reversed its former identity: that is, with politics.

Until relatively recently, psychoanalysis was generally regarded as the very antithesis to the political and both Marxism and feminism, with a few notable exceptions, were generally hostile towards it. Marx's pronouncement about the relation of materiality to consciousness has always weighed heavily against any association between psychoanalysis and Marxism, or indeed sociology generally. An instance of this attitude can be found in Durkheim's famous remark: 'Whenever a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, we may be sure that the explanation is false'.² In literary criticism, by contrast, it was the very lack of politics, the concentration on the cosy pleasures of subjectivity without having to be bothered by all those social and historical factors that provided the main attraction of psychoanalysis as a way of reading literature.

But in the nineteen seventies and eighties, although the psychoanalytic establishment in Britain at least remained much the same as ever, the use of psychoanalysis as a theory changed dramatically. It was employed in a whole range of specifically political literary and cultural theories, particularly feminism, Marxism, and even postcolonialism. Indeed the politicization of psychoanalysis, in direct contradiction with its former identity, meant that you were no longer able to discuss it at all without, say, raising questions of gender and sexuality. This meant that a 'pure' psychoanalytic literary criticism was no longer possible.

But what's the status of psychoanalysis in these theories? How did this change come about and why? In

what ways did psychoanalysis get politicized? Perhaps it's easier to begin by asking when it came about, and here looking at the history of psychoanalytic criticism, of feminism, and of Marxism, it is obvious that the shift came with Lacan. Lacan's rereading of Freud effectively changed the whole terrain of the use of psychoanalysis in contemporary cultural theory.

Lacan changed psychoanalysis because he shifted it from a seemingly self-referential body of technical knowledge into a metaphysics of language. Less charitably, you could say that Lacan produced the most effective repression of sex of all, by turning it into a sign system and denying its ontological status in favour of that of language.³ The transformation of sex into language, and therefore by implication of language into sex, was an exciting prospect for academia. Translating the configurations of sexuality into linguistic ones, Lacan showed how the structures of sexuality could be remapped onto a conceptual rather than familial narrative: thus the Oedipus complex, for instance, is transliterated into the story of the subject's accession into language and law. The metamorphosis of psychoanalysis into linguistics meant that it was in effect translated into a metalanguage, and became a form of semiotics. That then allowed psychoanalysis to be correlated with, or plotted on to, any other form of social knowledge or behaviour through the analytic method known as structuralism. Since structuralism was a method of investigation that used the model of language for the analysis of a whole range of cultural forms and disciplines in the human sciences, the use of the linguistic model within psychoanalytic theory meant that for the first time psychoanalysis could be grafted onto other kinds of analysis, and even become a model for them. Anywhere that

structuralism had gone, psychoanalysis could follow, and generally did.

At the same time, such a translation also opened up psychoanalysis itself, no longer protected within its own discrete discourse, and made it possible to bring other forms of knowledge to bear upon it. It exposed psychoanalysis in a new way to the pressures of the social and the political. Lacan's structuralism enabled the articulation of psychoanalysis, a theory of subjectivity, with theories of culture and the social, such as Marxism or feminism. They met in language and ideology, and in Coward and Ellis.⁴ Psychoanalysis appeared as the marriage broker between them. It was indeed a marriage of convenience, so seductive because suddenly it seemed as if Marxism and feminism could acquire a theory of the subject, and psychoanalysis a theory of the social.

Although the opening up of psychoanalysis to the pressure of the social and the political was all to the good, the problem was that psychoanalysis was already a theory of the articulation of the individual and society, and already offered an account of their relations. If desire, for instance, is the desire of the Other, it means that desire is a social phenomenon. When forms of social analysis have tried to link themselves with psychoanalysis, they tend to forget the fact that psychoanalysis is already a theory of the relations of the psyche to the social, and the theory is that they are unable to link up. That is the reason for the existence of desire. The result is that those marriages between forms of social explanation and psychoanalysis, far from being able to exploit psychoanalytic theory, end up repeating the narrative that it theorizes.

Let me illustrate this by returning to the story of Oedipus—which I want to suggest already comprises an

allegory of the rise and fall of structuralism, and of the problem of the articulation of the individual subject and society, and thus, of the articulation of psychoanalysis with politics.

During the course of the play, Oedipus goes through a double process of interpretation.

He begins by considering that the truth of things corresponds to the way in which he sees the world. His own interpretation of the experience of his life shows him to be entirely innocent—he has done nothing wrong and has avoided fulfilling the dreadful prophecies. But then Tiresias accuses him, as René Girard puts it, of being ‘a man who, at all times, is what he thinks he is not, and is not what he thinks he is’.⁵

All the play then consists of, in a way, is a divorce: a process of massive re-interpretation by Oedipus of his own life in which he has to separate his own experience from what emerges as the real social truth about it—that is, that he has killed his father and married his mother. The play shows that far from constituting his own meaning he has been caught as a bearer of a larger impersonal process utterly indifferent to, and unrelated to, his own initial suppositions and account of his experience. Oedipus undergoes the rather painful discovery that, in Lévi-Strauss’ words, ‘to reach reality we must first repudiate experience’—or that there is a gap between being and meaning, between what the life-text says and what it means.⁶ What has happened to Oedipus is that his subjective view of his story has been replaced by an objective, or social one. He has to learn to live in the discourse or locus of the other. From being the subject of his interpretation, and of his curse, he discovers that he is their object.

When Oedipus finally abandons his own account

of things in favour of that of others, he is effectively decentred from the usual position of the human subject as a single, determinate being, as an agent who is the source of his or her own actions, responsibilities, experience and self-identity. 'My words', Oedipus comments, 'are uttered as a stranger to the act'. The paradox of his story is that he becomes a stranger to his own tale, and to himself.

This reversal illustrates the polarity within the possibilities for any form of interpretation which means that the result of your interpretation will depend on the position from which you started. There are basically two positions from which you can start any interpretation, or indeed any philosophy in general, and that is, as Coleridge puts it, the I AM or the IT IS—in effect, Kant or Spinoza. It all depends on the position from which you are doing the interpreting. Now interpretation, especially literary interpretation, has tended to emphasize the I AM, that is the perspective of the individual on society and the world rather than the IT IS, that is that of the individual from the perspective of the social, and certainly psycho-analysis has seemed to do the same.

But if there is one shift that is common to many recent but different forms of theory it is that this has been reversed, that is, that the individual is considered from the perspective of the social rather than the social from the perspective of the individual. Structuralism, for instance, constitutes a method of analysis which regards the meaning or significance of any individual element not in terms of any intrinsic identity that it may possess in isolation but in terms of its relation to the system of which it forms a part. It represents a shift from seeing experience from the perspective of the first person to that of the third, or, a shift from the philosophical starting

point of the I AM to the IT IS.

Oedipus Rex, then, could be said to constitute an allegory of the shift from the I AM to the IT IS, or the story of what happens with structuralism—or indeed any form of thought that characterizes individual entities in terms of external or collective identities (such as class), singularities in terms of universals, immanence in terms of transcendence. The play is an attempt to think experience in other terms than those centred on the consciousness of the individual subject—to think of experience in the manner of the late as well as the early Oedipus. This suggests that in addition to the spontaneous account of the individual human subject and his or her view of things, there is another account of that individual from the perspective of the society of which he or she forms a part. In the traditional literary critical terms that Freud uses, the play is, as he puts it ‘a tragedy of destiny’ in which the individual learns to submit to divine will.⁷

Experience can thus be interpreted from the perspectives both of the first and the third persons, and, as Oedipus discovered, these two accounts often exist in an incompatible tension with each other. The play, in Freud’s words, shows that ‘the attempt to harmonize divine omnipotence with human responsibility must naturally fail’.⁸ The living through of this incompatibility is the subject of psychoanalysis. In Freud’s account, everyone has to learn to live in the third person; we manage this affront by repressing it so that it becomes unconscious, an act of secretion most memorably suggested by the constant motif of archaeology, the ruins of a city that the forces of repression bury, like Pompeii, in the psyche. Psychoanalysis is not the narrative of this subjugation, the story it tells is rather the continuing

effects of the tension that its structure produces, of the incompatibility of the individual and the social. What Lacan did was to show that psychoanalysis is about nothing other than the story of Oedipus—which was always what Freud had said in the first place. But Lacan said it again in a different way, emphasizing that it is about the conflict of the fact that we experience in the first and third persons simultaneously: to use his terminology, our psyche is made up of an incommensurable antagonism between the Imaginary and the Symbolic, neither of which can claim a total fit with the Real.

Both Marxism and feminism, in incorporating psychoanalysis, have tried to use it as a way of incorporating the individual with the social, or subjectivity with society. When Marxism and feminism attempt to marry the two together, it inevitably exacerbates conjugal strife. In appropriating a theory of subjectivity they then find themselves acting out the incompatibility between the psychic and the social. The lesson of psychoanalysis is rather that these have to be lived as two incompatible entities, that both are misfits for the real, and that is why we have an unconscious. We are all, in our different ways, the scarred children of interminable proceedings for divorce.

Psychoanalysis does not just offer a theory: it also makes therapeutic claims that it can help us deal with this divorce trauma. In this respect its difference from deconstruction becomes clear, insofar as the latter, like Adorno's cultural criticism, never tries to reconcile the torn halves. It is only in emphasizing this incommensurability that psychoanalysis has the capacity to become a critical instrument. At the same time, psychoanalysis is a theory and (institutional) practice of dissension which acts out the conflicts produced as an

effect of the torn halves. This means that it is not just descriptive or analytical but is itself performative, an acting out of dislocation that can never be comfortably put together with any other body of theoretical knowledge.

Psychoanalytic Criticism

If Marxism and feminism have both a history of unsuccessful relationships with psychoanalysis, the same could be said for literary criticism. Psychoanalytic literary criticism itself has not generally been considered as a political literary theory. Indeed, it seems to encapsulate everything that Marxists and feminists object to: a dwelling on subjectivity (whether of author, reader, or character), with no reference to social or historical determination. Psychoanalytic criticism began with Freud himself, but in spite of continued attempts to develop it as an autonomous critical form, it has always remained, as Peter Brooks has remarked, something of an embarrassment to the academic literary establishment.⁹ But those awkward days for academia are over, because psychoanalytic criticism, as an autonomous critical method, no longer exists. You just can't be 'a psychoanalytic critic' anymore.¹⁰

This was the inadvertent effect of the 'return to Freud'. In 1977 Shoshana Felman announced the arrival of a new, Lacanianised form of psychoanalytic criticism in her introduction to the influential Yale French Studies *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise* (1977).¹¹ Declaring that the relation between literature and psychoanalysis had to be 'reinvented', Felman called attention to a problem in the very concept

of a 'psychoanalytic criticism': it implies bringing a body of knowledge, psychoanalysis, to bear on a body of unselfconscious experience, literature, the first of which can then be invoked in order to interpret and understand the second. Effectively, this means that one discourse is being read in terms of another, a work of translation. This is essentially the structure of a whole range of criticisms, such as Marxist criticism, which bring in an external body of knowledge in order to interpret or understand a text. Felman questioned the usefulness of this enterprise; for one thing it does not produce anything that the body of knowledge did not know in the first place, and secondly, it consigns to oblivion the specificity of the object being examined, namely that it is constituted in language. 'The psychoanalytical reading of literary texts', she commented, 'precisely misrecognizes (overlooks, leaves out) their literary specificity' (6). The renewed emphasis that Lacan placed upon the function of language in psychoanalysis led to the realization that literature contained more of the knowledge of psychoanalysis than had been allowed for. After all, psychoanalysis must have a special interest for the literary critic because of all the disciplines only psychoanalysis appeals to the evidence of literature for its verification. Moreover, psychoanalysis uses literature not only to test its hypotheses but also in order to construct its conceptual framework and even to name itself—the Oedipus complex, narcissism, masochism, sadism etc. (Perhaps it would be unwise to speculate too much on what this list suggests about literature.) If psychoanalytic knowledge is grounded *in* literature, then it cannot provide a grounding *for* literature.

Felman therefore spoke of there no longer being an *application* of psychoanalysis to literature, but of it being a

question of mutual *implication*, or interimplication. Literature and psychoanalysis are enfolded within each other, traversed by each other, simultaneously both outside and inside each other. This seemed to auger well, and the volume brought a real sense of a new phase in which psychoanalytic criticism would no longer be concerned with self-affirming, reductive readings of literary texts as symptoms or case histories of their authors. But today, some years later, it is clear that what was not realized at that juncture was that Felman's redefinition implied the end of a psychoanalytic criticism as such.

The problem was that, as the title of the volume—*Literature and Psychoanalysis* suggests—as soon as you reject the notion of psychoanalysis as a masterful body of knowledge being applied to literature, then the notion of a 'psychoanalytic criticism' as such must be rejected also, for it precisely indicates the use of psychoanalysis as a perspective that is being brought to bear upon literature, in the same way as with Marxist or structuralist criticism. Ironically, then, Felman's re-invention of the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis had the effect of ending it.

Or rather, reversing it. If the Lacanian reading of Freud was to read Freud with an awareness of the patterns of repetition and repression at work in the text, it was not long before critics realized that Freud's writings offered an exceptionally rich text for literary analysis. For many, it was far more interesting to read the texts of Freud in this way than to read literary texts via Freud; this coincided with the appearance of a new way of reading itself heavily influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis and deconstruction, which no longer sought to discover or impose a meaning on a text but to tease out

its repressions, self-contradictions, logical and non-logical arguments, figurative contaminations and the like. Instead of a new psychoanalytic criticism, what developed was a 'literary' reading of psychoanalysis.

So, the 'new psychoanalytic criticism' never really materialized but became something else. There was one last reason for this, and that was because subjectivity itself became a matter for intense political debate, and therefore any use of psychoanalysis could not but raise political concerns. In particular the Lacanian rereading of Freud emphasized the question of sexuality and of gender, and was itself increasingly challenged on these grounds. The idea of writing a psychoanalytic criticism without engaging with these issues became unthinkable. The function of psychoanalysis in criticism and cultural theory therefore changed radically. Instead of being an autonomous and apolitical, it was used instrumentally for specific political ends. For feminism and even Marxism, the analysis of the forms of subjectivity was no longer a refuge, but a way of understanding, and changing, dominant ideological formations.

Paradoxically, when literary criticism decided that it could not be grounded on psychoanalysis because in some sense psychoanalysis was itself based on literature, when it stopped considering psychoanalysis as a science and realized that Freud's texts were a form of literature, that was the moment when feminism and Marxism began to relent in their hostility towards it. At the very time when psychoanalytic criticism became untenable, versions of psychoanalytic feminism and Marxism appeared. But if it is no longer a ground for criticism, can psychoanalysis be a ground for anything else?

Marxism

The basis of Marxism's traditional objections to psychoanalysis are summed up in Horkheimer's story about the beggar who one night dreamt that he was a millionaire. As he awoke, he had the good fortune to meet a psychoanalyst and so he told him his dream. The psychoanalyst explained that the millionaire was a symbol for his father. 'Curious', remarked the beggar, not entirely convinced.¹²

This story illustrates quite neatly the way in which the real problem in the relations between Marxism and psychoanalysis is that they both provide mutually exclusive causal explanations, that is, economics and class versus sexuality and the unconscious. And in spite of what might seem like a possible rapprochement when Marx begins *Capital* with a section on fetishism, or Freud writes an essay with the suggestive title of 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', the explanations of economics and sexuality tend to stay resolutely separate. Marxism, as a global explanation, is duty bound to subsume another competing global explanation: its relations with psychoanalysis therefore resemble a contest between two imperial powers that alternates between uneasy alliance and the outbreak of actual hostilities and war.

The common, and plausible, Marxist accusation has always been that psychoanalysis is a refuge of bourgeois individualism and its philosophy of consciousness. This is certainly the position that can be found in the thirties in a writer like Christopher St. John Sprigg—better known by his less aristocratic nom-de-plume, Christopher Caudwell—who states categorically in *Illusion and Reality* that:

Psycho-analysts are idealist in their approach to the practical problems of living, and in no way take up an attitude different from that of the great class religions. For if man's subjective feelings of misery, unease and unhappiness, are not due to outer material causes but to Sin (as the religions put it) or Complexes (as the analyst puts it), then man's misery, unhappiness and unease can be cured by casting out sin, by self-control, by salvation, by abreaction.¹³

The surroundings and obstacles in social relations are the real causes of human misery, Caudwell contends, and only material change can eliminate it. For Lukács, psychoanalysis was itself a symptom of the ideology of capitalism: in his essay 'The Ideology of Modernism' Lukács berated modernism for its morbid subjectivism, for portraying 'man as a solitary being, incapable of meaningful relationships', a comment which might apply equally well to psychoanalysis itself.¹⁴ The pathological, according to Lukács, is the surest refuge of modernist writers, and 'it is the ideological complement of their historical position'. He continues:

This obsession with the pathological is not only to be found in literature. Freudian psychoanalysis is its most obvious expression. The treatment of the subject is only superficially different from that in modern literature. As everybody knows, Freud's starting point was 'everyday life'. In order to explain 'slips' and day-dreams, however, he had to have recourse to psychopathology.... Freud believed he had found the key to the understanding of the normal personality in the psychology of the abnormal.... It is only when we compare Freud's psychology with that of Pavlov, who takes the Hippocratic view that mental abnormality is a

deviation from a norm, that we see it in its true light.¹⁵

Lukács' claim that 'as everybody knows, Freud's starting point was "everyday life" ', slips of the tongue and daydreams, suggests that his own reading of Freud was somewhat limited, though it has to be said that a similar idea seems to form the basis of Timpanaro's critique.¹⁶ But such detailed knowledge was not in itself necessary, since he was at this point simply following party doctrine in rejecting Freud in favour of Pavlov. Curiously enough, in spite of the general hostility to psychoanalysis that one encounters so frequently in Marxist criticism of the older variety, it is quite difficult to find sustained Marxist critiques of psychoanalysis, presumably because writers such as Lukács felt that it was appropriate to leave such work to 'proper' psychiatrists.

But there is another reason, I would suggest, and that is that in spite of a general hostility it is quite obvious that psychoanalysis has exercised a continual fascination for Marxism: its relation to it has taken the form of an interminable oscillation between attraction and repulsion. In the early days in the Soviet Union psychoanalysis seems to have been perfectly acceptable, or was at least the subject of intense debate. One of the few sustained Marxist critiques, Voloshinov's *Freudianism: A Critical Essay*, published in 1927, the same year as Pavlov's *Conditioned Reflexes*, contained a long chapter 'devoted to a refutation of arguments by four Soviet scientists in favour of incorporating at least certain aspects of psychoanalysis into Marxism'—a chapter which is, symptomatically, omitted in the English translation.¹⁷ Ironically, it was the visit to the Soviet Union two years later by the Marxist psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich that was partly responsible for the clampdown on psycho-

analysis, after Reich claimed that unless there was a sexual revolution too Communism would degenerate into a bureaucratic state.¹⁸ Perhaps he was right.

Reich is only one of what Fredric Jameson has called 'the experience of a whole series of abortive Freudo-Marxisms'.¹⁹ Marxism's continual fascination with psychoanalysis is sometimes explained because it offers the theory of subjectivity which Marxism lacks. This is the way in which the fusion of existentialism with Marxism has been justified.²⁰ The philosophy of Sartre, particularly his concept of mediation, did offer a way of integrating a theory of subjectivity or consciousness with a theory of the social; however, this was effectively achieved at the expense of psychoanalysis, specifically the theory of the unconscious. It was only at the moment that his commitment to Marxism began to wane that Sartre turned to psychoanalysis.

The basic problem with the project of trying to combine psychoanalysis with Marxism is that, as Ernesto Laclau has pointed out, the whole idea of adding a theory of subjectivity to Marxism is misconceived since Marxism is constituted in the first place by a negation of subjectivity.²¹ If psychoanalysis offers a theory of the (mis)integration of the psychic with the social from the perspective of subjectivity, the problem with classical Marxism is that in its desire to be a science it rejects all forms of subjectivity, including its own, and does not question the stability of the interpretive position. As Althusser put it:

The author, insofar as he writes the lines of a discourse which claims to be scientific, is completely absent as a 'subject' from 'his' scientific discourse.....²²

The way in which this could be modified would not be by appropriating a theory of subjectivity, but by displacing and reinscribing the subjectivity of the interpreter, the desire of the subject, within the analysis—in psychoanalytic terms, through the transference. At this point the method of such a Marxism might indeed begin to resemble that of psychoanalysis; after all, as Kristeva has pointed out, the two already have a certain affinity in so far as their hermeneutics are both designed to produce forms of action, namely revolution and cure.

It was, however, through the anti-humanist description of subjectivity that the most recent major rapprochement of Marxism and psychoanalysis took place in the work of Althusser and Lacan. For the first time since Marcuse, Althusser brought psychoanalysis into the mainstream of Marxist theory. He declared not only that psychoanalysis was a science, comparable to Marxism itself, but went on to claim that psychoanalytic theory was implicitly based on historical materialism because it took the form of an analysis of 'the familial ideology'.²³ This is striking considering that it is the apparent dependence of psychoanalysis on 'the familial ideology' that often constitutes the grounds for Marxism's rejection of psychoanalysis.

Althusser's integration of the two was somewhat precariously achieved through his reformulation of the concept of ideology. One long-standing ground of dispute between Marxism and psychoanalysis had been the conflict over their conceptions of histories. Althusser's description of ideology as being eternal in the same way as the Freudian unconscious—that is, that they have no history—provided a new basis for the pact between them. Althusser's definition of ideology through Lacan's concept of the imaginary, his stress on the

representational structure of ideology, and his description of the interpellated subject in terms of Freud's account of the stages of sexuality, meant that psychoanalysis effectively became the mode through which to understand the place of the subject in ideology. This was in spite of the fact that the theory of ideology was supposed to provide an account of the reproduction of class relations.

But it is rather the question of gender that becomes increasingly more overdetermined in Althusser's account. Take his example of being hailed through a closed door:

We all have friends who, when they knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question 'Who's there?', answer (since 'it's obvious') 'It's me'. And we recognize that 'it is him', or 'her'. We open the door, and 'it's true, it really was she who was there'.²⁴

It's difficult not to believe that Althusser is here reversing Lacan's famous example of the girl and boy in the train drawing up along side the two doors labelled 'Ladies' and 'Gentlemen'. Althusser insists on the question of gender difference in the construction of individuals as subjects, and returns to it several times. But after his most extended discussion, in relation to the unborn child, the Father's name, and Freud's stages of sexuality, he ends, as so often when he gets to a more adventurous idea, by saying 'But let us leave this point ... on one side' (165). It is a question to which he does not return. Nevertheless, although Althusser leaves us in no doubt that the formation of subjects in ideology is a process to be discussed in relation to the class struggle, it remains the case that he can't stop himself from bringing in the question of gender too.

The place of the subject was left so empty in Althusser's account that it needed further definition. The problem for Althusser, or rather Althusserianism, however, was that if it borrowed a theory of subjectivity from Freud for its account of ideology, that account placed a primacy on gender rather than on class. And that, indeed, was what did happen to his account of ideology when it was subsequently developed. What went wrong for the theory of the subject was that although Althusser's theory of interpellation seemed to offer a place for sexuality, the old difficulty of the primacy of class or gender refused to go away. The predicament, as always, was that as long as Marxism held on the primacy of class it always had to subsume other categories such as those of gender, race etc.—a position graphically evident in Jameson's now notorious remark in *The Political Unconscious* when he spoke of:

The reaffirmation of the existence of marginalized or oppositional cultures in our own time, and the reaudition of the oppositional voices of black or ethnic cultures, women's and gay literature, 'naive' or marginalized folk art, and the like....

And then added:

Only an ultimate rewriting of these utterances in terms of their essentially polemic and subversive strategies restores them to their proper place in the dialogical system of the social classes.²⁵

The problem for Marxism in its engagement with any contemporary form of politics of marginalized groups is that in classical Marxist theory a politics based on identification with a group of any sort, that is 'local'

allegiances such as cultural community, gender, or race, must be transcended as a necessary prelude to the higher realm of class consciousness. Except in Gramsci, identification with any community, gender, or race, actually inhibits the development of class consciousness. Here Marxism differs markedly from feminism which can offer an account of a general theory of marginality. At the same time it is striking that when Marxism does use psychoanalysis, it always sticks to the patriarchal versions. The question is whether Marxism can continue such neglect or whether the force of other forms of politics, notably feminism, will make this impossible.

Althusser's theory of ideology did produce some extremely important work, notably in the area of visual representation, particularly film and related forms of cultural analysis. In literary criticism, the story is not quite as happy, largely because psychoanalysis was used with a good deal less precision. Althusser's disciple, Pierre Macherey, attempted to produce an Althusserian theory of literary criticism, but failed to develop a theory of the interpellation of the subject by a literary text, beyond his important analysis of the function of literature within the educational Institutional State Apparatus.²⁶ In as much as Macherey did attempt an examination of the representational form of ideology, he proposed an analogy between the literary text and that of a dream, and in *Criticism and Ideology* Terry Eagleton demonstrated how far this could be extended.²⁷ But the literary text as dream was already the oldest trick in the psychoanalytic critical book. It remained nothing more than an updated analogy, still dependent on a theory of reflection, and merely provoked a seemingly endless hunt for gaps in literary texts which could be arbitrarily proclaimed their unconscious moment of ideological conflict. But this

hardly needed the weight of Althusser and Freud: after all, it is not surprising if the bourgeois novel leaves out any fundamental analysis of the exploitative economic relations from which its own social class is derived.

The only other concerted effort to use Althusser's theory of ideology in Marxist literary criticism has been that of Fredric Jameson, first in an article in *Yale French Studies*, and then in his book *The Political Unconscious*. This latter is an extremely interesting work the complexity of which I have analyzed elsewhere. There is, however, one basic problem in its use of psychoanalysis that is of relevance. Jameson, correctly in my view, criticizes certain Marxist theorists in terms of their continued reliance on categories of the individual subject: even 'the notion of "class consciousness"', as it is central in a certain Marxist tradition, rests on an unrigorous and figurative assimilation of the consciousness of the individual subject to the dynamic of groups' (294). Althusser's influential description of history as a 'process without a subject' is precisely designed to counter this tendency to be found not only in Lukács, but in the Frankfurt School.

Nevertheless, Jameson himself tends to slide towards the use of Lacan's account of the psyche as an analogical model for the state as a whole. For instance, he defines Althusser's ideology as

a representational structure which allows the individual subject to conceive or imagine his or her lived relationship to transpersonal realities such as the social structure or the collective logic of History. (30)

Here, implicitly in Althusser's version, the Imaginary ideological representations of the individual become the

psyche, the social structure becomes the Symbolic, and the collective logic of History, the Real. This schema then becomes a descriptive model for society itself. Similarly, though he criticizes what he considers to be the perfunctory introduction of a Freudian scheme into a discussion of cultural or political history in the work of Adorno and Horkheimer, and the use of psychological categories for the description of social categories in Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*, Jameson's own use of Lacan's account of schizophrenia to describe the fragmented subject of the 'new cultural norm' of postmodernism quickly becomes a description of the 'randomly heterogeneous', the 'fragmentary and the aleatory' structure of society itself.²⁸

In spite of the problems, Althusser's intervention has meant that psychoanalysis has been allowed a more credible place within Marxist theory. But in effect this has meant a tendency to revert to an older Marxist-psychoanalytic tradition, that of the state-as-psyche repression theories of mass society of the Frankfurt school. Here it becomes apparent that Adorno's torn halves that don't add up come close to the incompatible realms of the conscious and the unconscious. The use of the model of the psyche for the state can be a problematic if it is used as an untheorized transference.

The use of the psyche for the social is simply a contemporary version of the time-worn metaphor of the state as a body, familiar from Hobbes, Menenius' speech in *Coriolanus*, repeated throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and represented most notably by Burke in his long reflections on the constitution of the body politic. To the degree that the mutual solidarity of the parts of the body, generally presented as an organism, was useful for Burke's vision of one nation, the image of

the body was not an appropriate metaphor for Marxism in so far as Marx's argument was always that capitalism is less of a community (a homogeneous body) than a system of mutual antagonisms (the body at war, in 'crisis'). Freud's account of the psyche as a system of conflictual forces seems to offer itself as a perfect metaphor for the class antagonisms of the social. From a Marxist perspective, these psychic torn halves will themselves be the effect of their social *dopplegängen*: the danger of describing the social as if it were the psyche is that the social becomes the double of the psyche, not vice versa.²⁹ The psychoanalytic model, it must be recalled, is precisely about the incommensurability of the psyche's relation to the social: it therefore makes little sense to apply that model to society as such. If psychoanalysis is about the tension between psyche and social, and if society is like a psyche, then what's 'the social' for the society?

The missing paternal realm of the social when the psychoanalytic model of the psyche is translated into a model of the state is doubtless why the latter tends towards paranoid descriptions of global capitalism, the culture industry etc., which offer no possibilities of resistance, and in which nothing seems possible to be done beyond a nostalgia for the unfragmented totality of the lost bourgeois subject. This adaptation seems to inherit something of the pessimism of the late Freud evident in its use by the Frankfurt School. The general conservative tendency of images of the state as a body makes it clearer why the image of the state as a psyche tends to take on the same political colour.

Althusser's work, then, facilitated the (re)introduction of psychoanalysis, but since Althusser there has been no fundamental reassessment of

Marxism's relation to psychoanalysis. Marxism has always tended to restrict its use of psychoanalysis to the occasional importation of one or two concepts in order to construct a model; it has never allowed it to affect the substance of its own theory, and there have doubtless been good reasons why it hasn't, for in its own terms it is duty-bound to subsume it. Psychoanalysis always remains marginal to it, and Marxism has rarely attempted to rethink the Cartesian inside/outside dichotomy on which this division is based and which psychoanalysis is concerned to bridge. The question that follows, however, is whether psychoanalysis does indeed seek to overcome the division between inside and outside, or whether it seeks to heal the effects of the outside on the psyche, by interpreting and accounting for the effects of the social and the political according to the operation of psychological economies. In Marxist terms, what psychoanalysis is doing here is attempting to heal the wounds of capitalism itself, the effects of its irrevocable splitting between the public and private realms, between the economico-political domain and that of the unconscious, between civilization and libidinal sexuality. But if so, it must equally be the case that Marxism, in denying the subjective realm, also finds itself determined by capitalism's division between public and private. As Jameson has argued, theories of 'desire' such as those of Kristeva or Deleuze, and one should add Marcuse here, which regard the force of desire as strong enough to fracture the ideological hold of capitalist society, can be powerfully countered by the argument—which can also be found in Deleuze, and no doubt accounts for magnitude of the theoretical shift between the two volumes of the *Anti-Oedipus*—that desire itself constitutes the dynamic that empowers and drives the economy of consumer

capitalism itself.³⁰ Meanwhile few forms of Marxism, apart again from Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, have attempted to project any monistic alternative to the experience of the division between public and private. Deleuze and Guattari's reworking of that dualism shows that such a move must also include a rethinking of the exclusive claims of the forms of rational logic on which orthodox Marxism is predicated. The corollary of this is that when Marxism reworks its relation to psychoanalysis, as in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Laclau and Mouffe or Zizek, it seems to have little alternative to finding that it has ended up in the ignominious position of being 'post-Marxist'—or as Adorno put it, that it has thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

Feminism

Feminism, in its modern phase, began in an aggressively anti-psychoanalytic mode, with Freud regarded as one of the worst of patriarchs by de Beauvoir (1949), Betty Friedan (1963), Eva Figs (1970), Kate Millett (1970), and Germaine Greer (1971). As late as 1975, Miriam Kramnick, the editor of the Penguin edition of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, wrote in her Introduction that:

The twentieth century has also seen the popularization of a formidable anti-feminist ideology—Freudianism. Once again women are put back into the home, their natural sphere; this time, however, not because of innate mental inferiority, but because of another kind of biological necessity. Freud's dictum that 'anatomy is

destiny' has encouraged his popularisers to preach that women find satisfactory fulfilment only in motherhood. More worldly ambitions signal a woman's failure to be reconciled with her own body.³¹

As corroboration of her argument, Kramnick cites a book published in 1947 by two (male) psychoanalysts, Lundberg and Farnham, called *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, in which they suggest that 'feminism is a deep illness' and trace its symptoms back to 'a single fateful book'—the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Marxist feminism, too, has often taken up the same position with regard to psychoanalysis, adding complicity in the oppression of women to the more habitual objections of Marxism. So Lilian S. Robinson, in a refinement of Lukács' comment, argues in *Sex, Class and Culture* that Freud's 'ideas are simultaneously a product or symptom of a cultural evil and a force to justify and perpetuate it'.³²

But then came French Freud, Lacan, anti-biologism, and anti-essentialism, which changed the politics of psychoanalysis. The rehabilitation of Freud succeeded by shifting the emphasis towards psychoanalysis as an analytic rather than a therapeutic activity: in Britain, for example, Juliet Mitchell in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* suggested that psychoanalysis was not 'a recommendation for a patriarchal society but an analysis of one' (xv), and could therefore be of central importance both in the analysis of the construction of gender under patriarchal ideology and in ending that ideology and the oppression of women.³³ In particular she stressed, as she was to do again in her introduction to *Feminine Sexuality*, that Freud had opposed the Jones/Horney position of an essential femininity, and that his position was being reformulated,

restressed and reworked in the writings of Lacan.³⁴ The disputes between Lacan and feminist analysts such as Irigaray were, initially, played down.

Marxism is a constant point of reference in Mitchell's book (she was herself at that time on the editorial board of *New Left Review*) and in introducing the name of Lacan she allied the enterprise of feminism with that of the contemporary Marxism of Althusser. Althusser's theory of ideology which used Lacanian psychoanalysis in its account of the interpellation of the subject in ideology, was obviously open to the reinscription of a gendered subjectivity. Mitchell pointedly ends her book by setting feminism alongside Marxism:

as the end of 'eternal' class conflict is visible within the contradictions of capitalism, so too, it would seem, is the swan-song of the 'immortal' nature of patriarchal culture to be heard.³⁵

This happy coupling of Marxism's eye with psychoanalytic feminism's ear was not to last.

Psychoanalysis did not turn out to be an effective marriage broker between Marxism and feminism. Alliances between the two have tended to be predicated upon the exclusion of psychoanalysis. In *Woman's Oppression Today* (1980), for example, Michèle Barrett admits the problem of Marxism's neglect of feminism, and adds that 'it is certainly true that many aspects of sexual relations are simply irreducible to questions of class'.³⁶ But Barrett remains 'unconvinced' by Mitchell's attempt to recover Freud for 'a materialist feminist theory of gender and sexuality', arguing that she 'offers an unduly charitable reading of his position' and that her

interpretation 'involves some stretching of what Freud actually said' (56-8). She then adds two further reservations about the compatibility of psychoanalysis with a Marxist feminism: the first is its universalism, the second is its implication that women's oppression is exclusively ideological in character rather than an effect of the material structures of women's oppression under capitalism (production, family, the state).

There are three objections to psychoanalysis here. The problem with the first two is that they apply equally well to Marxism itself. If Freud has to be 'stretched' to draw out a critique of patriarchy from his work, Marx has to be distorted out of all recognition. With the notable exception of Engels, Marxism has a long history of marginalizing and occluding women. If a Marxist feminism such as Barrett proposes can modify that historical form of Marxism, it is hard to see why the same should not be allowed of psychoanalysis.

In the second place, psychoanalysis' universalism, emphasizing 'the mythic, "law"-like agencies at work in psychosexual development' and adaptable in this form to any cultural variation, may be universal, but is hardly more universal than Marxism's reading of all history according to the ubiquitous operation of the dialectic, with all human history, as Jameson tells us, sharing 'the unity of a single great collective story ... a single vast unfinished plot'.³⁷ The advantage of psychoanalysis' universalism could be that, as Jacqueline Rose argues, it may be able to offer an account of the historical unspecificity of the oppression of women which may indeed take different specific historical forms but which is by no means exclusive to capitalism.³⁸ However, detaching the oppression of women from the material contexts in which that oppression takes place seems an

unpromising project.

Barrett's third objection is perfectly valid in its own terms, and represents the essential argument between Marxism and psychoanalysis: thus her emphasis on an autonomy of the ideological form of oppression at the expense of specific material structures in effect reproduces the founding opposition between psychic and social structures that represents the competing claims of psychoanalysis and Marxism with which we began.

The relation of psychoanalysis to Marxist feminism remains a problem. The problem remains of balancing the competing antithetical claims of the two: on the one hand, psychoanalysis involves a theory of the construction of gendered subjectivity, offering analysis that can expose this process working in a whole range of cultural and social forms, in short the sphere of ideology, that space in which material effects are given representations and worked on at the level of fantasy. But on the other hand, such understanding does not in itself include analyses of historical and institutional factors or offer prescriptions for material change. In this sense, psychoanalytic feminism could be said to have settled down into the same polarities as Marxist criticism, that is ideology critique versus prescriptions and material accounts of how to effect change.

Even if the feminist emphasis on the psychic as a social construction begins to break up this distinction, presenting gendered subjectivity as one effect simultaneous with other forms of social and cultural subject positioning, the argument still continues to be governed by the unresolved tension between the psychic and the social. As Cora Kaplan puts it:

While socialist feminists have been deeply concerned

with the social construction of femininity and sexual difference, they have been uneasy about integrating social and political determinations with an analysis of the psychic ordering of gender.... semiotic or psychoanalytic perspectives have yet to be integrated with social, economic and political analysis.³⁹

The problem seems to be that the polarization of psychic and social explanations is still seen as an antithetical subjective and objective dualism that needs to be synthesized. But the reason that they have not yet been synthesized may well be because they are incompatible: here I would return to my argument that psychoanalysis is itself a theory of the incompatibility of the psychic and the social. This suggests that a different kind of thinking and different kind of logic would be necessary to think them both together at the same time. The problem would then be to what extent such thinking would still be Marxist, or even feminist.

Some feminists have made the claim that 'because psychoanalysis has assured the link between psychosexuality and the socio-historical realm, psychoanalysis is now linked to major political and cultural questions'.⁴⁰ Marxist feminists, however, such as Angela Weir and Elizabeth Wilson point to the continuing 'absence of a theory of the relationship between them' and suggest that psychoanalysis itself needs to be grounded in a materialist theory of ideology.⁴¹ It is not quite so easy for feminism to reject psychoanalysis on the classic Marxist grounds of preoccupation with subjectivity, and the personal—although Weir and Wilson still manage to do this, even to the extent of repeating Lukács' argument about psychoanalysis and modernism. But subjectivity is less easily dismissed because the political intervention of feminism has been precisely to

redefine or reclaim this ground as a valid political space. If some Marxism has tried to turn the state into a psyche, then feminism has much more effectively shown that the psyche and the body are a form of the state.

One of the forms of the oppression of women is that the personal, the domestic, sexuality, the family, are denied political, or even 'serious' status of any kind. So what feminism has done is to politicize psychoanalysis, not by adding the 'real' world of the social to it, but by showing the extent to which its own 'domestic' space is already political. Thus politics enters a new realm which was always highly political but the political nature of which had previously had been repressed. But to what extent has sexual politics been registered in Marxist theory, as they say, 'proper'?

Has the rejection of psychoanalysis helped Marxist feminism to shift Marxism itself? Here the answer varies. While cultural theorists such as Terry Eagleton have modified their work considerably in response to feminism, many historians and political scientists have refused to do so. Take as an example Perry Anderson, one of the most influential of British Marxists: in his overview of contemporary theory, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, he confidently rejects Lacanian psychoanalysis in the space of a couple of pages. Does this lead him to consider women's oppression from a more materialist perspective? Anderson comes to a consideration of feminism only in a postscript at the end of his book. While acknowledging the challenge of feminism to the traditional scope of the discourse of Marxism, and even the extent to which 'precarious recourse to less scientific bodies of thought like psychoanalysis' have 'in part' (88) made good that omission, he ends by commenting on what he calls

the paradoxes of the relationship between socialism and feminism. For if the structures of sexual domination stretch back longer, and go deeper, culturally than those of class exploitation, they also typically generate less collective resistance, politically. The division between the sexes is a fact of nature: it cannot be abolished, as can the division between classes, a fact of history.⁴²

So much for the impact of feminism on what Cora Kaplan calls 'macho mustachioed Marxism' (147).

Unlike Marxism, there is no problem for feminism in what Anderson calls the 'precarious recourse' to a psychoanalysis that is as much grounded on literature as it is 'scientific'. Literature is not as peripheral to feminism as it is to Marxism, for it is literature in particular that has been the place for feminism's self-construction of its own identity. Literature, particularly fiction, has been the historically permitted locus for women, constructed by them and written for them, as Virginia Woolf suggests when Orlando becomes a woman in the eighteenth century. Its 'marginalized' place, has constituted, for the past two hundred years especially, one of the few social spaces available to women. In the same way, while for Marxism psychoanalysis has always been a worry at the margins, for feminism psychoanalysis has always been crucial—and the different forms of feminism divide up according to their attitudes towards it. Psychoanalysis has been central to its redefinitions and its own explorations and self-identity.

Psychoanalysis has also been at the forefront of debates about the problems for feminism in the use of theory at all, and here the pressure of the political on

psychoanalysis has had important effects. While for a long time psychoanalysis was brought to bear upon cultural phenomena as a form of explanation, with feminism this relation has been reversed: in France the pressure of feminism has led to a series of powerful rewritings of psychoanalysis outside the patriarchal mode—it is not just a question of the influence of psychoanalysis on feminism. In Britain and the States, where there has been something of a tendency to defend Freud and Lacan at all cost, this process has only begun relatively recently. As Mandy Merck has argued, the reworking of psychoanalytic theory has not yet gone far enough: the Oedipal story offers only a restricted number of contained places and positions of subjectivity. The future of psychoanalysis must lie in the demonstration of the ways in which, as Jeffrey Weeks has argued, ‘there are class sexualities (and different gender sexualities) not a single uniform sexuality’.⁴³

This is rather different from French Feminism, in which, as Jane Gallop has pointed out, in writers such as Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva, ‘we have seen a way of thinking that appears to be at once feminist and psychoanalytic, and also highly literary’.⁴⁴ Here the literary has been one of the main ways through which Freud has been rewritten. Conversely, one of the problems with thinking about feminist literary theory is that the psychoanalytic forms of it have succeeded in breaking out of such academic categories altogether. This could be compared to Derrida’s work, and indeed one of the problems of writing about feminism and psychoanalysis, particularly in France, is that its relation to deconstruction makes matters complex. Derrida was amongst those producing the earliest critiques of Lacan’s phallogentrism, and he has made one of the most sustained and influential

attempts to write against patriarchal discourse. The problem for Derridean feminism, however, is that as soon as it moves thus far into deconstruction, then it becomes merely one part of a more general project, and falls into the same problem as with Marxist feminism of its being subsumed in a 'larger' cause.

Much French feminism has often been misread in terms of the following argument: the problem with the use of psychoanalysis for feminism is that it either leads to essentialism, which many women reject, or if it doesn't, and the feminine is proposed as a purely relational category, then it means that 'woman' has no absolute identity as such and risks being subsumed by other related forms of politics. The choice is thus portrayed as one of essentialism versus post-feminism. It is only recently being acknowledged that the point about the deconstructive feminism of Cixous, Irigaray, *et al.*, is that it avoids this by holding essentialism and relationalism together simultaneously—in other words, preserving psychoanalysis' theory of the irresolvable relation of the psychic to the social.

For Kristeva, as for Lacan, to define woman is to essentialize her: 'woman' as such does not exist. So, in Toril Moi's words, she characterizes the feminine as:

marginality, subversion, and dissidence. In so far as women are defined as marginal by patriarchy, their struggle can be theorized in the same way as any other struggle against a centralized power structure.

In her account of Kristeva, Moi emphasizes that Kristeva does not so much have a theory of femininity as one of positionality, concluding that 'if "femininity" has any definition at all in Kristevan terms, it is simply ... as "that

which is marginalized by the patriarchal symbolic order'''⁴⁵.

This means that, whether it likes it or not, this form of feminism becomes a theory of the marginal, and its theory can be appropriated for use by any other marginalized group. Feminist criticism is already distinguished by the way in which it has marked out a space for its own, marginalized groups, particularly lesbian and Black women. But if feminism has become a theory of the marginal itself, this means that its theory becomes available for appropriation by any other marginalized group—not just, say, by gay men or any other minority, but even, for Kristeva, by a category such as the avant-garde. The question, therefore, is whether feminism wants to provide a theory that goes beyond itself, and overflow its borders only to lose itself.

Although this may explain some of the male interest in feminist theory, it has to be said the threatened appropriation of feminist theory by marginalized men never really occurred. Take colonial discourse analysis, for example, where the use of individual psychoanalytic concepts has concentrated on the fetishistic: metonyms that can easily be substituted for others from somewhere else within psychoanalytic theory or even from elsewhere. While certain structures of sexuality are provocatively mapped onto those of race, critics have pointed out how gender itself can be often eliminated in favour of an undifferentiated 'colonial subject'. And once again, the psychoanalysis that is used is generally the patriarchal version, never that, say, of Irigaray. A larger problem is the question, first raised by Fanon, of whether the use of psychoanalysis in the colonial context, as for example in the work of Mannoni, is not simply another version of colonial discourse and less of a therapeutic

practice than an oppressive colonial exercise of power. There is still much work to be done on the question of psychoanalysis' relation to colonialism. However, as Fanon recognized, psychoanalysis, for all its drawbacks, can offer a way of theorizing and charting—but not for 'curing'—the antagonistic, pathological effects of the colonizer's social reality that has been imposed on the psyche of the colonized. With colonialism, after all, the incompatibility of psychic and social takes on the status of material fact. The question remains, as Ania Loomba has emphasized, of how psychoanalytic theory can accommodate cultural difference.⁴⁶

Identity and the Politics of Difference

I want to end by returning once more to the story of Oedipus. There is a more directly political dimension to the story of Oedipus, and this is the story of the continuing rejection of psychoanalysis by some forms of Marxism and feminism. Oedipus, after all, is the King. In his first identity, in which he has avoided the curse, and solved the riddle of the Sphinx, he produces effective political power. The story, from one perspective, is about his loss of this power, about the moment when, having been a King, he wanders out into the wilderness in total abjection. So much for the decentred subject. If Oedipus' process of self-discovery is analogous to the unfoldings of psychoanalysis as Freud claimed, then it also suggests that that procedure will produce a loss of political and personal authority.

This problem has been lived out in the uses that Marxism and feminism have made of psychoanalysis: the long century of the bourgeois individual subject, from

1789 to 1917, does after all have several strikingly successful revolutionary actions to its credit; its theory of the subject also forms the basis of Marxist theory in which the working class assumes class-consciousness to become the subject of history. Deconstruct that identity, it is said, and you deconstruct the agent of history and of politics. Some have therefore responded with calls to bring back the subject on the grounds of political necessity. So Weir and Wilson, for instance, write that:

The concept of the 'fractured self' ... questions the very possibility of a coherent identity, and this process of the deconstruction of the self could also be seen to question the very possibility of women uniting politically around their existence as 'women'.⁴⁷

And the same problem is articulated even in those more sympathetic to psychoanalysis, such as Toril Moi. Who can afford, politically, to go through Oedipus' process of self-understanding—and self-blinding?—hence vocal cries to bring back the bourgeois individualist subject. It seems odd that it should be within Marxism above all that there has been the most cogent movement to retrieve the bourgeois subject: not so much in its early neoclassical guise of the fractured self divided between the morality of the home and the market-place and only centred by being anchored to property, but rather the subject in its identity as an individual will, the defining characteristic originally foregrounded in liberal thought in order to compensate for the loss of self-determination brought about by the mechanical and impersonal processes of industrial capitalism.

This question of identity seems to remain one of the main problems in the relation of psychoanalysis to the

political. But it raises as many difficulties as it offers to solve. In the first place, it requires a kind of imperialism of identity which means that we are only allowed one, and that our politics has to have a single meaning. The result of this is illustrated by Weir and Wilson's assertion that Black women must dissolve the question of race into the more important question of class:

We believe that a theoretical basis, if not for unity at least for a much needed political co-operation among different groups of women, can be most accurately and concretely developed in the context of class analysis.⁴⁸

But this demand for a single identity 'beyond race' does assume that we can choose to have a single coherent, unproblematized identity as a matter of will. The argument for the necessity of the unified subject for politics also relies on a fairly crude theory of intentionality, whereby you need a totally unified subject to be able to have any form of will or agency; and that in turn must assume a univocal theory of language. It also assumes that politics is an entirely intentional activity, free from the ruses of history. The point about psychoanalysis is that it questions all that.

This has not been the only way in which identity has been formulated in recent years. The rise of critical positions based on minoritarian politics sets up more complex parameters. Postcolonial and Black identities are frequently defined in terms of the effect of the experience of simultaneously living among different cultures through shifting subject positions. In this respect, contemporary forms of cultural identity instead of aspiring to a single class identity have rather emphasized what Stuart Hall has called 'living identity through

difference ... recognizing that all of us are composed of multiple social identities'.⁴⁹ Hall has argued that the representative postmodern experience occurs when the marginal identity has become the centre, which itself emphasizes how all identities are historically constructed and potentially unstable.⁵⁰ He describes these in terms of what he calls 'the dialogue of identities between subjectivity and culture', and here we can see that what is distinctive about such forms of displaced, nomadic identity is that they are able to articulate in a positive way the hybridized realms and incommensurable torn halves which are conventionally negotiated in psychoanalysis. Such identities are not entirely unstable either: certain moments of (no doubt, in the final analysis, fictional) closure take place—whether at the level of the self, the community, or forms of political action. Politics here speaks not only the powerless language of dispersal, but also the positive language of 'contingent closures of articulation'. Through this means, it is still possible to act, even if such action is not based on the stable identifications of classic Marxist theory. And identity through differences still allows the possibility of articulation, and of hegemonic alliance.

A clear example of such unity-in-difference can be found in certain strategic coalitions in gay and lesbian politics. While gay and lesbian theorists have increasingly defined their own political identities in terms of their sexuality, sexuality itself has been more and more understood in terms of a circulation through different, mobile and reversible subject positions. It has been argued that today's identity politics are simply a reassertion of bourgeois identity as the experience of subjectivity, going directly against Marxism's crucial move towards objective class identifications, a shift back

from the IT IS to the I AM. But one of the strengths of today's identity politics, on the other hand, is that it succeeds in defining the I AM in terms of the IT IS: reorienting criticism towards a subjective perspective, but a subjective perspective that has been socially defined and which provides a point of access to a wide social structure. In that sense, today's identity politics are focussed explicitly on the same sexual, social and political incompatibilities that were once considered to require the therapies of psychoanalysis. The torn halves of the psyche will never add up any more than those of capitalism itself—but they can provide the basis for new forms of politics and new articulations of hybridized identity.

Notes

1. Roazen, *Freud and His Followers*; Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics*; Roustang, *Dire Mastery*.
2. Cited by Fredric Jameson, 'Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism and the Problem of the Subject', in Felman, *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, 339.
3. Cf. Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, 141; Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, 45. Jameson (*Postmodernism*, 239) questions the assumption that because all language is about language, then language itself has an ontological primacy.
4. Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism*.
5. René Girard, 'Tiresias and the Critic', in *The Structuralist Controversy*, eds Macksey and Donato, 17.
6. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*.
7. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 364-5.
8. *Ibid*, 366.
9. Brooks, 'The Idea of a Psychoanalytic Criticism', 334.
10. For a fuller version of this argument, see my 'Psychoanalytic Criticism: Has It Got Beyond a Joke?'
11. Shoshana Felman, 'To Open the Question', in Felman, *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, 5-10. Further

references will be cited in the text

12. Cited in Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*, 73.

13. Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality*, 188-9; see also *Studies in a Dying Culture*. the forms of psychoanalytical literary criticism available at that date seem to encapsulate everything that Caudwell suggests. Either psychoanalytic criticism pursued the question of the relation of a text to authorial neurosis (or something even nastier) with a single-minded obsession with the mind of the creating subject, at the expense of all other factors, or it reduced a literary text to a crude interpretive schema which transformed all representations into phallic or other monsters.

14. Georg Lukács, 'The Ideology of Modernism', in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, 24.

15. Lukács, 'The Ideology of Modernism', 30. Pavlov's psychology went on to produce some interestingly incompatible intellectual soulmates: on the one hand it was accepted by Brecht, who was always scathing about psychoanalysis and compared it to astrology (*Letter to an American*) as does Derrida. On the other hand, it also provided the basis for the aesthetic theories of I. A. Richards—and thus for Anglo-American New Criticism, a kind of criticism that Marxist criticism has always considered to be anathema.

16. Timpanaro, *The Freudian Slip*. For Lukács psychoanalysis was itself a symptom of the ideology of capitalism, although he seemed to give it a more general relevance

when, late in life, he confessed that 'I must say that I am perhaps not a very contemporary man. I can say that I have never felt frustration or any kind of complex in my life. I know what they mean, of course, from the literature of the twentieth century, and from having read Freud. But I have not experienced them myself'.

17. Voloshinov, *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, 4.
18. Roazen, *Freud and His Followers*, 493.
19. Fredric Jameson, 'Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan', 385. Wolfenstein's *Psychoanalytic-Marxism*, which represents the most comprehensive attempt to date to synthesize psychoanalysis and Marxism, was published after this chapter was written.
20. Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France*.
21. Laclau, 'Psychoanalysis and Marxism', 330.
22. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, 160.
23. *Ibid*, 177.
24. *Ibid*, 161.
25. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 86. Further references will be cited in the text.
26. Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*.
27. Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology*, 90-2.

28. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 25.
29. Cf. Jameson's discussion of homology in *The Political Unconscious*, 43.
30. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 202.
31. 'Introduction', in Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 70.
32. Robinson, *Sex, Class and Culture*, 115.
33. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, xv. Further references will be cited in the text.
34. Mitchell and Rose, *Feminine Sexuality*.
35. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, 416. Even here, as Michèle Barrett has pointed out (*Women's Oppression Today*, 61), Mitchell offered a dualism rather than a synthesis.
36. Barrett, *Woman's Oppression Today*, 46. Further references will be cited in the text.
37. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 19-20
38. Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 90.
39. Kaplan, *Sea Changes*, 152-3.
40. Gallop, 'Reading the Mother Tongue', 315. Gallop makes the remark in a discussion of Garner, Kahane, and Sprengnether's *The (M)other Tongue*, the first anthology of

psychoanalytic feminist criticism.

41. Weir and Wilson, 'The British Women's Movement', 97.
42. Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, 88, 91.
43. Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society*, 10.
44. Gallop, 'Reading the Mother Tongue', 316.
45. Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, 164, 166.
46. Loomba, 'Overworlding the Third World', 190 n.11.
47. Weir and Wilson, 'The British Women's Movement', 97.
48. Weir and Wilson, 'The British Women's Movement', 81.
49. Hall, 'Old and New Identities', 57.
50. Hall, 'Minimal Selves'.

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