

Politics of Hate- Race, Gender and Psychoanalysis
Elaine Stavro
Associate Professor
Trent University,
Department of Women's Studies and Philosophy
estavro@trentu.ca

Draft copy do not cite without the permission of the author.

Tensions between political theory and psychoanalysis

Political theorists have long been wary of psychoanalysis. The role of the unconscious in subjectivity; the way fantasy dematerializes the world; the significance of emotion; all challenge the rationalist and materialist assumptions of much liberal democratic and socialist thought. Liberal democracy assumes that individuals act in their interest and 'the system' reflects majority interest. Socialism assumes that the collective or majority is negated by the existing material conditions of capitalism, however a rational solution to history is envisioned. So the rational exists as either achieved or achievable. These models tend to marginalize the non-rational, emotion, sentiment and the contingent in history.

Critics of enlightenment and modernist thinking have cast suspicion on these rationalist assumptions; that individuals act rationally; that facts and workings of the political world can be transparently revealed¹. The belief that one can objectively disclose the truth, reveal falsehoods, and in doing so catalyze progressive forces of political change is also contested. The idea of 'innocent knowledge,' knowledge outside or above power, is also queried. The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake; the belief that one brackets one's emotion and beliefs at the threshold of investigation, to achieve objectivity, is challenged. In light of these critiques it is more acceptable that knowledge is fuelled by sentiment or passion, and struggles for justice, rather than been disinterested. In the words of Jane Flax²

A belief in the connections between truth and knowledge at this point in Western history seems far more likely to encourage a dangerously blind innocence rather than to prepare the ways for freedom and justice. We should take responsibility for our desire in such cases: what we really want is power in the world, not innocent truth (1993: 1440)

Rather than seeing passion as negatively impacting upon the political, there is an appreciation that there is something liberating in recognizing that passion and sentiment that accompanies thought. Feminists are not simply involved in epistemology or fact

¹ Since the world is not transparent, but culturally mediated, one must focus upon the discourses that produce our experience. Minimally one must recognize that our subjectivity and investigations are influenced by social and cultural factors. In the wake of the criticism of 'innocent' knowledge, analyses of discourses and ideologies have gained support. But discursive analysis has not been met without protest from materialists, empiricists and idealists who are wary of treating the subject as an effect of discourse or truth as a discursive effect. For many political thinkers this approach does not sufficiently account for the social structural and political worlds and their resistances. For them these rhetorical or discursive concerns are deemed epiphenomenal, when it comes to thinking about how resources and political power are distributed.

² Jane Flax (1993) *Disputed Subjects: essays on psychoanalysis, Politics and Philosophy*, New York, Routledge. p. 144 Vikki Bell, (1999) *Feminist Imagination*, London, Sage pps. 8-9

finding, but are engaged in politics. However this valorization of emotion and sentiment in politics is not without its critics.

Politics is not just about structures, institutions, state formations, fields of power, rational patterns. One too must acknowledge the importance of events in politics and the fragility and unpredictability of them (as evidenced in 9/11 disaster). This necessitates that one considers the role of emotion or discursive construction of emotion in politics.

Given that awareness that emotion can sabotage the best laid policies an understanding of them in their complexity and specificity is important. Emotion is not simply a negative force in politics, for a spirited protest can push the state to live up to its democratic ideals.

Violence seems more prevalent in democracies today. We daily witness the atrocities of war; hate and intolerance is stirred up in racist and sexist practices, insecurity and exclusion fuel contemporary protests. One is no longer convinced that democracy is able to marginalize violence and treat it as a social problem of delinquents. The recent riots in the Banlieu, where North African's took to the streets torching 1000's of cars per week protesting their exclusion from French society and the demonstrations of middle class students and workers in March concerned that French governments plans for globalizing and modernizing would create for them a precarious future, are evidences of the presence of violence and emotion in contemporary democracies.

More attention to how emotion circulates in the political is worthy of exploration. It is important to understand how hate and intolerance towards different races, religions, classes and sexes is generated, disguised and reproduced. How communities of love can be equally pernicious, creating strong boundaries between insiders/ outsiders and undemocratic practices. How strong feelings of injustice and passionate expressions of commitment inspire and sustain protest movements around racism, sexism and globalization. Since most political theorists are rationalist in disposition they pay insufficient to how emotion enriches politics or inflames intolerance.

Psychoanalysis is one way of exploring emotion and sentiment in social and political life. Psychoanalysis's distinctive contribution to theories of emotion is to acknowledge the role of the unconscious in structuring behaviour. What appears on the surface as a conscious rational attitude might disguise unsavoury motives like hate, envy and resentment. Our apparent openness and tolerance of minority groups, may betray deep feelings of intolerance and a sense of guilt that requires covering up. Minorities may rail against their domination and consciously seek respect; although their internalized Otherness fills them with self-loathing. They are their worst enemies. Although minority groups seek reciprocal relations on a conscious level, they covet the power of those who have dominated them; consequently, perpetuating relations of dominance and submission. Political theorists who are disposed to think of ways of improving the human condition, through normative or analytic work have difficulty with the unconscious sources of action, for it is believed that our emotions control us, rather than we control them. Equally worrying for the reformers is the belief that (un)happiness is psychological

in nature. So even if one transforms the social structures of oppression psychic forces of domination will persist.

Psychoanalysis is often disparaged as not being sufficiently political, given the significance it attributes to the psychological register. Since it focuses on intra psychic processes in subject formation - the way the child manages its desires, needs and fears structures its later psychic life- it does not pay sufficient attention to the social and political contexts in that life. Individuals are presumed to be formed in an insular space between primary caretakers, the infant and their interior worlds, where politics is absent. For this reason psychoanalysis is often disparaged as theory which doesn't account for the social context and isn't particularly relevant to politics. However the psychoanalytic theorists that interest me here are very much aware that the subject is relational and becomes a subject within a particular culture and social context. So subjects are formed in a thoroughly social world. Feelings of exile, homelessness, alienation, postnatal depression, are experiences that arise in specific social and political contexts, experiences associated with migration, colonialism, sexism and racism. Furthermore since our subject formation - our psychical economy - structures how we experience the world and how we act, it has political effects.

Existential theories of Alterity- Psychoanalysis modified

Political thinkers have been wary of embracing psychoanalysis, since it doesn't fit well with their normative or ethical approach to politics. Yet it hasn't stopped them from trying to accommodate emotion and explore its role in creating and sustaining power and subordinate citizenry. In this paper I will trace the concept of Othering or alterity, (which has such contemporary purchase) to its non psychoanalytic roots - the master/ slave dialectic in Hegel. The master / slave relation that captures Othering in a philosophic register re-surfaces in the French Hegelians, in particular in the works of Kojve and Hypolite who inspired post war existentialism. These existentialists, specifically Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir and Fanon blend the insights of Marxian emancipatory theory with psychoanalytic theory. Their rethinking of Hegel's master slave relation alongside Freud's notion of projection, Levinas's theory of the Other (at least Beauvoir) and Lacan's theory of the mirror phase helps understand the social and psychological dynamics of oppression. They recognized that freedom was a state of being that had psychological as well as socio-economic and political preconditions.

I will focus upon the ideas of Fanon and Beauvoir. They are interesting because of their theoretical ambiguities. They are neither postmodernists who make the real world disappear, nor are they modernists who believe in the 'march of History and Reason.' They are cross dressers, moving between modernism and postmodernism, moving between optimism and pessimism regarding the possibility of political and social change. They believe in the need to constitute new identities of embodied subjectivity to overcome the damage of their social oppression without reifying or essentialising their cultural identity. Neither Beauvoir nor Fanon are spoken by the universal narrative of the proletarian revolution, but rather are engaged in very locale and specific struggles. Fanon

was committed to the liberation of Algeria, and Beauvoir was devoted to the feminist movement in France. In spite of their specific location, they collaborated with other social and political movements. Beauvoir's involvement in the defence of Boupacha, the young Algerian woman, supported the cause of Algerian liberation. Neither of them shirked from making general statements about oppression. Both used fiction, autobiography, psychoanalysis³ to deepen their understanding of the human condition and action. They refused the rationalist or analytic approaches of most the political thinkers of their times without subscribing to the philosophic assumptions of poststructuralists. Neither of them are indebted to Lacanian psychoanalysis seeing subjectivity produced within symbolic matrixes, Foucauldian analyses (although more attentive to history) believing subjectivities are produced within discourses and discursive formations, nor convinced by Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence. For them narrating, expressing and representing the dilemmas of their embodied situations is important to struggle towards their limited autonomy. They are equally aware of the forces that restrict them, yet equally aware of the problems of fixing and stabilizing identity, having an essential theory of the feminine or negritude is not the way to proceed. While narrations or presences of previously invisible subjects are necessary to psychological and socially shed the negative determinations of their past, their action and commitment should not rely upon essential identities or communities. Existentialists were not as troubled as Derrida, Lacan and Foucault at the prospect of re-inscribing the enlightenment subject and surveilling position of the gaze.

These French existentialists have all too frequently been dismissed due to their Hegelian and socialist roots. Their optimism that through creative and committed actions, homo faber, would bring forth a rational (free and equal) future was contested by postmodernists and poststructuralists. I think this critique exaggerates existentialism's rationalist and humanist assumptions; existentialism has a much more complex understanding of history and subjectivity. Although they were committed to political change, they were not naïve and were much more cautious than most revolutionaries. Turning to semiology, psychoanalysis and cultural critique, the poststructuralists displaced what they believed was naive historical optimism of humanism and its ethical and rationalist predisposition, but also lost sight of the link between subjectivity and political/ historical change.

I reject the hasty dismissal of existentialism as voluntarist and humanist. This interpretation is based upon a serious misunderstanding of action. Individuals do not wilfully choose to act, rather in emphasising the embodied and situated subject, it is assumed that the individual assumes his/her situation which is constituted by psychological, physiological and social influences. Their choices arise within structured situations and involve others, rather than being voluntary and individualistic. Embodied and situated subjectivity involves the commingling of choice and projects, social

³ Beauvoir's relation to psychoanalysis is paradoxical: she is critical of it for rejecting the role of choice and values in human action, however she is heavily reliant upon some of its insights into subject formation. See BK 11, chapter 1.

structures, and patterns. Exemplifying what Merleau-Ponty calls determination without determinism.

Beauvoir is wary of human behaviour been reducible to the unconscious. The psychoanalytic way of attributing action to complexes and mechanisms over which the individual has no control is unsatisfactory, so too is psychoanalysis's theory of universal symbolism,⁴ that denies the role of the individual in the process of signification. Rather than embracing the unconscious, or celebrating rational free choice, Beauvoir seeks to accommodate the irrational into choice, recognizing that action is not simply the effect of reason, but structured by Alterity. For how else could she explain relations of domination and the persistence of master/ slave relations throughout history. She parts ways with psychoanalysis, which she believes simply re-iterate relations of domination. Beauvoir believes woman is constituted as 'Other,' yet one can chose to reject the values of femininity. Even though woman is inscribed as Other on a social level and in cultural practices, women can chose to live their lives differently, struggling to be active and engaged in art, politics or a profession.

Existentialists assume a different relation between the psychic and the social. The subject is not driven by unconscious drives and fantasies, but rather preconscious forces that can be made visible and integrated into the self and / or collective action, thereby overcoming the psychic forces that contribute to passivity and neuroses. For Beauvoir the roots of many pathologies are social in nature, female narcissism and depression are rooted in their social relations of alterity, so it not surprising that she suggests political as well as social changes. Fanon too draws attention to the psychological states of alienation experienced by minority groups in a majority culture. The existential Marxists believe that existing social structures and hierarchal relations are an impediment to freedom for they produce social illness and thwart creative human agency. However they also believe in the absence of structural change, some free action is possible.

Since existentialism stresses the potential of the ego to become more coherent, less divided, more able to engage in projects and sustain stable relations with others, it has more affinity to object relations theories of psychoanalysis. Although the Lacanian approach to subjectivity is by far the more popular today in social/ political and cultural theory, it is not as predisposed to think through these concerns. The Lacanian approach sees fragmentation and the split subject as fruitful. His theory of the symbolic has weaker connections to the political, hence it is less useful for my purposes.

Today insights around racial Othering and abjection are often attributed to poststructuralist and post-colonialist theorists like Julia Kristeva, Homi Bha bha, Stuart Hall. They often identify Fanon as an important precursor; however they dismiss existentialism as naïve. In tracing the genealogy of 'Othering' to these post war existentialists, one has a different reading of the logic of Othering. A logic inspired by Hegel and Marx that believes in the possibility of transcending master/ slave relations

⁴ Juliet Mitchell, in **Psychoanalysis and Marxism**, is critical of Beauvoir's reading of Freud, here she clearly confuses Freud and Jung, whereas Jung had a theory of universal symbolism, Freud did not.

through political solutions while recognizing that there are also socio-psychological sources of oppression. We also encounter a different approach to psychoanalysis, an approach which recognizes the complexity and constructedness of embodied subjectivity, without completely jettisoning choice, political change, or reducing it to an unconscious process.

In addition to tracing Social Othering to its existential humanist precursors, I will follow the genealogy of Othering to contemporary poststructuralists; Julia Kristeva, Homi Bhabha. First I turn to Bhabha's reading of Fanon's existentialism. As most poststructuralists, Bhabha sees Fanon's Marxist humanism as culpable of the all shortcomings of an enlightenment transcendental thinking. Not surprisingly Bhabha fails to see his potential for hybridity, the interstitial and unstable identities and more encumbered forms of freedom. Bhabha's problems have to do with his deconstructive and rhetorical project. He refuses to draw connections between the philosophic speculations and political ones, for any positive suggestions trap him into re-inscribing the enlightenment subject and its surveilling gaze. This is also true of Kristeva's textual its political implications are also insufficiently drawn, and when they are drawn they are not particularly interesting. Kristeva's suggestions as to how to facilitate "reciprocity of respect" between foreigners and the native population are trite, given her lack of attention to political context, in which they occur.

These poststructuralists rely upon a Lacanian version of subjectivity, they all tinker with it to avoid its formalist inclinations, however not very successfully in my opinion. For they all have difficulty connecting up the symbolic and socio-economic or political worlds. Lacan's theory of the subject as produced within a symbolic register presumes the social is reducible to the socio-symbolic or is socio-psychic, and therefore is overly psychically determined. Clearly this has political ramifications, but how does subjectivity of the symbolic order get articulated in shared social worlds, political realities or social structures. Do changes in the social and political order have effects on the symbolic?

For these reasons, I am interested in returning to the positions of Beauvoir and Fanon, whose philosophic work assists their radical political project. Their understanding of the psychic world lends itself to think about the interconnections between the symbolic and the social structural and political. Fanon and Beauvoir believe that social and political change can initiate changes in the symbolic order rather than simply seeing the social and political as given within the symbolic. Eliminating colonialism and sexism would alleviate some sources of alienation. This way of proceeding gives more space to the social and political world to generate new forms of subjectivity, or overcome debilitating effects of oppression and marginality, more ways of breaking through the repetitions and melancholy of the psyche. Instead of seeing the psychic as determinant of subjectivity, social factors can alter behaviour.

The master/ slave relation a theoretical precursor to Othering

Hegel's theory of self-development and emancipation is foundational in social and political theory. Hegel recognized that the self is relational, one becomes a self in the eyes of another. Social recognition is a precondition for subjecthood. Not only was Hegel a resource for Lacan, but Hegel is also a resource for much multicultural democratic theory. Hegel anticipated the importance of mirrors and the imaginary in Lacan. Positive self representations are not a product of the individual, but require a vital and vibrant cultural community. The self is realized in community.

In order to be a self, Hegel surmises, one has to be recognized by another, but since each wants the recognition of the other and each is hesitant to relinquish it - a symbolic struggle to the death ensues. The one who submits first takes up the position of slave and serves the victor - the master, but ultimately since the slave is not the master's equal the battle for recognition is hollow and unsatisfying to the master. One must be respected by an equal to feel worthy. So the battle proceeds to secure the respect of equals. And conflict is essential ingredient in self-development.

In the late 1930's readings and interpretations of Hegel engendered debate in the French philosophic scene. Kojève a French Hegelian Marxist recuperated the master/slave dialectic. Beauvoir, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Lacan either participated in some of Kojève's actual lectures or were party to the debates that ensued. The Marxist version involved seeing the capitalist world divided between masters/slaves; the bourgeoisie /proletariat. A class divided society was antithetical to freedom and recognition. There must be material equality if there is to be reciprocity of recognition. Focusing on labour Kojève sees the slave as less dependent upon his master. Through his labour the slave provides for the master and mediates his world. In doing so the slave develops internal strength and productive capacities. Paradoxically the master is more dependent upon the slave, than the slave on the master. The relation is not satisfactory from either position, the master is not respected as an equal and the slave has no public worth. But the growing awareness of the slave's accomplishments and lack of public acknowledgement foreshadows the proletarian or slave revolution. For Kojève there cannot be recognition or freedom without structural economic and political changes.

The existentialist Marxists were influenced by Kojève's reading of Hegel, but bristled at Marxist determinism and economism. None joined the PCF (Parti Communiste Française). Even Sartre who felt closest to the PCF in the early 50's was not a member. They all had strong reservations regarding both communist theory or practice. Given the importance existentialists attribute to literature and culture and their criticisms of mechanical Marxism, these existentialists challenged historical materialism. They moved beyond proletarian agency endorsing new agents of change - the student movement, the women's movement, anti-colonial struggles. Beauvoir and Fanon in particular explored the psychological roots of oppression. It is not simply economic and political marginality that bind people to their inferior status, but the oppressed have internalized a diminished sense of self and hence are complicit with their relative powerlessness. So economic and

political changes are insufficient to liberation, new generative forms of action are essential to break down their psychological bounds of submission and patterns of failure.

Hegel's master/slave dialectic is a classic narrative used to explore self development and emancipation. Over the years it has been reconfigured. In the post war years in France. Marxists used these categories to understand economic relations between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. More recently race and (post)colonial theorists have applied these categories to understand relations between black /white. Gender theorists and feminist theorists have applied them to understand sexual relations between men / women.

Hegel is at the centre of the radical theoretical shift initiated by the structuralist and poststructuralists. Hegel's optimism in historical change, his belief that the revolution was imminent; his understanding of the dialectic's capacity to integrate that which is outside and overcome the dualisms (self/other; master /slave) have all been rejected by the poststructuralists as overly rationalist. The poststructuralists assume that Hegel assimilates difference to the logic of the same. Weaknesses in contemporary radical theory are traceable to Hegel and the dialectic's capacity to resolve theoretical and political problems. The dialectic preserves or sublates that which is progressive and sheds the negative. This theorization of change has been disputed. The binary relation between subjects and objects does not adequately reflect the complexity of oppression, for the masters as well as the slaves are constituted in the inter-world or the interstitial world. Therefore there are not just two elements in this situation but three. Interestingly enough Beauvoir and Fanon recognize that it is not just the self and other, but cultural constructions that mediate subjectivities.

In spite of Hegel's shortcomings, there are some enduring insights that even the poststructuralists have been influenced by - conflict is intrinsic in self-development fulfilling a positive role. In a relation of Alterity, the Other is a cipher for the subject, shoring up the subject's position of dominance, as well as confirming its subordinate status.

Freud and psychoanalysis have taken up the categories and logic of the master/ slave in exploring the psychological side of dominance and submission. In exploring the sado-masochistic side of desire, psychoanalysis problematizes and complicates emancipatory projects. Amongst those who submit, some get pleasure or a charge out of their submission and secretly covet the power of their masters, so instead of accepting equality and reciprocity they will sustain unequal relations and the desire to dominate. The continual circulation of command and submission will make reciprocity difficult to achieve in human relations. Equalizing the power and status of the powerless will not eliminate relations of domination. On an emotional level, many in power, seek out rituals of humiliation and seek to be dominated, in spite of their societal privileges.

The existential Marxists were hopeful that master/ slave relations could be transcended, or at least minimized through changes in social structures, and existing political and economic relations. The poststructuralists like Wendy Brown assume that they are undoable, for minority groups are driven by resentment and envy of the powerful, and

will retain a secret desire to dominate rather than relinquish this form of behaviour. Furthermore in clinging to their source of suffering, harmed groups will reiterate master and slave relations while struggling for social justice.

Communities of Love- past and present

As Freud has so eloquently expressed in **Civilization and its Discontents** – communities bound by love, must have outsiders to serve as objects of hate. To bind communities in love, a repository or recipient of all those negative, abject feelings, is necessary. A scapegoat, an object of hate is necessary to consolidate love and forge relations of belonging. Fundamentalist religious communities operate in this way. Their membership is rigidly maintained, they are bound through bonds of faith and strict observance of religious practices. Continually boundary setting with those outside them, so the unfaithful as faithful help to preserve the community. Faith is not contestable or debatable, nor is breaking strict laws or digressing from accepted norms. One might argue that faith communities are by their nature un-democratic or possibly even authoritarian, for their practices are unchallengeable accepted upon faith. Democracy requires the negotiation, dialogue and contestation, something in short supply in such communities. Religious communities in Israel and Palestine are communities bound by love and hate. Their strong internal bonds are maintained in shared religious practices; also external threats to their community intensify both their solidarity and weaken their privacy. Situations of war are every different from the mundane politics of peace and the everyday functioning of institutions. The fear of attack is not a fantasy, but a daily threat that serves to magnify feelings of insecurity and strengthen one's dependence upon a community. Fear of political insecurity and threat of retaliation diminishes the salience and significance of the private, there is little place for privacy or intimacy in a country at war. Arendt believes that the balance between the public and private is essential to democracy. So one might argue that as in a state of war (i.e.in Iraq) privacy is impossible and democracy tenuous. In peace- loving times incursion of the state into the privacy of one's home (as evidenced in the Patriot act) threatens the balance of the private and the public essential to democracy.

Communities bound by love are found in the Diaspora. As a strategy to manage and assuage their dislocation and alienation, immigrants reproduce tight communities in their new homeland. Living close to members of their extended family or cultural community provides belonging, friendship, familiarity and solace in a foreign land. Setting up churches and community groups to socialize their children and impart their religion and culture is an important feature of the immigrant experience. This tight community, locatable and identifiable, also facilitates targets for abjection. Although a sense of belonging is vital to minority culture and important for an immigrant to avoid anomie and alienation, however if they nostalgically cling to their homeland and fetishize their essential culture, they will never adapt to their new home. And will alienate younger members of their community. Asian immigrant groups in England and Canada whether it

is in Birmingham, Bradford, Ealing or Scarborough having created such inward looking communities, hence producing ideal objects for abjection. These feelings of hate or intolerance are exacerbated by their decisions to establish their own religious or charter schools; frequent only Asian shops and withdraw from life outside their local community. More movement and exchange between the Asian and Canadian cultures is desirable, for this avoids the nostalgic attachment and essentialized identities on both sides. Schooling is potentially a rich site of communication between cultures

In the 1980's Scarborough, a former white working class, ex British enclave, became a transitional place for refugees and new home for Asian immigrants to Toronto. Many of the white working class have moved away- relocating further East beyond Toronto's borders to Pickering Ajax, Bowmanville, benefiting from lower property taxes, and larger new homes, and avoiding the refugee and Asian communities of Scarborough. These Asian and refugee enclaves have become the abject Other for working class and lower middle class whites. Although they do not actually steal their jobs, siphon off social and community services, there is the perception in the minds of some that they do. Not all residents of Scarborough are equally affected or equally threatened. But the landscape and character of the neighbourhood has changed and the changes are visceral given the extent of new immigrants in the area. There does remain the restored or nostalgic memory of their past – 30 years ago when white Anglo-Saxon communities dominated the neighbourhood, apart from the Italians, Greeks or Jews who found their way into East Toronto.

While living in King's Norton in Birmingham I remember our British neighbours been horrified and saddened by Asians who tore up an existing garden to make room for a parking pad. The eyesore on the streetscape was a constant reminder of their cultural differences and unwanted presence. It stood in for their otherness, their foreignness. It really was indigestible, causing a blight on the streetscape. Several years earlier, I had experienced much the same battles between residents on a Toronto side street, however it was not the Asian but young yuppies who wanted to park their car on their lawns. Here the divide was generational, not racial, and without the added emotional charge.

Lacanian and Object relations theory of Psychoanalysis

In contemporary social and cultural theory, whether in the field of gender studies, postcolonial or critical race theory, Lacanian psychoanalytic work has been dominant. In the course of this paper I shall draw upon the less visible tradition of object relations or attachment theory, often identified as the British tradition, as an alternative way to think through the psychic register of subjectivity that helps us approach the problem of demeaned minority identities and racist and sexist practices. We are not offering discursive analyses of racist and sexist discourse, which is a useful activity, but trying to think beyond racist practices in a theoretically informed way.

Lacan challenges the meta-narratives of modernity, rationality, liberation. For him selfhood is a fiction. The infant recognizes oneself in a mirror, however this he insists involves a misrecognition, the infant sees itself as a unity, when in fact it is a “hommelette,” (reference to a scrambled egg- an omelette). So a unitary self is imaginary or imaged. Through language the child moves into the symbolic register and beyond the dyadic relation of infant/ (m)other. In becoming a speaking subject, it takes up a position in language, capable of receiving meanings and identities. The self is organized through linguistic codes and symbolic structures. Lacanian theory focuses on this organization of the self, symbolic and imaginary as carriers of ideological structures and meanings. The subject is produced by these codes and structures rather than being responsive to them. Lacan believes in the generative or creative power of the unconscious, the split subject is a resource to fracture false identities that our societies impose upon us. It must refuse identity and the instrumental and homogenizing forces of contemporary society. In fact to assert strong identity signals an inability to deal with lack, a weakness in one’s ego functioning.

The object relations school take a different approach to the subject and the symbolic. They believe we are object seeking rather than pleasure seeking, we become a subject in relations with others, and not by taking up a position in language as Lacan insists. Pleasure is important to achieve emotional connection to others, the quality of our interpersonal relations transform unconscious desire and passion. If early relations with parents are low, the child will overcome pain and frustration through ego – splitting and internal fantasy substitutes. Fantasy is not generative, creative but a substitute for failures in the environment. So as the ego expresses its anger and repressed hostility, it loosens itself, liberates itself from the strong pressures of the super-ego, harsh self-criticism and guilt are diminished and more pleasure is possible. The self must develop from internal un-integration; a more authentic self hood emerges from maternal and paternal preoccupation. This sort of devotion allows the child to experience itself as omnipotent and self-identical and enables a distinction between true self capable of creative living and a false self incapable of stable relations. So the object relations theorists presume that the unconscious passions get released, brought to consciousness, worked on and integrated into the self. Although autonomy is questionable given the relational nature of subjectivity, optimally one must reconfigure one’s relations to oneself and others to establish good stable relations. Rather than living the split subject, as the Lacanians do, seeing the unconscious as creative, object relations theorists allow for the enlargement of the ego. As one becomes conscious of those unconscious forces, those nasty excluded or abject bits, one becomes less driven by them. And the possibility and desirability of mitigating the negative effects of the split are desired. These theorists follow Freud’s dictum where “it” (id) was there “I” (ego) will be. So culturally demeaned and economically subordinate minority groups whether they are blacks, Muslims, women, the unemployed, begin to positively identify with their bad bits, feel less alienated and more able to engage in the world, this has transformative effects at the level of the subject and community. The Lacanians pursue the opposite tactic, summarized under the mantra- where “I” was there “it” will be. If the subject accepts one’s lack, takes up the position of castration and vulnerability, rather than assuming the stance of masterfulness and

independence one is better off. As we will see since minority cultures and women have been socially and politically positioned as an “it” and not an “I” as objects not subjects, and they are often filled with self-loathing. I’m not sure the Lacanian approach⁵ - an acceptance of one’s impotence, acceptance of castration is the best way to proceed.

There is no doubt that the Lacanian tradition is more influential amongst social, cultural and political thinkers today and has made many contributions in analysing colonialist, racist and sexist discourses. However my interest lies in acknowledging the potential of the less visible tradition of object relations and attachment theory. They provide insights into the importance of productive and creative identifications and belonging. Recognizing that the source of our fragmentation or splits can be overcome and a more coherent subjectivity is progressive for the individual. If a member of a minority community sufficiently attaches to others in their community and emotionally invests in the larger society it is possible to overcome his/ her demeaned identities without creating a fixed or essentialized identity.⁶ Positive myths of negritude or the feminine are not advisable but appearances, expressions, narrations of one’s existence are. The insistence that one refuses identity and the endorsement of fragmentation is not useful.

It is not that object relations or attachment theory have been wholly absent from social theory or public policy, but its most notable presence has been to shore up conservative political forces. Attachment theory emphasizes the importance of a child developing strong attachments to its mother or primary caretaker. Trust in others and stable relations presume that we have experienced reliable care and parental attention. The ideas of Winnicott, Melanie Klein, feminists argued, blamed working women for not being “good enough” mothers, for not allowing sufficient attachment and devotion to develop between them and their child. These theories, it was believed intensified mother’s feelings of guilt and justified the return of working women to the home in the post war years. In the 60’s these schools of thinking were denounced by second wave feminists. New Labour under Tony Blair and his intellectual guru Tony Giddens used the language of belonging and theories of attachment to focus on the importance of parenting. The disruptive youths, soccer hooligans are traced to a poor sense of attachment to others and their community, a consequence of inadequate experience of primary care. Rather than the more traditional labour concerns with structural change, economic re-distribution of wealth, new Labour found itself pressing families to improve their parenting. In spite of these conservative political guises, British psychoanalysis, I believe have radical possibilities, thinking through the preconditions for political agency of minorities and woman. Richer relations to others, engaging in creative projects would militate against feelings of depression and social alienation.

⁵ Lacanian theory that is the focus of poststructuralist cultural analysis, may have a different emphasis than its analytic and therapeutic practice. Juliet Mitchell drew attention to this in *New Left Review* 1984 ?

⁶ Some might argue that this is reformist/ conservative ploy- getting people to fit in to their minority cultural groups and larger society. It is not fitting in, but having enough of a sense of belonging that one risks expressing, narrating one’s uniqueness and feeling alright about that. Further I have no truck with those for whom the wholly marginalized, or psychotic are romanticized as they stand as forces of resistance to the system. I ask them would they not want their children or friends to be sufficiently attached to their world to feel engaged in their personal projects and capable of strong relations ?

Existential theories of Othering: Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir

In Child and its Relation to Others Merleau-Ponty identifies a projective consciousness in the experiences of children; children often loudly blame others for acts that they themselves have committed. While the blurring of boundaries between self and other may be just acceptable for children, it is not acceptable for normal adults who must accept responsibility for their actions. Projection is a pathology, but a pathology normalized in certain social contexts. Merleau-Ponty identifies white culture portraying black men and black women as excessively sexual, engaging in bestial sexual acts. In projection humans attribute to others precisely those desires and experiences which trouble them. They fail to distinguish between one's own fantasies and fears and those of others. In this way they get rid of their own troubling sexual anxieties by projecting them outside, onto an external site. However now they exist on the outside and in others, now they have an external source of their fear and anxiety. The Black man's identity is thus constituted in a white man's imagination and sustained by discourses that continually re-inscribe this as the norm. The belief in black bestial sexuality has much to do with white projections and abjection.

Beauvoir identifies a similar logic in the behaviour of men and women. Men are only too quick to divest themselves of their feelings of vulnerability and weakness; men project these feelings of insufficiency onto their wives, who are happy to comply, given their own feelings of insecurity in this "masculine" world. There is nothing more comforting to men than to have financially dependent wives who spend her days shopping and attending to their face or toilette as Beauvoir calls it. However men also disrespect and loathe this behaviour. Dependent wives shore up their husbands and boy friends identities as strong and independent. The circulation of feelings of vulnerability and care allows men to off load their feelings of dependency through chivalry.

Beauvoir contextualizes universal psychoanalytic truths such as projection, alienation and lack. She distinguishes between ontological forms of alienation and debilitating forms of alienation that follow from social oppression. Ontological alienation arises in the human condition since humans find themselves in a world that is not of their making. Equally it is an experience rooted the inability of individuals to accept lack or loss of the maternal nurturing environment. These general forms of alienation are experienced very differently by women and minority groups. For the social cultural world targets their embodied subjects as abject, they are construed as Other – treated as passive and inferior specimens. There is no reciprocity of exchange between men and women, or white and Black men. Although Beauvoir concentrates on women's otherness in **The Second Sex**, even in this book, she recognizes that not only women, but minority men are Other. Since women are oppressed – constituted as inferior and dangerous, their achievements or lack thereof are not their personal responsibility, an effect of their psyche alone, but a product of a patriarchal and racist society. Beauvoir describes the processes of their alienation:

Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man. And she is simply what man decrees; thus she is called “the sex,” by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex-absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her: she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other. “(1974, xix)

She appreciates the structural characteristics of otherness. Women can not simply choose to be free agents in this world, for although some engage in creative projects and this may mitigate their Alterity, this structure has certain effects. This causes problems with their femininity, their sexual identity.

Following Levinas, Beauvoir sees otherness as both a general dynamic in social relations, but she also identifies its more pernicious forms in racism, sexism and nativism. She says, “no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the other over against itself.” (1974: xix-xx) She works from a general and benign level of otherness to explore its particular malign forms. She says “In small town eyes all persons not belonging to the village are “strangers” and suspect; to the native of a country all who inhabit other countries are “foreigners”; Jews are “different” for the anti Semite, Negroes are inferior for the American Racists, aborigines are “ natives for the colonists, proletarians are the “lower class” for the privileged.(1974: xx)

In some detail she explores the structural inequalities between men and women, how and in what ways man has set himself up as essential and defined women as inessential. One would expect that man and woman would struggle to impose their sovereignty upon each other, but each would resist and this tension and conflict would create reciprocity, but Beauvoir insists the master/ slave struggle has never ensued between men and women, because women are not respected as equals. It is not that women are different and to be respected in their difference, rather their difference marks them as subordinate. She notes that man needs women for “sexual desire and the desire for offspring- which makes the male dependent for satisfaction upon the female.” (1974: xxii) Yet she is not able to turn this to her advantage, “it works in favour of the oppression and against the oppressed.” (1974: xxii) Just as the slave or working classes are not able to turn their strengths to their advantage, it is equally true of women. She asks why women have accepted “this alien point of view?” She draws parallels between women and minority groups like American Negroes and the Jews, while their slavery and anti-Semitism are historical events; but there is a historical memory of a time of independence. This is not true for women, who have never been autonomous, but have always been subjugated. While the Negroes and Jews have shared traditions or history, women do not, since they have also lived with men. Since they have never formed their own communities, this too makes collective identity difficult.

Beauvoir goes onto to show how historically the female body is both an object of fear and desire. Although she does not use the psychoanalytic term abjection, it is fitting in these

circumstances, involving the commingling of disgust and desire. She quotes biologists and Christians to express how women's body is abject. It is described in such lurid terms that its power and secret pleasures are evident. "Linnaeus avoided as 'abominable' the study of women's sex organs. Lauren, another scientist, asks "how can this divine animal, full of reason and judgment, which we call man, be attracted by these obscene parts of the woman, defiled with juices and located shamefully at the lowest parts of the trunk?" (1974:189) St. Augustine, in horror "calls attention to the obscene commingling of the sexual and the excretory organs; we are borne between feces and urine." (1974:189) Beauvoir humorously suggests at least God was saved from the defilement of birth. (1974:189) not being borne of woman. Christians, she remarks, invest women with "frightening privileges"... "for her body is responsible for the original sin and the body is the enemy of the soul, only if redeemed by Christ can man be saved. (1974:188) So women incarnates the temptations of this world through her flesh. She is "the gateway of the devil... because of her Christ had to die." (1974:189) The dangers and secret pleasures, the powers and abjectness of the female body could not be more evident.

Beauvoir socializes psychic phenomenon, she recognizes that are social causes of women's alienation and depression. Our contemporary culture objectifies woman, sees woman as objects of male desire, "a trophy for her man". These identities of docility and passivity and scripts of femininity have profoundly negative psychological affects. For Beauvoir the psyche is situated and influenced by the social context so there is some movement between the inner psychic forces and the social world.

Beauvoir's treatment of narcissism exemplifies this. She recognizes the significance of the social context of the psychic phenomenon. Female narcissism is simply not explained intrapsychically as a neurosis, but is explained in terms of women's gendered relations. Lacking recognition and self-esteem, relegated to the private domestic sphere, woman become obsessed with their self-image. However Beauvoir attends to specific psychological features of women – her ungratified sexual aggression and the absence of positive mirrors, tend to encourage narcissism, focusing on oneself rather than engaging in creative actions that take one beyond the self.

Woman is lead into narcissism along two converging roads, as subject she feels frustrated: when very young she lacks that alter ego which his penis is for the boy: later on, her aggressive sexuality remains unsatisfied. And what is much more important, masculine activities are forbidden her. She is occupied, but she does nothing: she does not recognition as an individual though her functioning as wife, mother, housekeeper (1974: 699)

Homosexuality is often explained as natural or in terms of intrapsychic forces, Beauvoir offers a more social explanation. Our existing forms of feminine life are so restrictive and unsatisfying, she sees lesbianism as a sexual choice that avoids this reality and offers vitality. Also she says, rough male sexuality is so unsatisfactory, that women temporarily chose lesbianism, when they are unhappy with their male lover or as a preliminary stage towards heterosexual practices.

[Homosexuality] is an attitude chosen in a certain situation. – that is, at once motivated and freely chosen. No one of the factors that mark the subject in connection with this choice- physiological conditions, psychological history, social circumstances- is the determining element, though they all contribute to its explanation. (1974: 473)

Roots of Postcolonial thinking – Abjection and Othering in the work of Franz Fanon

Just as Beauvoir sees female narcissism in terms of the context of patriarchal society, Fanon sees Algerian alienation in the context of their colonial experience. Their experience of alienation has to do with their specific social content. As a French trained psychiatrist he recognized the impossibility of his mission.

“If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his country, lives in a state of absolute de-personification... the social structure existing in Algeria was hostile to any attempt to put the individual back where he belonged “⁷ Fanon explores how the Algerians were demeaned and objectified by majority French culture, he also delves into his own self-loathing - how impossible it was for him and other Algerians to feel at home in their skins, in their bodies. Hence they produced white masks. In the introduction to **Black Skins, White Masks**, he asks: What does the Black man want? So demeaned by European representations of him, yet so tethered to stereotypes of primitivism and degeneracy, he is dismembered by the white man’s Gaze.⁸

Fanon can only see himself through Western eyes, as such he is fragmented, a body part, a fetish. The parallels to women are important. Since women is the Sex for man, as Beauvoir insists, “nothing more or less,” reducible to her body parts (breasts, vagina or “juices located at the lowest end of the trunk.”) She is doubly alienated from her body, since its meaning has been given by man, for man. Fanon’s description of himself seems to confirm a similar fragmenting Gaze. The Gaze of the colonial authorities.

“ I had to meet the white man’s eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his body schema... I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects.... I took myself far off from my own presence..... What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that splattered my whole body with black blood.” (1986: 157-58)

⁷ F. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Pelican 1967) p.63

⁸ F. Fanon, *Black Skin and White Masks*, (London, Pluto, 1986) p.60

Again, when Fanon experiences a white girl's fear of him, he is devastated. Since his worth is wholly defined by her apprehension. He has no recourse, no independent basis for judgement, no self.

“Look, a negro...mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened... I could no longer laugh because I already known where there were legends, stories, history, and above all historicity ... then assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema...it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person... I was responsible for my body, for my race, for my ancestors.” (1986: 112)

Just as Beauvoir identified women as paradoxically powerful and pathetic, incarnated as body and not mind. Fanon represents Black men in colonial Algeria as on the one hand dangerous, awesome in their sexual prowess and physical strength and yet reducible to dismembered body parts, less than human, weaklings. They are portrayed as cunning and duplicitous but without wit or intelligence.

As we can see Beauvoir and Fanon went some distance in exploring abjection and its contradictory feelings. In addition their eclectic use of psychoanalysis, in conjunction with Marxist theory gives more space to the social and less to the psychic in determining subjectivity. Their philosophic theory of subjectivity facilitates radical political action, without denying the significance of the psychic.

Homi Bha bha's poststructuralist reading of Fanon.

My treatment of Homi Bha bha will for the most part be restricted to his poststructuralist reading of Fanon. Homi Bha bha refuses the struggle for identification invoking Lacan's fear and caution regarding identification. For Lacan one must accept lack, accept castration and refuse identity. While this may be the way to proceed for white middle class European men who have been culturally represented as robust and effective, this may not be an appropriate strategy for racially abject men or women, especially those encountered by Fanon and Beauvoir. Bha bha says “the emergence of the human subject as socially and psychically authenticated depends upon the negation of the originary narrative of fulfillment,”⁹ The psychic experience of lack coincides with loss of maternal nurturing environment and fantasies of satisfaction and completion. However this lack or insecurity has been compounded by an experience of Otherness, emptiness, a lack of a sense of self. So lack of identity was an experience all too readily felt by Algerian men. So I'm not sure Bha bha's strategy would have been supported by Fanon.

Which isn't to say that Fanon calls for robust identity, nor does he seek to recuperate an authentic Africans male identity. Following in the footsteps of Sartre, Fanon is aware of the fragility of human existence, as evidence in the quote below. Far from humans being fixed or robust entities as Dasein, I am a “being for -itself,” “a nothingness,”

⁹ Homi. K. Bha bha, *The Location of Culture* , (Routledge, London) 1994, p. 72

transcendence. This capacity to transcend the givenness of things, to resist definition and fixity is a distinctively human quality. Beauvoir who is more appreciative of the effects of social constraints on one's freedom, theorizes humans not as nothingness, a hole in being, but embodied subjects, a fold in being. Far from humans being a pure positivity, or pure negativity, they are embodied and that allows beings to appear, they insert negativity in human history. For the existentialists human existence is always tenuous and finite.

As soon as I desire I ask to be considered. I am not merely here and now, sealed into thingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else. I demand that notice be taken of my negating activity in so far as I pursue something other than life... I occupied space, I moved towards the other.. and the evanescent other, hostile, but not opaque, transparent, not there disappeared. Nausea. (1986: 112

So it is difficult to imagine that the existentialist would be supporting robust human identity, as Bha bha seems to fear. For humans always feel tenuousness in their existence, and threatened by the durable and stable forces of things, herein lies the source of nausea. One's insertion in the world, the setting up of meaningful projects is a future possibility and something to be valued. This capacity for creativity and urge to feel authorized and effective in one's actions cannot be denied, but it need not be supported by some notion of robust individualism or human essence, which Bha bha seems to believe. Why must action or this urge to engage in the world be read negatively as Homi Bha bha tends to?

At the outset of **The Second Sex** Beauvoir asks a similar question: Instead of posing Fanon's question: What do Black men want? Or Lacan's question: What do women want? She asks: What is women? Not that she wants to pin women down to an essence or an identity. There is no single simple answer, but she spends much of the book exploring the plurality of identities, the complexity and diversity of myths, facts and actions that constitute women's various situations. Since woman has for the most part been defined by male representations, inserted into male history, ignored by male philosophy and social theory, it would be rash to assume that women's desire for a history, distinctive projects were dangerously essentialising. Again accepting lack, vulnerability and dependence are experiences woman are all too familiar with. Since she has experienced herself as dispersed, seen from the eyes of others, invested in the lives of her children and husband, parents and siblings, some experience of coherence, stability, forthrightness, vitality are called for. Beauvoir encourages women to assume their situations, embed themselves in their past, to create a coherent project that transitions them into a better future.

Bha bha has a simplistic reading of existential Marxism in mind as he reads Fanon. He is unaware or chooses to ignore the intermingling of Being and Nothingness. To become a subject is a becoming, a process, it is not achieved once and for all. Algerians are not fixed entities that will direct history and forge the revolution. The process of their empowerment involves a change in their subject position or situation. The significance of

the situation, rather consciousness is category that has affinity with Homi Bhabha's concept of social location.

Furthermore Beauvoir respects the hybridity of subjects. We are always an entwining of social differences- race, culture, sex, gender, age and class. These social differences never exist in isolation, nor does she subscribe to the singularities of race, class, gender. Beauvoir recognizes the third, the in between subject and object, the intermonde as Merleau-Ponty calls it, or the interstitial world as Bhabha calls it. This place where action and projects are formulated and affirmed is our shared social/ cultural world. The idea of breaking down the primary organizational and conceptual categories like race, class, gender, age, etc, is something that Beauvoir and Merleau- Ponty as phenomenologists had been working on, though not in a self-conscious way. The importance she attributes to fiction and the diversity and complexity of lived experience is very much part of her work.

Given Homi Bhabha's concern about re-inscribing the enlightenment or modernist subject and the surveilling position of the Gaze, he offers some poststructuralist suggestions. For Derrida the evil eye "circulates without been seen," therefore it does not retreat to a sense of identity, or subject hood, or presence, "the evil eye is nothing in itself though it exists in its negative effects..... it arrests time- death/ chaos and initiates a space of intercutting that articulates politics and psyche, sex and race." (1994:79) Homi Bhabha describes the strategy of the migrant woman who has experienced invisibility, if she uses it as revenge as mimicry she again avoids the logic of identity. (1994: 80) I understand the fear of repeating presence and the gaze in its classical enlightenment assumptions. But presumably visibility also presumes invisibility; they are not completely in opposition to each other. The rhetoric of repetition or doubling challenges the idea of a singular or definitive truth as grounding knowledge, but one can have a more cautious and modest approach to understanding and visibility which avoids these imperious assumptions. Need one go as far as the evil eye or the invisible women to avoid the logic of certainty and respect ambiguity. Again both Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty rely upon the concepts of ambiguity and contingency and embodied agency that eschews essential identity and fixity. (1994:78)

Whereas Bhabha relies upon Lacanian psychoanalysis seeing the unconscious, in its racial sexual dimension as subversive. The psychoanalytic tradition of object relations believe that in enlarging the ego to allow for investment and attachment to this world, stable and meaningful relations with others will be produced. This new "identity" moves beyond the persistent demeaned meanings of one's past and yet avoids dangerous essentialism.

So far I have suggested that Homi Bhabha's reading of Fanon and his poststructuralist strategies are unsatisfactory, given the lack of a link from the social to the psychic. However in this section, Bhabha's insight into the rhetorical use of the stereotype has

leads to interesting reflections on stereotyping and strategies to break them down. As Homi Bhabha says

“the stereotype is a major discursive strategy of a colonialist discourse, it is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always “in place”, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated...as if the essential duplicity of the Asian or the bestial sexual license of the African needs no proof, can never really, in discourse be proved. It is the ambivalence that gives the stereotype its currency; ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjectures” (1994: 95)

One understands the process of subjectification, which stereotypes makes possible. Although the stereotype is scorned, or seen to repeat something that everyone knows, it is still repeated. One must engage the effectivity of it, as a source of derision and desire. (1994:96) Bhabha quotes Levinas for whom “the art-magic of the contemporary novel lies in its way of seeing inwardness from the outside.” (1994: 96) I believe that in the narrating of stories, the re-signifying of events in films stereotypes can be broken down in their ethical aesthetic positioning. And the myth of the Palestinian zealot, willingly stepping up to become a suicide bomber and martyr is challenged in the narrative of **Paradise Now**.¹⁰ Two suicide bombers whose mission had to be sabotaged, were given the time and opportunity to reflect their actions. At the outset, Khaled, appeared most committed and certain of his mission, repeating chants of loyalty, expressing the body language of battle in his final testament (recorded video) He believed under occupation he’s already dead, so blowing himself up held no fear. In the end he is convinced by a woman of the ineffectiveness of his actions. In an emotional twist, the other, Said, who at the outset, appeared more ambivalent, troubled by his conscience and his obligations to his widowed mum, in the end, insists that he be able to carry his mission. In spite of his touching relationship with his mother, the prospect of love that hovers in his future, these do not deter him from his mission. He explains to the leader that he always bore the public shame of his father, who was collaborator. Since the community looked down on him and his family, he pleaded that he be able to expunge this shame. As their characters become more complex, motivations and hesitations become more real, the stereotypes of the suicide bomber are challenged. Even though, I did not end up supporting his actions, some improved understanding follows. The lived situation of Palestinians: the daily life been hemmed in by check points, trapped behind walls, living a meagre and insecure existence, anxious of reprisals, occasional rocket blasts, a life without a future, makes the suicide bomber’s action more comprehensible. The film director’s aesthetic ethical project does not judge, but rather explores “ the inwardness from the outside” – the complexity of these individual’s lives. After having seen this film it is difficult to blindly hate or dismiss these suicide bombers as simple fanatics, in seeing their exchanges and hearing their stories the stereotypes are challenged.

However the director’s non- judgemental stance towards the suicide bombers is not sustained in her portrayal of the community leaders. Those who selected the men to sacrifice their lives, those who monitored the bombers behaviour before the mission and

¹⁰ Paradise Now, Hany Abu- Assad, released 2005

those who made more senior decisions, were not presented as wise, or reverent. Hot headed and protected by the power and respect that their position and religious community afforded them, these men did not commit heroic acts, but had the audacity to chose others for that task. The unconditional trust and respect these leaders mustered up was presented as misguided.

Kristeva and abjection.

Strangers to Ourselves¹¹ involves long forays into the Greek's treatment of foreigners and into biblical studies that exemplify the processes by which a ruling group gets set up by acts of exclusion. The 'social' is founded upon the violent expulsion of the Other. Abjection is necessary to establish a strong community. Kristeva is reliant on Rene Girard's work and pursues what he calls "things forgotten since the foundation of the world." Her exploration of the foundation of "the political" and founding myths relies on the work of Freud in **Totem and Taboo** and **Civilization and its Discontents**. Her treatment of abjection has little appreciation for the complexity of social and political contexts. Abjection and othering are treated as universal phenomenon, necessary to group formation, however admittedly they are exacerbated in certain circumstances. Her work is compelling but does not take us far. One should not expect that theorists provide practical or useful suggestions as how to deal with the problems that arise. It is equally important just to raise questions.

Since recently three books on Kristeva's politics have been published her reflections on politics are obviously worth investigating. **Revolution in Poetic Language** was a call to revolution. For her political transformations must be preceded by a revolution in meaning and subjectivity. This was the idea behind the Tel Quel group of which she was a member; textual experimentation was believed to be able to change the world. In her book she covers the period from 1850- 1890's a period of textual experimentation, but after the repression of the Commune in 1871 there little political subversive activity. However this seems to pass her by. Generally she seems to be able to ignore examples that don't quite fit.

Her theory of psychoanalysis was applied to the problems of bourgeois society in the belief that radical change would ensue. She places enormous emphasis on avant gardism, however her novels are rather traditional in form. Something that many of her interpreters have passed over. She took a lot from Lacan, but challenges the centrality of his notion of symbolic. For Lacan, the place of language and exchange is the symbolic, but Kristeva introduces a sub- or pre - linguistic condition that she calls the semiotic. This dimension revealed by primitive rhythm and primary processes expressive of primitive desire and the pleasure principle. The semiotic is not meaningful in it self, but is a precondition for language and meaning. It is associated with the maternal and the feminine, and is dangerously close to the psychotic, since it is pre-linguistic and pre- individual. She believes avant- garde writers (Lamartine, and Mallarme) poets and musicians and

¹¹ Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, (Columbia University Press, New York) 1991

painters (Pollack) tap it semiotic although they are male. 23 yrs later she wrote **The sense on non-sense of revolt**, since by the works of the surrealists and situationists had been co-opted, hanging on the walls of museums, they did not have the subversive role imagined. Kristeva describes the disenchanted world we live in, as dominated by “robotic culture” and “the spectacle” a revolt of psychic necessity, is no longer possible. She no longer calls for a textual/ political revolution, for revolt is defined as “intimate,” that which is most profound and singular within us, that which provides the basis for new forms of intersubjectivity is based upon love. Intimacy will lead the psyche to infinite recreation. The excluded (the unemployed youth, the homeless, exploited foreigners, or dispossessed have no access to this realm, for their world is dominated by retrograde ideologies (religious fundamentalism) these are casseurs (wreckers, rioters) casseurs is a loaded term. For in 1970, when Kristeva was a Maoist, the loi anti-casseurs was passed to make all participants in the demonstrations collectively responsible and punishable for any violence committed. Mitterand abrogated this law 12 years later.

Kristeva’s actual political positions have been singularly uninteresting, her textual experimentations lead to her verbal support of Maoism in the late 60’s and early 70’s. More recently she has praised de Gaulle, defended Giscard d’Estaing and Chirac. None of these leaders are renowned for their positive treatment of immigrants. For her the political is without state, economy, classes and institutions. She suggests reciprocity of recognition, but has no idea of how to get there. Though her theory has some interesting political implications, they are not drawn out, or only in the vaguest ways.

In her work **On Strangers** she is not clear whether she is referring to foreign nationals or racial others. She believes that the relations between immigrants and hosts be based upon reciprocity of recognition, immigrants should be asked why they chose France as a host country. This is a rather naïve approach, begging obvious questions. Many didn’t choose France, but rather their parents were recruited from their Algerian villages to come and work in France. Many could come from Martinique, Guadalupe, a part of the French republic. Since she naively fails to distinguish politics and the political, she fails to think through the sorts of policies or institutions that might facilitate respect.

Not all theorists produce practical political suggestions to the concerns they raise. Nor should they. Raising questions is important in itself. However in the domain of political theory, the disconnections of philosophic and political thinking, evidenced in Kristeva’s work warrants my turn to think through the logic of othering in Beauvoir and Fanon, where the connection is stronger. They also consider political solutions to the problems of social oppression and alienation. For Kristeva individual psychotherapy, the acceptance of the ‘Other’ within, or intimacy is a solution to this political problem. Insufficient attention is given to the role the political has on the psychic.

Although Kristeva has a place for the psychic she has eviscerated the political by reducing it to an effect of the symbolic and semiotic register, albeit supplemented by the semiotic. Phallogentrism, masculine thinking informs and sustains traditional power politics - its presence makes change hard to imagine, except perhaps through the avant garde. The phallogentric symbolic or the conversely the semiotic informs politics. This is reductionist, one can’t read the political off of these symbolic forms. This does not

adequately theorize the possibility of the social and political relations generating new symbolic and cultural changes, here Beauvoir and Fanon are useful. The rise of the feminism and anti-colonial struggles did have effects. Political independence from colonial rule, self rule and new cultural representations had positive effects on the lives of Algerians. Challenging existing gendered relations, including women in economic and political life, undermining existing forms of femininity which constituted women as docile, passive and dominated by men, all had progressive affects on existing political relations. Such things Kristeva is unable to appreciate.

In retrieving these existential exponents of Social Othering, I have drawn attention to theorists who draw stronger connections between the psychic and the social and political worlds. Since neither is overwhelmed by the problems that afflict modernist and postmodernists, a reconsideration of Fanon and Beauvoir is a worthwhile project.