

**TOWARDS A POST-SACRIFICIAL THEORY OF IDENTITY FORMATION**

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTERS OF ARTS IN POLITICS**

of

**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

by

**NATALIE MENEZES**

January 2006

The unpredictable and the predetermined unfold together to make everything the way it is. It's how nature creates itself, on every scale, the snowflake and the snowstorm. It makes me so happy... It's the best possible time to be alive, when almost everything you thought you knew is wrong.

- **Arcadia**, Tom Stoppard

## Abstract

In this thesis I shall outline various modernist authors' arguments that collectivities (such as ethnic groups, nations, states and cultures) and subjectivities employ sacrificial violence to establish and assert their identity where identity is inescapably (?) understood in terms of the *sovereignty* of the collective or the post-Oedipal *autonomy* of the individual. To this end, violence has been posited as a historical and conceptual inevitability and is set as the default-state of human nature and politics. In recent times, protesting voices (from post-feminist, post-colonial, post-modern and the emerging human rights discourses) have begun to rigorously contest the notion of violence as the default-state. As a result, the legitimacy of sacrifice as the primary modus to an autonomous selfhood has been radically problematised. I believe that a comprehensive understanding of the nature of this crisis of identity formation, and the possibility of transcending it, is to be found in the paradigmatic shift away from Newtonian thought toward a post-Newtonian worldview.

In seeking to challenge the assumption of violence-as-default, I shall translate the comprehensive sacrificial nature of collective identity and subjectivity into a complexity-based model that allowed me to make three crucial conceptual moves toward a comprehensive understanding of *post-sacrificial* identities that occupy an important place in a post-Newtonian world. First, it will allow me to challenge the assumptions that supported the Hobbesian myth of autonomy/sovereignty sacrificially achieved by charting the ontological shift that compels us to understand "entities" (be it a cell, an individual or a state) not in terms of autonomy but interdependence. Secondly, it provides the conceptual tools needed to understand the systemic nature of sacrificial violence by reading subjectivity violence and collectivity violence in terms of their organic self-similarity. This will equip me to comprehensively explore a post-sacrificial epistemology valid for both collective identities and subjectivity. Thirdly, I propose a model of post-sacrificial identities that are created and sustained at the edge of chaos through the dynamic interplay of order and disorder that reconciles creative and destructive forces in a generative unity. I believe that this post-Newtonian reading will clear the conceptual space needed to suggest there might yet be hope for a future that does not embrace violence as default-state.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my family and friends for their unending supply of wisdom and wit over the last two years – so greatly needed and appreciated when my own supplies had run out.

I also express a vast debt of gratitude to my father without whose support and generosity I would never have been able to start this project, and to my mother without whose love and encouragement I would never have been able to finish it.

Finally, I am exceptionally grateful to my supervisor and mentor Dr. Leonhard Praeg for guiding me, challenging me and inspiring me throughout this remarkable journey.

# Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Chapter 1: The Sacrificial Search for Collective Selfhood.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Mimetic violence	3
1.3. The Surrogate	7
1.4. Violent culture	12
1.5. The violent sacred?	18
1.6. The crisis of sacrifice	21
1.7. Girard's revelation	28
1.8. Beyond Girard	30
1.9. Human rights discourse: the catalyst for consciousness	33
1.10. Post-colonial Africa and human rights	36
1.11. Conclusion	38
<b>Chapter 2: The Sacrificial Construction of Subjectivity .....</b>	<b>41</b>
2.1. Introduction	41
2.2. The early stages of selfhood	42
2.3. The Oedipal predicament	45
2.4. The imaginary father	48
2.5. Of signs and subjectivity	52
2.6. The horror of the abject mother	53
2.7. Rituals of abjection	58
2.8. The eternal fascination of the threshold	60
2.9. Conclusion	62
<b>Interlude I: The analogies of violence: a modernist view.....</b>	<b>64</b>
1. The social contract and the self	65
2. State of nature	66
3. The sovereign and the <i>civitas</i>	66
4. An anarchic international system: in the shadow of violence	67
5. The inevitability of violent engagement	69
6. 'Just...so' stories	70

<b>Chapter 3: Charting the change toward Complexity.....</b>	<b>72</b>
3.1. Introduction	72
3.2. Human nature without humanity	73
3.3. Violence and science	76
3.4. Toward a comprehensive account	80
3.5. The Social Organism	81
3.5.1. Change as Immanence	82
3.5.2. Teleology	84
3.6. Sketching complex systems	86
3.6.1. Where chaos and order collide	89
3.6.2. The complexity of change	92
3.7. The fractal life of complex systems	94
3.8. Conclusion	97
<b>Interlude II: The self-similarity of violence: a complexity view.....</b>	<b>98</b>
1. The self-similarity of violence	98
2. The fractal of (Western) modernity	100
3. Unlocking a logic beyond violence	101
<b>Chapter 4: Toward a Post-Sacrificial Subjectivity.....</b>	<b>103</b>
4.1. Introduction	103
4.2. In the space between	104
4.3. Rethinking the abject	106
4.4. The abject, the sacred and sacrifice	109
4.5. The self-similarity of ritual	112
4.6. Toward a discourse of love	115
4.7. Symbolic reconciliation	118
4.8. Articulating an alternative economy	121
4.9. Conclusion	124
<b>Chapter 5: The Complexity of Forgiveness.....</b>	<b>126</b>
5.1. Introduction	126
5.2. Making sense of our (violent?) origins	127
5.3. Thinking beyond violence	130
5.4. The spirit of <i>ubuntu</i>	131
5.5. Conditional and un-conditional forgiveness	134
5.6. The ethics of forgiveness	138
5.7. Aporetic forgiveness	140
5.8. To harm and to heal	144
5.9. Ethics, complexity and community	147
5.10. Conclusion	149

<b>Conclusion: Toward a Post-sacrificial Future.....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>6.1. From autonomy to interdependence</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>6.2. From analogy to self-similarity</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>6.3. From binary to interplay</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>6.4. Forging a post-sacrificial path</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>160</b>

## Introduction

In this thesis I hope to provide a novel contribution to the existing discussion in social theory around the nexus between violence and identity. To begin speculating about the linkages between forms of violence and formations of identity, I pose two pertinent questions. Firstly, to what extent has violence historically acted as a force of identity (re) construction? And secondly, what is the precise nature of the connection between the violence employed in the formation of individual and collective identities? Or in other words, how do we account for the filtration of violence between levels of social existence? In tracing the theme of the violence-identity nexus to address these questions, in the first chapter I shall discuss René Girard's theory of the centrality of violence in human culture. In an oeuvre that spans more than thirty years, and draws from a wide range of work from ethnological, anthropological and socio-political fields, Girard has compiled an extremely convincing and equally terrifying account of the tendency of groups to seek out an outsider against whom to perpetrate violence as a modus for inventing its identity or sense of self. In *Violence and the Sacred* (1977) Girard contends that at the foundation of any community stands an act of collective murder that brings cycles of reciprocal violence between humans as mimetic creatures to a close. Rivals defer their aggression onto a scapegoat victim who is unanimously sacrificed by the community and such a violent *arche-sacrificial* ritual generates a collective solidarity that accounts for the violent origin of human culture. Based on his deduction that human culture was formed in violence, and that collectivities know *only* the spilling of blood as a catalyst for social cohesion, Girard proposes that *culture necessarily sustains itself violently* through the re-enactment of ancient rituals that invoke the expulsion or even eradication of an *arche* or original 'other'. Following this conceptual scheme, we may argue that all collective identities (groups, societies, nations, states and empires) are diachronically or historically (re) constructed through a re-enactment of this sacrificial logic.

In the second chapter, I shall argue following Julia Kristeva (whose work is rooted in a long psychoanalytic tradition dating back to Sigmund Freud) that this sacrificial logic also accounts, synchronically<sup>1</sup>, for the constitution of subjectivity as such. In Kristeva's model it is the sacrificial rejection of the mother, or abjection,

---

<sup>1</sup> The use of the word "synchronic" in this study derives from De Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1974).

which is originary (in a constitutive sense) to the subject's emergence into society. She posits a "single founding and traumatic moment that inaugurates the experience of abjection" (Hook 2003:53). It is traumatic insofar as the initial separation of the subject from the unity within the maternal body that constitutes the founding moment of subjectivity formation (Anderson 2000) involves violence, or the violent expulsion of the mother. Abjection enacted as matricide, then, is a vital sacrificial moment in the construction of subjectivity within patriarchal culture because the maternal body poses the primary threat to its autonomy (Oliver 1998). By extension, the perpetual rejection of abject forces (of all traces the maternal body) is necessary in the securing of the stable and cohesive identity. From Kristeva I hope to illustrate that subjectivity is constructed sacrificially in a patriarchal context.

In chapter three, I shall argue that this structural similarity reveals the violent nature of Western modernity – concerned as it had been with the violent construction and maintenance of subjectivity and collectivities like the state. There is thus something modernist<sup>2</sup> in both the work of Kristeva and Girard whose understanding of identity formation works on the principle of exclusion, or definition *at the cost of*. Social solidarity is induced by a scapegoat sacrifice that depends upon the eradication of the Other and similarly, the sacrificial violence involved in the emergence of the subject in the social order demands the symbolic annihilation of the (m)Other. This reveals that the violent expunging of the scapegoat victim to create community is *comparable in logic* to the violent abjecting of the maternal body in the construction of subjectivity. In both instances, sacrifice is the modus whereby the autonomy of the individual and collective are constructed and sustained and it is the specific nature of this comparison that this thesis intends to scrutinize.

In seeking to make comprehensive sense of the violence-identity nexus by clarifying conceptually the coterminous articulation of a fascination with personal autonomy and collective sovereignty as exemplified in the Newtonian paradigm<sup>3</sup>, I will examine the ways in which political theorists like Thomas Hobbes, Benedict de Spinoza, Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, articulate the relationship between a violent human nature and violent state interaction. From here, it will become possible to engage one of the founding mythologies of Western modernity –

---

<sup>2</sup> In terms of the historical narrative employed here, "modernist" is associated with "Newtonian" and "post-modern" with "post-Newtonian".

<sup>3</sup> This use of the word "Newtonian" derives from authors like Capra (1982) and Merchant (1983).

that violence is the default-state of human nature (Hobbes; Girard) and, consequently, of political associations (Hobbes, Kant, Spinoza, Waltz, Morgenthau *et al*). The case of the identity articulation of the modern man and the modern state provides an excellent, specific example of the violence-identity nexus and whilst I shall explore the extent to which both were forged in violent expulsion of the feminine as Other, my project is a philosophical one, which seeks to launch a more fundamental critique of the possibility of conceiving identity formation beyond a reductionist association with violence.

To do so, I shall argue for a synthetic unity of Girard and Kristeva's analyses of sacrificial violence that will offer two important insights into the violence-identity nexus. One, that sacrificial violence has both a diachronic or historical dimension (Girard) and a synchronic or constitutive dimension (Kristeva) and two, that sacrificial violence accounts not only for the formation and maintenance of large *collective* identities (societies, cultures or civilizations) but also for the formation of subjectivity at a *personal* level. Despite the similarity of sacrificial violence in the construction of individual and collective identity, what is lacking is a model that can account for the violence-identity nexus *as a systemic phenomenon*, or an account that can accommodate an understanding of violent identity formation that is engaged *at all levels of social existence* (be it the individual, community, state or empire). To put forward such a comprehensive theory on the basis of which to postulate some kind of "analogical relationship" between human nature (subjectivity) and state formation (collective identity) is not a radical departure from conventional political theory. Where social contract theorists read the relation between man and state in analogous terms, I propose that the birth of the Western ideal of the modern, autonomous individual is *epistemically coterminous* with the emergence of the modern nation-state that points us to a more fundamental connection than such Hobbesian analogies may suggest. What I am searching for is an interpretative model that tells us how methodologically the "below" relates to the "above. I believe that such an integrated, comprehensive model that can accommodate both an individual and collective level explanation of the violence-identity nexus becomes available when we view society in complex dynamical terms.

The primary goal of the final two chapters is to discuss, in a comprehensive way, what it would mean to disengage from the violence of inventing and reinventing the identities of individuals, communities and states sacrificially. Again, I suspect that

complexity theory will be extremely useful in this pursuit. Complexity is a nascent and vast domain of knowledge that constitutes various branches of study. From mathematics the field of fractal geometry has developed. Computer science offers another area of study concerned with the development and application of computer simulated models that enable us to understand society as network or interdependent entities. Advances in physics have allowed for the emergence of chaos theory and new approaches in the life sciences have made the reappraisal of an organismic view of society possible. Given the limitations of this study I cannot possibly delimit the entire domain. Instead I shall draw on a very specific set of contributions from physics (chaos theory), mathematics (fractal geometry) and the life sciences (revival of the organismic world-view) and explore only those concepts necessary for my re-reading of Kristeva and Girard; a re-reading that is aimed at conceiving the formation of subjectivity (chapter four) and collective identity (chapter five) in non-sacrificial terms. This means that concepts like “emergence” and “non-linearity” – central as they may be to complexity studies - will not be discussed. This thesis, then, is not “about” complexity theory. Rather, I believe concepts central to that emergent domain can allow me to make two strategic moves. Firstly, to address the question at both the individual and the social level and thus explore the possibility of identity formation beyond violence in *systemic* (i.e. self-similar) *terms*. Secondly, it allows me to sever the modernist connection between identity and autonomy/sovereignty and to prioritise the inter-relatedness or interdependence of entities as basic, ontological assumption. In my opinion both these points need to be explored in order to chart a way towards a post-sacrificial identity formation. The combination of self-similarity and organismic functionalism accounts for or explains the specific way in which “complexity” is read and used in this thesis<sup>4</sup>.

The opportunity to do so testifies to the new space opened by current paradigmatic shift from the Modernist/Newtonian to a post-Newtonian worldview that may be as significant as the shift from the organismic to Newtonian world that occurred several hundred years ago (see Capra 1982). A move of this magnitude involves a complete revision of the ideas and values that sustained the previous hegemonic order and no aspect of social existence will go unaffected. For example,

---

<sup>4</sup> In the complexity domain there does not seem to be much consensus on the relationship between “complexity” and chaos theory. Some might argue that my reading and use of the domain is more closely aligned to “chaos theory” than complexity theory. For a discussion of the complexity of the domain itself, see Thrift (1999).

the sacrificial mechanisms that have historically ensured our sense of individual and collective selfhood have begun to fail us. This *failure of violence* in acting as an effective catalyst for identity formation stimulates what Girard terms a “sacrificial crisis” that leads to an *eruption of violence* in a community. This is manifest in the increased viciousness and prevalence of violence in the contemporary global (dis)order. Indeed, this “crisis of degree” has reached global proportions as cycles of retaliatory violence have been unleashed by in the international arena and are being played out in the streets of Baghdad and the undergrounds of London. We thus find ourselves in a perplexing and intimidating moment in human history. An instinctual response is pessimistic and reads the nature of the multifaceted crisis of transition in destructive terms. But we must remember that after a time of destruction and decay, comes a time of rebirth. In drawing my inspiration from Fritjoy Capra who wrote, “During the painful process of disintegration the society’s creativity – its ability to respond to challenges – is not completely lost” (1983:10), I seek to excavate the creative dimension of the subject and society’s response to the violence of disintegration that has historically been buried, even sacrificed, but certainly not lost.

In theorising identity formation in the light of this paradigm shift, I hope to chart a way forward beyond the systemic fascination of individuals, communities and states with “autonomy” and thus offer an optimistic account of the possibility of articulating identity beyond its historical nexus with violence.

# Chapter 1

## The Sacrificial Search for Collective Selfhood

The women came into view, nearly a thousand of them. Some of them who had babies in their arms raised them up and waved them like flags of grief and vengeance. Others younger with chests puffed out like warriors, wielding sticks, whilst the elderly were an awful sight as they yelled so hard the veins in their skinny necks looked almost ready to snap. The men brought up the rear: two thousand frenzied madmen, pit-boys, colliers, and repairers *moving in a single block, so closely packed together that they could not be distinguished from the uniform earth-coloured mass.* All that could be seen was their burning eyes and the black holes of their mouths *as they sang the Marseillaise...above their heads an axe was raised...a single axe, the banner of the mob, and it stood out against the sky like the blade of a guillotine.*

– **Germinal**, Emilé Zola (my translation)

All Nation-States are born and found themselves in violence

– **On Forgiveness**, Jacques Derrida

### 1.1. Introduction

In her beautifully poetic and poignant work *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2001) Arundhati Roy reveals the presence of scapegoating in the policies and planning of the Indian government. In particular she refers to the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, who in his addresses to the nation and published propaganda, dressed up as poetry, has actively sought to mobilise the peoples' support of continued violent retribution against Pakistan. Roy claims he has done so by fuelling the notion of Indians as long-suffering victims of their neighbour's aggression. She writes

That's the substance of it. That's our meat and our drink. We need enemies. We have so little sense of ourselves as a nation, we cast about for targets to define ourselves against. To prevent the state from crumbling, we need a national cause, and other than our currency (and of course, poverty, illiteracy and elections), we have none...*This is the road that has led us to the (nuclear) bomb. This search for selfhood* (Roy 2001:27; emphasis added)

In India, Roy claims that the search for selfhood is intrinsically violent. She argues the nation's fragile identity is predictably and perpetually bolstered against collapse by mobilising the masses against a series of targeted enemies who are constructed as the source of the state's malaise. India is by no means unique in this regard. From the Salem Witch Hunts to the French Revolution, to the Holocaust's Kristalnacht and

Auschwitz to the Black Death, the Crucifixion of Christ, McCarthyism and Mao's Cultural Revolution to the Rwandan genocide, Sarajevo, Kosovo and most recently the War on Terror, collective identities are relentlessly defined vis-à-vis a diminished, sacrificeable emissary. What these parties – from women to Jews to Communists to blacks to Iraqis to homosexuals to ethnic minorities – have in common is that they are all the victims of unjust violence or discrimination. They are victims upon whom evil, fear, wrong-ness and violence pent up in society are projected, precisely because they are constructed as the Other which, it is believed, stands diametrical opposed to an accepted way of life or system of beliefs. The other (and all that it embodies) needs to be held on the outside to assert that which is held dear. Whether *They* (the oft unnameable, unrecognisable, formless enemy who we do not know yet know to fear) pose a veritable threat or not, is trivial; the point is that they *become* real enemies. We 'cast around for them' and ultimately we find them because our sense of self demands it. We believe these enemies embody a threat to that which we are, or that which we as a community seek to become. Govier writes:

Wounded individuals and groups seek their own healing and redemption, the restoration of their own power and self-esteem, in their ability to assert themselves and impose suffering on others" (2002:34).

All anguished collectivities seek out the blood of minorities, outsiders and constructed others whom the group seeks to brutalise, dehumanise and even murder. This collective action *seems* to possess a therapeutic power through which the community may restore a sense of social harmony and redeem its flagging sense of self-identity. In simple terms, the construction of strong group identity through the manipulation of 'us versus them' logic to bolster group spirit and divert attention from group problems (Bailie 1995:47) is a well-documented phenomenon. Girard however postulates a more fundamental explanation. His hypothesis places *violence at both the heart of human nature and at the origin of human culture* and proposes that *all* collectivities (whether families, tribes, groups, communities or nation-states) construct their identities through violent unanimous action perpetrated against a scapegoat. He argues that in circumstances where the very identity of the group and the sense of solidarity amongst its members are fundamentally challenged, individuals become immersed in group or mob violence perpetrated against a more or less arbitrary outsider. This points to the thematic concern of this chapter, namely to make sense of

the nexus between violence and collective identity, or in other words to understand the ways in which violence enacted collectively generates an invigorated sense of social unity. To do so is a daunting task, as it requires us to delve into the dark side of human nature and confront the reality of the viscous, violent underbelly of our cultural order. It also requires us to confront the reality that the more uncertain the community is of its sense of self and the closer the community comes to crumbling, the more frantic the search for scapegoats and the more extreme the violence against them becomes. Communities search desperately for a form of violence that promises to wield transformative power – a public hanging, a necklacing or even ethnic massacre will no longer do in generating the desired social unity. The enemy must not merely be attacked; they must be destroyed, annihilated. The terror lies in the (retrospective) realisation that the scapegoat ‘other’ whom we seek to exclude, expel or even kill is not as distant, not as foreign, and not as malefic as we like to convince ourselves. History reveals that victims of scapegoat violence are, for example, our German (Jewish) professor, our Rwandan (Tutsi) neighbour or our American (Muslim) doctor. They are one of us, members of the community who in one way or another are marked as sufficiently different from “us”. It is this *difference* which is emphasised while that which is *common* is symbolically sacrificed or forgotten, which allows communities to generate their identities by devaluing and dehumanizing outsiders and ultimately, committing “terrible crimes against them”(Baillie 1995:47). The conclusions that Girard arrives at horrify our moral sensibilities as they implicate *us* in violence enacted against a denigrated ‘other’. It is not merely a case of our complicity that shocks us, but the allegation that our human nature, or more specifically our mimetic proclivities, acts as the catalyst for such violence.

## 1.2. Mimetic violence

To begin our inquiry into the nature of sacrificial strategies employed by both visible and invisible groups in the generation of collective identities, I look to Girard’s (1977) hypothesis that historically the construction of a community’s sense of selfhood is intrinsically and inevitably violent. As one of the founding principles of (violent) human culture Girard presents the notion of “mimetic rivalry”. My immediate task then is to uncover the notion of mimetic desire as presented in Girard’s theory and assess the extent to which it provides an adequate *model for the formation of social or collective identity* (Anderson 2000: 217).

Imitation is a defining characteristic of human beings; it is our most primal desire. We instinctually copy the behaviour, speech patterns and desires of others, whom we model ourselves on. We learn to talk and act through these processes of imitation, which serve as the nascent subject's proverbial rite of passage into the social order. Imitation is closely linked to the concept of mimesis. Although in common usage the two terms are used interchangeably, for the purposes of this paper it is necessary to distinguish between them for the former involves a degree of "conscious intention that the term 'mimesis' does not necessarily imply" (Bailie 1995:118). The distinction is best illustrated with reference to a very simple triangular model between the subject, the object and the model (in Girard and Williams 1996). For example *imitation* occurs if one person (the model) desires an object and others imitate this desire. The interaction is therefore between the subject (the imitator), and the model (the imitated) and centres on the desire for the object. Consequently in this dynamic the individual (the subject) seeks to appropriate an object not because s/he desires it but because another person (the model or imitated) desires it. To this end it seems that desire for an object is never desire for the object itself, but rather lies in the knowledge that someone else desires it. This implies that any belief in freedom of choice is a myth, an illusion of our times. Two examples illustrate this point.

The first is of two young children who are placed in a nursery full of toys (Bailie 1995:116-118). The first child randomly selects a toy to play with, which will invariably be the same toy that the second child wants, and will assume it is the plaything he wanted all along. In other words one child is perfectly happy to ignore the toy, until the other child suddenly wants it, at which point the toy becomes an extremely desirable object. The object's meaning as desirable is constructed between and as a result of the interaction between the children involved. The first child is unwilling to give the toy up and the second child is unwilling to play with any other toy. Consequently the toy is at the heart of the two children's squabble, each considering the other to be the 'sole cause of the crisis' (ibid:118).

A supporting example is the very existence of consumer culture. The way we dress, the gadgets we buy, the places we eat, the films we watch, the objects we covet and the general dividing line between the consumer goods we like and dislike, are all mimetically mediated. In *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981) Jean Baudrillard argues precisely this in proposing that whilst the individual in consumer society may believe they have a range of choices between the commodities

they consume, these options are predetermined and pre-coded (Kellner 1989:81) and autonomous choice is therefore an illusion. We want commodities, Baudrillard argues, not because of their inherent value but because of their *sign* value. Synthesizing the two points, we can argue that the consumer culture is a function of mimetic envy. Within such a society, where the consumption of commodities signifies happiness, affluence and prestige (ibid:13), individuals seek to imitate other consumers and emulate trends that they too may achieve the status of the model. As Girard writes, "the subject desires an object only once he knows it is desired by another person whom he admires" (Girard 1996:37).

The subject's desire is therefore neither spontaneous nor autonomous, but rather an emulation of the models' desire. Desire then is not an internal force of an independent subject but is externally mediated; defined according to the Other as opposed to being defined by Oneself (Girard 1996:35). Girard goes so far as to say that *all* desires are a product of mimetic mediation. On this view our lives are mimetically structured to such a great degree that it has become 'banal' (Ushedo 2001:140) and we hardly reflect on it. It would seem we are victims of 'mimetic paralysis'. We are crippled by our mimetic desires that abolish our ability to make "autonomous" decisions. This claim effectively denies us our individuality and our capacity for independent choice that we hold so dear. And indeed Girard is in fundamental conflict with Freud on this point. In Freud's earliest descriptions of the emergence of the Oedipus complex, he explains a situation in which the young boy imitates father, *then falls in love with his mother* and ends up fighting his father for the mother's attention. Girard disputes exactly this "then falls in love with mother". For Freud, the desire for the mother is a sign of our autonomous desire, born from the self and directed at the mother. Girard disagrees. When the boy falls in love with mother he does so because he is still imitating the father (1977:169). In the following chapter I shall look more extensively at the notion of the "Oedipus Complex" with reference to the work of Freud, Girard, Lacan and Kristeva in a discussion of the sacrificial dimension of subjectivity formation.

In this chapter, in terms of Girard's mimetic theory based upon the triangular model, it is fair to assume that the subject and the model eventually desire the same object. This overlap of desire ensures that *one is a model for others and has a model himself*. There is thus a perpetual competition between individuals who want what someone has or possesses that which someone else desires. In seeking to *appropriate*

the same object and in reaching for the same object, *they become rivals for that object*. This is precisely the conflictive aspect of mimesis that can be observed in the nursery in the interplay between the two children and the desired object. Such a clash of desires invariably leads the self to see the other as a rival, a nemesis. The challenge stirs in the rivals certain aggressive urges which incite a physical response. Anderson (2000:17) writes “it is the miming of another’s desire that necessarily leads to conflict” precisely because the model will not give up ownership of the object and the subject will not give up pursuit of it. On the contrary, as the original subject reaches to appropriate the object, the model’s desire for the object increases when he finds his attempts to obtain the object thwarted by the rival. The result is that “each becomes the imitator of his own imitator and the model of his own model [and] violence is generated by this process” (Girard 1996:9). Otherwise said, aggression is stirred up by this tussle in which rivals attempt to hinder one another in their attempts to appropriate the desired object. Up until now we have been looking at imitation, but in this model, the object drops off the radar and the relation is centred on the rivalry between subjects. When the subject becomes more concerned with the model of desire than the desired object, *this is mimesis*. According to Girard and Anspach, the mimetic mechanism operates spontaneously within the individual, quite independent from rational thought (in Juergensmeyer 1992); it is thus best defined as *unconscious imitation*. In principle, mimetic desires do not necessarily lead to conflict, however in practice they often do. The struggle of the subject is to *gain a mastery over the rival*, or to *become* the model. As such the self becomes bound to the other through violence. For example, as the subject gets closer to the acquisition of the object of desire and subsequently the model becomes increasingly hostile to the subject’s advancement (Hamerton-Kelly 1994:9) and the conflict intensifies to the point of violence. Then, *imitation leads to mimesis and mimesis leads to violence*.

To control and channel our violent impulses so that social life remains possible, societies erect rules and taboos that attempt to create distance between individuals to prevent them becoming rivals. However these social mechanisms are imperfect and cannot offer a guarantee against the consequences of mimetic rivalry. As a result of the intensity of interaction between rivals who become obsessed with one another, the differences between them are gradually eroded and they become replicas of one another – mimicking one another’s actions, desires and violence. They become twins, doubles or what Girard dubs “enemy brothers”, that is, “matching

images of violence” (1977:79). By this he means that rivals engaged in such a mimetic rivalry are levelled in uniform violent behaviour fuelled by equally fervent feelings of hate and obsession (ibid). Antagonists are equally terrified by the dissolution of difference between themselves and the person that they detest most and thus resort to violence to reinstate the difference that is agonisingly eroded by this rivalry. Once the violence encapsulated between rivals is released, like the blood that is spilt, it seeps and spreads contagiously throughout the social order as “their impurity is contagious and anyone who remains in their presence risks becoming a party to their quarrel” (Girard 1977:28). Through ever-spiralling circles of imitation and can spiral into a crisis of epic proportions, as even those not directly involved in the initial rivalry may mimic the violence it produces. “There is something infectious about the spectacle of violence” Girard writes, “Indeed at times it is impossible to stay immune from its infection” (1977:30). Mimetic conflicts spiral towards the point of destruction when the rivalry is no longer about obtaining the object of desire but rather the *elimination of the rival* (ibid:121). It is only through the *eradication of the other* that individual identity can be restored.

### 1.3. The Surrogate

The spirit of ‘mimetic rivalry’ has existed since the origin of human history and still today acts as a catalyst of conflict between human beings. In simple summation we may say that mimesis breeds rivalry and rivalry breeds violence. The originary violence, which as we shall see stands at the origin of the primal social order, is rooted in *mimetic desire*. Girard writes in *The Scapegoat*:

The future moon-god is obviously driven to volunteer by the wish to outstrip all the other gods, the spirit of mimetic rivalry. He wants to be without rival, the first among them, one who acts as a model for others without having a model himself (Girard 1986:64).

When mimetic desires mutate into violent mimetic rivalry, mimetic violence contagiously saturates the social order that threatens to destroy the entire social fabric. It is on the basis of this permeation that Girard asserts that violence is *endemic* in all societies (Hamerton-Kelly 1987:6). By endemic he means that once it exists it will not fade away, it cannot dissipate naturally. No element of social life is immune from the contaminating force of violence, promulgated by the suspicion and fear that govern rivalrous human relationships. One act of violence leads to a retaliatory act, which

degenerates into an unending cycle of reciprocal killings and violent sprees of vengeance, as murder is the only answer for murder (ibid:8). For each attack the counterattack is more brutal as every act of retaliation is driven by the (naïve) belief that if the act is violent enough it will put an end to all other revenge killings, thus bringing the cycle to a close. The irony is that the escalation of the mimetic rivalry culminates, not in the killing of the rival, but in an act of sacrificial violence that imitates or re-enacts the *arche* solution as a ritualistic expulsion or killing of a relatively arbitrary victim. In other words the ‘contaminating force’ of self-propagating cycles of violence within the social order is finally contained by a violent act against a “single polluted enemy” (Girard 1977:81).

This constitutes the second key principle of Girard’s theory – the scapegoat or “surrogate victim mechanism”, which refers to the one last act of violence, or ‘final’ killing through which the mimetic crises is terminated. As Girard explains:

Mimetic desire [as] the catalyst for the crisis, would eventually destroy the entire community if the surrogate victim were not at hand to halt the process and the ritualised mimesis were not at hand to keep the conflictual mimesis from starting afresh (1977:148).

Where the community is one moment engulfed in a flood of violence from the plenitude of unbridled conflicts between ‘mirror’ rivals, a moment later the antagonists (greatly facilitated by the dissolution of difference between ‘doubles’) unite in a collective force directing their violent fury toward one isolated individual. The mimetic impulses within society generate a snowball effect and everybody’s chaotic, random accusations polarize to one individual (or indeed a marginal group), culminating in a situation of *unanimity-minus-one* (Girard 1977:259). The whole community is united in a collective anger towards one victim. In other words, rivals rapidly unite in a single purpose, or mimic one another’s violence against a common victim, thus re-directing the violence within the community as unanimity becomes a function of our imitation of others in the group. Such unanimity is crucial and it is only through our proclivity for imitation (of the thoughts and the behaviour of others) that all members of a community will believe that the victim is truly responsible for all the internal tensions, disorder and rivalries pent up within the community (Girard 1986). The moment of unanimous deflection or transference *from rivals to the substitute*, with a view to rehabilitating society, corresponds with the emergence of the sacrificial victim, or scapegoat.

For Girard, the term scapegoat has two references. The first is a biblical reference drawn from the Mosaic ritual of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. In this verse the scapegoat is “one of the two goats that was chosen by Lot to be sent alive into the wilderness, the sins of the people having been symbolically laid upon it, while the other was appointed to be sacrificed” (Girard 1977:73). This denotes a scapegoat *ritual* that must be distinguished from a scapegoat *effect*. The former is enacted as a rite whereby a victim is traditionally offered as a sacrifice, most often to appease the gods of a primitive community. Girard defines the latter as, “The strange process through which two or more people are reconciled at the expense of a third party, who appears guilty or responsible for whatever ails, disturbs or frightens the scapegoaters...by expelling and destroying him” (Girard 1996:12). The effect then is an intimate connection that emerges between individuals who collectively partake in the act of sacrifice. The second, anthropological reference draws an analogy between the Leviticus ritual and other rituals that were underpinned by the belief that feelings of suffering, discontent or guilt within a community were transferable onto (an animal or human) ritually selected victim (Girard 1977:74). In Girard’s understanding of scapegoating, the community, which feels that it is under attack by some dangerous almighty force that has brought a plague, an endemic, a natural disaster or another form of panic, dissolves into a crazed mob. Prohibitions, rituals and social institutions were established with a view to containing exactly this sort of descent into disorder, by delineating the pure from the impure in two senses. The first is to isolate those individuals (lepers, criminals etc.) that embody impurity from the broader community in a bid to contain the infectious spread of disorder throughout the social order.

The second related precautionary measure was to guard against the de-differentiating chaos that emerges in times when mimetic rivalries turn violent and spread like plague that threatens to annihilate a community (Girard 1986). In the case of the latter, instead of trying to suppress mimetic violence, the community encourages it, seeking to return to a state of social stability with recourse to the ritual sacrifice of the surrogate victim. In such instances, where all individuals are mimetically manipulated, the collectivity is transformed into a mob (Girard 1996:12). Not unlike the fictional scene described in the opening of this chapter, in which the coal miners of Montsou have spontaneously risen up in revolt, the mob actively seeks out a victim upon whom to project all the pent up fury, desperation, *grief and vengeance* of the group. Girard gives us insight into the mentality of such a mob:

Then, like all mobs, this one turned to violence: the people picked the first available victim, the likeliest scapegoat, the visiting stranger, but they never found out what really caused their violence; *they believed in their story too much* (in Hamerton-Kelly 1987:98; emphasis added)

From this quotation it is clear Girard believes that the escalation of mimetic rivalries culminates in an act of collective violence against an outsider, performed by the mob. The victim is *scapegoated* for the 'sins' of others as well as for a whole gamut of tensions within society (Hamerton-Kelly 1987:86) and is therefore *sacrificed* in a bid to generate a sense of solidarity. Girard's theory of collective violence is positioned vis-à-vis the genealogy of mob violence as developed by Sigmund Freud, yet at the same time goes beyond it in *positing such unanimity violence as the generative function of all human culture*. In his analysis of *Group Psychology* (1922), Freud argues that the behaviour of the mob is socially constructed. It is not instinctual but the product of a dynamic between people that generates a "herd instinct". In a group individuals subscribe to a "collective mind" (ibid:7) which makes them feel, think and act in ways which they never would if in isolation. As Freud says with reference to Le Bon's work:

The individual forming part of a group acquires, solely from numerical considerations, a sentiment of invincible power which allows him to yield to instincts which, had he been alone, he would have perforce kept under restraint (ibid:9).

In forming the group, all individuals succumb to the logic of the group and differences between individuals are obliterated in the group. As Zola describes, all differences between women and men, the young and the elderly are effaced as they merge into a "*uniform earth-coloured mass*" united in a common search for blood. As Girard says, they *pick* the same victim. This is not a 'choice' as much as a function of mimetic mediation. It is our mimetic inclinations that constitute a fundamental part of our human condition, which cause us to imitate the actions of others who in turn respond mimetically. The mob is thus a product of the rampant indiscriminate spread of imitative violent behaviour and testifies to the susceptibility of individuals to mimetic contagion. LeBon states that, "In a group every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest" (in Freud 1922:10). He goes on to say that this behaviour is *contrary* to his nature and individuals who are immersed in a group fall under the magnetic influence of that group. Le Bon however

fails to offer us a psychological explanation for the mechanism that operates at the level of the individual who succumbs to mob violence – which explains why his work has fallen into disfavour with crowd psychologists. Gobodo-Madikizela (2000:111-113) for example, testifies to the way in which participants in necklace murders gradually stopped thinking independently, and in imitating the fury and frustration of each other, surrendered themselves to the group.

The supplement to this is the mimetic predilection of the human condition. Mimesis is the mechanism *within* the individual that operates on the basis of the imitation of others. The mimetic mechanism therefore saves the concept of de-personalisation without which we are left with modernist rational-choice theories of crowd behaviour (Gobodo-Madikizela 2000). Violent mimetic rivalry has a contagious effect; it breeds a mob mentality in which the moral autonomy of the individual succumbs to the mass hysteria. As Kristeva (1987:24) elegantly describes, “The object in hypnosis devours or absorbs the ego, the voice of consciousness becomes blurred, in loving blindness one becomes a criminal without remorse (ibid:24). The ego, the conscience of the individual is *devoured* by the group and any empathy that may arise for the victim is eclipsed by their participation in mob violence and the pressures to conform that are implicit in this immersion (Baillie 1995:51).

In surrendering themselves to their passions, individuals *become* lost in the mob and subsequently forego their individuality. This culminates in an *intensification of violence* perpetrated by the group against the scapegoat. In the midst of a frenzied mob, violence reproduces itself at an exponential rate and rationality diminishes at a similar rate. The violence gets more extreme by reciprocity; participants egg each other on and become devoured by their appetite for violence. As illustrated in the description of Zola’s mob who will settle for nothing less than “*the blade of the guillotine*”, a violent and bloody public execution in which the three thousand odd can all participate, if not directly then by their presence at least. Only under the chop *of a single axe*, which is at one and the same time a symbol of violence and symbol of unity, will the mob find fulfilment of its quest and with that a rejuvenation of its sense of identity.

#### 1.4. Violent culture

In Girard's conceptual scheme, such a violent *arche*-sacrificial ritual enacted against a first scapegoat accounts for the violent origin of human culture. Girard incorporates both historical and constitutive aspects into this meta-narrative. He logically deduces from the operation of the sacrificial mechanism in contemporary societies that some violence must have occurred. Unsure of the nature of this violence he deduces that a primal sacrificial act of violence must have occurred at the beginning of social history. This involved a random collection of human beings; the primal horde that spontaneously and unanimously excluded one individual by blaming him or her for some disaster that had befallen them. Girard's historical account then is that the first community is formed through a collective sacrificial act, which is quite close to Freud, who can be attributed with the original concept of collective murder (Girard 1977:194). Whilst acknowledging that Freud's account of the origin of society and guilt are very problematic and circular (Davis 2000), there is one point worth noting. Freud (1913) postulates that at the beginning of totemism we find a violent and jealous father who takes all the women for himself and drives away all his sons as they grow up. But then, he writes, "[o]ne day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end to the patriarchal horde. United they had the courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them individually" (ibid:203). The horde transforms into the primary fraternal clan and the *commemoration* of the act of parricide in a totem meal (ibid.) becomes the originary act of culture. What then matters according to Davis is "not that the *father* is murdered, but that the father is *murdered*, that the crime is more important than the victim" (Davis 2000:196). Girard's point is that whilst Freud notes the connection between violence and religious totemism from the act of collective murder, he fails to posit a generative principle or mechanism that can develop a general theory beyond a single act of murder (Girard 1977:197). Girard remedies this by unearthing the "unanimity-minus-one" principle as formal mechanism that accounts for the formation of human culture. In addition, from a constitutive point of view, it is possible to isolate a segment of society, analyse it and arrive at a sacrificial mechanism. Both historical and constitutive accounts re-enforce each other and fortify Girard's thesis that society is constituted sacrificially.

Hobbes offers a third mutation of this interplay of the historical and the constitutive. His question is rational, conceptual and very much driven by a

Newtonian reductionist methodology. He looked to articulate a rational explanation of the modus whereby society is constituted by first understanding the facts of man. He offers the social contract narrative as such an explanation, which will be more fully explored in chapter 3. Crucial here is that for Hobbes the state of nature is quite literally a methodological fiction, it is a useful heuristic device to explain how society originates, but he is unperturbed by whether the state of nature is historically true or not. In *The Leviathan* (1914), Hobbes states that the solution to the war of 'everyman' against 'everyman' in the state of nature is the power of one, the Sovereign who remains outside the social contract, thus in the state of nature. The sovereign has unlimited force which he may wield to secure the security and prosperity of civil society. In mimetic theory, mimesis transforms a war of all against all, into a war of all against one. As Bailie (1995:121) summarises, "Mimesis...brought the first culture together like a magnet". The primary difference for Girard and Anspach (in Juergensmeyer 1992:147) is that social contract theory assumes rationality whereas mimetic theory draws upon a spontaneous (unconscious) mechanism operating within the individual.

By all three accounts, the birthing of a new sociality requires the participation of all members of a collective, united vis-à-vis a unique identified 'other'. Whilst Freud acknowledges the importance of the connection of violence with religious totemism and Hobbes postulates rational, voluntaristic unanimity, Girard offers a spontaneous, generative principle. He contends that the violence in question is not merely "collective" violence, but an act of *spontaneous unanimity violence* against the scapegoat who is unanimously declared responsible for the violent divisions in society. Such exertions of violence, collectively enacted against the victim, stimulate strong emotional ties amongst its constituent members thus leading to unprecedented social solidarity. To this end, the violence that threatens to tear society apart is redirected onto the victim and as a result harmony is restored to the community, as Richard Kearney (in Anderson 2000:217) elucidates:

[A] sacrificial mechanism...provides most communities with their sense of collective identity. But the price to be paid is the destruction of an innocent outsider: the immolation of the 'other' on the altar of the 'same'.

But how do we make sense of what Girard terms "a scapegoat-induced return to serenity" (Hamerton-Kelly 1987:91). How exactly are we to conceive of the nature of

the connection between sacrificial violence and the emergence of the sacred? For Girard, human societies are founded on myths of sacrifice (Kearney 1999:251) – the creation and rejuvenation of collective identity is only possible *provided that the ritual sacrifice of the scapegoat is successfully mythologized*. The mythologising of violence *as sacrifice* and not as murder not just any victim, but the *perfect* victim to distinguish *this* act of violence from the countless other acts that preceded it. The notion of ‘perfect’ is hazy given that the victim can be anyone whose sacrifice engenders a sense of collective identity. The ‘selection’ of the scapegoat is by all intents and purposes a groundless accusation; however there are a number of conditions that can be stipulated for the perfect victim whose death best serves the purposes of the sacrificial economy. Girard (1986) explains these criteria in his discussion of Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*, or the myth of Oedipus who in killing his father and marrying his mother was guilty of two crimes, parricide and incest. The closeness of these crimes, the one collective and the other individual, had an undifferentiating effect which Girard contends marked Oedipus as guilty of a third crime, the contamination of the entire collective, thus marking him for scapegoating. Girard writes that Oedipus bears

[T]he sign or stigmata of victimisation. First there is infirmity, Oedipus limps. The hero moreover has arrived in Thebes unknown to all, an outsider in fact if not in essence ... Oedipus manages to accumulate both the marginality of both the outside and the inside ... he is sometimes a mendicant stranger, sometimes an omnipotent monarch ... the infirmity of Oedipus, his wounded childhood, his status as outsider, of stranger, of king, make him a veritable conglomeration of victim-signs (Girard 1986:38–39).

To camouflage the truth of such narratives of violent persecution and thus reconcile the acute crises within society, Girard stipulates that the victim must firstly have some mark or trait of difference around which the accusatory gestures of guilt may mimetically polarise. Against a backdrop of mimetic uniformity only the most notable differences stand out and most often the notable distinguishing features are physical ones (Girard 1991:208). Those with deformity or infirmity will more easily attract the anger of the group as they physically represent the diseased and disordered state of their society as a whole. As a second condition Girard (1977:12) stipulates that the victim must come from the fringes of society, usually these are the dregs of society (prisoners of war, slaves, child urchins, the handicapped or deformed and so forth). At

the same time, there is no reason why a figure from the apex of the social hierarchy cannot be targeted, as with the myth of Oedipus the King, for it is precisely his isolated position at the heart of the community that separates him sufficiently from the group (ibid). The common denominator is the victim has an established status as an outsider (as this greatly reduces the likelihood of the development of a social bond between any the victim and any member of the persecuting community). Herein lies the logic of the fourth criteria that warns against the *integration* (ibid:13) of an individual in a community. The aim of seeking out a sacrificeable victim is to restore harmony to a distressed social order. This requires that the victim be vulnerable, unable to retaliate and most importantly, without champions that would seek to avenge the killing (the victim must be without voice, without face and thus without means of mobilising sympathy). The sacrifice must be an act of violence without any risk of retribution that would plunge society back into cycles of vengeance and counter-vengeance. Following from this is the fifth stipulation that the victim must be de-humanised, reduced to an abstraction or an object (a dog, a cockroach, vermin etc.), as it is the objectification of the victim that makes their mutilation and murder possible. In other words, if the victim is placed *outside the cultural realm* then the usual 'rules' of human engagement do not apply. It is virtually impossible to do so if the victim has social ties that by their nature would testify to the humanity of the scapegoat. The final requisite is ambiguous, as it requires that the victim must be neither glaringly guilty nor obviously innocent. Girard argues that the surrogate victim mechanism must be delicately poised between 'too much' slippage and 'too little' slippage or contact between the victim and those that the victim represents (1979:39) – at one and the same time a stranger and a king. Associated with the community yet sufficiently removed from it. Why? The answer lies in the third criteria. It is clear that the mechanism will only heal society by transfiguring animosity and fear if the victim is notably separate from those for whom the victim is a substitute (to reinstate a degree of difference). At the same time the victim must be recognizable as a surrogate for the guilty party as there must be *unanimity in the group* that the victim is the one at fault if scapegoating is to harmonise the community (in Hamerton-Kelly 1987:100).

The collective violence of all-against-one hinges on the existence of a perfect victim, for a victim that is *imperfect* in any regard would not be capable of attracting violence to itself and will therefore plunge society back into vengeance, murder and

mayhem. This is closely related to a third stipulated condition for the perfect victim: namely, that the victim has *no voice*, which ensures that the community feels no sympathy and thus poses no possibility of revenge. In such an instance where the scapegoat mechanism is rendered completely ineffective, the connections or ties between members of the group dissolve. As a result, each individual is set back upon him or herself and, Freud argues a *panic* arises (1922:45). The libidinal ties that constitute the fabric of society disintegrate and sacrificial rites are unable to quell the flood of violence pent up in society, hereby threatening to tear society apart. In traditional communities the position of the individual is delineated through an ontological connection to other people, the dissolution of a social bond is distressing. Attempts to master this panic and reclaim a sense of ownership of the place in the social order that is no longer under our control involve violence.

In the study on the connection between various forms of crowd violence, Gobodo-Madikizela (2000) argues that *rumour* consistently acts as a catalyst for violence. In a community gripped in fear, confusion and suspicion, embodied by South African township communities in the 1980s, the role of *rumour* is critical as it functions to create or “settle on” the perfect as described above. It plants the seeds of guilt as witnessed in the necklace murder of Nosipho Zamela in Gobodo-Madikizela’s study. Nosipho was accused of being an *impimpi* (a branded traitor) that informed on her community and slept with the police. Once such a link was established in the mind of the persecuting community, the assumed *becomes* “the guilty”. This *perceived* betrayal *becomes* the cause of social disharmony, or at least this is the community’s truth, their mythology. There is thus no way to doubt the legitimacy of the punishment that is enacted by the community against her (ibid:124). Rumour is

The *source of survival and solidarity* for the community: survival through the unquestioning acceptance of the rumour and solidarity through the creation of a common enemy in the person accused i.e. misdirected revenge (ibid:118; emphasis added).

Feelings of individual anger, anxiety and confusion are augmented within a group. Rumours generate a feeling of *collective outrage* as the community unanimously and uncritically accepts the allegations. In this way, rumour *becomes* an event (Gobodo-Madikizela 2000:119), a way of pre-emptively mythologising as justice what will occur as unjustly murderous. In times of crisis members of a community feel angry, frustrated or impotent; they have limited control over their own lives (they cannot act

against the regime so they seek out a surrogate). At such times participation in rumour, as a predecessor to participation in ritual opens up a space in which participants reclaim a sense of diminished autonomy (ibid:121). If rumour serves as the catalyst for scapegoat violence, myth as retrospective narration or meaning making adds closure in defining this violence as a legitimate and necessary sacrificial ritual thereby confirming the original truth of the rumour. And so the circle closes. Together they ensure the effective functioning of the surrogate victim mechanism.

The cumulative effect of rumour and myth is that individuals who are submerged in violent collective behaviour unanimously direct their violence toward the 'accused'. These accusations are invariably of such a nature that they can never be confirmed, there is no means of verifying their truth or exposing their untruth. Who is to tell if Nosipho was, in fact, a spy? The impossibility of verification is locked in the accusation itself. However this confirmation or denial is not the point, as Le Bon understood, "Groups have never thirsted after truth. They demand illusions and cannot do without them. They constantly give what is unreal precedence over what is real" (in Freud 1922:21). The belief in the victim's guilt is not founded in fact or truth but rather in necessity and the allegations of guilt are 'proved' when the *unanimous* violent action of the group against the 'guilty' regenerates the social bond. This is captured in a telling remark made by one of the marshals involved in the necklace murder of Nosipho:

Once you are called an impimpi, everyone knows what will happen...*All of us knew that she wasn't*, but then she got herself into a police truck, and the label stuck on her. That's why that morning everyone followed us (in Gobodo-Madikizela 2000:130).

Despite the acknowledgement of innocence, the community's need for a scapegoat is so great that it *collectively convinces* itself of the victim's guilt. The actual guilt of the scapegoat is not of concern in the functioning of the scapegoat mechanism – the pivot is that which the persecuting community believes. The scapegoat is not innately guilty, but is constructed as such and thus only "*appears* to incarnate the supreme violence" (ibid:257). The associative image of Nosipho and the police truck, 'confirmed' the rumours, and thus provided the 'evidence' to pronounce the victim *mythically* guilty (Hamerton-Kelly 1987:79). If the victim appears to be the source of all tension and violence within the community, the victim's annihilation is believed to be the only way to liberate the community. The restoration of order and tranquillity

seems to affirm this choice and thus legitimate the violence enacted against the scapegoat. This is the mythic lie, that individuals at the margins of society are guilty for crisis in society and it is this myth that blinds the group to the scapegoating nature of their violence.

Crucial to this whole process then is the myth that the perpetrators of violence are innocent and victims of the violence are guilty. The very order of society requires that the innocence of the victim is concealed so that this violence can be cast as *sacrifice and not as murder*. The survival of human communities thus requires the ignorance of its members to the mechanism's workings. Girard claims that if such sacrificial acts of violent unanimity or the "expulsion of the surrogate victim" creates and restores the social order then we are dealing with something more fundamental than myth. We "find ourselves dealing not only with myths but also with rituals and the whole question of religion" (Girard 1977:87). We find ourselves in the realm of religion, the very task of which is to give a structure to the sacred and at the same time conceal the acts of sacrifice that structures culture. The *origin* then is not the foundational act of murder as such but the *mythologising* of this act (to say that this murder is a *symbolic* act) that generates a sense of the sacred. This delicate meshing of myth and murder stands at the foundation of cultural order and accounts for the nexus of "violence" and the "sacred".

### 1.5. The violent sacred?

In Girard's in Girard's magnum opus, *Violence and the Sacred* (1977), the Sacred is perceived as a transcendental force that dictates the prohibitions and rituals that must be obeyed to keep violence (as disorder) outside the social order. Members of the community must heed prohibitions for culture can only be sustained if members are cognisant of the *things that they must and must not do* (Hamerton-Kelly 1987:93) where this understanding is intimately related to the task or function of sacrificial rites and rituals to prevent, channel and contain the destructive violent forces born from mimetic rivalry. In particular it is the surrogate victim mechanism, which if masterfully deployed, can negotiate and achieve a renewed sense of social solidarity. In this way, sacrificial violence invents a new form of the sacred – if by "sacred" we understand the cathartic collective experience of calm and awe, which results from this ritualistic expulsion. However failure to translate chaotic violence into social

order, invokes the rain of 'transcendent violence', which can push society to 'the point of total annihilation' (Girard 1977:259).

To achieve the delicate balance needed to preserve the illusion of 'scapegoat guilt,' the god is removed from the community to avoid resurgences of 'bad' violence yet not too far away that it may cease to inspire both awe and dread. The illusion requires that there is an optimum distance (Girard 1977:268) between the community and sacred. Girard argues that if the sacred is too close to the community it loses its transcendental character and the result is the blurring of the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence. The result is the flood of both 'bad' violence and 'bad' blood throughout the social order (ibid). Constructed as the source of all social malign (plague, illness, flood), the community may be cured by riding this party from their midst. Theoretically then, the collective banishment of the scapegoat from the community also banishes all traces of violence and the cathartic effects are attributed to the scapegoat who is divinized. This is a matter of violence *and* the sacred. One may object by noting that Girard reads the relation between violence and the sacred in modernist binary terms. The sacred or the feeling of collective awe, from which the primal community is born, is a function of the violent expulsion of disorder, manifest as violence against the scapegoat. In writing that "the operations of violence and the sacred are ultimately the same process" (ibid:258), it is clear that Girard reads the sacred in purely destructive terms and in so doing constructs violence *qua* destruction as a cultural, political, but also natural, default state.

Because the community has no way of conceiving or understanding the surrogate victim mechanism, they are ignorant to the workings of violent unanimity. Therefore the community "naturally turns toward the victim and seeks to determine whether he is not somehow responsible for miraculous consequences of his own death or exile" (Girard 1977:85). The scapegoat's death does not, miraculously, invoke a violent reprisal from any individual or party because he/she would have been pre-selected as not being able to take revenge but also because, through their death, they miraculously become the source of reconciliation and societal unity. The victim's spilled blood becomes the lifeblood of the community. If the originary act of collective murder restores peace and stability to the community, then it is a *controlled* ritual re-enactment of this originary sacrifice that constantly and in future will regenerate society. Girard's reading of religion is limited to its task of instructing men as to what they must do prevent such destructive violence, or the reign of fury

from the transcendental 'demonic temptor' (ibid:258). He therefore responds solely to the *destructive aspect of the sacred*. In instances when unanimous violence harmonizes society, Girard says (1977:258) the community is offered the 'gratuitous gift of non-violence', or a cathartic moment of peace and social harmony. In saying that violence breeds non-violence, it becomes clear that violence sets the frame and the alternative is conceived of in violent terms. Through the employ of the sacrificial mechanism, violence *gives birth to a new form of the sacred*. The originary sacrificial act therefore engenders the view of the *violent sacred*.

While Girard conceives of the sacred in violent terms, there is the second sense in which violence is linked to the sacred that will be explored extensively in the final chapter as a means to problematise the hegemonic place that the economy of sacrifice occupies in culture – namely, violence *as* the sacred. To begin to interrogate the implications of the conceptual nuance in defining the nexus between the two in terms of 'as', let us take Girard's claim that all primitive divinities (the Sacred) have a double nature as they display both beneficent and maleficent behaviour (Girard 1977). Prometheus, Osiris, Romulus and Christ are all examples offered by Girard of such sacrificial figures that have been retrospectively transfigured into saviour gods who miraculously transform chaos and conflict into order and peace. In this way the divinity stands as a supernatural being which is believed capable of absorbing both 'good' and 'bad' violence. This ambiguity is captured in the sacred or of the Latin, *sacer*, which can be translated as both "sacred" and the "accursed" (ibid:257) and equally in that of the *pharmakos* which in classical Greek is a word that denotes both poison and the antidote for the poison. The surrogate victim is "a supernatural being who sows violence to reap peace; a mysterious saviour who visits affliction on mankind in order subsequently to return it to good health" (ibid:86). In bestowing the good effects of violence, namely the return to serenity, onto the victim the persecutory community construct the *illusion* that the victim is both the cancer and the cure.

At height of the mimetic crisis the (destructive) reciprocal violence of all against all is metamorphosed into (creative) unanimity violence through the intermediary of the surrogate victim. The violence that threatens to tear society apart is redirected onto the victim and in restoring harmony to the community and thus the victim *qua* central figure of the myth becomes "a transcendental symbol not only of violence and disorder, but of peace and order as well" (Girard 1987:92). Whilst Girard reads order as a function of the *violent expulsion of disorder*, and social

formation as a function of *sacrificial exclusion of the scapegoat*, in this citation we see that scapegoat violence has both a generative and a destructive role. The “Sacred” which is born out of such violence becomes a metaphor for that which *is both generative and destructive* and therefore any processes of social reconstruction must surely demand the collective’s engagement with the creative, as much as the destructive, aspect of the sacred.

Whilst Girard acknowledges the conceptualisation of violence *as* the sacred, in writing that the sacred involves “*peace as well as war, creation as well as destruction*” (1977:258), he is very disparaging toward such a “metaphysical attitude to violence” (ibid:258–259). He argues that the metaphysical approach that conceives of violence in transcendental terms is dangerous as it separates violence from man. It speaks the ‘language of pure sacredness’ and thus “detaches violence from man to make it a separate impersonal entity” (ibid:258). By portraying the victim as superhuman, we infer that the victim is *not one of us* and therefore *it is not our violence*, it’s the work of a metaphysical entity that is notably separate from us and over which we have no control. We thus deculpabilise ourselves projecting the source – as well the resolution – of violence to a metaphysical level. In denying our complicity in the violent origins of culture, we generate the illusion that the scapegoat is guilty and the mimetic rivalry is not ours. We are not the guilty party. Quite the contrary, *we are the victims*. However if myth fails in transfiguring human violence into divine violence, then the sacred effectively fails in its task of detaching violence from man, which has lethal consequence for society. Violence is no longer a separate, impersonal entity – on the contrary, within a community it becomes personalised (Girard 1977). It becomes *our* violence. We cannot blame it on the ancestors, the gods or any transcendental force. At the moment of this devastating revelation, we find ourselves *alone with our own violence* and the truth of our “violence is unveiled” (Bailie 1995).

#### **1.6. The crisis of sacrifice**

In Dunstan Wai’s description of violence that consumes African post-colonial states, he writes, “*everywhere, violent eruptions, vengeful massacres, and frenzied power struggles have punctuated the course of political violence since independence*” (in Pollis & Schwab 1979:155; emphasis added). Wai describes a violence that has become endemic and like a contagion erupts, seeps and overflows throughout the

social order. Violence is, quite literally, everywhere and any one and everyone may become its target. Wai succinctly captures the essence of the pervasiveness of violence that has the potential to become pandemic, as theorised by Girard. In his work, Girard speaks of precisely such a deluge of violence, which when unleashed in all its fury permeate all levels of social existence and all human relations.

For Girard, the fabric of human culture is a tapestry weaved of murder and myth, and it is precisely the role of myth to veil the truth of our violence from us. It seeks to “incorporate the point of view of the community that has been reconciled to itself by collective murder and is unanimously convinced that this myth was a legitimate and sacred action” (Williams 1996:150). In other words, myth seeks to legitimise acts of sacrificial violence as good violence (*by no means murder*) enacted unanimously against the scapegoat for the Good of the Community. This ‘Ultimate Good’ is invoked to legitimate all manner of evil perpetrated against all manner of Other. Roy (2001) recognises this tendency in India’s history. She argues the foundational act of Indian nation was born from the oppression, displacement and exclusion of Adivasi people, the original inhabitants of the land. She writes, “their histories, customs and deities were dispensable, and *ultimately sacrificeable*, for the ‘Good of the Nation’” (2001:35). Similarly Roy claims that India’s sworn enemy, Pakistan, is equally *sacrificeable* and she fears her governments willing and able-ness to detonate a nuclear bomb on its neighbour, for the “Good of the Nation”. This is Girard’s point, that scapegoats are *constructed* as the source of all violence and disharmony within the community, who *become* sacrificeable for the good of the community. However through the contemporary moral lens, with help from critical minds such as Roy, we may retrospectively reinterpret the acts of violent persecution perpetrated against the scapegoat as bad or illegitimate violence. In other words with the benefit of hindsight we may begin to label scapegoats as such and allow victims their claim to victimhood. The exposure to the truth of the mechanism is tantamount to the failure of myth and results in the “unveiling of violence” (Baillie 1995). As a result communities are alerted to the truth of the role that the scapegoat plays in regenerating social harmony and this is matched by an increased tendency of the plight of the victim to be brought to light. The success of scapegoating requires that parties defend their own status as victim and the Other as guilty, however for Girard, this inversion of traditional sacrificial logic – namely that the perpetrators are guilty and the victim is innocent – accounts for a *sacrificial crisis*.

As violence is unveiled, it is unleashed. Scapegoating is no longer effective in channelling and expelling violence away from the community, which is thus incapable of regenerating itself with recourse to ancient rituals that rely on surrogate victim's sacrifice to bring violence to an end. In failing to unite the entire community against the identified scapegoat, acts of vengeance occur. These revenge killings fail to bring the violence to a close, but rather fuel further violent reprisals that disintegrate into violent mayhem and *vengeful massacres*. Where sacrificial mechanisms *should* turn "murder and madness into a sacralized bulwark against madness and murder" (Baillie 1995:17), the failure to do so breeds more murder and greater madness. Each person in society falls prey to their mimetic impulses, 'reciprocating violence they experience and duplicating violence they witness' (ibid:121). The combination of mimetic impulses inherent in human nature and the augmentation of violence in human affairs generate a series of violent rivalries that quickly galvanise into a *frenzied* mob. In such a group, governed by passion and panic, the moral autonomy of the individual succumbs to the mass hysteria. Any empathy that may arise for the victim is thwarted by their participation in mob violence and repressed by the pressures to conform that are bound up in this group action (ibid:51).

Crises always emerge when the legitimising myth – on the basis of which good violence is distinguished from bad violence – is revealed. In the absence of a clear distinction between pure (good) and impure (bad) violence, indiscriminate violence spreads rampantly throughout the community. In sum, the loss of the Transcendental Signifier, which is basically any Ultimate Good in the name of which violence can be considered good or necessary, leads to the disintegration of entire system of signification. In this post-colonial moment the failure to redirect violence onto a scapegoat hereby containing it, places a devastating ontological strain on communities whose attempts to assert and sustain themselves following sacrificial means are predisposed to failure.

Such is the crisis of the African community's engagement with their post-coloniality – the generative scapegoat mechanism is no longer capable of emancipating society from its own violence. It is also marked by a failure of the community to conceive of its liberation in anything other than violent terms. Our contemporary crisis is therefore marked by a specific kind of violence, not as Wai contends, specifically *political violence*, and equally the failure to realise an imagined

post-colonial communality is not a purely *political failure*. It is a more fundamental, foundational failure to translate the employ of sacrificial ritualised violence into the articulation of a sovereign sense of selfhood. The failure of myth met with the failure of imagination has unleashed devastating orgies of violence in these fragile communities. In his paper *Warfare, Endemic Violence and State Collapse in Africa* (1999) Chris Allen observes that extensive violence and warfare have become commonplace in Africa from the late 1980s. His research on the nature and prevalence of violence in countries including Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Liberia, Sudan and Angola provides empirical support for Girard's claims. Indeed the (frustrated, failed) attempt of many African communities to make sense of their post-coloniality reads as a Girardian blueprint of the sacrificial crisis.

In the last twenty years violence has become increasingly ubiquitous, demanding vast numbers of victims as the attempts to make ritual sacrifices work become increasingly desperate. Vulnerable groups such as *children, women, the elderly and refugees* (Allen 1999:369) who in an ordered stable polity would be safely removed from the terrain of war instead become inextricably embroiled in it. They have become not only targets of violence and are attacked, mutilated or killed but also act as the agents of violence as attackers, mutilators and murderers. Naturally all warfare involves brutality; however such violence takes an excessively sacrificial turn, as Allen (ibid:370) observes in the prevalence of *violent rites* involving the use of body parts in murders, mutilations and torture, ritually enacted. Previously unthinkable acts of horror, acts of brutal mass slaughter are committed by young children against the elderly; by the elderly against their neighbours; and even between members of kin. Indeed such grotesquely violent acts become commonplace. Such general frenetic erosion of family and community institutions, for Girard (1979) testifies to the *crisis of degree*. By this Girard means that the obliteration of pure – impure distinction led to an obliteration of all other differences through which the social defines itself, differences such as elders, children and the relation between them. *Panic* saturates the society as existing hierarchies, which denote the place of each individual in the community, are toppled. Consequently, the sacrificial crisis can be defined as the crisis of distinction that permeates the entire cultural order (Girard 1979:49). Girard says the following about Degree *qua* social system of differences:

“[it] is the underlying principle of all order, natural and cultural. It permits individuals to find a place for themselves in society; it lends a meaning to things, arranging them in proper sequence within a hierarchy” (ibid:50).

The crisis of degree is a testament to the fury of the moment when things fail to differ. Individuals lose their distinctiveness, identity and ultimately their ontological place in society and as a result, existing social hierarchies are overturned which causes the entire cultural structure to teeter on the brink of collapse. Historically the employ of extreme or founding acts of violence enacted against the scapegoat reconstitutes difference upon which the social order is erected hierarchically. For example, in ancient societies sacrificial rites were delicately and expertly employed by the sages of society, whose ability to establish, restore and perpetuate a social bond through such ritual exercise clearly demarcated their place in the social hierarchy on a basis of seniority. The scapegoat was therefore accorded a central place in religious and cultural ceremonies as his or her ritual murder, meticulously performed, held the power to purge society of its own destructive violence and affirm the hierarchical structures of society. In the current crisis however the *art of sacrifice* has disappeared and with it its transformative power. Ellis’ study of Liberia illustrates my point:

In the civil war, in a world grown anarchic, acts of violence are performed daily in the familiar language of the secret society rituals, but now out of control. *Ritual murders are no longer carried out by officers of established cults, but by unqualified adolescents* (in Allen 1999:374; emphasis added)

The continued failure of sacrificial violence to transform a community’s anarchic disorder into the order of culture, in no way infers that societies have given up on sacrifice. Quite the contrary, it means the members of a community go to greater lengths, explore more terrifying extremes, to make the rituals work. In an especially provocative bid at myth making, it was reported in the Liberian civil war that cannibalism was practised and that “Charles Taylor himself has been reported to have drunk the blood of *sacrificial victims*” (Allen 1999:370). The accuracy of this claim is less important than the desperation that this image powerfully suggests. The nation’s leader is literally immersed in the blood of the scapegoat, feasting on the flesh of the victim in a bid to imbue the murder of his rivals, mostly members of his two main opposition parties (LURD and MODEL) with a sense of legitimacy. After the slaughter of what is estimated around 200 000 Liberians failed in its generative capacity, this excessively, overtly, sacrificial act testifies to a desperate last ditch

attempt to make the members of his community believe in his myth. The frantic fall back onto increasingly ineffective rituals leads to the 'immolation of more and more victims' that are meant to be sacrificial but are less and less so (Girard 1987). As Girard explains:

Anything that tends to disengage or reveal violence, represents considerable progress, at least potentially in intellectual and ethical respects, but that also, in the short term, it will mean a terrible recrudescence of that same violence, often in odious and atrocious forms, since sacrificial mechanisms become progressively less efficient and less capable of renewal (ibid:127-128).

When national leaders participate directly in acts of ritual violence and these acts are not successfully mythologised, civility crumbles and any sense of rule of law is lost. The participation of the nation's father figure in indiscriminate murderous sprees represents the fulcrum of the crisis, in which violence becomes the only language that members of the ravaged community understand. In the absence of a Transcendental Signifier to legitimise the distinction between Good and Bad violence, the system of differences disintegrates and individual identities – the differences between rival and ally, victim and victimiser, layman and leader – become increasingly indiscernible. The violence of de-differentiation becomes a disease to which no one is immune. At this point desperate and disillusioned communities turn their backs upon rituals of scapegoating; "sacrificial rites are no longer effective and parties, who had previously spontaneously united in projecting their violence and hostility onto the scapegoat, now turn on one another" (Girard 1987:47). At this point society is swamped in violence and antagonists become completely blind to the humanity of the rival. The power of violence is such that interpersonal rivalries between enemies fall away and violence becomes an end in itself, as witnessed in African states where "violence and warfare have become *self-reproducing with no prospect that they can be brought to an end*" (Allen 1999:369). In such societies, the carnage in human life is unspeakable.

But why at this specific moment in a millennia long narrative of cultures violently born and sustained is the sacrificial mechanism suddenly no longer effective? In other words, why *now*? Why have violence and the mechanism of sacrifice become transparent or, in the words of Bailie, been unveiled at this point in time? Allen offers an inadequate response in suggesting that what we are seeing is a *new* form of warfare and violence, what he dubs '*senseless*' violence (1999:368). There is *nothing new* about either the scapegoat mechanism or the sacrificial crisis

that constitute a recurring theme in all of human history in the way that communities are born and attempt to regenerate themselves. The experience of contemporary African communalities displays a clear sacrificial logic and bears testament to the attempts of post-colonial communities to construct an identity – a sense of social solidarity – with recourse to ancient sacrificial rituals that, according to Girard, are constitutive of human culture as such. This seemingly senseless violence was therefore generative in this sense. The attempts to violently restore the communality and recreate the System of Difference (Degree) present us with an example of violence *as the sacred*. This post-colonial moment is exceptional however because of our awareness and understanding of scapegoating and the wholesale doubt in the possibility of legitimising myth. What is therefore *new is that the mechanism no longer works*. The *extremity of violence* employed in a bid to *make* the mechanism work is new, as is the length and depth of the crisis. So how do we account for the increasing ineffectiveness of the generative scapegoat mechanism that culminates in a prolonged sacrificial crisis? Girard offers a convincing account of the crisis, attributed to the heightened awareness of humanity to the plight of the victim, which undermines the moral legitimacy of sacrificial rituals that archaic religion employed to restore social cohesion.

In responding to this question, Leo Lefebure (1996) criticises Girard for missing what he considers to be quite an obvious point: namely, this century has the *technology* necessary for the perpetration of wholesale genocide. Whilst Lefebure uses Dresden and Hiroshima to illustrate his case, in defence of Girard we need only look the Rwanda's genocide of 1994 or the current genocide in the Sudan. These mass killings (by stabbing, stoning, impaling, hacking or burning), not to mention the Ancient Incan or Aztec slaughter by the thousands, have been enacted using the most primitive of weapons (pangas, machetes, sticks, stones, clubs and bear hands). This tells us that it is less about the method of violence than the logic that underpins it, or in this case, unveils it.

The ability to step back and criticise or even condemn the violence enacted against the scapegoat indicates that sacrificial mechanisms have lost their original mystifying power (Bailie 1995:28). The implications are profound as they render traditional ways of generating and regenerating society's identity and culture not only ineffective but also morally reprehensible. It seems to attack the excess of scapegoat violence. In short, from the Judaeo-Christian perspective, "the gospel revelation

gradually destroys the ability to sacralise violence” (ibid:24) which coincides with the *disintegration* of the sacrificial system. But how are we to make comprehensive sense of this revelation?

### 1.7. Girard’s revelation

Girard interprets the failure of myth in the light of his commitment to Christian theology. He argues that the Judaeo-Christian tradition has “an undeniable tendency to take the side of the victim on moral grounds” and that “the condemnation of the murder takes precedence over all other considerations,” (Girard 1987:149). He contends that the prophetic teachings of the Bible, which defend the victim, present humanity with a unique revelation of the workings of the sacrificial mechanism. The victim is innocent and vindicated by God, as Friedrich Nietzsche notes, Christianity ‘sides with victims, not conquerors’ (in Lefebure 1996). He argues that *the gospels have revealed the role the surrogate victim plays in the founding of all human cultures and the role that sacrificial victims play in sustaining them*. It is on these grounds that Girard makes the bold claim in *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (1978) that it is the Bible, and *only* the Bible, that has presented us with a moral backdrop against which to condemn acts of murderous violence and recognise the humanity of the victim upon whom such violence has befallen. The Bible is aware of the sacrificial crises, but its scriptures aim to *reveal rather than conceal* the guilt of those who deploy the surrogate victim mechanism and hence, the scriptures provide a “complete revelation of the collective victimage as the founding mechanism of human culture” (Girard 1996:18).

Girard argues “It was first in ancient Israel that...prophets began to view history from the standpoint of God’s concern for the victims rather than from the standpoint of the sacred social order” (Williams 1996:145). In other words, the biblical teachings of the prophets reveal the truth of the sacrificial mechanism by inverting the logic that the victim is guilty of the violence encapsulated within the community and declaring instead that the *community is guilty* of projecting such violence on to an innocent scapegoat. Girard argues that various examples of this revelation are mentioned in the first testament but is never defined as such. In Genesis the murder of Abel by his brother Cain stands as the founding moment of the Cainite community. In the book of Job, Joseph is identified as an innocent scapegoat who is violently expelled from the midst of his brothers as a result of their jealousy and in

Exodus Moses and the Chosen people are identified as the scapegoat vis-à-vis Egyptian society. It is only in the New Testament – in the prophetic writings of the Gospels – that the workings of sacrificial mechanisms are unambiguously revealed most specifically with the crucifixion of Christ. This is clearly articulated in Isaiah Chapter 53 verses 8 and 9:

By oppression and judgement He was taken away; and as for His generation, who among them considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? (8) And they assigned Him a grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death, although He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth (9).

By assigning Christ a ‘grave with the wicked’ the persecutors attempt to mythologise the violence to be enacted against Him as legitimate violence: Christ *was* wicked, he *was* the omnipotent source of all the violence pent up within the community and thus his murder *was* both necessary and defensible. However the revelation of gospel inverts this myth by once again siding with the victim in proclaiming Christ’s innocence and thus clearly vindicating him of the allegations, ‘He had done *no* violence’. By insisting on his innocence this statement blows the one criteria for the perfect victim out of the water, namely “somewhat guilty, somewhat not”. In addition and as argued before, the success of scapegoating violence depends upon the community’s unanimous support of the action enacted against the victim. It is thus imperative that all empathy for the victim be extinguished. The word of the Gospel however raises at least one empathetic voice. Its message bears witness to the innocence of the victim – who has done *no* violence – and the truth of the violence committed against them, hence shattering the possibility of unanimity. It is this revelation which amounts to the failure of the sacrificial mechanism and Girard argues that as a result “Humanity is no longer capable of producing idols of violence around which it might achieve unanimity” (Girard 1987:136).

Girard asserts that the rehabilitation of the victim has a *descaralising effect* (Girard 1987:152). Bailie enforces this point by stating that “The only kind of violence that can end violence effectively is sacred violence, but over time, the gospel revelation gradually destroys the ability to sacralize violence” (Bailie 1995:24). This means that the violence enacted against the victim can no longer be mythologized as *sacred, Good or even Legitimate*. The nexus between violence and the Sacred is severed and consequently the victim is no longer the omnipotent source of all

violence and disorder or the supreme source of order and social cohesion. The victim is simply human – and an innocent one at that – against whom indiscriminate acts of violence have been perpetrated.

This “humanising” of the scapegoat makes us recognise the nature of the sacrificial mechanism more clearly. The more aware of the arbitrary victimage we become, the less effective the mechanism is in its powers of reconciliation. Indeed the increase in our knowledge of the logic informing acts of sacrificial violence is met by an increase in the number of victims that fall prey to the multiplied violence that this revelation incites. Communities who come under biblical influence now find themselves in a state of proverbial purgatory: unable to find redemption with recourse to ancient rituals of sacrificial violence yet equally unable to transcend violence as the vehicle in attaining the redemption that they seek.

In the light of the Gospels there can be no denying that it was the suffering and crucifixion of Christ that revealed the workings of the scapegoat mechanism and in so doing set a frame against which to denounce other acts of sacrificial violence. Christ was intended as a scapegoat and because his innocence was revealed after the crucifixion Caiaphas along with the Gospels revealed the victim as innocent and consequently revealed the entire mechanism for what it is. Girard is very clear when he states that “everything is already revealed” and the Scripture “has no other function than to unearth the victims of collective violence and to reveal their innocence” (Girard 1987:138). This revelation equates a monumental shift in perspective insofar as it allows us to take the side of the victim and thus declare the culpability of the community. With this the ordering and sacrificial benefits of original violence fritter away (Williams 1996:151) and the entire sacrificial system disintegrates. To this end, Girard’s argument that the Gospels can be accredited with the revelation of the workings of the scapegoat mechanism is extremely compelling.

### **1.8. Beyond Girard**

Whilst Girard’s theological explanation is perhaps a necessary part an explanation, it is not sufficient as it fails to account for the emergence of sacrificial crises in cultures that do not fall under biblical influence. Whilst Girard proposes a universal account of the origin of all human culture, he does not articulate an equally universal account of the *failure* of the mechanisms that generate culture. Girard stresses the radical singularity of the Bible and Bailie clearly supports this position.

My criticisms are as follows. Firstly, it is precisely this distinctiveness and uniqueness of the Bible that denies his theory universal application. It excludes all the other major religions including Hindus, Muslims, Confucians, Buddhists, Shintoists, Animists and equally secular communities, which collectively populate a vast portion of the globe that certainly has *not* escaped the permeation of sacrificial crises. My second contention is that to relate the current crisis causally to the influence of Christianity is reductionist. Bailie (1995:14) asserts that, “the West’s historical consciousness is inextricably bound up with the historicity of the Judaeo-Christian tradition”. Certainly the important contributions of Judaeo-Christian scriptures must be acknowledged, however even if individuals and groups have *never* had biblical exposure, they may still feel an acute sense of *dignitas* to others that is derived in terms of a social bond between members of a community. Finally, Girard fails to adequately address the teleological aspect of this view. He admits that the truth of scapegoating has been ‘hidden since the foundation of the world’ (1978) indeed the sacrificial crisis is by no means a new phenomenon. However he fails to explain why this crisis at its most intense and its most ubiquitous *now*, given that over the last two millennia the Bible has been preaching the same message of the victim’s innocence. In other words, what allows us *now* to understand the Bible’s message so clearly – after so many thousands of years of Church complicity in scapegoating. He fails to offer us an adequate explanation as to why we now find ourselves incapable of escaping or transcending the crisis and are thus unable of injecting differentiation into an increasingly undifferentiated order with appeal to the scapegoat mechanism.

Given how deeply embedded the sacrificial crisis has become in our global contemporary social order, it is impossible to ever return to a time and place in which the mechanism works because the truth of it is concealed from us. Girard postulates that if societies are to be saved from the cycles of a sacrificial economy, humanity must make a stark choice between our complete annihilation and our abandonment of violence. He states, “For the first time ever, humanity faces a perfectly straightforward choice and even scientifically calculable choice between total destruction and the total renunciation of violence” (in Bailie 1996:16). But how reasonable is it to offer us a choice between utter destruction and complete renunciation? For, straightforward it certainly is not.

As it has already been elaborated, for Girard one of the two truths of the human condition as a whole is the revelation of the first condition, the mimetic

predicament. The second truth – the truth of liberation – is therefore the revelation that is born from the Scriptures and exposes the victimary mechanism (Williams 1996:145). Girard assumes that in revealing the truth of our inherently mimetic nature, *we can be liberated from it* and by extension, be liberated from the violence that threatens our eventual annihilation. The prospect of liberation is indeed one that must be explored for failure to do so would uncritically accept humanity's self-induced and inevitable march toward Armageddon. The problem with Girard's dichotomous postulation is that it rests upon the problematic assumption that man – and indeed by this I mean *every* human being – is capable of altering their human nature. It requires that humankind expunge from our nature all envious and aggressive tendencies that cause our mimetic desires to run their course for rivalry to violence and finally to murder. It seems to demand, ironically and of all things, a violently sacrificial redefinition of human nature as such.

Girard's account of the origin of human culture is a theory in which violence is set as the default state. Society is born violently and must therefore be nurtured violently as human solidarity literally feeds off violence. Whilst conceding that violence is an extremely fundamental aspect of cultural formation, it is not the only aspect. Violence is not, as Girard's logic dangerously suggests, a conceptual and historical inevitability. Despite his previous claim, Girard proposes that humanity can only be saved from its own violence by moving toward non-violence. This requires an incorporation of human values such as compromise, love and forgiveness as expressed in the Scripture's in such dictums as 'love one's neighbour'; 'forgive one's enemies' and 'turn the other cheek'. Following this logic Girard states that, "The definitive renunciation of violence...will become for us the condition *sine qua non* for the survival of humanity itself and for each one of us" (Girard 1987:137). But how plausible is it to conceive of a collective future, which in Girard's conceptual scheme would be premised upon an understanding of 'human nature', devoid of violent mimetic impulse or aggressive urges? This strikes to the heart of this thesis, and the question of whether there can be a *form of the sacred that incorporates and simultaneously transcends violence*. In chapter 3 the conceptual space will be cleared to engage thoroughly with the nature of the nexus between culture and violence scrutinised from an alternative epistemological paradigm with a view to the possibility of alternative catalysts for social regeneration, as a means to transcend this economy of violence. For now, I look to universalise the logic of Girard in a search of

a cultural, historical and moral force that can account for the unveiling of sacrificial logic. It is imperative that Girard's narrow – yet intellectually sound – theological explanation for the increased consciousness of the sacrificial mechanism is enlarged, for only in developing a comprehensive, universally applicable, understanding of the emergence of this crisis may we hope to move beyond it.

### **1.9. Human rights discourse: the catalyst for consciousness**

Girard contends that in order for the myth to work in regenerating social solidarity, it requires that the face of the victim be veiled and the voice of the victim be muted. Whilst Girard and Bailie attribute this unveiling to the revelation in Judaeo-Christian scripture, there is another tradition that predates (and includes) this biblical message, that exerts a powerful force in preventing the generative scapegoat mechanism from functioning effectively. This frame is the emergent human rights culture, whose very *raison d'être* is to protect the minority and ensure the voice of the victim is heard. The contemporary notion of human rights emerged from 18<sup>th</sup> century Western political philosophy and later in the United States and developed through the legal and philosophical writings of thinkers such as Grotius, Locke, Montesquieu and Jefferson. The Judaeo-Christian tradition has certainly contributed to this culture but constitutes *one* aspect and is thus not a sufficient explanation in and of itself given that the discourse is situated in the tradition of natural law that dates back to classic antiquity and significantly predates Christianity and is present in the writings of Sophocles (496-405 BC), Aristotle (384-322 BC) and Cicero (106-43 BC). The proposition then is to situate the sacrificial crisis against the emerging universal humanist order and the moral background languages that constitute it.

According to Charles Taylor (1989:4) “Perhaps the most urgent and powerful cluster of demands that we recognise as moral concern the respect for life, integrity, and well-being, even flourishing, of others”. Vandersluis and Yeros (1999) take up this view and argue that the humanist order “exists as a set of background languages that...constitute the universalist version of [such] moral demands” (ibid:10). The universality of the humanist moral order is critical for my purposes as, “it is this moral order from which demands for rights, autonomy and participation spring *in every corner of the earth*” (ibid:7). This humanist order is founded upon a gamut of moral languages, as the authors explain “the moral languages of religion, race, ethnicity, nation, class and gender have come to be in wide currency, as has most importantly,

that of humanity” (ibid:13). Together – culminating in the latter – they constitute a *universal* background language on the basis of which to make claims about moral worth and ‘human’ rights and from this develop a *universalist* ontology of the human (Taylor 1989:5). Two points must be made here. Firstly, the human background language has attained a global presence (Vandersluis and Yeros 1999:5) and is thus inescapable as a basis for moral debate. All our actions, obligations, reactions and so forth are interpreted against this background language and it “provides a common moral language *on the basis of which to indict the objectification and annihilation of human beings*” (ibid:13; emphasis added). Such condemnations are underpinned by the belief in the innate human worth of *all* human beings. Human worth is subject to a struggle for recognition for membership in a morally higher human community. Following from this, the second point is that the humanist moral discourse provides us with a frame against which to condemn exclusionary social practices *publicly*. To voice discord in a public forum is critical as it generates a debate within the community in raising differing and/or concurring voices, marks a development toward a *universal* recognition of sacrificially exclusionary practices as morally violent (ibid:10). The *public nature* of processes of contestation is critical. We know that in instances of generative scapegoating, unanimity is the guarantor of success. To mobilise the entire community, the act must involve “the *blood, sweat and screams of the spectacle of the public flogging*” (in Govier 2002:39). The visible flow of blood and sweat; the anguished screams of the victim and the frenetic jeers of the spectators create a *spectacle* that is indispensable in processes of myth-making, the success of which literally makes or breaks the community. Society is fascinated by such spectacle, people are morbidly drawn to the vulgarity of violence; they are seduced by it. If such fascination manifests itself in a cathartic sacrificial conclusion then the violent spectacle will have succeeded in curing society’s internal ills (Bailie 1996:87). Logically then, any move to denounce such acts of violence must be an equally public spectacle. Only in generating a public fracas, either as a participant in collective violence or a protester against it, may we tap into the power of unanimous collective action and the capacity it has to restore the social bond.

The pursuit of a universal ontology of the human that elevates the status of victim-hood in public debate, according to a Girardian interpretative stance, will *perpetuate the sacrificial crisis* and make the transcendence to a higher moral community *less* rather than more likely. As we have seen, exclusionary social

practices (read: scapegoating) are fundamental in the founding and re-founding of social unity. The success of the scapegoat mechanism requires that *certain* subjects *are not* recognised and that *certain* subjects are dehumanised – *deprived* of their human worth and right to life – in a bid to generate social cohesion. The truth of this act of sacrificial violence *qua* generator of social peace and harmony must remain hidden if the scapegoat mechanism is to succeed in its task. A public condemnation however equates an exposure of the truth of the sacrifice and it thus stimulates the failure of the myth. The ideal of the humanist moral order requires that *all unite unanimously against* such violations of ‘human’ rights. The crisis is therefore born from *the clash between one community that needs to silence the voice of the victim and the other that feels it has a moral obligation to make the voice heard*.

The exposure to the rights and the plight of the scapegoat, which has developed empathy for the victim, ultimately amounts to the failure of the myth. In other words, the human rights discourse provides us with a universally applicable *mode of knowledge*, or consciousness (even moral paradigm) of the mechanism and the result is that ritual killing cannot be successfully mythologized as an act of sacrifice, thus culminating in a prolonged sacrificial crisis. Reading this crisis in terms of the human rights discourse is a proposition counter to, but also supplementary to, that of Girard. Once the knowledge of the violence has been revealed it can never be stifled and all attempts to do so will involve violence. The inability of the scapegoat to absolve the community of its violence and restore the sacred frustrates members of the community and leads to an increase in the extremity of violence perpetrated against the victims as the truth of the mechanism becomes less and less obscured by ignorance. The “sacrificial crisis” cannot be resolved using traditional rituals, as by giving the victim a voice and a face and a place in the global moral community, the universal humanist backdrop will never allow for the invention of a “perfect victim” – whose existence is a condition for any act of sacrificial violence. In fact, the presence of humanist background languages will contest the construction of a collective identity with recourse to violence *in every corner of the earth*. As a result, perpetrators will forever be exposed to the humanity of their victims.

### **1.10. Post-colonial Africa and human rights**

From Girard's claim that every culture is founded upon a collective act of ritualised sacrificial violence, we can assume that the emergence of new political forms will also necessarily entail violence. In looking at nascent democracies in Africa, this logic is problematised however by the emergence of a universalist moral order that generates an empathy for the would-be scapegoat, and framed by global discussion of human rights, condemns any form of violence against them. By way of brief illustration of the crisis manifest from this inherent tension, let us take the contemporary example of the Sudan. Since February 2003, state-sponsored Arab militiamen, the Jangaweed (translated as "Devils on Horseback") have slaughtered more than 50 000 non-Arab Africans in the south Sudanese region of Darfur (Robinson 2004). Despite the reluctance of global powers to define this systematic ethnic massacre as genocide for fear that this definition will demand action, the statistics speak the truth that UN resolutions avoid. Employing sacrificial strategies of ethnic cleansing as a means to a consolidated national identity, the Khartoum-based Arab regime has given its militia-allies the financial and military support needed to enact a rampage of mass extermination against Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups. The question then is, *Why now?* Why over the last few years have we witnessed a terrifying descent into ethnic cleansing at this scale when the Arabs and non-Arab Africans have co-habitated in the region for millennia? Certain analysts have attributed it to persistent drought that has changed migratory patterns of the Arab nomads, leading to conflict with the African farmers. Others argue the competition over land has turned violent due to a proliferation of arms in the region from neighbouring states (ibid.). However these explanations speak to the symptoms rather than the cause of the crisis. A true understanding of this ethnicised violence is, I would argue, found in the emerging chasm between the sacrificial violence that historically made community possible and the universal human rights discourse that makes attempts to mythologise that violence impossible. The persistence in employing violence despite the crisis accounts for the extremity of violence employed.

The mandate given by Khartoum reflects the actions taken by their contemporaries who are confronted by like pressures of the 'nation-building' project. One of the primary obstacles to the creation of a unified national identity is the fact that the tribes and communities that comprise the nascent nation-state are severely

politically and ethnically divided. As An Na-Im and Deng explain “a new African state has to face the fundamental problem of welding a heterogeneous conglomeration of tribes and communities into a united nation” (1990:298). In terms of the Girardian model of social formation set up in this chapter, the only way to transcend inter-group rivalry and violent conflict to effectively establish a sense of national solidarity is through sacrifice. In theory, all rival parties would unite spontaneously in the expulsion or killing of an identified tribal or ethnic minority other who would effectively become the scapegoat onto whom all woes would be projected. As an identified enemy other, the scapegoat is violently excluded from the community. Although banished as an outsider, this excluded minority ironically becomes the pivot – or what McKenna (1992) would term the “supplement” – of the entire community-building project.

Sensitive to this logic certain authors such as, Keba M’Baye, asserted in the face of strong criticism, that human rights violations are necessities of the nation building project. M’Baye explains that after independence the African ruling elite wanted to “make up for their economic backwardness [and] protect their fragile independence...they reached a point where they neglected all that did not seem likely to consolidate their sovereignty and ensure their economic progress” (in An Na-Im and Deng 1990:295). The historical nexus between scapegoat violence and state sovereignty suggests this is true. He goes on to say that African governments interpreted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “in such a way as to justify the infringements required inevitably by the necessities of *unity*, prosperity and stability” (ibid.). This is by no means an exclusively African predicament. Pollis and Schwab (1979) use the example of McCarthyism in United States as an instance where the perceived threat of communism was invoked as justification for the infringement and violation of the civil and political rights of many individuals. Much the same can be said of the present War against Terror. This position acknowledges that in such instances when it is necessary to establish both the legitimacy and unity of the nation, and ensure the imperatives of national security, individual political rights may be infringed or “legitimately violated”. Framing this view with the logic of generative scapegoating, it is unsurprising that ‘human rights’ violations play a central role in the nation-building project.

To cast human rights violation as necessary seems morally problematic, even outrageous. But it is precisely the human rights discourse and corresponding

emergence of a universalist moral community that allows for the articulation of these feelings of outrage. The ontological dividing line lies between our violent cultural heritage that demands human rights violations against the scapegoat and the moral frame of reference that renders such violations increasingly problematic. In a bid to make sense of this discontinuity that translates extremely poorly in terms of Africa's human rights record, James Silk commented that "Africa cannot be held to standards that are culturally inappropriate and that Africans had no part in establishing" (in An Na-Im & Deng 1990:291). The problem with this argument is naturally that in denying the universality of human rights, the entire concept of human rights may be rendered obsolete. In so doing, the crop of African postcolonial elite are free to invoke either state sovereignty or an opposition to Western conceptions of human rights to mask or excuse serious violations of human rights, security and dignity of their citizens. But this is not the concern here. The point is that human rights discourse sets up a frame against which the modernising project of African states has to be interpreted. How to do so without recourse to the kind of violence that made Western modernity possible pushes the question of non-violent alternatives to the fore. While Girard's suggested alternative follows conceptually from his theory, it presents us with a binary either/or, which is extreme and, I would argue unhelpful. In order to generate more helpful way of thinking non-violence, we need to revisit and question the basis assumption of violence as default state. This, I will do in chapter three.

### 1.11 Conclusion

Central to the sustenance of a collective identity is the (mimetic structured) enactment of the sacrificial violence that occupies the space at the birth of human culture. Thus a community's search for selfhood invokes the construction of a series of victims against whom the ancient rituals of sacrificial scapegoating may be re-enacted. As Roy (2001: 220) explains,

If it [the community] doesn't find its enemy...it will have to manufacture one. Once war begins, it will *develop a momentum*, a logic and a justification of its own, and we'll lose sight of why it's being fought in the first place.

Sacrificial violence *gains momentum* and in generating a unanimous social purgation, the sacred may be restored. To this end, the *shared act of persecution* of the

scapegoat, who is blamed for a gamut of ills and is deemed 'guilty' for a range of crimes, rejuvenates social bonds (Kearney 1999:252). This century's notable examples of such strategies of persecution include the Holocaust, Apartheid, the War on Terror or the Rwandan genocide and all reveal very clearly the nexus between violence and collective identity (re)formation. Increasingly however the ritualistic world that humankind has created can no longer be sustained through purely sacrificial means – quite simply, the persecution of scapegoats is no longer an effective means to social salvation. The act of scapegoating fails to achieve its intended effect of uniting the collective unanimously against the victim because it is pre-determined to failure, and consequently sacrifice compounds rather than closes cycles of violence. This failure of myth testifies to the failure of the scapegoating mechanism to stand up to the scrutiny generated by the human rights discourse. The root of the Greek word *mythos* is *mu* that means 'to close' or 'to keep secret' (Baillie 1995:33). Myth can act as a supremely powerful generator of social unity. But, it only does so on the proviso that the mouth of the victim is kept closed to avoid them speaking the truth of their innocence and the face of the victim is kept hidden so that the truth of arbitrary violence committed against them is kept secret. These requisites are denied as acts of generative scapegoating are unfolding against a backdrop of human rights, the task of which is to protect the minority in making the voice of the victim heard and face of the victim visible, thus inverting the traditional function of *mythos*. This exposure to the rights and the plight of the scapegoat ultimately amounts to the failure of the myth, and with that the failure of the generative mechanism. Girard elucidates the consequences of this, "The spectacle of violence will *become a model* for similar violence, and those who were its most entranced members will reciprocate it" (1977:7). Under the influence of mimesis, the failure to generate a ritual catharsis leads to the festering of violent rivalries throughout the social order. The gross violations of human rights we see in post-colonial Africa is a function of the aforementioned failure. This leads us to the (unnerving) ironic conclusion that within the current frame in which violence is set up as the default state, human rights violations can be read as a function of the human rights discourse, which has served to define rather than deter heinous crimes against humanity.

So if we accept Girard, and despite our growing awareness of the operation of violence, acknowledge the unwillingness of communities to relinquish sacrifice and similarly the unwillingness of states to abolish war as an instrument of foreign policy,



we find ourselves in a terrifying place. At a global level the idea of nuclear powers, armed and engaged in a deadly mimetic rivalry, as ‘monstrous doubles’ poised ready to replicate the offensive move of the enemy, even if it culminates in global annihilation is deeply distressing. At the level of community, the image of child soldiers impaling their own parents or pregnant women hacking each other to death is even more haunting.

In post-colonial African communities, scapegoating has become excessively violent. Indeed, examples of brutality are so numerous and instances of hate so prevalent that tales of unspeakable horror and the cruelty and carnage of war eclipse all notions of good, purity or legitimacy. By and large it seems impossible to even *imagine* an imagined communality that is not haunted by the spectre of violence. Whilst we still speak the archaic languages of ritualised sacrifice, the reality is that this vocabulary is no longer intelligible in terms of contemporary cultural discourse. We thus have no mechanism that can effectively bring violence to a close, other than the employ of violence so staggering that it ends all other violence – and life in the process. The current challenge laid down to collectivities is how to negotiate the ontological obstacles in their search for selfhood that spring from the agonising realisation that the originary force of social (re)generation in the form of ritual collective sacrifice, has in contemporary culture descended into random collective slaughter. While the focus of this chapter has been on the violent formation of collective identities, in the following chapter I shall examine the role of sacrifice in the construction of subjectivity.

## Chapter 2

### The Sacrificial Construction of Subjectivity

There looms with abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to *emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside*, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. Its lies there quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced...Unflaggingly, *like an inescapable boomerang*, a vortex of summons and repulsions places the one haunted by it literally beside himself

– Powers of Horror, Julia Kristeva

#### 2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued that the construction of social existence is sacrificial, mediated by the unanimous collective violence inflicted upon a relatively arbitrary chosen scapegoat, whose death restores good health to an ailing social order. In this chapter, I look to those authors in psychoanalytic discourse who maintain that, historically, the very construction of subjectivity or consciousness has a similar sacrificial dimension. By tracing the thread that runs from Freud to Lacan and Kristeva, I shall argue that the emergence of subjectivity and the assertion of the *subject's sovereignty* is fundamentally a function of violence instigated against, what Lacan first termed, the 'Other'. From as early as Freud's work, we were offered the insight that the 'Other' was problematic as it challenged the omnipotence of the self and is thus perceived as a presence that haunts and repulses the subject precisely because it threatens the *individual's autonomy*. The fear of the 'Other', or the *fear of the threat to existence* that the 'Other' incarnates, enlightens us as to our attempts, in their various guises, to destroy or annihilate the 'it' with a view to self-assertion and more fundamentally, self-preservation. This is akin to the threat to the community that we *believe* the 'scapegoat other' poses and who we accordingly seek to denigrate, demonise and eventually destroy to bolster the collective's identity. I shall read Kristeva to expose the sacrificial dimension underpinning her theory, which suggests that the maternal body is demonised, and abjected, or sacrificed in a bid to assert the autonomy of the subject. In tandem with the first chapter the suggestion, here, is that at both the social and personal levels there is an immolation of that which threatens the identity or autonomy of either the collective or the self and that identity formation

is thus intimately connected to what appears to be a necessary violence. To unveil the sacrificial logic involved in the immolation of subjectivity the first port-of-call in this chapter must be Kristeva's work that exposes an intimate historical nexus between language and violence in the formation of subjectivity. In what follows I shall, firstly situate her work genealogically vis-à-vis her psychoanalyst predecessors Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Secondly, I shall examine the way in which she psychoanalytically maps the development of the subject from its absolute dependence on the mother to its location as a speaking subject within the Symbolic order (Fletcher and Benjamin 1990:80). Kristeva is particularly concerned with both "the role of the body and corporeality in the constitution of the speaking subject" (ibid:80) and the role that violence plays in the constitution of subjectivity insofar as the violent abjection, or sacrifice, of the maternal body allows the child to cross the threshold into the social order. Here it will take up a position as a speaking, autonomous subject as a member of a collectivity that similarly has to (re)define its identity violently.

## **2.2. The early stages of selfhood**

Kristeva works from Lacan's psychoanalytical model of the three stages of subject formation: the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. According to Lacan the Real, also known as the pre-mirror stage, is the infant's first experience of the world during which the child undergoes negligible psychic maturation, causing him to largely disregard this phase in his body of work. What we do learn from Lacan is that during these first 6 months the "self" experiences its body as fragmented, uncoordinated and helpless. At this time, the child's body image is in Lacanian terms, "*un corps morcelé*" (in Gallop 1985:79) or literally "a body in bit and pieces". The child is unable to distinguish between inside and outside, here and there, and similarly cannot discern between self and other. Lacan believes that in this psychic phase the child's world *is* the mother and the child lives in an idyllic state of harmony with her (Lechte 1985:158). Kristeva criticises Lacan for skimming over this period of the self's development ego. She takes on and enlarges the notion of the Real, re-termining it *the semiotic* from the Greek *semeion*, which means trace, mark or distinctive feature (Kristeva 1987a:5). Kristeva borrows the concept from Plato's *Timaeus* in which he spoke of "the *chora*, an ancient, mobile unstable receptacle, prior to the One, to the father, and even to the syllable, metaphorically suggesting something nourishing and maternal" (ibid:5). The *chora* is a centre of energies and drives at the heart of the

semiotic space, which precedes the unified *one-ness* of the subject precisely because it precedes the first encounter with the ‘Other’ or ‘Third party’. The Real is a similarly ‘prior to syllable’; prior to speech and signification and for Lacan is that which “resists symbolisation absolutely” (in Leader and Groves 1995:61). It is thus prior to the birth of subjectivity for as shall be argued, speech is the means of access into the Symbolic order of signification. Kristeva agrees that the semiotic is a pre-linguistic space and acknowledges the difficulty of articulating this linguistically, precisely because the semiotic is a receptacle of traces of existence that is “outside of language” (Keltner 2004:97) and symbolic definitions that are, as it cannot be, fully grasped by the human mind. The difference is that for Kristeva, this pre-symbolic (pre-signifying) phase contains important traces that have been suppressed and, as I shall support, must be excavated if we are to rethink the origins of subjectivity. These traces speak of a *nourishing*, loving, pre-oedipal identification shared by the mother and *infans* (pre-subject). In Kristeva’s understanding of the semiotic (pre-oedipal, pre-symbolic) phase, the “mother” is primary and the self and other are intertwined. And accordingly she concurs with Lacan that the space is marked by a certain “spatial ambivalence” (Oliver 1993:253) that is to say, the boundaries between inside and outside are uncertain. The maternal body cannot be neatly separated into subject and object – there is no separation between self and mother and thus none between self and other; subject and object – ‘The *I* truly is an other’ (Kristeva 1996:95).

Lacan’s notion of the mirror or the imaginary stage in a child’s development marks the next stage of psychic maturation and sees a distinct separation between self and other. Lacan’s key observation concerns the behaviour of infants between the ages of 6 and 18 months. At this age, Lacan notes that children become capable for the first time of identifying with an image outside him or herself. This occurs when the child catches a glimpse of its own reflection in a mirror. Initially the infant attempts to grab the mirror for they mistake the mirror image of themselves to be a real object that “indicates an initial confusion between the self and the other” (Dor 1997:96). Gradually however the child learns to distinguish between a real being and a reflection of it and therefore no longer attempts to appropriate it. In this period the child is able to *recognise him or herself in the mirror* or recognise his/her own behaviour “reflected in the imitative gestures” of an adult or identifies with the image of another child (Bowie 1991:21). Consequently, the child begins to model itself on others. As was argued in the previous chapter, such imitative behaviour is a defining

characteristic of human beings; our most primal desire. Through the instinctual imitation of the behaviour, speech patterns and desires of others, we learn to talk and act and thus are able to take up a place as a subject in the social order. In psychoanalytic terms we may say that imitation allows the child to move through the imaginary phase toward the Symbolic.

The child is fascinated, or for Lacan, *captivé* by its own image and gains a great deal of narcissistic pleasure from its reflection. Lacan accordingly associates narcissism with the infant's identification with its own image (Gallop 1985) and is best defined as 'self-love' or the love of seeing one's own image, which is first possible in this mirror phase. Whilst previously the infant had to be supported if it were to sit up straight; the pleasure of recognition of a self-image in the mirror, causes the child to "jubilantly assume the upright position" (Gallop 1985:78). For Lacan this 'jubilation' can only be explained as a testament to how, in the recognition of its mirror-image and the discovery of a corporeal unity that was previously absent in their development, now presents a vision of what the child 'will *only later become*' (ibid.). The child, born prematurely, is still totally dependent on others for every aspect of its survival and still has very little control over its own bodily functions. Therefore, reflected in the mirror "are the *would-be* autonomy and mastery of the individual in their earliest draft forms" (Bowie 1991:22). It is such *anticipation* of fulfilling future potential – it is the promise of co-ordination, self-sufficiency and autonomy – that captivates the child and marks the turning point in the child's development as it puts an end to, what Lacan terms, 'the fantasy of the fragmented body' (Dor 1997:95) that subsumed the Real phase. At the end of this period the process of identity formation has begun but the child's existence is still strongly fused with that of the mother. The important point is that in the mirror the infant has gained a glimpse of a cohesive, stable identity that will have assembled 'body bits and pieces' into *unified totality* (Gallop 1985:79). The infant also understands that the image is its own and that it must be perpetually guarded as it is "constantly threatened by a retrospective pull toward fragmentation" (Bowie 1991:26). The infant thus finds itself awkwardly situated in a space between the forward progression to selfhood, and the backward regression to *corps morcelé*.

This ability to identify with his or her own image then marks the child's first attempts to *become a unified and autonomous individual*, or to *become a self*. Indeed it is through this primordial experience, in which the subject conceives of himself or

herself through the reflection of the other, that the 'I' becomes an *imaginary construct* (Lacan 1968). It is imaginary precisely because it reveals the possibility of what the child *will become* by presenting an *illusion* of corporeal unity. Imagination therefore plays a vital role in stimulating a desire for self-mastery and to this end the mirror, or imaginary stage for Lacan, is the 'originary moment' of subjectivity formation. Gallop explains, "It is the founding moment of the imaginary mode, the belief in a projected image" (1985:81). Lacan contends that there is nothing on the other side of the mirror. If we believe there is, then we have been duped by a retrospective projection from this side. In contrast Kristeva believes that there *is* something on the other side of the mirror. In developing this argument, Kristeva criticises Lacan and argues that narcissism is predicated "on the existence of the *ego* but not of an *external object*" (Kristeva in Oliver 1997:253). She contends that primary narcissism emerges in the semiotic (pre-subject, pre-object) phase, in the processes of identification between mother and child. The precise nature of this semiotic relation between the child and the mother that is neither object (as Freud and Lacan would argue) nor non-object, but 'something in between' (ibid:226) will become clear in the discussion to follow. The important conceptual marker for now is that in placing the ego of primary narcissism in the *pre-Oedipal* phase, Kristeva suggests that subjectivity begins to form prior to child's experience of its own reflection. Within the semiotic (Real) stage the infant's narcissistic identity is inseparable from identification with the mother and the infant internalises this as a fragmented body image (Fletcher and Benjamin 1990:82-83). She contends it is precisely this initial feeling of lack of corporeal completeness or independence that stimulates an alienating identification of the "subject" and constitutes the earliest phases in psychic development. This 'something' for Kristeva is thus the *semiotic* or pre-Oedipal phase of experience (Oliver 1993:57) that constitutes a beginning of selfhood *prior to* the mirror stage and contributes to the gradual constitution of the self.

### **2.3. The Oedipal predicament**

For Lacan the mirror stage ends with the onset of the Oedipal conflict in which the object of the child's fascination is no longer its own mirror image. In Freud's earliest descriptions of the emergence of the Oedipus complex, he explains a situation in which the young boy imitates his father, *then falls in love with his mother* and ends up fighting his father for the mother's attention as the father intervenes and becomes

an impediment to the child's attainment of his Oedipal aspiration. The repressed and intertwined wishes of the Oedipal process are also well illustrated by Freud's story in *Totem and Taboo* (1913:142) in which he speaks of a violent and jealous father who takes all the women in the tribe – most notably the mother – for himself and expels his sons from the community. He continues that the father is the *feared and envied model* of each one of the sons, who return from their banishment and in a unanimous act of violence against the father, the sons devour him and in so doing accomplish their identification with him. The sons are caught in a terrible predicament as they love and admire the father yet at the same time despise him because he poses an obstacle to their sexual desires. Similarly, the Oedipus myth in *The Ego and the Id* reveals that whilst the 'father' is idolised, he becomes both *a rival and obstacle* to the sexual interests of the child:

At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis of his *mother*, which originally related to the mother's breast...the *father* the boy deals by identifying himself with him. For a time these two relationships exist side by side, until the sexual wishes in regard to the mother becomes more intense and his father is perceived as an obstacle to them; this gives rise to the Oedipus complex (Freud 1923:40)

From this insight it is clear that the boy displays two psychologically distinct attachments: both an object-cathexis toward his mother and an identification with his father whom he takes as his model. The distinction between the two desires depends upon whether the attachment ties to the object (desire *to have* the mother) or the subject (desire *to be* the father). Freud explains that the convergence of the two stands at the dawn of the normal Oedipus complex. In discussing the second attachment, Freud wrote in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* "A little boy will exhibit a special interest in his father, he would *like to grow like and be like him* and take his place everywhere. We may say simply that he takes his father as his ideal" (Freud 1921:105). For Freud, the cathexis or strong libidinal attachment toward the mother is a sign of our autonomous desire, born from the self and directed at the mother. Girard disagrees and instead contends that in the Oedipal complex, the child first identifies mimetically with the father. Later, the child's focus shifts to that which they *would like to have* namely the mother that the father desires. The child's desire for the mother is not autonomous. Quite the contrary, when the boy falls in love with mother he does so because he is still imitating the father (Girard 1977:169). In wanting to 'be like him' and 'to act like him' it is logical that the mother only became

desirable to the boy when he perceived that the father desired her. In his actions the child is guided by the aspiration that he *'would like to be'* the father. There are ominous undertones in the suggestion that the boy would not only like to imitate the father but in fact take the father's place, as the son's feelings toward the father grow increasingly jealous and aggressive, as Freud describes "His identification with the father takes on a hostile colouring and becomes identical with the wish to replace the father" (Freud 1921:105). The object (the mother) effectively drops off the radar and the relation is centred on the rivalry between the boy and the father. The subject becomes more concerned with the model of desire, with becoming the model, than the desired object, which is the mark of a true mimetic engagement. We may therefore say that processes and desires of the infant's formation are mimetically mediated by the behaviour of the father figure (Anderson 2000). More specifically it is only through the nascent self's primary identification with the imaginary father figure, or *the model*, that the child gradually develops an autonomous identity linked to the separation from the maternal body.

Mimetic rivalries run their course from the *desire to be like the father* to the *desire to have what the father has* and finally the *desire to be the father*. In terms of psychoanalysis we can say that the child ultimately breaks its unity with the maternal body by way of *desire to be like the other*. Anderson (2000) notes a parallel between this model of subjectivity formation and the model developed by Girard. In Girard's triangular model of mimetic desire, mimesis acted as a catalyst for the violent rivalries that threatened to destroy society and the violence that restores the collectivity. Similarly at the level of the individual, Freud through Kristeva concurs that mimetic proclivities play a fundamental role in generating rivalries, and in generating subjectivity. Anderson summarises: "the common pattern in the formation of individual and collective identities is mimetic" (ibid:217). Such is the power of mimesis, that it *"forms identity* and mind in conjunction with the process of mimetic identification" (Ragland-Sullivan 1986:162). Chapter 3 will explore in greater detail the specific nature of this pattern or similarity in the way that mimetic desire functions in the formation of identity at both social and personal levels. For the purpose of this chapter though, I look to fully understand the relationship between the mother, mimesis and murder.

#### 2.4. The imaginary father

In both the origin and resolution of the Oedipus complex, the 'Father' plays a key role and ultimately guides the child's transition to the social or Symbolic order. After the initial break with the mother's body Lacan contends that the subject finds itself in the imaginary phase trying to see itself in relation to others and to negotiate the move from *corps morcelé* to corporeal unity within the Symbolic order. It's the 'Father' figure who intervenes from the exterior to act as mediator between mother and child. Following Lacan's logic, Anderson writes that it is "the imaginary figure...as the mediating third term between the receptacle of maternal forces and the child gives a symbolic ego-ideal, which makes possible the transition to the Symbolic order of language" (2000:221). This quote reveals that at the threshold of the symbolic the subject takes its first steps toward the new Symbolic order, through an *imaginary identification* with a third party. This party is the 'Father' figure who becomes the child's ego-ideal, or in terms of mimesis, what the child wants to become. How are we to conceive of this 'Father'? Lacan offers the following:

The father is not a real object, so what is he? ... *The father is a metaphor.* What is a metaphor? ... It's a signifier that takes the place of another signifier ... The father is a signifier substituted for another signifier. And this is the province and the only essential province of the 'father' as he intervenes in the Oedipus complex (Lacan in Dor 1997:94; emphasis added).

The 'Father' then is not a real father but rather a metaphor for the *phallus*, which signifies the mother's desire and acts as a *symbolic agent* with which the child identifies. It is confusing to say that a child can identify with an abstraction and it seems that this identification would need to manifest or concretise in some form/representation; in something that represents "separation" as such. This is clearer if we understand that the child identifies with the phallus as he wants to be the phallus, so he may *become the object of the mother's desire*. Later, in bringing the Oedipal complex to a close, the child severs its dependency on the maternal body and renounces its desire for the mother by mimetically identifying with the phallic signifier as associated with the 'imaginary father'. The child no longer wants to satisfy the mother but wants to take a place next to the Father in the Symbolic order. The little boy is more able to make this break as he possesses a like signifier – his penis – which means that he can more readily identify with the phallus (Appignanesi

and Garratt 1999:93). The misogyny in privileging the phallus as a means of transition from imaginary to the Symbolic and the important implications for women who are effectively abandoned outside the social order, and thus outside meaning, will be addressed in chapter four.

For now we must continue to develop the Lacanian connection between the 'Father' figure and the psychic development of the child. He writes that the "imaginary (phallic) figure" stimulates the separation between the mother and the child within the Oedipal process and "the human ego establishes itself on the basis of the imaginary relation" (in Kristeva 1987:22). The most important 'weapon' in the 'imaginary father's' arsenal to ensure this transition is the *threat of castration* that is different depending on the gender of the child. Lacan's specific interest is in the case of the boy and the way in which the 'father' forcefully prohibits the incest relationship between mother and child by threatening the boy with castration. The boy therefore renounces the ambition of becoming the phallus for the mother and detaches the child from maternal dependence (in Kristeva 1984:46-47) due to his 'castration anxiety' or fear that the father will cut off his penis. Therefore in Lacan's conceptualisation it is the overly strict father, who forces the child into compliance with the threat of castration that instigates the separation from the maternal body in the constitution of subjectivity. It is such a Freudian concept of prohibition, in this instance against incest, which Lacan elaborates in defining the Law of the Father.

Against Lacan, Kristeva conceives of a more 'loving' father that she roots genealogically in the work of Freud:

At the dawn of psychic experience Freud saw a *primary identification*, a direct and immediate transference of the nascent ego to the *father of individual prehistory* who according to Freud *possessed the sexual characteristics and functions of both parents* (Kristeva 1987:25; emphasis added).

In *Tales of Love* (1987b) Kristeva argues that the child's identification with the prehistoric mother-father is a primary identification with an 'imaginary father' that contains both masculine and feminine characteristics (also Oliver 1993:77). Her argument contains two bold propositions that need be elaborated. One, that the child's primary identification is pre-historical, that is to say it occurs pre-mirror stage and pre-Oedipal, and two, that the 'father' figure is a conglomeration of both maternal and paternal functions. In so stating, Kristeva challenges Lacan's argument that the child's primary identification occurs in the mirror stage and his theory of subjectivity

formation in which the Oedipal Father demands the rejection of the maternal. Kristeva thus sets herself apart from Lacan in rethinking the Oedipal triad and ultimately rethinking the transition to selfhood.

Kristeva counters the Oedipal narrative with its portrayal of a threatening and authoritarian father, with recourse to the tale of Narcissus. In this myth, Narcissus is gazing into a pool and he is overcome with the desire to reunite with the 'other' that he sees reflected before him. According to Kristeva, he longs for the *union with the other*, which can be traced back to his sense of loss in separating from the m(other) in the process of ego formation (in Lechte 1985:171). Although Narcissus is mistaken in taking his own image for an image of (an)other, the important point is that he identifies with an object (Oliver 1993:71) which for Kristeva recalls an archaic (uncanny) identification. Thus whilst she acknowledges that a narcissistic identification does occur in the mirror stage, Kristeva contends that it is not the first. Her proposal is that "the narcissistic identification in the mirror stage is merely the *reduplication* of earlier narcissistic identifications" (in *ibid*:72). In other words, the archaic identification of *pre-mirror, pre-Oedipal* stage becomes the model or the pattern whereby identifications are reduplicated in latter phases of psychic development. It is this identification to which Narcissus responds – namely, the earliest narcissistic identifications in the *mother-child* relation (1983:22) of the *semiotic* phase of experience. On these grounds Kristeva disagrees with Freud's claim that primary narcissism is a developmental stage and argues instead "primary narcissism is already a structure" (1983:374).

The child naturally cannot remain entirely in this semiotic phase as dependent on the mother and needs to separate – to make the transition from the maternal body to the Symbolic order – in order to develop an individual identity. Kristeva proposes that initially it is not the Lacanian 'Father' but the *mother* that is the agent of separation who "must instigate the break-up of the primary symbiosis" (Kristeva 1983:260) in order to allow the child to make this move. The mother recognises the importance of the separation and what she does out of love for her child. This gesture of love is what Kristeva names "the mother's gift" (1982). The mother's gift to the infant is to display that s/he is not the object of her desire but that she desires another. The mother's desire is elsewhere; it is deferred to the phallus, which is identification with the 'imaginary father'. In saying that the mother's desire is for the phallus, we are saying that this desire *is part of* the mother. Therefore we may say that the

paternal function “*already exists in the mother*” (Oliver 1993:79; in original). In other words, the mother’s desire for the phallus *qua* ‘father’ involves her in the paternal function and as such the ‘imaginary father’ is an amalgam of the maternal and paternal function or a combination of the mother and her desire (ibid:77).

Kristeva’s imaginary father plays a support role in facilitating the child in thethetic break: “He is a presymbolic imaginary father who stands in as a support for the place of the mother’s desire” (Oliver 1993:78). The emergence of this supportive third figure, which Kristeva calls a godsend, makes both the primary separation and amatory identification possible (1987: 40) as it allows the mother to defer her desire from the child to the phallus. Oliver elaborates, “It is the mother’s love and her love for her own mother, a *narcissistic love from generation to generation*, that supports the move into the Symbolic order” (1993:68; emphasis added). It is this primary identification *qua* amatory identification (Keltner 2004:100) that is reduplicated from generation to generation. For Kristeva, the primary amatory identification causes the child’s separation from identification with the mother’s body to identification with the mother’s desire. Oliver summarises that the imaginary figure mediates the move “from the mother’s body to the mother’s desire through the mother’s love” (Oliver 1993:70-71). So, whereas Lacan understands narcissism as a result of auto-identification that generates ‘self-love’, Kristeva places it in the semiotic phase where the self is not yet formed and love is contained in the pre-Symbolic, pre-linguistic dyad between the pre-subject, the mother and her desire.

Kristeva’s novel conception of the ‘imaginary father figure’ has two important consequences. Firstly, it challenges the traditional maternal/paternal dichotomy. In traditional psychoanalytical discourse, the maternal function belongs to the semiotic and the paternal function to the symbolic. In this conceptual frame, a move to the Symbolic order required identification with the *mother’s body*. The form of this identification was abjection – the sacrificial rejection of the maternal body as a rite of passage into the Symbolic. Kristeva has reconfigured this to allow for an alternative catalyst in the form of an amatory identification with the *mother’s desire*, or a union of the mother and the phallus. According to Oliver (1993) this union recalls the primal scene: the child’s conception. The archaic ‘imaginary father’ is a metonymic association that forms in the child’s imagination of the union of father and mother that the child imagines was present at conception. As Oliver clarifies, an identification with the ‘father of individual prehistory’ is an identification with the child’s

conception (ibid:79). Through an identification with the 'imaginary father', "the child can rejoice in a (re) union with the mother" (ibid:80), thus shifting emphasis from exclusion to union.

Secondly in postulating "the loving imaginary father as the archaic disposition of the paternal function *preceding* the Symbolic, the mirror stage, and the Oedipal father" (Oliver 1993:81) Kristeva offers two different (albeit interwoven) narratives – one of sacrifice and one of love. The former, the traditional account of the origins of subjectivity centres on Lacan's harsh authoritarian 'father figure' and is set up against the maternal semiotic. The latter points to a post-sacrificial account of subjectivity formation, which invokes Kristeva's archaic imaginary father as "an imaginary agent of love" (Oliver 1993:69). This primary direct and immediate identification of the child with this 'father of individual prehistory' is *conceptually prior* to the stern, severe 'father' that Lacan posits as the primary agent of the Oedipal phase. In this scheme the child identifies with the loving imaginary (maternal) father that gives the child support so that he or she may take up a place in history.

## 2.5. Of signs and subjectivity

In Lacanian discourse, it is the 'Father figure' that creates and enforces the transference from the imaginary to the Symbolic through the repression of the mother. The Father is thus representative of the entire Symbolic order or the *order of signification* which constitutes social systems such as Law, culture, religion, family and language. Such systems precede the birth of a child and when an infant learns to gauge its place in the world and negotiate the networks of the symbolic, the child would have attained a sense of self-identity (Hook 2003). Lacan was particularly fascinated with the role of language. He argued that the subconscious functions 'like' a language insofar as it's comprised of signs, metaphors and symbols (Appignanesi and Curry 1999:89) however the infant can only acquire it *after* the symbolic break with the maternal body. Furthermore it is only through language that the child takes up a place in the Symbolic order as a subject (ibid:91). Because the transition to the social world is premised on the repression of the mother, Lacan argued that language too was the domain of the Father. Women, situated in the imaginary, were therefore stranded 'without language' (ibid:93) and without access to the Symbolic. Against Lacan, Kristeva argues that 'signification' is not the exclusive domain of the Symbolic and that instead meaning may be found on the 'other side' of the mirror – in

the space where 'semiotic bodily drives' fuse with symbols in language to create meaning (Oliver 1993:76). In bringing to light the complicated pre-Oedipal relation between mother and child and the complicating processes of identification and separation (Oliver 1997:226), Kristeva argues that *there are traces of meaning* in semiotic stage of experience. The very aim of Kristeva's psychoanalytical *discourse of love* is "to get behind static linguistic representations in order to discover pre-linguistic traces of another space of experience" (Pateman and Gross 1987:130). By uncovering the repressed mother-child dyad and writing meaning into a space that was previously deemed to be without, Kristeva begins to challenge the dominant discourse of the Symbolic.

Kristeva and Lacan are both concerned with the linguistic processes through which subjectivity is constituted. For Kristeva the child must be able to identify with words and become capable of enunciation in order to survive as a subject, in "the universe of signs and creation" (Kristeva 1989:23) as it is only through language that the subject can make meaning of anything. Lacan argues that the signifiers from the parent's speech act as elements of identification and the identity of the child will depend on *how he or she assumes the words* of the parents (Leader and Groves 1995:43). This is a mimetic process as the subject imitates and reproduces the words of another who becomes a model. In incorporating the speech of another, the subject becomes like the model; the child too becomes a speaking being. This capacity for speech and enunciation allows for the emergence of the autonomous self. Kristeva goes so far as to argue the subject only exists in its capacity to identify itself with a 'speaking other' (Kristeva 1984). For Lacan this acquisition of language and subjectivity is a "battle" (Bowie 1991:21) that acts upon aggressive impulses. Kristeva argues that this latent aggression manifests in acts of *symbolic violence*, or what Kristeva titled *abjection* that stimulates the shift to selfhood and supports the Symbolic order.

## **2.6. The horror of the abject mother**

The logic of abjection was deeply ingrained in Lacan's work yet it was never articulated as such. Lacan's endeavour to "return to Freud" and excavate Freud's connection between words and symptoms of psychosis was fundamentally shaped by the Saussurian distinction between *signifier* and *signified*. The signifier is the materially produced representation – a particular sound, sign or image (West

1996:165) and the signified is the mental idea or concept that the signifier represents (Kearney 1994:243). Lacan however sought to move beyond the simple flow between signifier and signified, word and meaning. He contended that a word led on to other words in a linguistic chain just as a meaning led on to other meanings and groups of meanings then are arranged by the links *between* the words rather than the words themselves (Leader and Groves 1995). He argued, along Freudian lines, that when an element is suppressed, it can return and manifest itself in one's speech in the signifying chain, or in the symbolic. However "if the element is foreclosed, it can't return to the symbolic for the very simple reason that it never existed there in the first place. *It was banished, rejected*" (ibid:107; emphasis added). The notion of banishing, rejecting, or expelling something, most notably of elements of self is the embodiment of Kristeva's notion of abjection. In this context, 'abject' is used as a verb, but Kristeva also uses the word as an adjective describing something wretched and despised. When confronted with the 'abject' the subject may literally want to vomit or recoil in repulsion – such is the potency of the feeling of disgust. A sensation of disgust, according to Winfried Menninghaus, is "a state of alarm and emergency, an *acute crisis of self-preservation* in the face of an unassailable otherness, a convulsive struggle, in which what is in question, is quite literally, 'to be or not to be'" (2003:1). As I shall illustrate with reference to Kristeva that the self is intimately and intrinsically tied to the abject and feelings of nausea and repugnance emerge from the deep-seated awareness that the abject poses not only a threat to subjectivity, but that the expulsion of such wretched forces literally becomes a question of life and death.

According to Kristeva, the first and primary abjection is that of the mother. It is the moment in which the child separates definitively from the mother and subjectivity is set up against her. Here the binary logic that underpins western metaphysics is expressed in an understanding of the autonomy of the self defined by the abjection of the maternal/feminine. In *Powers of Horror* (1982) Kristeva points out that the self's transition to the Symbolic order entails violence as one body is *violently* separated from another in birth. It is this initial separation of the subject from the unity within the maternal body that constitutes the founding moment of subjectivity formation. Kristeva exquisitely highlights the nexus between the violence of abjection and identity formation:

Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the *immemorial violence* with which the body becomes separate from another body *in order to be* (1982:10; emphasis added).

If the subject wishes to take up a place in the Symbolic then the subject must violently reject the mother's body. The transition from the semiotic to the Symbolic order of signification is then seeped in violence and abjection stands at the threshold at which the child acquires language. Reineke powerfully elaborates, "Human violence is murderous because only humans, at the very borders of language, linger over the flesh they tear in the accession to a social space" (Anderson 2000:224). This conjures a provocative image of the physical process of birth. The subject passes violently through the birth canal to be born into 'social space' (Oliver 1993:55) and therefore what lies on the other side of the canal, *within* the maternal body, is the incarnate threat to the subject's autonomy. The mother's vagina, as a portal to the birth canal, is seen as threatening as it provides a visual recollection of the semiotic which the subject rejected in order to be born. The mother's genitals designate the literal boundary between inside and outside and they are viewed with horror by the subject. In constructing her sexual organs as abject, and within a patriarchal social order reducing the mother to her sex, it becomes easier to reject or expel her in the assertion of selfhood. Indeed Kristeva (1982) argues that the subject comes to *hate* the mother that is expressed through the abjection of all traces of her body.

Subsequently all such corporeal crevices, hollows and orifices, namely the mouth, anus, genitals, eyes and ears that designate the boundary between inside and outside the body generate abjection as do the bodily functions which with which these sites are associated, such as vomit, faeces, urine, blood and phlegm (Fletcher and Benjamin 1990:88). Beyond this Kristeva labels food loathing as perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection:

Food becomes abject only if it is a border between two distinct entities or territories. *A boundary between nature and culture...* [A]ll food is liable to defile, food can designate the other (the natural) that is opposed to the social condition of man and penetrates the self's clean and proper body (Kristeva 1982:75; emphasis added).

When exposed to any of these, the subject's reaction is one of disgust as they straddle the ambiguous, dangerous boundary between inside and outside; nature and culture. They thus beckon the threat that the mother poses to the Symbolic order as she occupies the ground *between nature and culture*. Ragland-Sullivan (1986) explains

that the very transition of the self from the Real to the Symbolic can be re-interpreted as a movement from nature to culture. We know from Kristeva that traditionally the semiotic (Real) space is associated with the maternal function and by extension with nature and disorder (or the impure) which must be perpetually purged to sustain the paternal, symbolic, ordered side. The 'mother' is subsequently constructed as "Other" and is seen as a threat to both the subject's identity and the entire social order due to the intimate nexus which has developed between the sacrificial expulsion of the maternal and subjectivity.

Kristeva attributes this to the fact that abjection is largely a social construction that repels our being and is a function of mimetic repugnance rather than nature. By way of illustration she argues that bodily excretions are culturally represented as unacceptable or impure:

The ability to take up a symbolic position as a social and speaking subject entail the *disavowal of its modes of corporeality*, especially those representing what is considered unacceptable, unclean or *antisocial* (Fletcher and Benjamin 1990:86; emphasis added).

Building upon this Kristeva proposes that the subject's corporeal functioning, *or modes of corporeality*, can never truly be expelled, but rather linger at the margin of both culture and the subject's identity. The original construction of subjectivity entailed the violent expulsion of traces of the maternal body, and beyond this that the sustenance of a 'proper' or a 'clean' self require the expunging of the improper or the unclean elements of its corporeal existence. It is the subject's recurring "disavowal of its mode of corporeality" which can be reread in Girardian terms as the *re-enacted sacrificial expulsion of a part of the self* in the (re) construction of subjectivity.

These abject forces present the self with a threatening or menacing force that must be perpetually expelled although it is impossible to definitively exclude them, as the abject, in all its forms and guises, returns *like an inescapable boomerang, always returning to the same place*. It is expelled and inevitably *returns to the real* rather than the symbolic:

It is the real in the Lacanian sense of the word, something *outside symbolisation and meaning*, constant and *always returning to the same place* to bring you suffering (Leader and Groves 1995:141; emphasis added).

This idea of recurrent anxiety and the haunting feeling of dread and horror is found in Freud's writings on the *uncanny*, which he takes to be "a particular shade of what is

frightening” and in particular, “that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and familiar” (Freud 1919:220-21). It is a feeling much akin to that of (disturbing) *déjà vu* which dates back to “a very early mental stage, long since surmounted” (ibid:236). The uncanny then is that frightening archaic force which was *once repressed* and now returns. The best definition of the feeling of abjection would be a similar sickly reaction of dread and disgust that stirs in the subject in response to the re-emergence of repressed forces that were expelled to the margins of the symbolic in the construction of the self. Such traces must be continually repelled and contested to assert a stable ordered identity, fulfilling the “prime operation of abjection [that] is exclusion” (Hook 2003:54) or the expulsion of Otherness. The uncanny is thus the conceptual predecessor of abject forces that *cannot* be annihilated; yet continually threaten to annihilate the self.

Why is it impossible to eliminate this threat? The answer is precisely because the abject *is part of the subject* and not a separate, detached object. By nature of the subject’s emergence into society through the abjection of the mother, the abject as a force which may destroy the self, becomes a necessary precondition of selfhood. The abject is therefore both a part of the self but must ironically be kept separate from it. Kristeva clarifies:

It is an extremely strong feeling which is at once somatic and symbolic, which is above all a revolt of the person against an external menace from which one wants to keep oneself at a distance, but of which one has the impression that it is *not only an external menace but that it may menace us from the inside* (in Hook 2003:135–136; emphasis added).

The acknowledgment of the impossibility of definitively expelling this menace haunts and disgusts us. The subject must keep this wretched and despised abject in check in order to define and redefine its identity. Even though the abject forces are expelled to the margins of the Symbolic, they still threaten the social order from a distance. “The Symbolic can maintain itself by maintaining its borders; and the abject points to the fragility of those borders” (Oliver 1993:56). Both the subject and society, situated inside the Symbolic order require the abjection of the maternal that embodies remnants of the semiotic, which threatens from outside its borders (Gross 1990:87). But in paradoxical terms, it is precisely that which disrespects borders and rules and disturbs identity that confers order within the symbolic. Consequently the Symbolic order is defined by abjection and vice versa, and their existences are mutually

inclusive. The abject is then a necessary condition – or a necessary supplement (McKenna 1992) – of both the subject and the Symbolic order and acts in the *development of subjectivity as well as the cultural order*. In understanding that the expulsion of all traces of the maternal body in the assertion of selfhood occurs at both the *personal* and the *social* level, we may speak of abjection as having a *systemic dimension*.

## 2.7. Rituals of abjection

As a counter to such systemic threats and a means of protecting its fragile borders, the Symbolic sets up rituals to keep the abject at bay. But because the abject can never be totally banished there is no absolute guarantee of security and autonomy – violent rituals of abjection only provide “*flimsy* protections against disintegration” (Oliver 1993:58). Kristeva argues that sacrificial rituals illustrate the boundary between semiotic authority [mother] and symbolic law [father] (in Oliver 1997:259-261). This sets up a clear binary between the maternal (the womb, the semiotic) and paternal (the phallus, the phallic order), the former sacrificed in the (re)creation of the latter. Indeed, the violence of abjection is locked into such binary logic; that there can be no order without disorder, law without crime, purity without impurity or morality without immorality. This is rooted in the original duality between self and other (symbolic and abject) that manifests in the abjection *of women*. In light of this, Kristeva’s move to open up the *pre-mirror* space to both paternal and maternal functions as a means to challenge such binaries becomes particularly pertinent. It is exactly the historical tendency to associate it with the feminine alone that lies at the root of patriarchal gender binaries like home/work, private/public, nature/culture, semiotic/symbolic. Such binaries I shall argue collectively constitute much of the patriarchal violence associated with identity formation in Western culture. It is this insight to which we shall return in chapter four as it will assist us in our aim of severing the nexus between [in this instance, sexually differentiated] violence and subjectivity formation by reconceptualising the relation between self and (m)other.

My immediate concern is the ways in which the creation of distinction between self and other (that creates the boundary between inside and outside; pure and impure) contributes to the sacrificial construction of identity. In Kristeva’s analysis all the impure, unclean, disorderly forces that pose a threat to the subject, society or the Symbolic order are ritually abjected in a bid for purity and order. To be

in the Symbolic order, there is a prohibition against the 'abject' that instructs the body must be clean and pure in order not to transgress the laws and conventions of society. Similarly for Girard, prohibitions and rituals designate the *things that the members of society must and must not do* (Girard 1987:93) as means to distinguish the pure from the impure to keep disorderly forces to the outside of the social order. In this instance it is the scapegoat as a poisonous presence – as the omnipotent source of disorder and impurity – that originates from the inside of the community is expelled to the outside, in a bid to restore social cohesion. Moreover it is only through the victim's violent expulsion that the parameters of the symbolic or social order are reaffirmed. These two authors provide personal and social readings of identity formation in purely sacrificial terms and this will allow the terms sacrifice and abjection to be used interchangeably in this discussion of violent identity formation. The purpose of Kristeva's sacrificial abjection is akin to the sacrificial scapegoating proposed by Girard: to illustrate that in the process of abjecting the mother or sacrificing the scapegoat, the 'other' is disfigured in their construction as impure, antisocial and a grave threat to selfhood. Therefore just as Girard says that violence lies at the origins of collective identity, Kristeva too argues that violence is originary (in a constitutive sense) to the subject's emergence into society.

To facilitate their sacrifice, the abject and the scapegoat are both constructed as 'other' prohibited from the social order, and thus become *taboo*. This notion resonates with Freud's *Totem and Taboo* in which he argues that civilisation is founded on the sacrifice or expulsion of "pre-oedipal pleasures and 'impure' incestual attachments to parental love" (in Fletcher and Benjamin 1990:86), which sets a precedent for the creation of prohibitions and restrictions that are placed on the actions of members of a community. It is precisely these prohibitions that allow for the existence of the social order. This is the restrictive and destructive aspect of 'taboo' – the aspect to which Girard and this, the *first reading* of Kristeva in this study responds. That is to say that one primary taboo is a prohibition set up against the (feminine) semiotic, which like Freud's Oedipal prohibition against incest is directed at the maternal body (Oliver 1993:56). In the process an important creative dimension is overlooked or neglected and its re-appropriation will be the subject of my second reading of Kristeva (chapter four) and the critique of Girard (chapter five).

## 2.8. The eternal fascination of the threshold

As early as 1895 Freud had spoken of “symptoms joining in the conversation” (in Leader and Groves 1995:35), which means that on the psychoanalysts couch, the patient will *reveal things not said* – or subconsciously *recall* the repressed – by experiencing pains at specific moments in their speech. His hypothesis was that words can then literally act as symptoms revealing some inner torment. Kristeva firmly agrees:

Your headache, your paralysis, your haemorrhage may be the somatic return of an unsymbolised repressed object. The repressed language of hatred or love, or of emotions too subtle for words, then reactivates energies no longer filtered by any psychic trace or representation; these attack and disrupt the functioning of the body’s organs...By reviving them in therapy, *I immolate them* (1987a:6).

The reference to immolation brings us beautifully back to Kearney’s insight from the previous chapter in which he argued that the constructed ‘other’ is *immolated on the altar of the same* for the sake of the collective’s identity. Similarly here, parts of the self or unsignified repressed objects (which are perceived as ‘other’, impure and antisocial; and torment the subject in menacing their very autonomy) are immolated, or abjected in a bid to secure the subject’s identity. Kristeva believes that the immolation of such objects is a form of abjection, which I believe can be read as a re-rejection of the mother or re-enactment of its sacrificial logic. In chapter one I argued that collective identities, which are challenged by the violence that erupts from the triangular model of mimetic desire, are constructed violently and therefore must be sustained violently. Following the same logic I am here proposing that in Kristeva’s analysis of boundary work and the formation of individual identity, “the triangular form of *primary identification is retained and recalled*” (Anderson 2000:221; emphasis added). Anderson continues:

When boundary work takes place it evokes *violence which tends to be sexually differentiated*. Thus for Kristeva a violent struggle with the abject (in hatred for the mother) ensues, until ultimately at the point of representation – at the threshold of the symbolic – *the violence of sacrifice enacts matricide* (ibid:221–222; emphasis added).

Kristeva argues that murderous violence *recalls* or *re-enacts* the initial violence tied to the semiotic and its eruption into the symbolic (Anderson 2000:223). The repetition of the initial sacrifice (*qua* matricide) becomes a *pattern for future murders* (ibid:225). This murder is a function of an Oedipal identification with a ‘father’ that

in traditional psychoanalysis is conceived of as stern and authoritative figure (the Law) that demands the symbolic sacrifice of the maternal body in the formation of self-identity. In this model, the phallus is the metaphor for the mother's desire and a means to sever dependence on the mother. By way of critique, Kristeva argues that the primary cathexis is not the paternal Phallus as suggested by Lacan in his reading of the Oedipal complex, but rather a pre-oedipal, pre-objectal identification with the mother's breast (1983:125). However such identification is semiotic occurring in the pre-objectal phase and Kristeva is clear that this breast is not an object for the child but a *model* or a *pattern* (ibid:25). It is based upon a semiotic need, which denotes "a pattern that sets up the possibility of desire" (Oliver 1993:74). And because the child's identification is with the model, Kristeva argues that such narcissistic identifications are mimetic (1983:22). Oliver summarises, "this archaic semiotic identification with the mother's breast...becomes the first in a series of reduplications. It prefigures and sets in motion the logic of object identifications in all object relations, including discourse and love" (1993:72). Mimesis is the generative principle that accounts the child's development through reduplicative identifications. Like Girard, Kristeva contends, "mimetic desire is mediated by the model" (Anderson 2000:221). The pre-objectal model is reduplicated and the 'imaginary father figure' becomes the model (Kristeva 1987:26) that mediates the child's move beyond the Imaginary.

The aim of this chapter has been to develop a model of how self-identity is created and sustained. From a traditional psychoanalytic paradigm, subjectivity is born from the symbolic (violent) break of the subject with the maternal body and therefore, obeying the logic of reduplication, too must be sustained violently. Kristeva terms this transition from the semiotic to the imaginary and the eruption to the symbolic (or the transition from one identification to another) the "soma". Reineke analyses this aspect of Kristeva's work in a passage that this very illuminatory and worth quoting in full:

She observes in the nascent subject two factors relevant to their *proclivity for murder*: language has a very specific impact on their accession to a social world, and soma plays a distinct[ive] role in confirming for subjects their linguistic achievements. Drawing on these factors, Kristeva can demonstrate that violence escalates ... initially when humans, invoking and exercising their capacity for language, find that they literally struggle for the sign. It continues to escalate because they *return repeatedly to the somatic bridge they have traversed ... seeking to secure themselves against loss by crossing it again and again* (in Anderson 2000:224; emphasis added)

It is the foundational violence of subjectivity formation that is re-enacted among humans, who return constantly to the threshold of the symbolic, believing that if they repeat the violence of previous struggles, they may prevail over existing forces which threaten, menace and haunt our being with annihilation.

## 2.9. Conclusion

The nature of the Symbolic necessitates the sacrifice of sexual difference as ensured through the abjection of the mother. Such sexually differentiated violence enforces modernist binaries of self/other; symbolic/semiotic and order/disorder and moreover, rituals and prohibitions are set to ensure that these binaries (upon which the social order is erected) are sustained. In analysing the community's relation with the scapegoat (Girard) and the subject's relation with the abject mother (Kristeva) we have arrived at a statement in systemic terms that the identity of the self is ineluctably bound to the sacrifice of the other. However this nexus between violence and identity is not inescapable. This chapter has offered the tentative beginnings to be pursued in the chapters to follow of a way to transcend thinking of autonomy in terms of sacrifice, or the assertion of order by expelling disorder. By following Kristeva into the realm of the imaginary it is possible to rethink the nature of the semiotic separation and the role of the 'imaginary father' as an authoritarian figure, situated in the mirror stage and the instigator of 'castration'. In other words, in thinking *before* Lacan's mirror stage and *beyond* the Law of the Father it becomes possible to conceive of the subject's shift from the maternal body to the Symbolic order in the absence of abjection (Oliver 1993:70). The hinge of this move is Kristeva's loving 'imaginary father' who not only facilitates the child's transition to selfhood but as I shall elaborate in chapter four, also provides the means whereby the subject is saved from melancholia and mourning of the maternal Thing by helping us to get to grips with the rejection of the mother that is a 'vital necessity' for our selfhood (Kristeva 1989). The important point is that whilst athetic break with the mother is necessary in order to be, within western patriarchal culture, separation by way of maternal sacrifice is constructed as vital and inevitable in the originary invention of self-identity. In other words the violence of abjection has been set as the default state. Logically that which is created violently must be sustained violently and this accounts for the

continuous expulsion of abject forces that return from the semiotic, which we perceive as a mortal threat to our subjectivity.

Kristeva describes the notion of abjection as something ambiguous that both defines the ego and threatens it with dissolution. Moreover Kristeva claims that the mother-as-abject delineates the boundaries of the Symbolic order. To this end she compares

[t]he way in which an individual identity is constructed against the exclusion of the abject maternal to the way in which a cultural or national identity is constructed against the exclusion of maternity and the feminine (in Oliver 1997:226).

While Kristeva develops a compelling argument that both the subject and the social are constructed and sustained by maternal sacrifice, she fails to develop a methodology to really conceive of the systemic connected-ness between the two levels. In other words, she fails to produce a comprehensive model or methodology that can contain the systemic dimension of the violence in question. In this she is not alone for the history of modern political theory (Spinoza, Hobbes, Kant, and Rousseau) is haunted by the same failure. Having argued for a synthetic unity of Girard and Kristeva's analyses of sacrificial violence, in the following chapter I intend to borrow from complexity theory to combine this synthetic unity in a holistic model of society that will account for the formation of sacrificial identities at all levels in comprehensive terms.

*Interlude: I*  
*The analogies of violence: a modernist view*

*Our miseries are ineluctably the product of our natures. The root of all evil is man,  
and thus he is himself the root of a specific evil, war*

– Kenneth Waltz (1959)

In the previous two chapters I argued that collectivities (such as ethnic groups, nations, states and cultures) and subjectivities employ sacrificial violence to establish and assert their identity where identity is inescapably (?) understood in terms of the *sovereignty* of the collective or the post-Oedipal *autonomy* of the individual. In both the political and psychoanalytic discussions of identity formation as represented in the theories of Girard and Kristeva, the root assumption or metaphor is concerned with the pursuit of autonomy that is enacted violently. Such a reading of identity in terms of sovereignty/autonomy is decidedly modernist and my task in this interlude is to briefly elaborate on this modernist assumptions and its consequence, namely that it posits violence as the default state of human nature and culture in general and identity in particular.

This modernism is clearly reflected in 17<sup>th</sup> century contract theory, and my particular interest is in the narratives of Hobbes and Spinoza whose views of human nature contributed to a specific understanding of society and state. I propose that the focus of contract theory is on autonomous individuals and sovereign states whose definition is a function of a Newtonian ontology, or the atomistic 17<sup>th</sup> century worldview that allowed for the creation of violence as default at the level of the individual, the state and the international system. In chapter three, I shall explore the profound consequences of creating and sustaining a world in which violence is the default state and in which values such as co-operation, interdependence and care have been sacrificially excluded through their construction as a threat to the autonomy of both the social and the self. From there, I shall seek to open a conceptual and political space that allows for such values to be re-integrated in the articulation of more holistic accounts of the nature of the individual and the collective. To this end I believe that post-Newtonian/complexity theory is useful as it provides us with the theoretical frame to begin conceiving of identity outside its association with autonomy.

## 1. The social contract and the self

Social contract theorists from Hobbes to Rousseau to Spinoza to Kant and Locke have erected their political philosophy from their respective understandings of the nature of human existence in pre-civil states. The optimistic view, represented by Locke that people are inherently good and co-operative and therefore that society is inherently harmonious, did not prevail. In fact it was fundamentally rejected (i.e. sacrificially excluded) in favour of a starkly different (pessimistic) view of human nature; one that replaced peace and co-operation with war and aggression and placed violent conflict at centre stage in human relations. This dominant view is found in the work of Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant and Spinoza who contend that humans are flawed (defective) and evil, are driven by instinct and self-interest and whose relations are plagued by distrust and conflict.

In accord with the teachings of Newtonian science Hobbes (followed by Spinoza who used Hobbes as a springboard for his own philosophy) endorsed a mechanical view of universe and all things in it, including man (Allison 1987). Accordingly all human beings were seen as separate, physical objects, governed by physical laws and thus human action, which was fundamentally mechanistic, could be explained in terms of these laws. A billiard ball game was often used as an analogy to depict the pre-determined behaviour of atomistic entities that collide and rebound off one another in accordance with the laws of motion. This model was applied in social theory to describe the deterministic behaviour of atomistic individuals in society. This analogy is important for two reasons. Firstly it painted individuals as solitary, antisocial (atomistic) individuals whose contact, following the laws of nature, is brief and forceful. Secondly, these laws governed individuals like atoms and in *acting in accordance with such deterministic laws, human behaviour was naturalised*. In other words, the assumptions about how men necessarily behave were thought to be scientific laws that illuminated the method men employ to ensue their primary goal, namely self-preservation. Hobbes (1914:XVI) writes, “These dictates of reason, men use to call the Lawes, but improperly for they are but Conclusions or Theoremes concerning what conduceth to the conservation and defence of themselves”. Indeed for Hobbes as with Spinoza, the driving force for all human beings was the effort *to preserve their autonomy* in relation to the external environment and especially other men acting in it.

## 2. State of nature

Social contract theorists commence their political philosophy with a description of such an external environment that pre-dated civil society. It is the State of Nature, which is essentially a description of human behaviour in the absence of civil laws and the government to enforce them. According to Hobbes the state of nature is a state of perpetual conflict (Allison 1987:181) or a 'war of everyman against everyman'. In this state Hobbes famously writes, "Worst of all, continuall fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes 1914:XIX). Faced with such profound insecurity, men are deemed to act in accordance with the law of nature (*lex naturalis*) that "is a Precept, or a generall Rule, found out of Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same" (Hobbes 1914:66). He concludes that man has a "natural right" or *jure naturali* to do whatever seems necessary for self-preservation, "The right of nature is the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himselfe, for the preservation of his own Nature; that is to say, of his own life" (ibid:66). Spinoza enlarges this logic to say that each man's 'natural right' is only limited by the power he has to assert this right. Because no man is safe from the predations of other men, Spinoza claims that 'might makes right' (Allison 1987:183). This is the logic of *jure naturali* that Spinoza takes one step further and extends to include the *right to do all things* that the individual does, provided it is done in accordance with the laws of human nature. Thus in a natural state, the only 'wrong' that a human being can commit is an action that results in the *loss of autonomy, as being at the mercy of another creates a dependence that threatens self-preservation*. Consequently, violence is accorded a central place in human nature (Spinoza, Hobbes) and social relations (Rousseau) as cognisant of the impossibility of a secure life in this state; men seek out a form of collective security that would provide a guarantee of autonomy against annihilation that is unattainable individually.

## 3. The sovereign and the *civitas*

The realisation that self-preservation and autonomy can never be assured in the state of nature, where life is defined by the constant threat of death, individuals coalesce into a collective – a *statu civili* or civil state. As such the state is understood to be an artificial product, or the result of an agreement or contract between men to

curb the inherent nature of men. Hobbes explains, “The state was meant to be essentially, deduced from the eternal nature of man, depending on the immutable laws of nature” (Hobbes 1914: XII). It is proposed that men enter into such a covenant as a means to escape the horror of life without it. Outside the state of nature, as within, the fundamental motivation that spurs human beings on is self-interest: all human beings wish to secure their autonomy against the threat of death. Man thus does not transform into a social being as his motives are still purely egoist and exclusionary. Notions of duty or obligation are completely alien and thus men are incapable of living in relative harmony unless they agree to enter into a “Contract of Submission” (Allison 1987:180) and accept the laws of the *civitas* as dictated by the Sovereign. By creating such obligations, it is the Sovereign or the Leviathan that mediates the transformation of the primal horde into the body politic and enforces the terms of the contract through threat of violence or sanction. The goal of men in submitting to the authority of the Sovereign is still the preservation of autonomy; however they change the means whereby they attain and assert it.

#### **4. An anarchic international system: in the shadow of violence**

There is consensus among contract theorists that the characteristics, beliefs and behaviour found in human nature condition human relations, that these are “*reflected*” at the level of the state (*civitas*) and in the interaction of states in the international system. In other words, they looked to articulate a political theory and theory of state based on or derived from assumptions about the behaviour of man. Hobbes (1914) planted the seeds of this comparison when he suggested that the international state system was “*akin to*” a pre-civil state of nature, the behaviour of states “*echoing*” that of man, “*equally governed*” by the *physical laws of nature*. My interest here is the way in which the same assumptions of self-interested, atomistic individualism that found reflection in Hobbes’ original social contract were later to provide the ontological framework of political realism as a theory of state (Morgenthau 1948; Waltz 2001). These assumptions that underpinned the notion of autonomy/sovereignty were borrowed from the much-revered Newtonian scientific discourse and accordingly we need to situate the wholesale fascination with “autonomy” in the wider modernist discourse of the day. The reason being that if violence is a function of this fascination with autonomy/sovereignty, then an understanding of the possibility of a non-violent future depends on understanding the wider, ontological

assumptions on which this discourse of autonomy is based. There are two especially important assumptions of the Newtonian mechanistic sciences that had important consequence in the social sciences and are thus relevant here. The first presents us with a mechanistic view of the universe in which nature is a perfect machine governed by immutable scientific laws. The mechanical image of living organisms argued that humans and animals worked like clockwork, in accord with a large number of chemical and electrical phenomena (Capra 1982:100). These 'machines' could be understood by reducing them to their most basic constituent parts or 'building blocks' (ibid:102). Secondly it was assumed that this world-machine was composed of distinct, individual, autonomous things like planets and atoms. From as early as ancient Greece, scientists developed a theory of particles based upon an understanding of the atom as the most basic invisible units of matter. It was believed that atoms were the smallest constituent building blocks of all matter and this was the launching pad for Rutherford's (Newtonian) solar system model of the atom. The atom was adjudged to be the smallest part of an element that has an independent existence. This was reflected originally in the work of Hobbes and Locke who sought to elevate the social sciences to the level of the natural sciences by conceiving of individuals as having an independent existence, or as autonomous, atomistic entities that constituted the building blocks of society. In the state of nature, men were truly autonomous, unaccountable to any authority for actions within the bounds of natural law and as such autonomy was actualised and asserted through violence. We may therefore conclude that *just as the laws that govern atoms are naturalised, so too was autonomy naturalised as an immutable social law inherent in human nature and its cultural formations like states and societies.*

The same assumption of atomised individualism subject to universal laws that was used to explain human behaviour in the state of nature was applied to the behaviour of states in the modern world. Waltz writes, "The social contract theorist, be he Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke Rousseau, or Kant, compares the behaviour of states in the world to that of men in the state of nature" (1959:172). At both levels of existence the concern then is with the autonomy of the actor or "unit of analysis". Since the signing of the treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the international system was seen to comprise a multitude of states which are deemed to be autonomous, atomistic entities that invoke their claims to sovereignty – the political equivalent of autonomy – to guarantee or enhance their own power. In other words, the Hobbesian heuristic device

of the State of Nature was *extrapolated* to the level of state and adopted by realists as a means of describing the behaviour of states in the international system. In 1977, Hedley Bull articulated the *analogy* of the Hobbesian State of Nature and what he coined 'The Anarchical Society' of the international system. He argued that the system of states is in a perpetual flux of anarchy and bits of security can only be snatched, can only be achieved and enlarged through war. Thus just as pre-contractual men define their relations conflictually, so too is violence the blood that pulses through the veins of the international system. The International System is, as Hobbes put it, the State of Nature writ large, and inter-state relations, a stag hunt writ large. Therefore I propose that assumptions of *not only the behaviour of men in the state of nature but also states in the international system are guided by the maintenance of autonomy masquerading as an individual "right" to self-defence*. "Masquerade" because this nexus of identity, violence and self-defence constitutes a vicious circle that is the conceptual grandfather of the cold-war dilemma. Self-defence conceived in these anarchic terms only becomes inescapable and "natural" when premised on the very notion of (violently invented) autonomous individualism that creates insecurity in the first instance. In Girardian terms, autonomy violently invented can only be violently sustained – hence the "need" for security discourses. Nonetheless, by naturalising it with reference to Newtonian atomism *autonomy is established as an immutable law that regulates the conduct of atomistic individuals and states*.

## **5. The inevitability of violent engagement**

*Extrapolated from* the behaviour of men in an anarchic pre-civil society, we understand that this conduct is *inherently violent* as war was deemed to be the modus through which states could consolidate their sovereignty in response to the chaos and disorder of the international system in which states were the threat of annihilation was ever present. In both instances, anarchy bred the perpetual promise of war and accordingly co-operation or dependence were adjudged to be a recipe for self-destruction. Underpinning this logic is a deep-rooted suspicion of the intentions of all other human beings and this mutual mistrust is augmented by the knowledge that, if given the opportunity, any individual would betray another. Fear or suspicion of the intent of others fuelled the actions of states. "Suspicion of others' motives led to behaviour characterised by aggression, self-interest, and the *drive for autonomy*" (Tickner 1992:46; emphasis added). In this anarchic international environment the

'brooding shadow of violence' looms large and dictates the behaviour of the states who become inherently suspicious and rely on their own power – realised through military capabilities – to defend their sovereignty because failure to do so would have led to the annihilation of the state. In this model, violent warfare enacted against enemies is adjudged to be the modus by which the state consolidates greater order and control. Bodin (in Waltz 1959:81) writes that war most often promotes the internal unity of each state involved:

The best way of preserving a state, and guaranteeing it against sedition, rebellion, civil war is to keep the subjects in unanimity with one with another, and to this end, to find an enemy against whom they can make a common cause.

Once again we find ourselves in Girardian terrain supported, this time, by Tickner (1992:47) whose emphasis on the link between identity of the state and a violently expelled 'other' could not be clearer: "Without spurs to greatness energized by fighting the enemy, the polity would collapse". The seeking out of an enemy other as a means whereby states preserve a form of unity, or guarantee an enduring national identity encapsulates the logic of generative scapegoating. Hence the processes of state identity formation are not simply violent, but sacrificially so. And in Girard, as with Hobbes, such violence is inevitable and the *only* modus whereby the autonomy of the agent (be it man or state) can be affirmed. From a Realist perspective, war is just as inevitable among states as it is among men precisely because if one wants to understand the recurrence of war one must look at the inherent defects within human nature, for the very locus of war is the nature of man. Waltz writes, "Wars among states are then as inevitable as are the defects in the nature of man" (2001:162). Whether we are dealing with the individual or collective level, the employ of violence is inevitable or pre-determined for autonomy (like self-preservation) is an immutable law inherent in their nature.

## 6. 'Just...so' stories

Thus far we have ascertained that individuals in a Hobbesian state of nature assert their autonomy violently *in much the same way* that the post-Westphalian state asserts its sovereignty violently, and what theorists like Spinoza, Rousseau and Kant all offer us are so many variations on the same "just as" story: "*just as* in a state of nature individuals ... *so do* states in what is effectively a global state of nature". But

what exactly do these authors mean by this “just as” argument in all its different variants (italicised throughout this section)? It seems to be an analogy that connects the behaviour of the individual in a pre-civil state to that of the state in the anarchic international system. However, in the absence of some kind of interpretative model that tells us how methodologically the levels relate, this line of reasoning becomes problematic. What we do know is that there is a definite and damaging connection between violence and autonomy that holds for both the individual and the collective, as personal autonomy and state sovereignty are conceived of in the masculine terms of Western modernity. Critics of such a view, notably pluralists and IR feminists, have proposed peaceful alternatives. But their suggestions that, for instance, international law and co-operation between states could curb the use of war as the primary instrument of national policy have been sacrificially excluded from the discussion on the grounds of idealism or naivety (Tickner 1992). The long enduring hegemonic status of Realism I believe is largely attributable to its epistemological roots in the Newtonian paradigm, which as the dominant discourse of modernity, has been extremely difficult to transcend. If it is difficult to imagine peace and co-operation it is exactly because, given the hegemony of Western modernity, it is difficult to imagine identity outside or separate from its violent assertion and sustained fascination with “autonomy” or the separateness of things. I believe that we currently find ourselves on the cusp of a shift that will allow us to reconsider the nature of identity-autonomy and also to account for the relation between the individual and the social quest for identity. Complexity helps us to chart both these dimensions of the contemporary shift – a shift that is perhaps as significant and far-reaching as the 16-17<sup>th</sup> century shift away from an organistic to a mechanistic worldview.

## Chapter 3

### Charting the change toward Complexity

The beauty of geometry is that is a language of extraordinary subtlety that serves many purposes

– A **Fractal Life**, Benoit Mandelbrot

#### 3.1. Introduction

Whilst the modernist paradigm did provide speculations around the nature of the relation between the level of the individual and the collective, the connection has not been theorised in systemic terms. Accounting ontologically for the systemic violence-identity nexus at all levels requires a heuristic or interpretative model. Indeed, the development of such a model that contains both an individual and collective explanation of the violence-identity nexus seems to be a methodological necessity as it allows us to challenge the fundamental root assumptions or, in Foucauldian terms, the epistemic *a priori*'s employed to construct violence as default state. Methodologically there are at least two ways of pursuing and representing the *systemic nature* of the fascination with the autonomy of (masculine) individual and (masculine) state. One could either pursue a Foucauldian “order of things” archaeology *or* one could read them both as representative of a 16-17<sup>th</sup> mechanistic or Newtonian paradigm in terms of an interpretative model of society that will capture this similarity in a comprehensive fashion. In *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1973) Foucault theorises around what makes certain knowledge possible and what causes sudden and significant changes in discourse. He claimed that all periods of history are erected upon “the fundamental codes of a culture” (ibid:xx) that constituted the foundations of knowledge. He argued that the codes of discourse changed over time, from one period's *episteme* to another. Thus the epistemic *a priori*'s are the conditions of knowledge in a particular culture, at a particular time. The second option is an investigation of the extent to which complexity theory allows us to unify the theories of social and individual identity formation as already mapped out in order to account methodologically for the historical systemic nature of the violence-identity nexus. Unlike the Foucauldian option, the complexity model will better enable us to consider identity formation as “hybrid” phenomenon (Urry 2003:17), that is, as phenomenon like migration,

population growth, health or the stock exchange that really are a combination of natural and social phenomenon. The emergence of such hybrid phenomenon testifies to the current systemic convergence of social and natural studies. While the social sciences paradigm has offered many theories on the relation between violence and identity, only complexity can help in understanding identity formation as such a hybrid phenomenon. This will allow us to chart a way forward, beyond the systemic fascination with the “autonomy” of things such as atoms, individuals and states.

If we are to reveal the true “systemic” or comprehensive association between identity formation and violence I believe it is necessary to identify a paradigmatic set of assumptions that can unify the analysis of the autonomy of the individual, the sovereignty of the state and the violence involved in construction of both. I believe that this set occupies a masculine, scientific epistemology and in this chapter I shall therefore look firstly at the masculine assumptions of the paradigm and after that, the scientific assumptions. This will constitute the first step in an investigation into the nature and possibility of a non-violent future. I therefore turn first to Ann Tickner and other IR feminists to dissect its masculine dimension.

### **3.2. Human nature without humanity**

In Waltz’s book *Man, the State and War* (2001), he observes that the ‘three images’ of international relations (human behaviour, war and international anarchy) are intimately connected and he adopts a “levels of analysis” approach in seeking to identify causal explanations for war at the levels of individual (level 1), state (level 2) and international system (level 3). As a proponent of methodological holism, he rejects the reductionism that places the causes for international conflict in the hands of individual states. He proposes instead that an adequate account of the composition of the international system (and the behaviour of states that constitute it) can only be ascertained by exposing the laws that operate at the systemic level (level 3). It seems counterintuitive to speak of laws in reference to an otherwise lawless, anarchic international system. These laws however are, for political realism, analogous to the laws that govern the behaviour of individuals and reign in the State of Nature as Tickner (1992:34) explains in saying that “politics...is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature”. These are the laws of nature that permit each autonomous entity to do whatever is deemed necessary for self-preservation. Tickner (1992) clarifies, arguing that international relations and security studies are rooted in

the assumptions of human nature found at Level 1, namely in the state of nature. She contends that the political realist assumptions of the state and the international system are rooted in Hobbesian assumptions of what constitutes human [read: male] nature. In the narratives of Hobbes and Rousseau male nature is taken to be constitutive of human nature and women were markedly absent from Hobbes' state of nature, as they are from IR and security discourses. Tickner argues that the assumptions linking level 2 (the state) and level 3 (the international system) are rooted in a discourse of hegemonic masculinity that devalues femininity at each of these three levels (Tickner 1992:29–30). She writes, "A socially constructed type of [hegemonic] masculinity has been projected onto the international behaviour of states" (ibid:37). Political realism therefore postulates an exclusively masculine theory of state. From this it follows that the problems generated by and through such a theory of state and state relations, problems such as war and violence, are a function of the masculine values in terms of which the state system and the state *qua* unit of analysis is conceived.

What needs to be highlighted here is that the identity of both man and state are established conflictually and reciprocally: men use metaphors of state to justify their violence while states, use the metaphors of masculinity to define and legitimise their actions. Underpinning such metaphors is a glorification of certain "masculine" virtues associated with autonomous political man such as discipline, order, rationality, control, strength and aggression (Pettman 1996:8) that have always been lauded and extrapolated to a discussion of state, it is only through assertion of these virtues that the perils of life in anarchic systems could be held at bay. This sentiment is strongly expressed by Waltz who explains that security depends on avoiding dependence and as a result "the greatest rewards for a state come, not from an increase in well-being, which might be attained through heightened interdependence, but from the maintenance of autonomy" (Waltz 2001:106-107). In modernist discourse then, selfhood and autonomy are tied to masculinity and these are pursued and achieved violently. This nexus between war and autonomy is illustrated in the Hobbesian project, which constructed autonomy/ sovereignty sacrificially, was premised upon the violent expulsion of values associated with interdependence such as such as nurture, care, tenderness and compassion from human nature. These qualities that are *associated with the feminine* were translated as signs of weakness that could lead to the ultimate demise of the (masculine) individual. Thus, within the Hobbesian state of nature atomistic self-reliant individuals sought to sever all relations that would breed

any sense of dependency. War acted as a catalyst from the transition from a self-interested, fearful existence in the state of nature to a higher form of selfhood as realised in the *civitas* (Pateman and Gross 1986:68). Similarly within the international system, realism prescribes that individual states must centre values such as independence, strength, aggression and the capacity for war-making (all 'masculine' traits) to defend their autonomy. Dependence and other weaknesses, such as irrationality, emotionality, compassion and compromise, as values associated with the 'feminine', were seen to threaten the man and state with dissolution. As Tickner explains; "the most dangerous threat to man *and* the state is to be like a woman, because women are weak, fearful, indecisive, and dependant" (1992:39). We can conclude that the assertion of identity-in-terms-of-autonomy of both the manly state and stately man is achieved violently and in both cases, *autonomy/sovereignty is premised upon the sacrificial exclusion of the feminine*. Tickner traces this to Machiavelli:

Machiavelli's construction of the citizen-warrior required a devalued 'other' against which true manhood and autonomy could be set, in Machiavelli's writings this feminine other is "fortuna" originally a Roman goddess associated with capriciousness and unpredictability... Fortuna is presented as the *feminine power in men themselves against which they must continually struggle to maintain autonomy* (Tickner 1992: 38-39 emphasis added).

"*In men themselves*"... how strongly this reminds us of Kristeva's description of the abject as a powerful threat to the subject's identity that constitutes not only an external menace but also that which "may menace *us from the inside*". The struggle for subjectivity *is* the struggle to maintain autonomy against the feminine power embodied by *fortuna* – as everything that a true man, an autonomous subject, must not be. In chapter two, I discussed how Kristeva argues that the abjection or re-enacted expulsion of the maternal body stood at the birth of subjectivity. We have just seen in the above example of modernity, that self-identity (here *masculine human nature*) is constructed sacrificially through the exclusion of the feminine. It seems there is a fruitful connection here: do the feminine traits or values, perpetually expelled from human nature since the birth of modernity, represent the abject? From chapter two let us recall to important points.

Firstly, Kristeva (1982) contends that within Western patriarchal societies all bodily excretions associated with the female form are viewed with repugnance, as abject precisely because the primary abjection that stands at the birth of subjectivity is

that of the female body. From here she argues that the sacrificial immolation of objects that threaten both the self and the symbolic order with dissolution is a form of abjection, which can be read as a re-rejection of the mother. Pateman and Gross (1986:130) elaborate that the movement toward an autonomous self-hood requires that the maternal bond must “be denounced, *sacrificed*, repressed or censored in order that the pre-oedipal child acquire a stable social position and identity through its submission to paternal oedipal edicts”. This reveals the intimate nexus which has developed between the sacrificial expulsion of the maternal and subjectivity. This echoes DiStephano’s argument that the Hobbesian invention of human nature and the founding on civil society were premised precisely on this sacrificial denial of the mother (in Gatens 1991) which leads to the second point that all traces of the maternal body are abjected both *individually and collectively* (Anderson 2000) in order to construct and sustain the symbolic order as both a personal and a cultural system. I subsequently argued that the purging of all traces of the female body-as-object in the processes of construction of self-identity (that is hegemonic masculinity) and the society as a whole displayed a systemic dimension. Kristeva provides us with an opening to the next piece of the puzzle with her observation that the all-embodying notion of “the maternal” is associated with nature (read as chaos, disorder) and is deemed to pose a threat to the existence of the cultural order. Such binary logic leads us to the next dimension of our critique of Political Realism, namely its scientism.

### **3.3. Violence and science**

Hannah Pitkin notes that Machiavelli’s portrayal of *fortuna* is often associated with nature “as something outside the political world that *must be subdued and controlled*” (in Tickner 1992:47). *Fortuna* is associated with chance, capriciousness, disorder and unpredictability and such attributes can only be controlled violently. Extrapolated to the arena of Realpolitik, this portrayal of *fortuna* by Machiavelli is similar to the Realist depiction of the chaos and anarchy of the international system. States are acutely aware of the ever-present threat posed by international anarchy, against which they must continually struggle for power in a bid to assert their sovereignty. The order or the autonomy of the polity depended upon the perpetual expulsion of the chaotic encompassing international environment, which threaten the state with disintegration, as Pateman and Gross clearly support, “War is associated with a kind of autonomous selfhood that escapes domination by mere nature” (1986:

67). The above feminist critique must be placed in the historical context of the rise of the mechanistic model of the universe with the Scientific Revolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In her book, the *Death of Nature: women, ecology and the scientific revolution* (1983) Merchant argues that this pre-modern worldview was erected on a vastly different set of assumptions that viewed the self, society and the cosmos in terms of organismic metaphors (ibid:1). Indeed, the entire universe was seen as a living, vibrant and sensitive organism that was comprised of interconnected organic relationships of people with one another and other living organisms and interdependent parts that “mutually affect each other and the whole” (ibid:99). The earth was seen to be both a living organism and a protective mother and humankind thus developed a profound respect for the Earth Mother who was their nurturer and provider (ibid:20). This worldview was thus characterised by the dissolution of all distinction between the spiritual and material realms and the pursuit of a holistic understanding of “the natural order [to] live in harmony with it” (Capra 1982:40). A fundamental assumption of the world-as-organism view was that all parts of the organism are mutually dependant on all other (living and non-living) parts as well as existing in a dynamic relationship with the whole.

With the Scientific Revolution in Europe, changes in physics and astronomy led to the birth of a new intellectual order. The combination of the scientific discoveries of Newton, Copernicus and Galileo coupled with the mathematical description of nature as espoused by Francis Bacon as well as the analytical method of reasoning as conceived of by Descartes gave rise to a radically different method of scientific discovery (Debus 1978:102). This in turn fundamentally altered the way in which humans perceived the natural world (Henry 1997:1). In its totality the ideology was named scientific materialism, which referred to the fundamental belief that the world was composed of matter which could be dissected, scrutinized, and fully understood by science (Wilber 1998). Merchant (1983) contends that the rise of the Newtonian worldview stimulated a shift in mankind’s view of nature from a living vibrant organism into that of a passive machine. Her fundamental critique of the general attitude toward nature as exemplified by Francis Bacon, dubbed the ‘father of modern science’, is that nature was objectified, mechanised and despiritualised by the unbridled and ruthless inquisition of man into the natural world through technology and scientific experiment. In his description of King Salomon’s House in *New Atlantis* Bacon’s faith is placed in scientific method to ascertain absolute truths and

laws that govern nature, or “the knowledge of causes and the *secret* motions of things” (in Redwood 1977:147) is resounding. The organismic belief in the interconnectivity and interdependence of man and nature was displaced by man’s desire to control and subjugate nature through the application of scientific methods. The mechanised version of the earth was subject to external forces to be dominated and dismantled by man in his quest to discover its secrets. There was no leash upon man’s pursuit of these undisclosed truths. “The new man of science must not think that the inquisition of nature is in any part interdicted or forbidden. Nature must be ‘bound into service’ and ‘made a slave’...and moulded by mechanical arts” (Merchant 1983:169). The organismic image of nature restrained the actions of human beings as the earth was perceived to be sensitive and responsive to these. However with the rise of the Newtonian world machine man lost any scruples about his treatment of nature and did thus not feel any moral obligation to protect and cherish it (Capra 1982:42). The metaphor of the universe as an organic, living and spiritual being was forcefully replaced by the analogy of the natural world with machinery (Henry 1997:57) as encapsulated by the new idea of *bêtes-machines* (literally animal machines) to describe living creatures (ibid:69). The methods of science provided the knowledge that could classify all living entities and explain their behaviour causally following the laws of mechanics.

The awe of women that accompanied the admiration of Mother Earth in pre-modern societies was transfigured by the scientific project into fear and loathing of the feminine. Masculine metaphors referred to autonomy, rationality or separateness of things, whereas feminine metaphors were used analogously to those forces (be it disorder, irrationality, interdependence, impurity) that threatened them. As Merchant (1983:2) explains, women were seen as symbols of the disorder of nature; associated with “wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts and general chaos”. Consequently it was believed that chaotic nature and disorderly women (bracketed as “the feminine”) needed to be dominated and controlled and, not surprisingly, it was the task of masculinised science to perfect this mastery and command. The glorification of masculine autonomy was a function of binary logic. It was women and the corrupted virtues that they allegedly embodied whose “disorder engenders all the vices and can bring the state to ruin” (Pateman 1989:18). This fear of the female only emerged in the modern world, framed by the Newtonian worldview that imbued dichotomies with a value judgement. Indeed, the discourse of modernity

is a specific constellation of binaries – mind-body, culture-nature, reason-emotion, public-private – to which the association masculine (order) and feminine (disorder) is fundamental. Pateman summarises this position in saying, “*Women, by virtue of their natures, are a source of disorder in the state*” (1989:18). The female body tied women immediately and physically to nature, which facilitated the construction of the *female as disorder*. Specifically, it was in *female bodily functions* that lay women’s potential for disorder. Pateman (ibid:25) continues, “Women are direct mediators between nature and society. However, women face nature directly, and, in giving birth and in their other bodily functions, they appear as part of nature”. The acute fear of childbirth and menstruation will be explained in psychoanalytic terms in chapter four. For now it is suffice to understand that the autonomy of the Symbolic order is sustained by the perpetual purging of semiotic space, associated with the maternal function and by extension with nature, disorder and impurity (Kristeva 1982), thus demanding the cleanliness of the body as a means to attain purity and the expulsion of impure and disorderly elements to the furthest margins of the Symbolic Order. This buttressed the belief that there was something inherent in female nature that, like the forces of nature itself, was disruptive to social life to such a grave degree that disordered women could lead to the destruction of the state. Gatens contributes, “Women are constructed as close to nature, subject to passion and disorder, and hence excluded from the self-conscious creation of the body politic, which is precisely where passion and disorder are transcended” (1991:70). Nature posed the greatest threat to culture, women the greatest threat to man, and both these forces of disorder, a threat to the ordered stability of the polity. Therefore the ability to separate oneself from disorder, in its various forms, was the mark of a subject’s autonomy or a society’s sovereignty.

Order or the autonomy of the self is a function of the expulsion of disorder and impurity, as exemplified in the body of the (maternal) Other. Identity is a function of the exclusion of the abject, here, as Kristeva writes, the feminine. This is based upon an understanding of identity that ties the masculine to that which is ordered and pure, or on the side of the *logos*. As such it is taken to be the default identity in relation to which all other identities are defined. The connection she makes between women and disorder and the violence enacted against them in western patriarchal communities is irrefutably rooted in the Newtonian worldview. Together Merchant, Tickner and Kristeva clearly articulate the *masculinised violence of Western modernity*. They

illustrate not only the masculine dimension of the paradigm but place that feminist critique in the bigger historical, context of the paradigm shift from world-as-organism to world-as-machine that sanctioned both the vicious exploitation of nature and the violent treatment of women. This is simultaneously the shift away from femininity to masculinity and from organism to mechanism. We thus end up with an understanding of how autonomy and sovereignty are both functions of this masculine, scientific epistemology.

#### **3.4. Toward a comprehensive account**

This conclusion reveals a certain consensus between IR and psychoanalytical feminists that the violence necessary to invent and sustain the autonomy of the subject is conceptually and historically related to the violence necessary to invent and sustain the sovereignty of the state. In other words, they seem to suggest that the violence of modernity is not only *systematic* but also *systemic* in some sense but they fail to articulate beyond the use of metaphors like “manly states and stately men” “or masculinity projected upon the world stage” and similar “just as” stories. In other words, they fail to address the systemic nature of the violence-autonomy/sovereignty nexus methodologically. To conceive of the rise of hegemonic western masculinity and the emergence of the Westphalian state system in *coterminous* terms gives us a clue as to how we can proceed to read autonomy and its violence systemically, in terms of modernity as a specific “order of things”. This goes to broader critique that existing theories of identity formation address *either* the social *or* the individual level. Authors who have been studied in the preceding chapters make statements either about human nature as such (Kristeva, Levinas) or collective violence as such (Girard). What is notably lacking is an explanation of the violence-identity nexus as a systemic phenomenon. The intention of this chapter to bridge the gap between the two, arguing that neither is exclusive, or that neither is sufficient in and of itself to make comprehensive sense of identity formation per se. It is therefore necessary to develop a fuller understanding of the “relation” between the level of the individual and that of state, in a bid to understand what precisely is meant by “related” or “systemic”.

In the rest of this chapter I have two aims. The first is to suggest that complexity theory offers us a methodology or paradigm that encourages us to conceive of this “just so” relation between the micro and the macro in terms of self-

similarity. If society is, as complexity theory suggests, a complex dynamical self-organising system, then we can expect such a system to display the characteristics of other such a living organisms, notably an analogical or self-similar relation between the parts and the whole. Many authors have suggested that contemporary complexity theory is a re-appropriation of the pre-modern organistic worldview (see Gare 2000). In that pre-modern organistic world the relation was captured by the suggestion that the macro is reflected in the micro. Henry explains, “The essential unity of approach to the nature of the physical world, from the macrocosm to the microcosm, was seen as unshakeable testimony to the truth of the system” (1997:56). However this approach relied too heavily on religious mysticism, natural magic and alchemy to be considered here. The idea was carried forward and is embedded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century organistic world views of Herbert Spencer and Karl Marx, which I shall investigate and situate vis-à-vis the contemporary complexity reading of the micro-macro relation.

The second aim consists in providing a methodological frame for answering, in the following two chapters, the question: “How does it help to say, in complexity terms, that the violence of Western modernity is self-similar?” In response, I believe that the very postulation of the fractal self-similarity carries with it a different set of assumptions that offers hope for conceiving the dawn of a less violent future. For, if the root assumption of complexity is relational then violence can/will no longer be invoked to sustain the myth of autonomy. The question then is of whether we can find traces of such an embrace of the relational at the levels where individual and collective identities are being articulated? And, if there is a shift in the way we think of chaos, disorder and interdependence, then this would suggest that there might yet be hope for a non-violent future or, at the very best, for a future that does not embrace violence as default state for human nature and politics.

### **3.5. The Social Organism**

Viewing the relation between the social and the individual in terms of such a self-similarity implies a conception of both individuals and society as *complex dynamical systems*. Since it is crucial to an argument concerned with post-sacrificial identity formation, I will explore what it means to describe individual and society as complex dynamical systems. Such a view in many ways entails a revival of the 19<sup>th</sup> century organismic view of society. In order to trace the development from this

classical conception of society-qua-organism to the contemporary conception that finds reflection in the post-Newtonian worldview, I will focus on two themes of 1) change as endogenous or immanent; and 2) teleology in the work of Spencer and Marx to provide historical continuity for the contemporary complexity discourse but also to highlight important differences. Moreover I shall illustrate the extent to which these concepts are informed by Newtonian discourse. The final analysis is critical as on the hand Marx and Spencer revived the pre-Scientific Revolution, organismic sentiment in viewing society and social change in *organic terms* yet the epistemological foundations of their thought also reflected a Newtonian paradigm and the scientific, utopian, teleological assumptions underpinning it. Consequently this world-view projected a static and rigid conception of change (as progress, as evolution), conceived of in a unidirectional, linear fashion. The result was a methodology that accommodated the belief that *the mechanistic laws* of the growth of individual organisms could be extrapolated to make sense of the growth of society. Society, in other words, was yet another type of *bête-machine*.

### 3.5.1. Change as Immanence

Spencer's methodology relied heavily on the metaphorical analogy of society as an organism and he drew parallels between the laws that govern the behaviour of living (e.g. an animal, the body) and social (human society) organisms. Rumney (1934:42) explains, "A society as a whole, considered apart from its living units, presents phenomena of growth, structure and function, *analogous* to those of growth, structure and function in an animal". He argued that growth is common to all social and organic bodies, which grow from what he terms, 'germs' into large masses (ibid:48). Such processes of *continuous growth* unfold from innate processes. This idea of 'growth from innate processes', or functionalism, is a touchstone of 19<sup>th</sup> century organic models of society. Functionalism looked at society in isolation and understood change as inherent and a function of the system itself, as analogous to the growth of an organism, from which emerged the idea of change as immanent (Nisbet 1970:170). The assumption of immanence that arose in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, most notably in the work of Leibniz, was manifest in 19<sup>th</sup> century theories of development and the convictions of the aforementioned theorists. According to Durkheim social evolution was seen to be function of differentiation *within the unified social system*, occurring (or modernising) gradually (Walby 2003:4; emphasis added). The focus of

functionalism then is order within society and ignores the relationship between society and the environment. Parsons was concerned with society's ability to *control* its environment (Baker 1993:125) through the capacity for *self-equilibration* – or the ability to balance itself once again after a disturbance or perturbation – indicating that society was separate from the environment which it sought to harness and control in true Newtonian fashion.

Spencer, as a proponent of functionalist thought, argued that change is endogenous, that is to say a function of internal influences. Spencer argued that it was a tendency of social bodies as well as of living bodies – indeed the inherent *tendency* of all things – to *increase in structure* as they increase in size (Andreski 1971:120). In so doing Spencer equated increasing structure with increasing complexity, which is a movement toward ever increasing perfection. As such, progress or an immanent evolution toward greater perfection was a key feature in the growth of all organisms. Equally for Marx, progressive, directional *change* as a function of the contradictions generated at the economic base *was immanent* to social systems. “No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed, and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society” (in Nisbet 1970:171). Like biological organisms, the social organism then unfolds from qualities contained within. Marx’s organic model therefore understands organic changes as *developed internally* through the resolution of internal contradictions. Marx, as a historical materialist understands progress and changes at the level of superstructure to be a function of the interaction of the forces and relations of production at the level of the economic base. He proposed that societies changed or evolved when sufficient contradictions between the relations and forces of production have been generated. According to Marx, production is situated in a dominant position in the hierarchy but Rader clarifies that hierarchy and interrelatedness go hand in hand. As he explains, “although production is dominant in the organic hierarchy, it is not independent, it is part of the *organic whole*” (Rader 1979:60)<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> By employing vocabulary such as interdependence, integration and most obviously, organic whole, Marx invokes an organic model of social structure at odds with his other mechanistic methodology and epistemology. See *Marx's Interpretation of History* (Rader 1979)

This notion of an organic, structural whole reflects the functionalist belief in the systemic nature of society<sup>6</sup>.

### 3.5.2. Teleology

The influence of the Newtonian worldview is reflected in Marx's keen interest in "disclosing the special laws that regulate the origin, existence, development and death of a given social organism and its replacement by another and higher one" (Rader 1979:57). This idea of *progression toward a 'higher one'*, made intelligible by the laws of science, forms the basis of Marx's typical 19<sup>th</sup> century optimism and this movement is by and large tied to the transition of man from bondage to freedom by 'striking the fetters' of the contradiction between forces and relations of production. This progression is marked by differences in the stages of historical development – from the 'Primitive' to Asiatic to Classical to Feudal to Capitalist and Communist modes (Marx 1977:21), with the communist state envisaged as what Fukuyama famously termed the 'end of history' (in Appignanesi and Garratt 1995:166).

In *Progress: Its Laws and Causes* (1857) Spencer expresses a similar reliance on the laws of nature to explain the laws of social progress:

The law of organic progress is *the law of all progress*. Whether it be in the development of the Earth, in the development of life upon its surface, in the development of Society, of Government, of Manufacture, of Commerce, of Language, Literature, Science, Art, this same evolution of the simple into the complex through successive differentiations holds throughout (in Rumney 1934:120).

In one of his later works, *First Principles* (1911) Spencer argued that evolution denotes a change toward increasing heterogeneity. Lewin (1992:147) summarises Spencer's Law of Evolution in saying "systems have a tendency to become more concentrated and heterogeneous as they evolve". The movement to greater heterogeneity denotes an increase in structure and order that is a mark of both biological and social systems. As Lewin (ibid:149) writes

---

<sup>6</sup> Marx's account of the organic nature of society comprises both a diachronic (historical) and a synchronic (structural) analysis. Analysed synchronically, all societies display fairly constant structural characteristics such as the existence of the base with its interaction of man and nature and its dialectical interplay between forces and relations of production (Rader 1979:57). This displays the variation of the nature of the activities at the economic base, for example the differences in the interface between forces and relations of production, thus presenting us simultaneously with the synchronic similarities that accounts for social structure and diachronic differences accounting for social change. The organic analogy can be applied at the both levels.

The pure Spencerian view of the world, therefore, is that increased complexity is an inevitable manifestation of the system and is *driven by internal dynamics* of complex systems: heterogeneity from homogeneity, order out of chaos.

Spencer proposes *directionality for all things*, from seeds to societies, whose evolution is a function of internal factors. This evolutionary progress is necessary (Lewin 1992:147). In other words, it is teleological as it amounts to a “study of ends of final causes” (Woodfield 1976:1). When we talk of final causes we are essentially referring to the idea of ‘purpose’ or the idea that the evolution of *all* things from ants to empires are bound up in an inextricable march toward a necessary and inevitable end. Following such logic, classical evolutionists all subscribed to the doctrine of historicism as a blend of immanence and teleology. As a doctrine it argues that every action, every thing, every change have a specific purpose and function and are guided by an underlying teleology or are *caused to occur* by the ‘machinery of history’ (Berlin 1969:50) and it explains “historical transformation as the result of the actualization of the potentialities inherent in the entity from the beginning” (Sanderson 1990:17). It is clear that the theory of historical inevitability, with its metaphor of history as a machine, is firmly embedded in mechanistic Newtonian paradigm. In this paradigm, absolute knowledge or true ends are attainable through science, as there is only “one complete and all-embracing pyramid of scientific knowledge, one method, one truth”. Accordingly it is held that history obeys fundamental laws (Berlin 1969:51) and if one is able to identify the *directional laws*, as an expression of immanence and have knowledge of all the facts, then one is able to predict what will happen, when and why with absolute certainty. Marx clearly reiterates this, defining historicism as “the doctrine that there are laws of historical development and that, on the basis of knowledge of these laws, it is *possible to make large-scale historical prophecies*” (in *ibid*:87). Marx puts his faith in the possibility of certain future predictions on the basis of study of absolute laws.

Nineteenth century attempts to identify patterns and laws that could account for historical change of social systems then relied on a teleology of history. Such historicism became problematic, however, when the western experience of change was taken as model of all change. The teleology of modernity coupled with social Darwinism legitimated the colonial project of conquest and domination. Later in the 1950s, modernisation theory (as an advanced, thinly veiled stage of colonial

imposition) dominated as a direct descendant of social evolutionism, following the belief that all societies, viewed as separate, autonomous entities or units of analysis, develop through the same inherent logic. The radicalisation of the organismic metaphor suggested by complexity theorists (See Baker 1993; Lewin 1993) however allows us to appropriate the organismic view of society and recast it in post-Newtonian terms that exclude such problematic linear notions of progress or teleology. The new conception of system offers us an approach that is anti-reductionist, multi-linear, un-teleological and against notions of self-balancing equilibrium. In other words, complexity equips us with the tools needed to develop an organismic view of society, which, contrary to its predecessors, is stripped of functionalist and teleological baggage and serves as a corrective to traditional assumptions about change, equilibrium and the isolation of a system from its environment. Below I look to radicalise the metaphor in illustrating that, outside such a Newtonian world-view, when we speak of societies that evolve like an organism we are effectively looking at societies as complex, or adaptive dynamical systems.

### **3.6. Sketching complex systems**

How then do we conceive of a contemporary version of the complex system that remedies the pitfalls of the social organism analogy yet is cognisant of the complementary and useful assumptions it offers? And furthermore, to what extent does complexity offer us a new conceptualisation of the complex system and its modus of generating and regenerating itself? But first, what does it mean to say that a system is complex? It is not sufficient to say that the complexity of a system is a result of the large number of parts that constitute it as this neglects the relation of a system with its environment. From a functionalist perspective, Marx makes this mistake in arguing that there is “a total functional integration in which each element is what it is because of *its relation* to other elements and to the whole” and it is this interdependence or mutual interaction of part to part and part to whole that is “characteristic of *all* organic wholes” (Rader 1979:59). However by focussing on the web of internally related parts, the relation of the organic whole with its external environment is ignored. Cilliers distinction between “complicated” and “complex” systems is useful here:

If a system...can be given a complete description in terms of its individual constituents, such a system is merely complicated. Things like jumbo jets or computers are complicated. In a complex system on the other hand, the interaction among constituents of the system of the system, and the interaction between the system and its environment, are of such a nature that the system as a whole cannot be fully understood simply by analysing its components. Moreover, these relationships are not fixed, but shift and change often as a result of self-organisation (1998:viii-ix).

The integrity of the system is sustained through its own astonishing ability to organise a network of innumerable factors that interact in innumerable ways, and to adapt and reorganise these webs in response to changing conditions from within and around the system itself. Such systems, whether we are looking at cells, plants, animals, brains, ecosystems or hybrid entities like societies, states or even the global economy, are comprised of (an often infinitely large) number of elements. It is the *nature of relations between* elements within a system and between the system and its environment, rather than the *number* of elements, which give the system its complex identity. Thus the behaviour of a system cannot be understood in terms of simple cause and effect because there are “massive disproportionalities between cause and effect” (Urry 2003:7). Contrary to Newtonian logic, in the world of complex systems there is no linear proportionality between large causes and large changes. Rather, a touchstone of complex systems is that they are governed by non-linear relations and are thus extremely sensitive to even the smallest changes. The internal structure of the system is therefore constantly shifting and evolving yet “despite the frenetic internal activity, outwardly the system seems to be unchanging” (Rihani 2002:8). In this light, their ability to self-organise and to absorb or accommodate change seems even more extraordinary. This characteristic is best captured in the butterfly effect that has become something of a complexity catch phrase that “a flap of butterfly’s wings in Brazil could set off a tornado in Texas”. Lorenz first alleged that given the dynamic and sensitive web of systems it was easy to conceive that one small change in a given system could reverberate throughout the whole, leading to large-scale changes (Hawkins 1996). This process of system renewal in the face of dramatic change is generated through positive and negative feedback. *Positive feedback within and between systems* exacerbates initial stresses by reinforcing or amplifying initial changes; it acts in the same direction and is self-reinforcing (Jervis 1997:97). This makes predictions about the future state of the system more often than not, impossible. *Negative feedback* on the other hand insulates the system from environmental changes; it minimises the impact of external change. “Positive and

negative feedbacks are powerful drivers of systems” (ibid:98) however it is uncertain how the system will be affected, as generative feedback loops move a system away from a state of equilibrium (Byrne 1998:29). Given such profound complexity and unpredictability, the movement of systems, in contrast to Newtonian wisdom, could never be towards an optimal and predictable end point, conceived of as a static state of equilibrium. Such non-mechanical, unpredictable systems are bound to be inherently unstable and operate in *far-from-equilibrium conditions* (Rihani 2002:70).

In many regards, *disequilibrium* is the key in understanding the dynamic nature of complex systems. For Spencer, the universal tendency of social organisms was “toward harmonious adaptation, perfect equilibrium” (Rumney 1934:10). Spencer, faithfully echoing the sentiments of 19<sup>th</sup> sociology, acknowledges that societies grow and expand and that this growth may lead to disturbances and conflict. He maintains however that equilibrium will be attained and at such a time, society will be *at rest* as a result of the “lubricating oil of Evolution [that will] minimise and ultimately abolish all social friction” (ibid.). This reflects the long pervasive assumption in the natural and social sciences that all systems, human included are driven toward a stable equilibrium, and that only one such equilibrium-state exists for a given system. The rise of the (complex) new complexity paradigm has brought with it a new notion of equilibrium; a notion that can, in part, be traced back to 19<sup>th</sup> century theorists like Marx who, theorising about process of changes, combined “both gradual evolution and the processes of sudden transformation” (Walby 2003:5). This theory of change accommodates both prolonged periods of development and sudden critical (revolutionary) changes that give birth to a new political form. Contrary to Parsons and Spencer and more in line with complexity thought, Marx’s conception of the social system was *not* built upon the assumption of self-balancing equilibrium. Walby (ibid:5) explains, “[it] allows that the social system may be far-from-equilibrium, generating sudden and violent change to the path of development”. In so saying, I believe Marx takes a critical step toward an understanding of complex dynamical systems. In conceiving of society as an organism, which is constantly changing, the key in understanding development is homeostasis or ‘dynamic inner equilibrium’. This is a moving equilibrium in which equilibrium is never perfect but yet the organism is well balanced (Rader 1979:86). An organism is said to be in dynamic equilibrium “if it has not only achieved homeostasis but has established a *modus vivendi* between its inner play of forces and its external environments” (ibid.).

In complexity terms systems are open systems – ‘open’ to the influence of both environmental conditions and the history of the system. It is in this respect that the complexity model departs radically from its 19<sup>th</sup> century counterpart that underplayed environmental influence. Contrary to functionalist logic, which deemed that systems were *inward orientated and teleologically directed*, complexity proposes that the system is not immune to the influence of the environment and while growth may display “an arrow of time” (measured through entropy) such directionality, far from being teleological, occurs instead as a function of interaction in a fitness landscape. In order to deal with a changing environment, a complex system must be able to internalise external fluctuations, which is greatly facilitated by the knowledge of the environment that the system has stored in its memory (Cilliers 1998:10). Insofar as the current adaptation of a complex system is influenced by past behaviour, we may say that it displays a diachronic aspect as it *evolves through time*. As I shall argue, such a (*re*) *generation* of the system over time is a function of continuous and dynamic self-organisation, which is in contrast to closed systems do not interact with the environment and as such exist in a state of equilibrium, or die in accordance with the law of entropy (Rihani 2002:69). It is precisely the open, continuous interaction with their environments that allows complex systems to adapt to changing circumstance and maintain the balance of stability and instability, quite extraordinarily, at the *edge of chaos*.

### 3.6.1 Where chaos and order collide

Complexity theorists are fascinated with the ability of complex adaptive systems to evolve toward a critical state between order and disorder that is situated at the edge of chaos. It is imperative that the delicate, dynamic balance is sustained as, “in the ordered regime, the system is too rigid and both information exchange among components and responsiveness to a changing environment are therefore limited. In the disordered regime, on the other hand, the system is too turbulent and its connections are too disorganised to allow it to function at peak effectiveness” (Eidelson 1999:15). Neither will do as it is only at the tumultuous vortex of order and disorder, constancy and change, that stock markets crash, volcanoes erupt, diseases mutate and new governments are elected. It is what John Biggs dubs, “the most fertile area of chaos study” (in Hawkins 1996:8).

All systems naturally evolve to the edge of chaos through the process of self-organisation (Eidelson 1999) where new patterns emerge as a function of the interplay between order and chaos without jeopardising the survival of the system, or its identity, as a whole (Rihani 2002). In stark contrast to Newtonian thought, order and disorder are *not rigid binary rivals* but rather two faces of the same phenomenon (Baker 1993). This is the most revolutionary and stirring contribution made by complexity. The consequences of this shift are immense, for as Hayles notes:

When a dichotomy as central to Western thought as order/disorder is destabilised, it is not exaggeration to say that a major fault line has developed in the episteme (1991:16).

This reconceptualisation of the order-disorder interplay will have profound consequence for my re-readings of Kristeva (chapter four) and Girard (chapter five) when we shall re-view subjectivity and culture to emerge not sacrificially by virtue of the exclusion or abjection of disorder and chaos but as a function of the way complex dynamical or open systems self-organise.

For now I am concerned with the phenomenal power that self-organisation unleashes and the miraculous structures that it sustains, by weaving together unimaginable numbers of elements in a complex web:

Consider the cascade of biochemical reactions in a single cell and their disruptions when the cell turns cancerous; the booms and crashes of the stock market; the emergence of consciousness from the interplay of millions of neurons in the brain; the origin of life from a meshwork of chemical reactions in the primordial soup...In every case, astonishing patterns emerge spontaneously. The richness of the world around us is due, in large part, to the miracle of self-organisation (Strogatz 2003:34).

But how do we account for the capacity of complex systems to self-organise? Courtesy of Spencer we know that growth proceeds by multiplication and recompounding and results in increasing heterogeneity, complexity and differentiation of parts and functions. In the case of social growth, “[it] continues either up to times when societies divide or up to times when they are overwhelmed” (Andreski 1971:109). In the language of complexity, we may rephrase this and assert that “when societies (or indeed all living organisms) are overwhelmed (or critical parameters are exceeded) *then* it divides (or bifurcation occurs)”. To say a system bifurcates is to say that it splits as a result of sudden changes in its critical parameters. When the system’s critical parameters undergo stress, it changes – instability

increases and appears to enter a chaotic state, thus the elements that make up a system and its environment to interact in new ways. Miller (1999:2) explains that “The elements *compete* with one another and those that *co-operate* successfully form an organisation stable enough to attract the remaining elements into its organisational structure. These stable organisational forms are called *attractor* states”. Within this new environment there is competition between elements, quite certainly, as conflict and competition form a vital basis for evolution and adaptation. Self-organisation through bifurcation as a function of the order-disorder interplay – or the interface of conflict and co-operation – then is the generative engine that allows system’s to grow and assume ‘new higher order, more differentiated, structures’ (Urry 2003:28). Such change may be induced by either internal (within the system) or external (within the environment) forces and the results thereof are inherently unpredictable:

This change comes not only from the unpredictability of the impact of external effects, which in far-from-equilibrium systems have unpredictable outcomes, but also from an inherent unpredictability in nature (Baker 1993:133).

Unpredictability goes hand in hand with the non-linear behavioural patterns of a system and although this seems to generate unbridled chaos, bits of stable ordered behaviour spontaneously return, giving birth to more complex adaptive forms of organisation, or what Prigogine describes as “islands of new order in a general sea of chaos” (in Urry 2003:101). It is the *attractor* that generates such ‘pockets of order’ (ibid:102) within the general mass of disorder and thus acts as catalysts for the movement of a system from one organisational state to another. Of particular interest to us are *strange attractors*, which are found in both the social and natural world, and are thus a touchstone of hybrid phenomena. These do “not have neat edges, smooth surfaces or clear boundaries between it and the next attractor. Indeed some attractors are so open that one or more other attractors, entirely different, can occupy the same time-space dimensions” (Milovanovic 1997:31). As a result of such highly complex overlap such attractors are seen messy and disordered. Mathematical models have attempted to map the emergence of ordered patterns from the (apparent) disorder of phase transition that is characteristic of any hybrid phenomenon. When looking at all such phenomena, the potential for change – for renewal or decay; for creation or destruction – lies in the transformative power of attractor states unleashed at the edge

of chaos, the point at which order gives way to chaos and/or chaos gives birth to order.

### **3.6.2. The complexity of change**

Complex systems are adaptive in the sense that they change or transform through an organic interaction with other complex (changing) systems (Walby 2003:8). The complexity of this interaction and co-evolution of systems is captured in the notion of “*fitness landscape*” that describes the phenomenon whereby the evolution of one system, leads to the evolution of the landscape. To illustrate, the cell is a complex system embedded in a greater complex system, the hand, which in turn exists in a greater system, the body. Similarly in the social world, the individual as a complex system is nested in complex system (society), a society in a nation state, which in turn is nested in regional blocks at an international level. A change in one system is manifest in all other systems, thus we are able to interpret the way in a great number of individuals enact with one another and their environment in a dynamic way. In other words, systems all interact with one another and internal changes in one system manifests as changes in the environment of other systems. Walby writes, “since every system is understood to take all other systems as its environment, systems co-evolve as they complexly adapt to the environment” (ibid: 8). The pertinent point is that systems change – they grow or decay – and this has important consequences for the development of other systems precisely because every system acts within a larger environment that in turn is situated within a greater system. We know for certain that systems that share the same space do not grow in isolation but rather are in a continual flux and systems *adapt internally to external influences* with time.

In classical sociology the debate over societal evolution has been polarised between idealist and materialist accounts of history, which is echoed in the division between autonomy (internal adaptation) and environmental dependence (external adjustment). The former (supported by the likes of Spencer and Hegel) proposed that change is inherent in nature, and unfolds following directional laws according to an internal logic, blueprint or clockwork within the living organism. At the opposite extreme, the latter (advocated strongly by Marx) contended that change is historical and contingent and all living organisms are functions of the environment; thus setting up a binary between the two. The root of this binary is the Cartesian body-mind split

(Capra 1982) as the mind is represented by idealist account of history and the body, by material accounts. In his later work however Marx hypothesised that the development of both biological and social organisms was a function of the *interplay of inward adjustment and outward adaptation* (Rader 1979:86). In incorporating both endogenous and exogenous influences he clearly pre-empted the life sciences concept of the *holon*, which is a neologism used to express the dual nature of every organism. Capra explains, "Each holon as two opposite tendencies: an integrative tendency to function as a part of a larger whole, and a self-assertive tendency to preserve its individual autonomy" (1982:27). The idea that systems are self-organising and capable of internalising change, whilst still maintaining order is captured in the term *autopoiesis* (Marx's "inward adjustment"). The trait of a system's dependency on other systems, marked by the exchange of energy and information with the environment, is termed *dissipation* ("outward adaptation"). All complex systems *qua* holons (as both autopoietic and dissipative) are defined by the interplay of self-assertion and integration. As Baker clarifies with an example from the natural world, "the entire cell, including its membrane and cell wall, is a creative autopoietic system. But the cell is dependent on a broader environment, making it a dissipative structure whose continued existence is dependant on interaction with its environment" (Baker 1992:129). No living organism is completely autonomous or completely dependent on the environment in which it exists. The cell, the individual, the society or the ecosystem as a complex system is subject to the same forces of integration and self-assertion (Capra 1982:27).

We may therefore speak of the identity of a complex system as created and asserted through the dynamic interplay of a functional struggle to define its autonomy in the face of adaptation to the environment. Such a synthesis is accommodated in Roy Francis' term "idergy" by nature of its definition accommodates both "the domains of material energy and cultural ideas" (Baker 1993:132) thereby refusing to accept the Cartesian binary body/mind split at the root of idealist versus material accounts of history. The application of this logic allows us to resolve the debate between idealist and materialist accounts of social evolution. The growth of the social organism is a function of both an internal logic as offered by Spencer and Hegel and the influence of environment as Marx suggested. Similarly the influence of idergy is present at the level of the individual. Baker contends that all human behaviour displays both energetic and ideational aspects and it is this interplay that structures

social relationships, as Baker explains all "cultures involve human social activity that is autopoietic and dissipative" (ibid:133). Indeed *the identities of all holons are idergic* – both ideational and material. This testifies to the “hybrid” nature of phenomena that emerge or become understandable as complex phenomenon at the interface of social and natural sciences. This means that the identities of complex systems from cells to individuals to states and empires are viewed holistically in terms of idergy as an interplay of autopoietic (idealist, self-maintaining) and dissipative (material, environmentally dependant) influences. We can conclude that it is a *systemic phenomenon* as all holons, regardless of level, engage in this activity (Capra 1982:304). A specific pattern of *fractal reflection* seems to be emerging as all systems at all levels are subject to the same interplay of integrative and self-assertive forces. The fractal in many ways is the conceptual hinge of this study, as I believe it is the tool that will allow us not only to make sense of subjectivity violence and collectivity violence in terms of their organic self-similarity (that is, their systemic nature) but also lay the foundations for a holistic *post-sacrificial* account of identity formation. It is to this concept that I now turn.

### 3.7 The fractal life of complex systems

In his groundbreaking text, *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* (1983), Benoit Mandelbrot coined the word fractal to describe the rough-edged, irregular, non-Euclidean shapes of nature that he derived from the Greek word, *frangere*, to break up or to create irregular shapes or patterns. To understand what is peculiar about fractals, consider that the length of the coastline depends on the scale used to measure it and not on the “objective” length (which in fact does not exist). Although it is impossible to measure the coastline, a pattern emerges – that at whatever scale the fractal displays comparably complex detail. Every time we zoom in, the subsystem revealed is *equivalent* in appearance, that is, geographically, to the whole (Hall 1994:123). Whilst they are irregular all over, they have the same degree of irregularity at all scales – so much so that if not provided with an indication of the scale it is impossible to judge scale solely on the basis of the coastline’s appearance. This is summarised by Mandelbrot who defined a fractal as “any curve or surface that is independent of scale. This property is referred to as *self-similarity* and it means that any portion of the curve, if blown up in scale, would appear identical to the whole curve” (Mandelbrot 1983:1). The self-similar pattern of fractal objects can be generated mathematically

e.g. in the Mandelbrot set or it can be found in nature e.g. a broccoli. The benefit of mathematical modelling enlightens us to the fact that despite the apparently chaotic nature of natural systems, if you zoom out far enough or zoom in close enough, you will see that ordered patterns are discernible, albeit often difficult to identify. Lest we be reminded that order is chaos and chaos is order.

All complex dynamical systems have a fractal dimension; that is to say they display a self-similarity that is independent of scale (Hall 1994). The different parts of complex systems are linked and affect one another and equally the constituent 'parts' of the system are *self-similar* to one another and the whole. Miller explains,

The ways in which the elements interact with one another on the microscopic level becomes the *algorithms* by which the system self-organises on the macroscopic level (1999:2).

The proposition that *all complex, dynamical systems grow in self-similar ways* acts as a counter to the inherently aggregative and reductionist connections made by classical sociology between the micro and macro level, hereby refuting the absolute analogy of behaviour and growth between the social organism and the living organism. Having said this, an astute awareness to the logic of the fractal self-similarity of the organism can be found as early as Marx's organic model. This is summed up by Rader (1979:80) who writes, "In the organism each organ has a structure that is related to the structure of the other organs and to the structure of the organism as a whole". At the macro level, the fractal increases as Rader explains:

Thus Marx thinks in terms of the wider and wider structures of organic wholeness. The psycho-physical individual is an organic structure; the society of which he is an organic member is a wider structure, nature of which mankind and its social formations are organic parts in still a wider structure (ibid:61-62).

Marx's contribution mirrors the post-Newtonian assumption of "ontological depth" (Walby 2003:10) that is opposed to a single level analysis, or the privileging of one ontological level, and searches rather for *connections between levels*. With regard to the social sciences, such an approach suggests that the individual, the society and the state are linked, exist simultaneously (ibid:11) or are generated "by the same algorithm". Each level is necessary for the existence of the others – they *co-evolve* through dynamic processes of conflict and co-operation – and therefore neither the micro nor macro level can logically be privileged. As James Crutchfield (in Hawkins 1995:18) supports:

Chaos brings a new challenge to the reductionist view that a system can be understood by breaking it down and studying each piece. The interaction of components on one scale can lead to complex global behaviour on a larger scale that in general cannot be deduced from knowledge of the individual components.

An understanding of the ontological depth of individual and social structure can, with the aid of complexity, be unified into a single framework. The benefit of such a non-reductive approach is that neither the micro nor the macro is considered sufficient in and of itself. Rather than attempting to displace one approach at the expense of the other as classical social theory attempted, the model offered here recognises the complexity of macro-micro linkages and the emergent phenomenon that result from the interaction. As Walby summaries, this would “not deny the self-reflexivity of the human subject while yet theorising changes in the social totality” (2003:2). Indeed one of the major breakthroughs of complexity is that it enables us to make systemic connections and establishing clear patterns between levels of phenomena within complex systems (ibid:4).

According to Baker (1993) the ontological depth of levels that are linked in a complex system are subject to the forces of centriphery. Centriphery as a term denotes the tendency of *complex systems to centralise their world* by funnelling energy, resources, values or information toward itself while marginalizing or peripheralising other, contending systems in the fitness landscape (ibid:139). The centre creates the periphery but is also dependent on the periphery for its existence. Centriphery is divided between centre and periphery in a way that is structurally similar to the split between autopoiesis and dissipation and as such the autonomy of the system is a function of its interaction with other systems in the larger environment and hence each is necessary for the existence of other. Otherwise said, the idergic identity of the centre is defined relationally to that of the periphery and vice-versa. Baker contends that processes of centring and peripheralising are something that cells, individuals, communities, states and even empires do and thus states that centriphery creates a *recurring pattern in the social world*: “Like the repetitive pattern in the Mandelbrot set, it [centriphery] keeps *emerging at various levels* of social organisation and through various changes over time”(ibid:140). It holds at all levels of social interaction, as entities engaged in all manner of social behaviour are attracted to behaviour associated with centriphery. To this extent, centriphery is a recurring phenomenon that is self-similar at all levels (ibid:142). In other words, centriphery is

an attractor that “creates the turbulence and recreates the order in social life” (Baker 1993:135). In generating a dynamic interplay between order and disorder, centriphery behaves as an attractor algorithm that occupies the critical space at the edge of chaos where it recreates a dynamic pattern of order and disorder *at all levels of social life*.

### **3.8. Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored the fundamental epistemological and ontological parallels between the analyses of Kristeva and feminist IR theorists. In their work there are discussions that engage the role of sacrifice in the construction micro level identities, such as the nascent self (Kristeva), the modern hegemonic male (Tickner), the citizen-warrior (Elsthain). Similarly, they explore the role of violence in the formation of macro identities such as the socio-Symbolic order (Kristeva), the *civitas* (Elsthain) or the modern nation-state (Tickner). However these theorists fail in developing a model, or a unified theory, that can account for the nexus between violence and identity in comprehensive terms. In a bid to remedy this, in what follows, I hope to present such parallels in terms of the fractal self-similarity of society viewed in complex dynamical terms and this as a critical move toward an understanding of the systemic nature of sacrificial identities. This will allow me to explore in the last chapters a different reading of identity formation in the emerging post-Newtonian paradigm.

## *Interlude II*

### *The self-similarity of violence: a complexity view*

*What is carved in human flesh is an image of society*

– Mary Douglas (1970)

Where in the first Interlude the systemic nature of the violence-identity nexus was represented in terms of Hobbesian “just so” stories, from the organistic world view of complexity I now seek to re-read these “just so” analogies in methodological terms as self-similarities.

#### **1. The self-similarity of sacrifice**

Psychoanalysis traditionally acknowledges the existence of a connection between the levels of the self and the social and the role of violence in the creation and sustenance of each. Lacan for example noted that the birth of the subject in a signifying system is reflected in the birth of civil society:

This *mini-version* of the founding of civil society as the founding of the form of individuation, with its *dialectic of dependence* on the presence of others whom one opposes to found one’s own identity and of the simultaneous *desire for independence* from them...can also be read in Rousseau and Marx (in Whitford 1991:176; emphasis added).

Armed with the tools of complexity however we may now move beyond reductionist analogies that employ ‘just as’ arguments and ‘mini-version’ logic and assert in more meaningful terms that we are dealing with a micro reflection of a systemic phenomenon that presents itself in terms of a self-similarity once we view, as I argued in the previous chapter we should, society in terms of complex dynamical system.

In chapter two, I elaborated an understanding of the birth of the self as a foundational act that requires sacrifice of the unity between mother and infant in the semiotic space as a condition of separation and autonomy. In other words the violent rejection of the mother’s body stands at the threshold at which the child acquires language and hence a position in the cultural order by claiming an autonomy of self from the (m)other. This originary violence is re-enacted in the *reconstitution* of the self through the expulsion of the abject that reappears sporadically at the edges of the Symbolic and threatens identity and order. In other words, it is only through the re-enactment of the sacrificial violence at the micro level (in the *micro-version*) that

founded subjectivity that the subject can be regenerated. This logic is supported in the substance of complexity literature, as Miller argues, for example, “*patterns of earlier organisation formed earlier in a system’s development are used as the patterns for subsequent development of the system*” (1999:6).

Moreover, the *return of the semiotic* has severe implications in not only the processes of subject but also social formation. Kristeva clearly explains that abject forces pose an omnipotent threat to the integrity of *the self and the collective*:

Abjection is coextensive with the social and the symbolic order, *on the individual as well as on the collective level*...one encounters it as soon as the symbolic and/or social dimension of man [sic] is constituted, and this throughout the course of civilization (1982:68; emphasis added).

Kristeva explains that the traces of the semiotic overflow, ultimately disturbing and unsettling the norms and boundaries of the symbolic order. These overflows or “symbolic ruptures” (Pateman and Gross 1986:130) can never be fully banished and thus continually cause the strength and stability of the Symbolic to quaver. Whether at the personal or the social level, the abject hovers menacingly and it must be ejected, excluded and sacrificed not only to obtain but also to sustain a stable cohesive identity. Consequently Kristeva posits a sacrificial dimension as intrinsic in the positing of the subject in the Symbolic order (Keltner 2004:102). Moreover, the very parameters of the cultural order demand the sacrificial exclusion of all that is impure, antisocial or abject. This emphasises the necessity of sacrifice (of the feminine) in the forging of a socio-symbolic unity and the constitution of the unified self and reveals abjection as a necessary precondition of the subjectivity *and* a precondition of society (Hook 2003:53).

The logic of abjection therefore presents us with a manifestation of the sacrificial violence engaged in identity formation in patriarchal cultures in which the identity of the self and the Symbolic is constructed through the repeated, peripheralisation or exclusion of the feminine in general and the (m)other specifically. The sustenance of an ordered polity and stable subject at both levels then is a function of the expulsion of disorder; using the abject to define the limits of inside and outside as such. This perpetual process of sacrificial exclusion generates a renewed socio-political unity and a revitalised cohesion of self. We may thus say that at both the micro level of subjectivity formation and the macro level of the Symbolic order the identity of the system is created and asserted through the violent sacrifice of forces of

disorder as embodied by the abject. In short, there is a systemic fractal dimension in the way in which the self and the Symbolic are sacrificially constructed and asserted which suggests a *self-similar dimension to expulsion of the abject as a generative sacrificial mechanism* between the micro and the macro level of social existence.

## 2. The fractal of (Western) modernity

What remains to be investigated is, given the organismic model of society implicit in complexity theory, whether the self-similar dimension to the sacrificial construction of the subject and the Symbolic excavated in Kristeva's work bears any resemblance to the critique of individual and state formation suggested by feminist IR authors. Thus far, following the contributions of Tickner *et al* I concluded that masculinity asserts its autonomy violently in *much the same way* that the Post-Westphalian State asserts its sovereignty violently. However with the benefit of the heuristic or interpretative model that can accommodate the violence-identity nexus at all levels, as developed in chapter 3 and now applied to psychoanalytic discourse, it is possible to return to the Hobbesian world-view so clearly captured in statements like these:

The international system that *resembles* Hobbes' state of nature is a dangerous environment. Driven by competition for scarce resources and mistrust of others' motives in a system that lacks any legitimate authority; *states like men* must rely on their own resources for self-preservation (Tickner 1992:46; emphasis added).

May we plausibly say that as another illustration of the same systemic phenomenon, the Hobbesian sacrificial invention of human nature is a *fractal reflection* on the large scale of relationships between nation-states, both of which were seen to exist in a violent state of nature? Following from Baker's argument that centriphery has a fractal dimension it seems logical that modern societies that are created and sustained through the processes of centriphery must also have a fractal dimension. The question then is whether a fractal self-similarity exists between modern individuals and states? Indeed, a complexity paradigm would strongly suggest that Western modernity exhibited exactly the kind of fractal self-similarity that Baker describes. To clarify, let us return to Tickner's argument, that the entire structure consisting of the state system at level three, state identities at level two and gender identities at level one is premised upon the notion of autonomy. I believe that modern western societies can be re-read as having constructed themselves through the centralising of masculine values. In the

process feminine values such as interdependence, negotiation and compassion were peripheralised, or sacrificed. The notion of *centriphery enacted sacrificially* is the attractor around which identities are generated and sustained and becomes the *algorithm* by which the system self-organises on the micro and the macro level. Given its masculine bias, this self-similarity is reflected in the way masculinity is entropically asserted as self-definition in much the same way that states articulated their sovereignty. In short, the centring logic of modernity that produced the identity-violence nexus has had an enduring entropic effect on feminine values. Accordingly we may provide a fractal interpretation of the violence-identity nexus that is peculiar to modernity insofar as the sacrificial modus through which states asserted their sovereign identity is self-similar to the way in which men centre their autonomy. In other words, identities created and sustained in patriarchal cultures display a *sacrificial logic independent of scale*.

Beyond this, by casting Kristeva and feminist IR authors' critique of this sacrificial logic in this holistic mould of society, I am able to propose that sacrificial violence and, *mutatis mutandis*, the process of identity formation is self-similar at all levels. When viewed as complex dynamical systems, societies and civilisations, communities and culture *construct and assert* themselves sacrificially in a way that is structurally *self-similar* to the sacrificial *construction and reconstruction* of subjectivities. Having thus revealed the systemic nature of sacrificial violence, it is this *very assumption of sacrificial exclusion that lies at the base of subjectivity and the way nations conceive of their identity*, which I hope to deconstruct.

### **3. Unlocking a logic beyond violence**

In the final chapters I shall attempt to uncover alternative ways to conceive of identity formation in such systemic terms beyond the need to invent and sustain such identities violently, by situating my study in the cusp of the transition to a post-Newtonian world. This will entail reading individual and collective entities as complex dynamical systems that exist as a function of the *interplay* between order and disorder, which will allow us to transcend the exclusionary binary logic that has haunted the modern world and led to the dichotomous definition of both individual and collective identity *in terms of autonomy*. Complexity teaches us that certain 'feminine' values, which have historically been sacrificed, are also attractor states that are vital for the very survival of the system. Within complex adaptive systems then

we are able to centre certain ideational values that have long been banished to the periphery (translated in social discourse as inferior and thus infinitely sacrificeable). Co-operation is one such value that is of critical importance in the evolution of a system in a fitness landscape. Miller (1999:3) elaborates, “Within this competitive environment, co-operation among elements and schemas fosters the development of increasingly novel, complex and adaptive structures”. It is the elements that co-operate that make the greatest contribution in maintaining the identity of the system, in an ever-changing landscape.

This propensity for co-operation takes the form of a centring activity that seems to be *emerging at various levels* of life, in the form of a fractal reflection, as Rihani supports, “there is undeniable evidence of widespread co-operation *at all levels* from genes to nations” (2002:101; emphasis added). This denotes the *systemic emergence of a complex dynamical ethic of co-operation and interdependence* that resonates co-terminously at the level of the individual and the collective. This will make a significant contribution in the following chapters discussions in which I seek to revisit and question and even re-imagine the role played by violence in the construction of human nature (subjectivity) and the state (collectivity) by employing the conceptual tools articulated in this chapter. Viewing violence as a historically constituted habit rather than the default-state, poses the challenge of articulating *alternative non-violent catalysts* that can account for the system’s evolution. I believe the key to making this move lies at the *edge of chaos*, where systems remain alive by balancing themselves between order and disorder, constancy and change. It is at the edge of chaos that the tussle between conflict and co-operation unfurls and the status quo is gradually eroded until eventually the system is radically transformed and “even the most entrenched old guard will be overthrown” (Waldrop 1992:12). Herein we find our glimmer of hope, for little could be more entrenched than the violence engaged in identity construction that has become an ontological necessity at all levels of social life.

## Chapter 4

### Toward a Post-Sacrificial Subjectivity

From being the subjects of an amorous discourse... we are allowed to talk about the wounds we have suffered and to search for possible new identities and new ways of talking about ourselves.

– In the beginning was love, Julia Kristeva

#### 4.1. Introduction

The very idea of a non-violent future is a binary product of modernist discourse, which is a sentiment strongly echoed in Girard's ultimatum regarding our future. Faced with an engulfing sacrificial crisis Girard proposes an extreme choice for the survival of humanity: either the complete embrace of violence or the definitive renunciation thereof (Girard 1987:137). While Girard's suggested alternative follows conceptually from his theory it does present us with an unworkable binary because to aspire to a non-violent default state is as unrealistic and as much of a misrepresentation of human nature as violence as default state. In order to truly get a sense of what a future would be like in which violence is not the default state, we have to follow the fault-line suggested by the post-modern and complexity suggestion that order/disorder is not a binary but a process or interplay. The consequences of reconceptualising the relation between order-disorder are immense and it bears reiterating Hayles assertion that "When a dichotomy as central to Western thought as order/disorder is destabilised, it is not exaggeration to say that a major fault line has developed in the episteme" (1991:16). I suggest that this fault-line be traced through a critique of Girard's definition of the sacred, as I believe from here we may begin theorising a future beyond binary thought.

Girard reads the relation between violence and the sacred in modernist binary terms. Through the employ of the sacrificial mechanism, violence *gives birth to a new form of the sacred*. From this it is clear that Girard posits violence as the default state, which he set up by separating order (as culture) and disorder (as Sacred) in order to read the sacred in purely destructive terms. I believe however that the originary sacrificial act cannot simply engender a view of the *violent* sacred. Using complexity it is possible to engage Girard's primordial understanding of the central place accorded to violence and it becomes possible to make sense of a metaphysical reading

of violence/disorder in complex terms as destructive *and* generative. This will entail looking at the way in which individual and collective identities are formed as a generative interplay of these forces and not as a battle between them. In this chapter I will re-read Kristeva on these terms and in chapter five illustrate that this phenomenon also seems to be emerging at a collective level.

#### 4.2. In the space between

In traditional psychoanalytic discourse the transition from the semiotic to the Symbolic order of signification is seeped in violence and according to Kristeva this violence is enacted against the mother. Her central argument in *Powers of Horror* (1982) is that abjection – or the sacrificial rejection of the semiotic maternal dependence – stands at the threshold at which the child acquires subjectivity and the subject must therefore keep abject forces (as remnants of the semiotic attachment) at bay in order to assert its identity. This is complicated by the fact that the abject *can never* be annihilated; instead it perpetually haunts and menaces the subject with the promise of annihilation. The abject is an indestructible threat precisely because it is an *intrinsic part of the self*. By nature of the subject's emergence into society through the abjection of the mother, the abject as a force that may destroy the self, becomes a necessary precondition of selfhood (Hook 2003:54). Therefore we may conclude that the social subject is *dialectically constituted by the interplay of the semiotic and the symbolic*. The semiotic (*qua* disordered nature) and the symbolic (*qua* cultural order) cannot be cast in binaried terms, as the two are necessarily interdependent, so much so that the *semiotic forms the underbelly of the social order*. Pateman and Gross acknowledge that the relationship between the two is an ambiguous one, the “semiotic being both a precondition of the social order as well as the site of its disruption” (1986:129). *A like ambiguity* emerges at the micro level insofar as the abject is both a part and not a part of the subject – simultaneously separated from and integrated with the self – which Kristeva captures in the phrase, “‘I’ am in the process of becoming...at the expense of my own death” (Kristeva in Oliver 1997:231). While Kristeva has insisted upon a *similarity* between the maternal abjection that is re-enacted ritually at the level of the subject and society, she has failed to articulate this ‘likeness’ methodologically. In chapter two I proposed that the *logic of reduplication* provided a psychoanalytical model to account for the means whereby self-identity is created and sustained. Specifically, I argued that the archaic identification of the pre-

Oedipal stage becomes the model or *the pattern* whereby identifications are reduplicated in latter phases of psychic development. With the benefit of the complexity-based model we may now say that the logic of reduplication is a *self-similarity* that is also not only reproduced in different stages but *also on different levels*. Oliver writes,

Patterns are reduplicated on level after level until thresholds are crossed; the semiotic gives way to the Symbolic; biology becomes culture [and] like the fractals in geometry, the patterns are recognisable (1993:73).

This provides us with the methodological frame to say that the violence of abjection has a fractal dimension or in other words that the sacrificial exclusion of the semiotic at the micro level becomes the *algorithm* by which the symbolic system self-organises on the macro level. The very postulation of the fractal self-similarity facilitates my next move to argue that subjectivity and the social order emerge not sacrificially by virtue of the exclusion or abjection of disorder but as a function of the way complex dynamical or open systems self-organise.

Keltner has already suggested that the processes of abjection that constitute the boundaries between self and other, inside and outside is “a strange and open system” (2004:98). The subject as open and complex system is defined by the interplay of *inward adjustment* (an autopoietic desire for independence) and *outward adaptation* (dissipative dependence on others). It is the open, dynamic continuous interaction with their environments that allow complex systems to generate and regenerate themselves by self-organising to changing circumstance and maintain the balance of stability and instability, order and change, at the edge of chaos. Both the individual and society, as complex system, create and assert a self-identity through processes of struggle and adaptation to change within the ever-changing terrain of systems. The subject is

*The site of contradiction*, and is consequently perpetually in the processes of construction, thrown into crisis by *alternations in language and in the social formation*, capable of change. And in the fact that the subject is a *process* lies the possibility of transformation (Gatens 1991:118; emphasis added).

This echoes the complexity suggestion that order/disorder is not a binary but a process. Whilst modernism is the necessarily violent construction of an autonomous subject, from a post-modern, complexity perspective it is not a matter of establishing the identity of an entity in and for itself as autonomous or the assertion of order by

expelling disorder. Within complex open systems the crisis involved in the perpetual processes of transformation does not equate chaos; as such processes do not simply generate disorder. Rather, change occurs from the dynamic interplay of order and disorder, creation and destruction, dependence and independence. In terms of idergy we can say that the Symbolic, or the site of 'language and social formation' constitutes the ideational component and nature *qua* maternal body or the forces of the Semiotic, embody the material. It is not a matter of examining the semiotic or the symbolic, the material or the ideational as dichotomies but rather to examine *the space between them* and the dynamic processes that create them. To do so, is to re-read the modernist binary between the semiotic and Symbolic in complexity terms. Only in acknowledging the complexity of the *contradiction* generated from the *interplay between terms*, can we begin to articulate a holistic reading of the processes involved in the construction of the self-identity.

#### 4.3. Rethinking the abject

Just as the order-disorder dichotomy is a refraction of a historically (and scientifically) contingent worldview, so must the processes of abjection be seen as a socially constituted habit rather than a historical necessity. Gross writes (in Hook 2003:49; emphasis added):

Abjection is the body's acknowledgement that the boundaries and limits imposed on it are really social projections – effects of desire, not nature. It testifies to the precarious grasp of the subject on its own identity, an assertion that the subject may *slide back into the impure chaos* out of which it was formed.

The mention of an identity premised upon the expulsion of chaotic nature draws us immediately back into the Newtonian realm where order is obligatorily defined through the violent expulsion of disorder; the self defined through the forceful oppression of the other. The analysis of Machiavelli's *fate/fortuna* from chapter 3 well illustrates this. Machiavelli postulated a devalued feminine other named "*fortuna*" whose devaluation was a necessity in the moment of self-invention of masculinity/autonomy. Associated with capriciousness, unpredictability and disorder, it was believed that *fortuna* could only be controlled violently. So once again we are dealing with the binary pairs of order-chaos, purity-impurity or nature-culture and the violence involved in sustaining these. Or are we? The employ of the word 'slide' opens another curious interpretation of abjection. It implies motion and fluidity; it

conjures the image of nascent subject who in search of a self-identity erupts from the chaos of the semiotic into Symbolic order, only to (possibly) slip back into chaos once again. The quest for autonomy is cast as a constant struggle; the continuous, fluid movement between order and disorder; pure and impure; the semiotic and the symbolic. This refinement, if pursued in more detail can allow for an understanding of identity formation that is not a function of the sacrificial expulsion of forces, but rather a dynamic and dialectical interplay between them.

Despite the intrinsic importance of the semiotic in the constitution of the self and the social, it has historically been devalued. The discourse of modernity has constructed the semiotic space as a fearful and ominous force that is associated with nature and, understood as specifically feminine, is subordinate and must be violently sacrificed. Gross (1987:128; emphasis added) writes:

While the West can accept the necessary reliance it has on law- and rule-governed...masculine functioning, on the symbolic, Kristeva claims it is incapable of accepting its *necessary dependence* on a fragmented, chaotic, bodily, libidinal, feminine energy.

The edifice of western metaphysics has been constructed such that the symbolic occupies a privileged space and is premised upon semiotic sacrifice, negating the significance of semiotic in social formation and the importance of the feminine in identity articulation. The fear that the cultural order could *perish from the disorder of women* is underpinned by a specific scientific discourse that privileges the masculine. However this entrenched paradigm has come under vigorous scrutiny and many of its key assumptions have been refuted with the rise of the post-Newtonian worldview as illustrated in the previous chapter. Logically therefore modernist, sacrificial account of subjectivities premised upon such scientific assumption must also be problematised. The instructive term in the above citation is 'necessary' – it tells us that the symbolic needs the semiotic; the one cannot exist in the absence of the other. This is the point that Derrida makes in his critique of logocentric discourse. In *Of Grammatology* (1976) he argued that the terms presence/absence; science/myth; male/female; mind/body; high/low and culture/nature are pairs of binary oppositions in which the (primary) positive term is given priority and placed on the side of the logos. Derrida radically challenged the practice of definition *qua* opposition, arguing that if rigorously challenged, these “oppositions break down and collapse into each other” (in Palmer 1997:134). Therefore neither one can be prioritized for any

experience is a combination of both absence and presence: “every moment of the present is loaded with a no-longer extant past and is at the same time pregnant with a future” (ibid:135). Indeed any experience of self-identity is a combination of semiotic and symbolic influence. Neither can therefore be logically prioritized.

It is this notion of *necessary interdependence* that allows us to conceive of distinctions without entrenched, damaging opposition, which Grosz (in Hook 2003:51) describes in her conceptualization of the Semiotic phase of experience:

[It] is an anarchic formless circulation of sexual impulses and energies traversing the child’s body before sexuality is ordered [and] the body becomes a coherent entity. [These energies] predate the distinction between subject and object and thus also the child’s notion of entity. They defy unification, distinctive boundaries and social regulation. The semiotic thus preceded all unites, binary oppositional structures and hierarchical forms of organisation.

The conceptualisation of the semiotic space as the whirling flow of formless energies and impulses in which all notions of binary distinction or rigid, hierarchical unity are obsolete is pre-modern but also strongly in line again with post-Newtonian thought. If anything, this second reading of Kristeva and the abject alerts us to the *impossibility of rigid distinction between the clean and the unclean, the pure and impure, order and disorder* (Hook 2003:54). Nature and culture, chaos and order must no longer be considered binary opposites but, instead, viewed as an interplay of forces arranged on a continuum from order to disorder (Baker 1993:123). Similarly the maternal body must be situated on such a continuum *between nature and culture* if the scorn for woman-as-female body within phallogocentric societies is to be transcended.

In having revisited and recast the semiotic/symbolic distinction in complexity terms as order/disorder interplay, the logical next step is to revisit the place of abjection, which has traditionally sought to enforce the divide between order and disorder. Modernist authors like Hobbes, Machiavelli and Lacan read sacrificial expulsion or “abjection” as a process of autonomy affirmation concerned exclusively with the perpetual violent peripheralisation of those forces that are both menacing and revolting to the self. It is this very assumption of sacrificial exclusion that lies at the base of subjectivity that I hope to deconstruct. In other words, abjection or the process whereby the self defines and redefines itself must be more complex than the repetitive sacrificial repulsion of that which threatens it. The aim then is to read this interplay from a complexity perspective and to make comprehensive sense of the process of identity formation as dynamic process. Hook’s (2003:52; emphasis added) reading of

abjection as an intriguing interplay of repulsion and attraction, offers a clue in this direction:

As in moments of the uncanny, one is able to discern within abjection *braids of revulsion and attraction, repulsion and compulsion* – the abject confuses, fascinates and yet disturbs desire, just as does any variety of the uncanny which stems from that which is both *strange and yet nonetheless originary*.

Abjection therefore stands at the originary foundational moment of society and the violence of abjection is reproduced to rejuvenate society from one generation to the next. This is a very Girardian point made in Kristeva's language, which allows us to use sacrifice and abjection more or less interchangeably. Abjection as the complex feedback of repulsed and attracted forces not only threatens the self, but the semiotic from which the abject emerges has a crucial role in sustaining the self. As a process, abjection is strange indeed. To be more precise, abjection displays behaviour associated with that of a *strange attractor*. I want to suggest that the movement of the self in and between fields of attraction and repulsion can be usefully conceptualised as the movement in and between the wings of the butterfly attractor. This image is generated by the interface of converging and diverging tendencies or, what complexity terms, positive and negative feedback. It is the attractor as the epicentre of attraction and repulsion that accounts for the "dynamic play of order and disorder, stability and change in human social life" (Baker 1993:124). It is thus imperative to acknowledge the dynamic attractor force in play between the symbolic (order) and the semiotic (disorder) that accounts for self-identity. Indeed, at the originary moment of subjectivity is the interwoven confused web of contradictory forces, which nonetheless complement one another beautifully in the formation of the self.

#### **4.4. The abject, the sacred and sacrifice**

Kristeva clearly contends that in the initial break from corporeal unity with the maternal body the boundary between inside and outside, order and disorder is created. Of all of the corporeal sites and bodily functions that designate the boundary between inside and outside and thus generate abjection, menstrual blood is viewed with the greatest abhorrence (Kristeva in Oliver 1997:260-261), as it provides a provocative statement of sexual difference and is the most forceful reminder of the maternal body that was repudiated in the construction of self. Girard offers a complementary

explanation. He argues that any bloodletting is a source of fear as it denotes violence seeping throughout society:

When men are enjoying peace and security, blood is a rare sight. When violence is unloosed, however, blood appears everywhere — on the ground, underfoot, forming great pools. Its very fluidity gives form to the contagious nature of violence. Its presence proclaims murder and announces new upheavals to come. Blood stains everything it touches the colour of violence and death. Its very appearance seems, as the saying goes, to ‘cry out for vengeance’ (1977:22).

Spilt blood however captures the duality of violence and has the power to either rejuvenate social bonds or contaminate the cultural order. On the one hand, it contaminates the social order, a provocative testament to the violence that has been unleashed in society. Yet on the other hand, the blood of a sacrificial victim, shed in appropriate rituals that will not invoke revenge (thus blood associated with sacrifice rather than random violence) can restore the good health of society by functioning as a “blood-letting”. It is therefore essential that pure and impure blood be kept separate (Girard 1977), as following the logic of the *pharmakon*, blood can be both lethal poison and miraculous cure. Menstrual blood as an ambiguous symbol of sacrifice embodies the *pharmakon* as it offers the possibility of both life and death and as such it “vividly illustrates the entire operation of violence” (ibid:36). According to Girard, menstrual blood is a pointed example of what many cultures consider to be ‘bad’ blood. Indeed, it is seen to be the most impure of all impurities (1977:34). To account for the specific fear of menstrual bleeding, Girard ties the sexual dimension of menstruation to violence. He argues that there is an inherently violent aspect to sexuality, “sexuality is impure because it has to do with violence” (ibid:34) and suggests that women’s blood is considered a taboo and a threat because its sexual associations imply violence. Therefore women’s blood wields a corrupting influence within the social order through its association with violence. Girard writes:

The fact that the sexual organs of women periodically emit a flow of blood has always made a *great impression on men*; it seems to confirm an affinity between sexuality and those diverse forms of violence that invariably lead to bloodshed. (1977:34-35 emphasis added)

For men, the sight of blood speaks of violence, as men only bleed if their bodies have been wounded in some way. For women on the contrary, the sight of blood is a fact of life, associated with childbirth and fertility. Women’s association with blood is taboo

as it serves as a reminder of original violence, of the bloodletting involved in the sacrifice of the Other.

At the micro level menstrual blood invokes a potent image of semiotic overflow that frightens society as it recalls (periodically) the originary violence of matricide that lined the subject's entry into the symbolic (Kristeva in Oliver 1997:260-261). Thus, when exposed to menstrual blood (as with any manifestation of the abject), the (male) subject's reaction is one of disgust and insecurity from the inability to discern between inside and outside, culture and nature, subject and non-subject. It is precisely this feeling of repugnance or vilification that is for Derrida a corporeal response to the horror of the "undecidable" that is something such as an androgen, albino or zombie, which cannot conform to either pole of a dichotomy (Reynolds and Roffe 2004:46). Such is the abject, the "undecidable" that straddles both semiotic and symbolic, yet belonging decisively to neither. It occupies the ambiguous in-between, as Oliver describes it is "the undecidable between subject and object, the unruly border, birth" (1993:57). The abject blurs boundaries; it menaces, haunts and disgusts us precisely because we understand that it is not '*only an external menace but that it may menace us from the inside*' (in Hook 2003:135–136 emphasis added).

Whilst the abject (as impurity; as taboo) threatens to destroy the very boundaries of the Symbolic and the self, it simultaneously creates them and therefore embodies the duality of the *pharmakos*. Oliver explains the abject is "[a]t once the *guarantee* and the *threat* to its stability" (ibid:66). The abject mother fulfils a dual role for the subject and the social order that is both destructive/poisonous and restorative/remedial. This signals a metaphysical reading of violence in complex terms as destructive and generative. Freud understood the ambivalence captured in its ambiguity, "One the one hand it means to us sacred and consecrated: but on the other hand it means, uncanny, dangerous, forbidden and unclean" (Freud 1938:26). It is conceived of as a fluid and ambiguous flow between the sacred and accursed, which is at one and the same time creative and destructive. It is therefore necessary to re-read Kristeva and to re-appropriate the creative-destructive ambivalence of the sacred, in order to move beyond the violence/non-violence binary.

The ambiguous abject, being both restorative and destructive, cannot simply be understood through clear-cut oppositions. Equally, the semiotic cannot be

understood as purely poisonous. It is the source of the subject's malady but also the cure. Gross writes:

Even at times of its strongest cohesion and integration, the *subject teeters on the brink of this gaping abyss*, which attracts (and also repulses) it. *This abyss is the locus of the subject's generation and the place of its potential obliteration* (in Fletcher and Benjamin 1990:89; emphasis added).

The subject straddles the space between life and death, perpetually confronted with the possibility of his or her own demise. In this regard the subject seems to balance in the critical state between order and chaos; stability and instability; constancy and change, with the unending imperative to self-organise and maintain his or her autonomy (or cohesive, unified selfhood) in the face of changes. To say that the subject 'teeters on the brink of a gaping abyss', which is 'the locus of the subject's generation and the place of its potential obliteration', is simply to say, in complexity terms, that the subject operates at the edge of chaos. At the edge of chaos the dynamic interplay of order and disorder achieves a critical complexity. It is where systems flourish or flounder, grow or decay. It is where the abject generates the autonomy of the subject and threatens to take it away.

#### **4.5. The self-similarity of ritual**

The subject must have a certain mastery of the abject; it must keep it in check and at a distance in order to define itself as a subject (Gross in Hook 2003:53). Similarly at the social level, the abject forces must be contained at the margins of the symbolic. This is necessary for the preservation of the social order and thus

[r]equires some mode of control or exclusion to keep it at a safe distance from the symbolic order and proceedings. This is the social function of a *number of rituals and religious practices* which require a distinction between the sacred and the profane (Gross in Fletcher and Benjamin 1990:93).

This originary act of matricide constitutes the thetic moment wherein the nascent subject renounces the mother. Such renunciation is the condition of the possibility of the social order. The 'abject mother' poses a grave threat to the very being of the patriarchal subject and structures of patriarchal society and therefore must be repressed or kept at bay by means of taboos that ensure law and order, thereby creating and recreating social life (Kristeva 1982:72-73). Taboos and prohibitions demarcate the space between the sacred and the profane – the realm of the sacred

constantly repudiated to uphold the profane. When autonomy fades, the subject seeks to re-enact the thetic break through *ritual* sacrifice of abject forces threatening the self with dissolution. In Kristeva's words, religious rituals negotiate the formation and reformations of the speaking subject in relation to the social and symbolic order (ibid:67). As pointed out earlier, for Girard a violent *arche*-sacrificial ritual enacted against a first victim accounts for the violent origin of human culture and it is such acts of ritual sacrifice that can be revisited when the cultural order is in need of rejuvenation. In his conceptual scheme, sacrificial rites and rituals within society serve a preventative function in keeping violence to the outside of society. The tool employed to uphold the social order against dedifferentiating, disordering forces, thereby preventing the flood of both 'bad' violence and 'bad' blood throughout the social order, is the surrogate victim mechanism (1977:201). If masterfully deployed, the sacrificed scapegoat can rejuvenate the community by deflecting violence away from the community to achieve a renewed sense of social solidarity.

Kristeva writes "The function of these religious rituals is to ward off the subject's fear of his very own identity sinking irretrievably into the mother" (1982:2). In other words, rites and prohibitions exist to *prevent the collapse of difference* between the identity of self and m(other). This loss of distinction from the return of semiotic attachment reverberates throughout the symbolic order, blurring oppositions between the pure and impure, culture and nature, which in turn requires controlled rituals so that difference may be re-instated. The failure to mythologise rituals of defilement cause social hierarchies to be destabilised precisely because fundamental distinctions upon which the social order is erected have been undermined. In contemporary culture it is becoming increasingly difficult to denote what constitutes "good taste" or "socially accepted behaviour" and to categorise that which is perverse, obscene or rude. It's the paradoxical embrace of all things abject as Mennighaus elaborates

The vulgar, the low-minded, the perverse, the abject – which last is, according, to its authoritative theorist, Julia Kristeva, closely akin to the disgusting – all these have enjoyed...a downright *epidemic* and generally affirmative expansion in the realms of literature, art and the humanities (ibid:14; emphasis added).

For Girard such contagion testifies to a specific type of cultural crisis. If the employ of ancient scapegoating rituals fail to channel violence away from the community, violence erupts, stimulates a cultural catastrophe as "impure" violence blends with

“sacred” violence and as a result, “the violence will overflow its channels” (ibid:39). Violence becomes endemic. It seeps and overflows throughout the social order; spreading contagiously. The cause of this contamination is the blurring of the pure and impure, culture and non-culture; when sacrificial rituals fail to ensure difference and consequently individuals lose their distinctiveness, identity and place in social hierarchy. Similarly for Kristeva in contemporary culture we are witnessing the dissolution of the demarcating space between the abject and culture as the traditional construction of the abject as a menacing and repugnant entity that must be repelled violently to save the self from slipping back into its clutches, is increasingly contested. The mingling of the pure and the impure increasingly contaminates the social order. Subsequently we are witnessing such a crisis of culture, symptomatic of a culture that embraces rather than expels manifestations of disgust:

The most surprising discovery may be this one: like a sweet that is all too sweet, the beautiful is in danger – from the first and by its very nature – of turning out to be *in itself* something disgusting (Menninghaus 2003:7 in original).

Such a revelation may have a profound impact and however destabilising it may seem is well in line with post-Newtonian thought. That which disgusts us, which repels us and menaces us, is in fact *in us*. The abject is something upon which beauty and selfhood depends. We are beginning to understand that the abject is an inextricable part of our culture and us – disgust and beauty, disorder and order, expulsion and inclusion are faces of the same phenomenon. This denotes a failure of myth that is accompanied by the startling revelation that the *violence of abjection is in fact our violence*.

But in what sense is it “our violence”? This is what Girard understands to be “the metaphysical attitude to violence” (Girard 1977:258–259) or as was argued in the first chapter, violence *as* the sacred. The violence that threatens to tear society apart is redirected onto the victim and in restoring harmony to the community the victim is thus turned into “a transcendental symbol not only of violence and disorder, but of peace and order as well” (Girard 1987:92). In this way, sacrificial violence invents a new form of the sacred, or the collective experience of calm and awe, which results from this ritualistic expulsion. There is a catharsis once the space occupied by chaotic violence has been transfigured into social order. Although Girard acknowledges that the sacred involves “*peace as well as war, creation as well as destruction*”

(1977:258), he is disparaging toward a metaphysical conceptualisation of the sacred as a unified force of creation and destruction that structures culture, as it detaches violence from man, thus deculpabilising ourselves.

My interpretation of Kristeva endorses such a metaphysical view, as the abject may be read in these very terms as a unified force of order and disorder, which it is both creative and destructive and lingers, looms and menaces at the boundaries of the cultural order, or the Symbolic. For Kristeva, the abject is the *dynamic space between* the sacred and the profane and in the wake of sacrificial abjection the sanctity of the cherished cultural order is restored, rendering the subject secure within it. Like the Sacred, the abject is violence and the exercise of ritualised violence is accompanied by a moment of cathartic relief. Whilst acknowledging that both play a crucial preventive function in keeping disorder to the outside of the social order, the creative power they possess is equally vital. The abject and the scapegoat play a self-similar generative role insofar as the violent expulsion of the abject and the violent eradication of the scapegoat galvanises, bolsters and recreates the socio-Symbolic order. To revisit Kristeva and Girard through the lens of complexity allows us to conceive of the means whereby subjects and societies as complex systems define and redefine themselves in dynamic terms. In a comprehensive sense we may say that ritual sacrifice is accorded a central position in the forms of human culture. Through the re-iteration of sacrificial rites that ensure the ideal distance between culture, the symbolic (as order) and the sacred, the abject (as disorder) the self and the social order are rejuvenated. Complex systems are thus constituted and reconstituted by the continual flux of order and disorder that makes possible an alternative conception of identity formation. It shifts the order-disorder interplay into a productive exchange that is no longer necessarily sacrificially based.

#### **4.6. Toward a discourse of love**

In the pre-Symbolic phase, the *infans* and the mother are inseparable however the loss or sacrifice of the mother is a “biological and psychic necessity, the first step on the way to becoming autonomous” (Kristeva 1989:27). In order to deal with the loss, or find compensation for, the maternal attachment the *infans* identifies with the ‘imaginary father’ who plays an intermediary role in the process of separation. It is this transference of identification that is the mechanism that saves the subject from melancholia. For Kristeva women have greater difficulty murdering the mother

because they identify with her and are thus more prone to melancholia and become, what psychoanalysts' term 'depressed narcissists' (1982:28). Such are individuals who are incapable of coming to grips with the rejection of the maternal and pine for the semiotic attachment between mother and child, thus often seeking to replace matricide with suicide as this denotes "the final triumph over the void of the lost object" (ibid:9). Kristeva elaborates:

The lesser or greater violence of matricidal drive, depending on the individuals and the milieu's tolerance, entails when it is hindered, its inversion on the self; the maternal object having been introjected, the depressive or melancholic putting to death of the self is what follows, instead of matricide. In order to protect the mother, I kill myself (ibid:8)

Such is the double bind that confronts women. On the one hand matricide is the vital necessity of selfhood, and the best way to sway the death-drive, yet in killing the mother she is committing a form of suicide. The female subject annihilates a part of her subjectivity as "she carries the mother or the maternal Thing with her, in the crypt of her psyche" (Tsu-Chung Su 2005:170). Kristeva borrows from Freud the notion of "the impossible mourning for the maternal object" (1987:9). Impossible, as it is the sacrifice of the mother that allows the subject to be born as such, thus needing to *re-enact rather than lament it*. From a patriarchal modernist perspective the 'options' open to women are either matricide or suicide – the murder of the self or the murder of the (m)other. It thus seems the subject cannot escape the violence that for Kristeva is a reaction against melancholia, self-depreciation, dejection and depression as "murdering the other protects against suicide" (Tsu-Chung Su 2005:196).

But is it possible to locate a space between, and conceive of individuation in the absence of murder? Is there a way to break the cycles that seem to inevitably end in symbolic sacrifice and literal bloodshed? Kristeva believes that there is an alternative and asserts, "*Forgiveness* appears as the only solution, the third way between dejection and murder" (1987:199). To forgive requires an exceptional effort from the individual, reflected in the Herculean endeavours of the collective who, beyond sacrificial violence, must embrace gestures equally miraculous in transforming disorder into order. With reference to Dostoyevsky, Kristeva (1987:204) acknowledges the criticality of forgiveness in forging an alternative path:

Through my love, I exclude you from history for a while, I take you for a child, and this means that I recognise the unconscious motivations of your crime and allow you to make a new person of yourself. So that the unconscious may inscribe itself with a *new narrative that will not be the eternal return of the death drive in the cycle of crime and punishment, it must pass through the love of forgiveness.*

Kristeva speaks of an alternative to the violence of sacrifice, a modus whereby humiliation, hatred and violence between individuals can be alchemised into a group harmony without recourse to more violence. Kristeva suggests that whilst the transition to the Symbolic is forged violently, it is not necessarily sustained violently and that the renunciation of violence may lead to a rejuvenation of the subjective Symbolic Order. Forgiveness then allows cycles of reciprocal violence to be broken, it allows violence to be brought to a close in the absence of punishment, which is a violence imposed by authority of law, or vengeance, which is decreed by the authority of the mob. Kristeva then proposes that *forgiveness can be a generative mechanism* that functions at the macro level *in healing a badly fractured polis* and in self-similar terms, functions at the micro level *in renewing or regenerating the self*. In the following exquisite citation, Kristeva (1987:205) makes clear that forgiveness does not erase actions, nor does it forget them. It transcends them and in so doing provides the gift of forgiveness from a loving other, a gift that allows the self to be reborn:

Forgiveness is a luminous stage of dark, unconscious timelessness – the stage at which the latter changes laws and adopts the bonds of love as a principle of renewal of both self and other.

From Kristeva's reading alone the possibility of forgiveness as a third way in identity reconstitution seems to be emerging systemically at the level of self and the social. This will be fully explored in the following chapter with close reference to the extraordinary transitional experience of South Africa. For now we must uncover the dynamic at the level of subjectivity that makes forgiveness possible – that which may best be described as 'bonds of love'. The first part of this thesis illustrated the systemic dimension to violence-identity nexus; the drive to sacrificially *exclude* or *expel* the other. In contrast Kristeva suggests in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) that we must learn to *embrace* the repressed within ourselves – in an effort to learn to live with, even love, others. The concluding remarks of this chapter are concerned with the means by which Kristeva weaves together the threads of the discourse of love *qua* forgiveness by revisiting the notion of the imaginary father with whom the *infans*' identifies in the articulation of self-hood. As Kristeva writes, "Whoever is in the

realm of forgiveness – who forgives and accepts forgiveness – is capable of *identifying with a loving father, an imaginary father*, with whom, consequently, he is ready to be reconciled, *with a new symbolic law in mind*” (Kristeva 1987:207). This will be followed in chapter 5 by an analysis into the extent to which social bonds can be reaffirmed in the absence of violence, through the non-sacrificial renewal of the social order.

#### 4.7. Symbolic reconciliation

In conceiving of a ‘loving’ imaginary father Kristeva attempted to sever the existing and enduring association of the maternal, or feminine semiotic with women, arguing that the maternal body and feminine energies need to be conceptually separate to women as such. Pateman and Gross clarify, “For Kristeva there can be no specific or determinate relation between this powerful semiotic, maternal structuring and structured space, and *women*” (1987:130; emphasis in original). Kristeva therefore suggests that the maternal and paternal functions are not necessarily aligned with actual ‘fathers’ and ‘mothers’ (Anderson 2000:218) and for her the problem emerges if the semiotic space is restricted to women, as both men and women should have access to maternal and paternal functions. Kristeva appropriates Freud’s ‘*father of individual prehistory*’ to enlarge our understanding of the ‘father figure’ as a hybrid of both parental functions – as a union of the semiotic (maternal, material) and the symbolic (paternal, ideational). On the basis of this idergic overlap, and in light of chapter two’s discussion, the picture Kristeva conjures of the “father of individual prehistory” is a loving father quite contrary to the prohibitive father of the Symbolic as described by Lacan (Keltner 2004:101). Kristeva acknowledges the need for a third figure with whom the child can identify to facilitate the split from the maternal body so that the child may situate his or her self as an autonomous agent within the socio-symbolic order. It is the *nature of the identification* that she calls into question. Contrary to Freud who claims the primary identification is narcissistic and aggressive, in Kristeva’s account the primary identification is an *amatory identification* (Keltner 2004:100) between mother and child. The mother offers the child a gift of love that encourages the *infans* to move forward from the maternal body to the mother’s desire – toward the phallus or “toward the symbolic of the other” (Kristeva 1983:33). The mother’s gift then is to show the child that the phallus and not the child signifies her desire and as was argued in chapter two, this renders the ‘imaginary father’ a

mother-father amalgam or a combination of the mother and her desire (Oliver 1993:77). This interpretation of Kristeva's thought sites an amatory association as the catalyst for the self's transition to the Symbolic in the form of "an imaginary agent of love that allows the child to negotiate the passage between the maternal body and the Symbolic order" (ibid:69). It is to read a love story into the pre-Symbolic, pre-linguistic relation between the mother and child. Beyond this, an amatory association with the 'father figure' is crucial for two reasons. One, it is the *identification* whereby an *infans* (pre-subject) becomes a subject proper without necessitating the violence of sacrifice and two, it is the *re-identification* with the (loving) father figure that allows the subject to escape from the grips of melancholia and thus reclaim a stable selfhood. In other words, it is the reduplication whereby subjectivity, forged in an amatory rather than sacrificial gesture, regenerates itself.

Kristeva's work has been criticised as endorsing "an ideology of matriphobia and misogyny" (Tsu-Chung Su 2005:169) by gendering melancholia, privileging the male melancholic and symbolising the mother as death (ibid:183). Yet in other aspects, as discussed in this chapter, Kristeva clearly and rigorously refutes Freudian and Lacanian accounts of identity formation which exclude the feminine (Appignanesi and Garratt 1999:98) For some conceptual clarity I turn to the postmodern feminist Luce Irigaray who is highly articulate in her critique of not only psychoanalysts such as Freud and Lacan but also social contract theorists. Despite their disagreements, Irigaray's primary ambition dovetails with that of Kristeva, namely to articulate a discourse of love. Irigaray too has 'a new symbolic law in mind'.

Irigaray serves as an excellent supplement to Kristeva insofar as she does what Kristeva failed to do, namely to challenge Freud's application of the boy's Oedipal development as a model for the girl as well as the privileged place accorded to the phallus in the symbolic order. Freud contends that both male and female children's primary desire is for the mother and thus the object of the girl's love is also the mother and her sexuality is also phallic (clitoral). So although the girl shares the boy's desire for the mother (Freud goes so far as to dub the girl "a little man"; in Gatens 1991:105) the female lacks the phallus that is needed to satisfy the mother. For her, castration comes first; it is a *fait accompli*. The little girl therefore suffers from 'penis envy' and her attraction to her father as "sex-appropriate love object" (ibid:105) is in part conditioned by her desire to (re)possess this missing part. In failing to become the object of the mother's desire, the little girl feels inferior and takes a passive role and

in so doing 'represses pre-Oedipal activity in favour of passivity' (ibid:106). In the transferring affection from mother to father the girl (in shunning the alternatives of asexuality or homosexuality) takes up a place in the social order, as the embodiment of 'normal femininity' with love toward the father (or a father-substitute).

Freud's hypothesis is hugely problematic not least for its phallogentrism in deeming the penis (phallus) to be the primary sex organ or his attempts to "disavow the specificity of feminine eroticism" (Gatens 1991:106). The utility of Freud's theory in contrast is that, working within the Newtonian paradigm, it accounts for the creation of (post-Oedipal) *sexed subjects* (*qua* feminine females or masculine males) who repress all socially inappropriate desires or activities to maintain the rigid distinction between order and disorder, between culture and non-culture (ibid). Furthermore, Freud's description of the female body is articulated in terms of lack – as the inverse of the male (phallic) form. Similarly in Lacan's system, the phallus is the privileged signifier. It therefore provided the benchmark against which the absence-presence dichotomy is delineated, and by application, women were constructed as imperfect pseudo-men and thus denied all authentic identity. Because these theories of sexuality are bound to the theories of subjectivity, Irigaray concludes that in the patriarchal world female subjectivity is based on a lack and in contestation of this develops a description of the *female form as lacking nothing* (Gatens 1991:115). Irigaray claims that there is an important overlap between psychoanalytical accounts of male and female body. Despite its construction to the contrary, "the masculine body is dependent on the feminine body for its morphological form, that is, for its phallic attributes" (ibid:120). The feminine body is thus neither inferior, nor inverse and it is not a complement to the masculine body. The masculine body is dependent upon it. In forcing the "monosexual cultural imaginary...to make space for the female sex; it would have to recognise the Other" (Irigaray 1991:74) and the aim of this is to "end the domination of the phallus in language and culture. It would involve the articulation of (an)other economy of thought in which plurality and multiplicity could have a positive value" (Gatens 1991:121). Kristeva and Irigaray both employ heterogeneous, non-teleological models of signification and therefore clearly draw on insights from post-Newtonian thought, without specifically contextualising it in that manner. In challenging binaries, rationality, linearity and teleology as a means to reject the patriarchal economy they (unwittingly?) enter into dialogue with the theoretical underpinnings of complexity.

#### 4.8. Articulating an alternative economy

Anderson (2005) contends that patriarchal philosophy is rooted in an economy of male self-sameness that privileges the relation between father and son and by extension orders society on a man-to-man basis. This is the origin of the paternal genealogy that has ensured the centrality of the phallus in patriarchal culture. In an attempt to develop a genealogy that accounts for sexual difference, Irigaray hypothesises about the nature of an alternative account of Rousseau's 'Golden Age'. She argues it was a time "when the mother and daughter were the figure of a natural and social model" (in Whitford 1991:177). It was thus an age characterised by fertility, nurture, life and wholeness, which was starkly contrasted with the sterile logic of taboo that springs from the paternal genealogy. With mention to the fertility cults of the Greek goddesses, she suggests that such a religion would be cognisant of 'women's values' and natural fecundity. Historically the relationship between mother and daughter has been totally repressed; unsymbolised in hegemonic paternal genealogy and completely written out of the myths upon which the symbolic order has been erected.

We have looked extensively at the extent to which women individually are deemed a threat to the security of the social order; it is thus unsurprising then that a bond between women (a common voice, language, economy) presents an even more devastating danger to the symbolic order.

The relationship between mother/daughter, daughter/mother constitutes an extremely explosive kernel in our societies. To think it, to change it, amounts to undermining the patriarchal order (Whitford 1991:77).

Ironically, the maternal genealogy is buried under the symbolic and it is from this foundation (feminine and fertile as it is) that culture grows. Irigaray's ambition is to create awareness about this dependency, thus bringing the mother-daughter relation into the realm of the symbolic. By tracing a maternal genealogy, Irigaray has sought to question the place of sacrifice as enacted in the Oedipus complex and sewn into the fabric of society thereby challenging the genealogy of patriarchal male self-sameness. Irigaray and Cixous suggest that the symbolic order (language, philosophy and culture) is only for men (masculinity) and consequently women are not only *oppressed* within it, the feminine is *repressed* from it (Gatens 1991:113). "If the condition of patriarchal society is the repression of the feminine, then that which

writes/speaks of the feminine imaginary amounts to the return of the repressed” (ibid). It stimulates patriarchal consciousness as to that which has been sacrificed in the construction and sustenance of the social order.

Irigaray argues that the paternal genealogy as expressed by Lacan is founded on the trinity of metaphor, substitution and sacrifice (Whitford 1991) – the Oedipal metaphor requiring the substitution of the mother in favour of the father and the subsequent act of matricide. The culture, the language and the imaginary of patriarchy is underpinned by the sacrifice of woman reproduces of the social order:

All of western culture rests upon the murder of the mother...And if we make the foundation of the social order shift, then everything shifts (Whitford 1991:81).

Similarly Irigaray’s vision for an alternative feminine economy revolves around three critical concepts. The first is metonymy, or the idea that a word or expression can act as a substitute for something with which it is closely associated or which it describes. Irigaray uses the notion of “two lips” to elaborate a novel metonymic mode of being (the feminine self relationally defined vis-à-vis other women). She elaborates her thoughts on a metonymic association in her controversial book *This Sex* (1985:24)

The *one* of form, of the individual, of the (male) sex organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning...supplants while separating and dividing, the contact of *at least two* (lips) which keeps women in touch with herself, but without any possibility of distinguishing what is touching from what is being touched.

The ‘two lips’ are a metonym for two types of relationships between women: the vertical pair (the mouth) speaks of the maternal genealogy and the horizontal pair (the labia), which represents the relation of sisterhood. The latter represents women’s *love of self and other women*, whilst the former offers a different (maternal) economy that contributes to a new form of the symbolic. She proposes a relationship between women as subjects based upon a metonymic association – the two lips, like the mother and daughter are separate, yet interconnected and continually touching:

As for woman, she touches herself in and of herself without any need for mediation...Woman touches herself all the time and moreover no one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact (Irigaray 1985:24).

It marks an inclusion of that which was excluded from the social contract and repressed from the symbolic order. This presents a psychoanalytic conceptualisation of a mother-daughter relation in the absence of the rivalry implicit in the Lacanian

model. In such a model there is a place for the mother but in the absence of a maternal genealogy there is a failure to distinguish between the mother and the woman so women are forced to fight over this place and girls come to be rivals with their mothers (Whitford 1991). By opening up the pre-Symbolic space to let the various voices of *femme* speak, woman and mother no longer need to compete for the unique place, traditionally occupied by the mother. This provides the possibility for women to differentiate themselves from the mother so that women in the Symbolic order are not reduced to the maternal function (ibid:89).

This raises the second concern of *contiguity* or association from which an alternative account of social formation is gathered. Irigaray's description of lips depicts that which is in continuous contact, perpetually touching, combining, uniting. The lips are in an unending embrace. She argues that the Oedipal metaphor (with the phallus as the symbol of autonomy) severs the maternal "leaving only one parental figure, the father, and only one genealogy, the paternal one" (Whitford 1991:181). Women have been rendered silent, so they must enter into the realm of discourse – made intangible by speaking/writing the mother-daughter relation. The genealogy of the maternal must be put into words, it must be signified. The critical point is that Irigaray does not seek to displace the patriarchal economy nor simply reverse the existing symbolic order for this, she argues, will eventually return to an economy of sameness. Rather she seeks to incorporate the metaphorical (the paternal economy) and the metonymical (the maternal economy) to foster a relation between the two (ibid:181). To do so is to bring women into the symbolic order, not as objects of men but by tracing an authentic feminine trajectory.

The third tenet is that *fertility counteracts the place of sacrifice* in the underlying social order. For Irigaray, "patriarchy is built on sacrifice, of which the primordial sacrifice is fertility" (in Whitford 1991:182). Fraternity is founded in the sacrifice of fertility, of the feminine. The intention is not to replace sacrifice with fertility but rather to present fertility as a counter-term to enlarge our understanding of the way in which a sociality is created and sustained. What Irigaray seeks to do then is present the possibility of symbolic change – not by replacing one metaphorical order with another, female sorority replacing a male fraternity (ibid:183) but rather "solidarity or association has to be on a different basis: a metonymical form of association based on contiguity and the relation between women as subjects, that is

*women who love themselves and each other*” (ibid:183; emphasis added). Love, the amorous exchange between women, then is a potential force of change.

#### 4.9. Conclusion

According to Gatens (1991:120) there is a complicity between Western patriarchal discourse and the phallogocentric construction of the male body. This chapter has attempted to scrutinise the *nature of this complicity*, and by applying a complexity-based interpretative model that can accommodate the violence-identity nexus at all levels, articulate the relation between the phallogocentricity of the (male) subject and the phallogocentric construction of the patriarchal culture in comprehensive self-similar terms. My intention is not to sacrificially exclude a paternal genealogy but rather to read the interface of a metaphorical (the paternal economy) and the metonymical (the maternal economy) in terms of idergy as a touchstone of a post-Newtonian communality. Neither do I wish to displace sacrificial violence, thereby sacrificially excluding sacrificial violence itself. For translated in complexity terms we can say that the modus of abjection and the surrogate-victim mechanism function to employ sacrifice in order transform chaos and randomness into order, ensured by religious rites and rituals that buttress the self and collective identities against the dedifferentiating forces of disorder. My intention is however to expose the creative and destructive duality of catalysts such as the scapegoat, the abject and even the melancholic, which operate at the edge of chaos. Yes, melancholia (as a modus of murder) serves a regenerative function at the level of the subject; in obeying the logic of the *pharmakon* it is at once a blessing and a curse. As Tsu-Chung Su surmises “melancholia is a blessed curse and a source of insight and creativity” (2005:186).

In suggesting non-violent mediating forces, I hope to enlarge our understanding of the generative experience by means of comprehensive or unified theory that illuminates the patterns of subjectivity formation as they are reflected in, and indeed define macro level social forms. As outlined in this chapter, much has been written about the possibility of a *non-violent* relation with the (m)Other, which, when applied, makes a valuable contribution to the micro-dimension of my quest for a post-sacrificial means of identity formation. The ‘discourse of love’ provides us with an exquisitely provocative, albeit highly poetic and abstracted proposition. Indeed Irigaray admits that she is “deliberately ambiguous, paradoxical, poetic and metaphorical” (in Gatens 1991:117). I do not wish to use the work of Kristeva and

Irigaray in a feminist context but rather, in the following chapter, integrate it into a more fundamental epistemological critique in seeking to *disengage from the violence of inventing and reinventing the identities of subject and society sacrificially*. In order to do so, it is necessary to translate the logic of conceptual markers such as melancholia, contiguity and fertility into something more concrete. For example, a shift to complexity provides a plausible scientific explanation as to the logic of contiguity, for this metonymic association is defined relationally in much the same way that the identities of complex systems as holons are understood. This translation therefore requires complexity and the need to cast Kristeva and Irigaray's critique of patriarchal sacrificial logic in this holistic mould of society. From here I can investigate the extent to which the holistic assumptions of the complexity paradigm make an important contribution in articulating non-violent identity formation. The greatest obstacle in the road to a post-sacrificial communality is fear. Not the *fear of the femme*, but the fear that the *femme* (as an omnipotent symbol of Other-ness) *may be freed*. Irigaray writes "What is feared is what has been repressed, there is a kind of cataclysmic end-of-the-world phantasy of total disintegration, dissolution and loss of self" (1991:97). To face this fear is an ontological imperative, and inspired by the fractal of *love* and *forgiveness*, individuals and communities may take tentative steps in their path to a non-violent selfhood.

## Chapter 5

### The Complexity of Forgiveness

To close our eyes and pretend none of this ever happened would be to maintain at the core of our society a source of pain, division, hatred and violence. Only the disclosure of the truth and the search for justice can create the moral climate in which reconciliation and peace will flourish.

– **Chilean President Alywin**, upon assuming office in 1990

True forgiveness deals with the past, all of the past, to make the future possible. We cannot go on nursing grudges even vicariously for those who cannot speak for themselves any longer. We have to accept that what we do, we do for those generations past, present and yet to come. *This is what makes a community.*

– **No Future without Forgiveness**, Desmond Tutu

#### 5.1. Introduction

Given the omnipresence of violence in human culture that creates and sustains a deeply dehumanised social order, the aim of this chapter is to chart the contours of the macro or collective dimension of a comprehensive or unified theory of non-sacrificial identity formation, that will allow us to think of ways to repair the torn moral fabric of society in ways that include but may also go beyond the assumption of sacrificial violence as default state. Fundamental to this move is an appreciation of the structural self-similarity of sacrificial violence in the construction of individual and societal identities. In search of a paradigm shift away from the traditional metaphysical ontology that is steeped in violence, in the previous chapter I turned to French psychoanalytical feminists such as Kristeva and Irigaray who, in their discourse of love, offer the basis of post-sacrificial epistemology valid for subjectivity formation. At the collective or cultural level, too, there appears to be a tentative move toward an embrace of the possibility of a post-sacrificial identity formation – the nature and basis of which will be fully explored in this chapter. Earlier in this thesis I used the new emerging organistic paradigm to recast the systemic nature of sacrificial violence in self-similar terms. More specifically, I used the notion of self-similarity implicit in this ontology to account for the assumed “analogy” or “similarity” between micro and macro always postulated by theorists like Hobbes, Kant and Spinoza but never accounted for in a methodologically satisfactory way. In a similar manner, chapters four and five suggest that there are indications, at both the micro level of

subjectivity and the macro, social level of a systemic change toward post-sacrificial identity formation. In terms of this new organistic vocabulary this would suggest that there is a *fractal of non-violence emerging systemically* at all levels of social existence. By post-sacrificial I am suggesting identity formation that is structured not by the binary opposition between chaos and order, but by their generative interaction – an interaction I am here describing or articulating in terms of complexity theory.

## 5.2. Making sense of our (violent?) origins

In seeking to understand the origins of subjectivity in a second reading of Kristeva, I argued that the lived experience of each subject testifies to the ambiguous reconciliation of forces of destruction and regeneration within us. There is a *pharmakon dimension to the abject*. Self-identity is not merely a function of the violent expulsion of forces, is not purely sacrificial. The origin of the subject cannot be conceived of in Euclidian terms as a single point, achieved by a single means, but rather as constituted in the dynamic and dialectical interplay between order and disorder. We literally are – we live – the originary paradox of destruction and creation. In contrast Girard reads the sacred in purely destructive terms: the sacred is the force of disorder that threatens the order of culture. This is the root construction of the violence binary, in which Girard narrows down the meaning of the sacred (violence) to its destructive dimension and in the process sacrifices or excludes the generative dimension of the sacred. However it is precisely this view of violence (as sacred in the sense of being a unified destructive/generative force) that my second reading of Kristeva relied on and which must be embraced if we are to start mapping a road to a non-violent communality. Using chaos/complexity to engage Girard's primordial understanding of the central place accorded to violence, it becomes possible to make sense of, what he would describe (negatively) as a "metaphysical" reading of violence; one that is both creative and destructive. It is a true appropriation of the generative-destructive ambivalence of the sacred.

In Girard's myth of the origin we are offered an account of the means whereby the primal community experience post-sacrificial serenity that is mediated by the scapegoat. Overwhelmed by the collective calm, the horde attributes a divine status to the scapegoat whom they believe is the supreme source of social restoration. Girard writes:

The agitation and fear that preceded the selection of the scapegoat and the violence against him are followed, after his death, by a new mood of harmony and peace. To what, or, rather, to whom will the change be attributed? Obviously, to the all-powerful cause that dominates the entire community: the scapegoat himself. Thus the scapegoat is credited with the reconciliation and the peace, after being credited with the earlier disruption. The absorption of all causality by the victim is so complete that he becomes a dynamic symbol of supreme benevolence as well as supreme malevolence, of social order as well as disorder...(1987:91)

It is an error to say that the unanimous act of sacrificial violence against the scapegoat led to the birth of the collective's sense of communality. Rather, one should separate from each other the *act* of murder and its *mythologising*. The original murder is distinguished from other primordial acts of violence through the act of mythologising this scapegoat's death as special or extraordinary in some sense because it "metamorphosises maleficent behaviour into beneficent behaviour" (1977:258). Through the unanimous *ritual* slaughter of the scapegoat the undifferentiated chaos of the primal community is transfigured into a new social order. Writes Girard,

Real or symbolic, sacrifice is primarily a collective action of the entire community which purifies itself of its own disorder through the unanimous immolation of a victim, but this can only happen at the *paroxysm of the ritual crisis* (Girard 1996:11).

The scapegoat rituals then are intended to buttress the disintegrating social order against the transgressions that the scapegoat (seems to) present, as the very purpose of ritual is "reconciliation and reordering through sacrifice" (Girard 1996:14). But what is the nature of this paroxysm? How are we to understand the collective's convulsion at a critical moment; this sudden violent rupture of rage and relief experienced by the primal horde? In Girard's words the paradox of ritual is that it represents "the genesis and regeneration as well as the degeneration of the cultural order through paroxystic disorder" (1996:14). In other words, the *scapegoat is pharmakon*, both destroyer and restorer, at once responsible for the near destruction of the community as well as the collective's return to a stable and serene existence. In other words the immolation of the scapegoat allows for the purification of society by uniting its members into a harmonious whole. Myth, that is, the mythologising of the act of murder reconciles the seemingly irreconcilable co-existence of destruction and creation as embodied by the sacrificial victim in his dual capacity as destroyer and saviour. At the critical moment – at the crescendo of the ritual crisis – the scapegoat killing can either purify or contaminate the community. The latter is thus literally poised on a knife's edge

between life and death. This intricate and extraordinary interface of order *and* disorder, violence *and* serenity is, according to Girard, the origin of culture.

In complexity terminology we may say that there is a fractal dimension (at the edge of chaos) to the nexus between violence and identity, reflected at the micro level in the form of abjection and, at the macro level, in generative scapegoating. Specifically, the *pharmakon is the algorithm* or conceptual hook by which we may understand the self-similarity in two forms of sacrificial violence: the abject constitutive of subjectivity and the scapegoat sacrifice constitutive of communality. At the micro and macro edge of chaos we find the dynamic interplay of order and disorder. This interplay is the locus of the subject and society's generation and the place of their potential obliteration. The origin of subjectivity then emerges in the difference between life and death, between a destructive act of matricide and a generative act of meaning-making. In self-similar terms we derive an understanding of the origin of human culture in the space between murder and myth, which as a reflection of the interplay between order and disorder negates any real distinction between the forces of life and death. We may therefore situate the originary formation of the subject and society in systemic terms at the edge of chaos; where order and disorder, life and death are intrinsically unified in ways that we cannot fully comprehend or calculate. At both ontological levels the generative engine is creative *and* destructive. Where Girard collapses the order-disorder interplay into violence, I believe that the force of culture is the interface between order and disorder, as an embodiment of the ambivalence of the sacred. In other words, destruction *and* creation are enmeshed in culture and subjectivity because they are interwoven at the origin of each. The concept that unifies them as self-similar phenomena is abject and scapegoat *as pharmakon*, by nature of which it is thus impossible to pronounce destruction more fundamental than regeneration or violence more fundamental than non-violence. By the same token it also signals a warning, namely that we should not seek to simply substitute peace or non-violence as default state. The response to culture must be order and disorder, both creative and destructive. This seems to suggest that if violence is the destructive aspect and if sacrifice is a violent response to this violent dimension of the sacred, that, given the generative dimension of the sacred, we should also be able to identify other, non-violent or generative cultural responses to the sacred. To make sense of the complexity of the order-disorder; creation-destruction phenomenon we must not seek out a new mythology of violence

but rather begin to conceive of the emergence of the subject and society in terms that are not exclusively destructive or associated with violence. Confronted with the reality of the most extreme forms of violence that may culminate in total annihilation, in seeking out non-violent alternatives we have to turn to similarly extreme, even miraculous, gestures. This chapter proposes *forgiveness* as one such extraordinary generative cultural response to the chaos that marks the founding moment of societies.

### 5.3. Thinking beyond violence

Forgiveness is, according to Kristeva, a timeless form of action:

Forgiveness is ahistorical. It breaks the concatenation between causes and effects, crimes and punishments; it stays the time of actions. A strange place that opens up in a timelessness that is not one of the primitive unconscious, desiring and murderous, but its counterpart – its sublimation...a loving harmony that *is aware of its violence but accommodates them, elsewhere* (1987:200; emphasis added).

Whilst understanding forgiveness as a counterpart or alternative to violence, the aim is not to aspire to a non-violent default state as this would create an equally unrealistic and unworkable binary that is similarly guilty of misrepresenting human nature as its violent counterpart. This thesis suggests that in order to speculate about what a future would be like in which violence is not the default state, it is necessary to read order and disorder not in terms of binary opposition but in terms of process or interplay. For in so doing the historically constituted ends of violence, namely the rejuvenation of a community, can be achieved by means that include and go beyond violence. A good place to start is to look at instances, brief illuminatory moments, in which cycles of vengeance and hate have been broken with a specific gift of non-violence. From the previous chapter we have Kristeva's postulate that an imaginary association of the child with a loving 'imaginary father' supports a 'gift of love' from the mother to her child as a means to include non-violence at the origins of subjectivity. Kristeva's suggestion of forgiveness as a third, non-binary response is echoed in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's extremely influential belief that forgiveness has a central political role in acting as a third way between vengeance and forgetting in the creation of community (in Govier 2002:78). Vengeance has excessively cruel repercussions that plunge societies back into violent abyss of historical cycles of violence and counter-violence that sacrificial rituals try to transcend. Commentators such as Ernest Renan have argued that the obliteration of memory is necessary to generate a new social

order, “the nation-building demands that history be forgotten in order for the past to be remade in the image of the present” (in Christie 2002:115). There is of course something sacrificial and violent about such active forgetting: it exorcises memory and by doing so replicates the violence it tries to forget. Given this chapter’s aim to transcend such sacrificial suppressions and obliterations, I reject this view as I believe that the obliteration of memory contributes to a further dehumanisation of victims. On the contrary, I shall argue that the development of collective memory that draws on perspectives of both victims and perpetrators, offers the possibility of restoring humanity. With this comes the possibility of inscribing the history of the community with a new narrative, one that does not speak solely of hatred, animosity and revenge, and one that severs this generation’s sense of selfhood from the sins of the past. For Tutu non-violence is thus a moral imperative. He writes, “The world is on the brink of disaster if we don’t forgive, accept forgiveness and reconcile” (in Govier 2002:84).

To begin an inquest into the transformative power of forgiveness and reconciliation in our contemporary culture, we need a more localised point of departure. I shall take South Africa’s extraordinary embrace of non-violence as this point precisely because it allows an emphasis on the transformative power that may be harnessed at level one. As Kristeva notes, the act of forgiving is “*first* the work of men” (1987:200) and it is in the extraordinary magnanimousness, lack of animosity and generosity of spirit of ordinary men and women that we are exposed to the creative dimension of the sacred.

#### **5.4. The spirit of *ubuntu***

Whilst in prison, Mandela<sup>7</sup> began negotiating the transition of the country from the autocratic regime of Apartheid to her first ‘free and fair’ elections that marked the birth of a democratic order. Given her excessively violent and oppressive legacy, the world turned its attention to South Africa expecting an eruption of vengeance and a deluge of blood. The situation, in the 1980’s in particular, was one in which the ANC and the NP had become, what can best be described in Girardian terms as “doubles” or “enemy brothers”, engaged in a deadly mimetic rivalry. As a result of the intensity of interaction between rivals, the differences between them are

---

<sup>7</sup> While speaking specifically of Mandela it is important to remember that his vision and his efforts were very much supported by other equally exemplary leaders of the freedom struggle, who also endured extreme persecution and imprisonment. These include figures such as Walter and Albertina Sisulu, Albert Lithuli, Govan Mbeki and Beyers Naudé.

gradually eroded as they replicate each others desires, moves and murders – they become “matching images of violence” (Girard 1977:79). This is a universal tendency as Roy (2001:266) illustrates with her observation of the same in the bloody rivalry between the Hindus and the Muslims in India, “the more the two sides try and call attention to their religious differences by slaughtering each other, the less there is to distinguish them from one another. They worship at the same altar”. Once the violence encapsulated in such rivalry is released, like the blood that is spilt, it seeps and spreads contagiously throughout the social order (Girard 1977:28) and will not disappear, setting the scene for never-ending vengeance and retaliatory attacks. Tutu understood this and was thus justifiably terrified of the spiral toward a bloody denouement, “I am frightened, dreadfully frightened, that we may soon reach the point of no return, when events will generate a momentum of their own...” (in Bell 2002:84).

Mandela was determined that the liberators would not become the oppressors of those who had previously oppressed them. He therefore expressed a will to see South Africa transcend repetitive cycles of bloodletting and “escape the cycle of history in which the oppressed seek revenge against their oppressors, becoming themselves oppressors in turn” (in Govier 2002:71). In radical denial of expectation, ‘the people’ of South Africa took to the polls in relative peace and through this collective gesture diverted the course of violence and what seemed to be a promise of civil war. This gesture has been widely explained with reference to the concept of *ubuntu*, an ancient philosophy which seeks “unity and reconciliation rather than revenge and punishment” (Bell 2002:89). The essence of *ubuntu* is captured in the Xhosa phrase “*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” that is best translated as ‘a person is a person through other persons’ (in Coetzee and Le Roux 1998:43). The humanity of one person is therefore relationally defined by the humanity of all. In this context, individuals are acutely aware of social obligations and the well-being of others as this exerts profound impact on the well-being of self. Because our humanity is inextricably intertwined and we exist through relations to other people, in dehumanising others, one dehumanises one’s self. Tutu elaborates, “When we oppress others, we end up oppressing ourselves. All of our humanity is dependent on recognising the humanity in others” (2004:49-50). The emphasis is therefore on the complex, interdependent relationships *between* people and is therefore inherently incompatible with western ethnocentric cultural systems that exalt individuality over

communality. In African societies that share in the spirit of *ubuntu* the notion of individual autonomy is obsolete because/since the individual is viewed as an integral part of society, whose identity is defined by role or status within the *group and is expressed in terms of an ontological hierarchy in which primogeniture is the principle of differentiation*. Such a culture is based upon an appreciation for the suffering of others, the fragility of the human condition and the virtue of solidarity in the face of this. John Mbiti summarises, “Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” (in Graybill 2002: 33; see also Praeg 2000:267). The fabric of African communities is therefore weaved by prioritising the collective over the self.

I argued in chapter two and the first Interlude that Western social contract theory assumes that the individual is conceptually prior to the social as best encapsulated in Descartes famous dictum *cognito ergo sum*: 'I think therefore I am'. Here in contrast the social is conceptually prior to the individual, or “I am because you are” (Coetzee and Le Roux 2002:43). In short, traditional African communities do not reflect a belief that privileges the autonomous self.

That said, the Africanist logic of *ubuntu* is not unfamiliar in contemporary Western thinking and is manifest in an emerging universal humanistic culture. Vandersluis and Yeros (2000), for example, argue that a universal humanist order is emerging that acknowledges the inextricably linked humanity of all human beings. Set against this moral frame we are provided with a common moral referent, namely that of “human worth” that is applicable to *all* humans, or a particular “*universalist ontology of the human*” (ibid:6) that transcends categories of race, class, gender, nationality and so forth. On the basis of ‘human worth’ all humans are accorded the same moral status and thus there is a moral demand placed on each member “to respect the life, integrity, well-being and flourishing of others” (ibid:10). Accorded the same rights and the same grounds for citizenship, all humans may ascend to a position within the human community (ibid:4). As further example, Rorty (1989) contends that social solidarity is tied to moral obligation to others but that this sense of obligation is strongest in collectivities where the members are considered to be “one of us” and where “us” is constitutive of something “smaller and more local than the human race” (ibid:191). He presses the need to extend the sense of ‘we’ to people who have previously been considered ‘they’:

thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, race, religion customs and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation – the ability to think of people who are wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of ‘us’ (ibid.).

This resonates with Mandela’s vision of the nation-building project that was informed by his express desire for the inclusion – the expansion of the South African sense of ‘we’ – rather than the violent exclusion of minority groups. His acute appreciation of human worth as a basis for social solidarity saved the white population from what seemed an inevitably violent war against them. This is captured in the ANC’s vision of an inclusive democracy, as first formally expressed in the Freedom Charter (1955) and now entrenched in the country’s Constitution, which does not seek to generate a sense of national identity through the exclusion of any group and rather understands national unity as an accord between all South African citizens by expanding the South African sense of ‘we’.

As was elucidated in chapter one, the emergent human rights culture, of which Mandela’s message undoubtedly forms a part, has severely problematised exclusionary logic by exposing the rights, plight and dignity of the scapegoat. Narratives that exposed the humanity of victims undermined the founding sacrificial myths which constructed blacks as inherently sub-human and infinitely exploitable, even sacrificeable. Graybill (2002) argues that oppressors create narratives that validate subjugation of an individual or group. These allegations, if successfully mythologised, *become* truth. What a Truth Commission such as the TRC offers is an opportunity to deconstruct such myths, to problematise the veneer of ‘truth’ and thus ultimately overcome the ‘narrative of the lie’ (ibid:82). Increasingly cognisant of the central place accorded to sacrifice in the construction and sustenance of the *old* Republic of South Africa, as a nascent community, in pursuing the path of non-violence, we have challenged it as the default state of our culture. In this process there has been a great deal (too great?) of utopian idealism of the future of South Africa as a non-violent community. In this move, there has been a reproduction of problematic modernist binaries as both options have effectively been *derived and defined in terms of violence*. It seems counter-intuitive to assume that all the complexity of human culture (and indeed human nature) is captured in one or other of these poles, as different expressions of violence. Furthermore, in terms of binary logic if the

definition of violence as default is rendered unsatisfactory, it follows that we cannot make any real sense of *non*-violence as default state.

### 5.5. Conditional and un-conditional forgiveness

The question then is what kind of forgiveness can take us beyond the binaries that brought us the violence as default state and the concomitant impossibility of imagining a post-violence future? Two kinds of forgiveness are problematic and unsurprisingly, they exist as a binary: conditional and un-conditional forgiveness. Conditional forgiveness is best described as a process or calculus of exchange: ‘*if* you the perpetrator confess, *then* you will be forgiven’. Thus the victim (individual, family or community) bestows forgiveness on condition that the perpetrator has confessed to a crime. Conditional forgiveness logically follows two options. Either, the perpetrator confesses and the victim grants forgiveness *or* the perpetrator refuses to confess and forgiveness is denied (Praeg 2000:270). In both instances the harmed individual must make the choice to forgive or not. This form of forgiveness is thus premised on a rugged individualism that forecloses the possibility of any real engagement between forgiver and forgiven that could stimulate a bona fide reconciliation between erstwhile enemies.

Whilst dimensions of conditionalities are found in TRC discourse, the very logic of conditionality is problematised by the Africanist identity dictum that strongly influenced the way in which forgiveness was conceived in these hearings. As a member of a humanist community there is a need to act and think in ways that will ensure the harmony of society as a whole. As Tutu states, “*Ubuntu* says I am human only because you are human. *You must do* what you can to maintain this great harmony, which is perpetually undermined by resentment, anger, desire for revenge” (in Graybill 2002:33; emphasis added). The individual’s sense of duty to the collective subsumes his or her right *not* to forgive. To harbour feelings of vengeance and animosity toward others is to threaten the very essence of what it means to be human. Members of the community are thus imbued with an ontological *obligation*, which is made even clearer in the following statement, “You can only be human in a human society, if you live with hate and revenge, you dehumanise not only yourself but your community. *You must forgive* to make your community whole” (in Christie 2002:143). As members of a humanist moral community in which it is only through their interaction with other members of the community and the society as a whole that

individuals garner their humanness, victims are obliged to forgive. Their humanity depends upon it as is illustrated if the African conception of identity is read in terms of human dignity, as the "*fulfilment of one's obligation to the group*" thus linking 'the inner (moral) nature and worth of the human person and his or her proper *relations within society*' (in An Na-Im & Deng 1990:3; emphasis added). To this end, forgiveness and reconciliation seem to be a precondition of *ubuntu* and by extension, an expression of the individual's self-worth. Therefore victims may experience a sense of guilt and inner impoverishment if they fail to embrace the perpetrators as this equates a rejection of traditional African values. In the cultural context of *ubuntu*, in which an individual (I) has an obligation to the other (we), the option 'that I do not forgive' seems a *logical impossibility* as the individual cannot risk *not* forgiving the perpetrators for fear that this may jeopardise one's personhood. As Praeg explains with a hypothetical scenario of a woman who seems obliged to forgive, "She will have to forgive them 'unconditionally' and embrace them regardless of whether or not they confess...She is because they all are" (ibid:270). Framed by an Africanist worldview then conditional forgiveness is rendered impossible as it is premised on a different, individualist logic.

This leads to the second form of forgiveness that is *unconditionally* granted. Mandela's extraordinary message was rooted in a belief that perpetrators were worthy of forgiveness as they were also, albeit in a very different sense, victims of the Apartheid system:

The message of forgiveness was extended to all South African whites... This forgiveness was *unilateral* and *unconditional* grounded in Mandela's sensitivity to the volatility of his circumstances and *respect for human beings as such* (Govier 2002:71).

According to Derrida (2001), conditionality or the *if-then* configuration is deeply problematic precisely because it represents a form of economic exchange (ibid:34) that places an enormous debt on the perpetrator thus undermining the graciousness of the gift (Verdeja 2004:27). He believes forgiveness in its truest sense must be "unconditional, gracious, infinite" (Derrida 2001:34) and therefore free of any element of exchange. In rejecting conditionality, unilateral forgiveness is offered in the absence of remorse or apology on behalf of the perpetrators. Consequently, the relationship between forgiver and forgiven is asymmetrical and entails a unidirectional flow from forgiver to forgiven – the former assuming the moral high

ground, as magnanimous and gracious. Mandela's granting of 'unconditional' forgiveness, for example, established a 'moral supremacy' (Govier 2002) that led to a status differentiation between white and black, oppressor and oppressed. The ANC had the option of re-enacting the violent oppression of the NP regime, but in *choosing not to*, in *choosing rather to forgive*, they occupied the moral high ground.

Such a form of forgiveness makes no demands on the guilty party, who indeed may not view themselves in this light and therefore feel impotent, bitter and attacked. The act of forgiving certainly implies that a wrong was committed and many white South Africans were offended by the implication that they had done something wrong. This culminates in anger, frustration and hatred in response to 'wrongful accusations' and his or her branding as 'criminal' or 'immoral', even though they do not acknowledge they have acted wrongly and will therefore not accept forgiveness. In the absence of any ontological transformation, indebtedness to the forgiver may aggravate cycles of violence, in giving the oppressors (self-perceived) grounds for vengeance. Verdeja consequently warns that such a form of "forgiveness does not place any conditions on the recipient [and] a debt of resentment may develop" (2004:30) and such sentiments may well lead us once again the road of revenge. If we seek to remedy this by involving an admission of guilt that could minimise resentment and help to develop concern for the other, this creates a form of conditionality on unconditional forgiveness. This is one flaw in the unconditional model of forgiveness.

Praeg elaborates a second flaw in writing, "If we cannot conceive of conditional forgiveness...then we cannot in any meaningful sense of the word conceive of unconditional forgiveness. The latter, is after all, *un*-conditional" (2000:272). Conditional and un-conditional forms of forgiveness constitute a pair of binary oppositions, and as such they are conceptually bound – one is framed in terms of the other. As a binary opposite it is thus logical to assume that unconditional forgiveness would be underpinned by the same "individualist presuppositions characteristic of conditional forgiveness" (ibid:272). The individualist terms of conditional forgiveness become problematic in the context of an Africanist worldview in which an individual is relationally defined. The conditional form threatens to *harm the other*, for if forgiveness is not granted the other (perpetrator) is denied their humanity. Similarly, the unconditional form of forgiveness does not seem to display any real concern for the other (ibid:272). In forgiving unconditionally, the other is effectively excluded from the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. Whether or

not the other is repentant or resentful, humbled or hostile is beside the point and this forecloses the possibility of dialogue and the prospect that erstwhile enemies may come to a mutual understanding, which as I shall argue, serves as an important galvanising factor in the creation of a new moral community. This model, which centres on the self and is indifferent toward the other, is therefore also theoretically untenable in the formation of a post-colonial African community.

The above forms of forgiveness are incapable of doing the post-sacrificial work that this chapter seeks, as they do not contain a sacred generative dimension. In fact, they present the danger of doing the reverse and aggravating cycles of vengeance – either by denying agency (unconditional forgiveness) or by calculating such agency as less important than the national project of reconciliation. There are two further options to which I turn for hope that they may point the way to a post-sacrificial community: The African ethical imperative to forgive (Praeg 2000) and aporetic forgiveness (Derrida 2001).

## **5.6. The ethics of forgiveness**

At both the micro and macro level, discussions are arising around the ethical possibility of non-violent relations with others. Indeed it seems that an awareness of the *imperative of an ethic of non-violence is emerging systemically* that is “concerned with humane, non-violative relationships between human beings” (Malan & Cilliers 2004:17). Such an ethical shift at both ontological levels radically transforms what is considered morally good and bad and how associated notions of duty, responsibility and obligation are understood. At the micro level, Kristeva has suggested an ethic of love between self and other that plays a vital function in the constitution of subjectivity. She suggests that we must learn to embrace the repressed within ourselves; the repressed being abject forces which recall the mother whose expulsion has been constructed as necessary for subjectivity (Kristeva 1982). In re-reading the relationship between self and (m)other Kristeva contends we may (must) learn to live with – and even love – others (ibid: 1987b). This idea of an intimate interdependence is embodied in the metonymic association of contiguity as suggested by Irigaray. In a similar vein, Gilligan (1983) postulated an ethic of care, by placing an emphasis on the interdependence rather than individual atomism of human beings, which gives rise to associated notions of responsibility and moral obligation in the treatment of others. She does so by challenging the logic of justice, which emphasises the

autonomy of a person by focussing on care in relationships. Whereas “justice gives rise to an ethic of rights [...] care engenders an ethic of responsibility (in Malan & Cilliers 2004:5). The logic of justice is rooted in a Newtonian conception of autonomy, that as I’ve argued, led to a specific, violent relation with the Other that Gilligan attempts to undermine by opening a space for an ethics toward a ‘non-violative relationship with the Other’(in Malan & Cilliers 2004:2). The acknowledgement of holistic assumptions such as interdependence, interconnectivity and contiguity resonates in complexity discourse and I shall return to this in the latter part of this chapter, as it will allow us to make comprehensive sense of the emerging ethic of non-violence. For now, it allows us to emphasise the *ethic of responsibility* between ‘I’ and ‘we’.

The philosophy of *ubuntu* has a profound bearing on the way African communities conceive of forgiveness. In a cultural context where ‘I am because you are’ and an atrocity is committed, *I need to confess* to you and *you need to forgive me because both our humanity* depend upon it. This is the crux of the African ethical imperative to forgive and is based on precisely such a form of reciprocity between victim and victimiser as the processes of forgiveness makes moral demands on both parties – the ‘I’ and the ‘We’, the individual and the collective. This allows common ground to be established between erstwhile enemies who share in the responsibility as they share in one another’s humanness. Praeg (2000:268) writes that the ethical imperative “is neither conditional nor unconditional but rather a function of the communality captured in the dictum ‘I am because we are’”. Not only is it essential to take responsibility for one’s own actions but also to facilitate others in their attempts to make amends when they have erred. Each party must be gracious enough to accept the confession of their foe and also have the courage to confess if they have transgressed. I propose that in terms of African humanism, such an *ethic of forgiveness* provides a creative force of cultural renewal.

This principle of reciprocity as embodied in the act of forgiveness is translated into political terms by the process of reconciliation. Therefore the transformative power of forgiveness in interpersonal relations and the reformatory power of reconciliation at the level of the community require *both confession and forgiveness* as a precondition of selfhood if it is to provide a form of long term social catharsis. In summary, two important points underpin such an Africanist view. Firstly, it seeks out

a 'non-violative' relation between members of a communality – between self and other, I and we. And a second related point is that social solidarity is a result of the *ethical imperative* to confess *and* forgive – because our humanity depends upon it. Praeg (2000:275) writes, “There seems to be as much of an ethical imperative to forgive as there is an imperative to confess”. It is the imperative of confession and forgiveness between ‘I’ and ‘we’ that regenerates the social bond in *dynamic non-linear* ways, which problematises the linear logic that prioritises the collective over the individual (as in the conditional form of forgiveness) or the individual over the collective (as with the un-conditional form) (ibid.). This idea of ethical reciprocity creates a form of forgiveness that is based upon recognition of not only the flaws of others but also of our own. In this cultural context, the will to reconcile exists as an imperative of our shared humanness; and, in the space between ‘I’ and ‘we’ awareness emerges of the complexity of human relations (and the associated ethic of responsibility) that define us as members of a moral community. But how are we to conceive of this ethic of forgiveness in Western communities in which the Africanist identity dictum is not tenable? In developing a comprehensive understanding of the generative potential of forgiveness that is not context bound, it is necessary to generalise the logic of the ethic here described. I believe the possibility of so doing is presented in Derrida’s aporetic form of forgiveness.

### 5.7 Aporetic forgiveness

In dealing with heinous crimes – or forms of horror as atrocious as those committed by the Apartheid regime or butchers as brutal as witnessed in the Rwandan, the Sudanese or the Nazi genocide, for example – it is not clear that these violations are forgivable. Such radical crimes against humanity, crimes that stand, quite literally, as the embodiment of evil, cannot (or should not?) be forgiven. In other words, in a community that has been so viciously stripped of its humanity, can the demands of our shared humanness suffice as an imperative for you *to confess* and for me *to forgive*? Indeed it seems to me that it is in such moments, so entirely devoid of ethics, that the imperative to forgive and confess is most vital. It is with respect to crimes that are so *intrinsically unforgivable*, that the imperative to forgive places its greatest demand between ‘I’ and ‘we’. When faced with crimes of this gravity, we are effectively required to experience an ethical relation that is impossible to experience, or as I shall argue, surrender to an *absolute interdependence* with the other. To do so

is to experience what Derrida terms an “aporia”. In an exquisite response to Jankelevitch’s work *L’Imprescriptible* in which he argues that there is no possibility of forgiving crimes against humanity, Derrida writes

‘Forgiveness died in the death camps’ he [Jankelevitch] says. Yes. Unless it only becomes possible from the moment that it appears impossible. Its history would begin, on the contrary with the unforgivable (2001:37).

The distinction must then be made between criminal acts and radically evil transgressions, the likes of which filled Nazi death camps, churches in Kigali and NP detention centres. The former is punishable by law and relatively easy to forgive; the latter on the contrary is a horror so vile, unspeakable, and even unthinkable that it causes us to disbelieve humanism. It is a transgression that as Hannah Arendt summarises, goes beyond the ‘realm of human affairs’ (1989:241). Derrida’s claim is that forgiveness *begins* in the face of such a radically evil crime against humanity that “remains on the horizon of the entire geopolitics of forgiveness” (2001:30). Accordingly, an act of true forgiveness can only occur in a realm that is beyond human comprehension; in a quasi-transcendental realm that is distant from human affairs; in the realm, that is, of the *sacred*. If the aporia-as-sacred mingles with community it loses its transcendental character and the result is the blurring of the distinction between pure and pseudo-forgiveness.

Derrida’s extraordinary aporia of forgiveness consists in an understanding so fundamental that it can grasp its own impossibility: “forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable” (Derrida 2001:32). In other words, the only act that can be forgiven – in any real sense of the faculty – is an act that is unforgivable. That is to say a true act of forgiveness must retain its “ontological connection to radical evil” (Verdeja 2004:25). With his aporia, Derrida is insisting that there is no crime or form of violence that is so extreme, so intrinsically impossible to forgive, that it cannot be matched by an equivalent form of forgiveness. In effect, there is no form of horror so great that it *suspends an ethical obligation* to another person. Such an absolute forgiveness occurs between self and other in the absence of a third party intervention (Derrida 2001:42) that would amount to amnesty, reparation, reconciliation or an end other than genuine forgiveness (ibid:51). Given the gravity of a radically evil crime, forgiveness that entails a non-violent embrace, rather than a retaliatory sacrifice, of the other is then an exceptional act in and of itself, as Derrida write:

Each time forgiveness is at the service of finality, be it noble and spiritual (atonement or redemption, reconciliation, salvation), each time that it aims to re-establish a normality (social, national, political, psychological) by a work of mourning, by some therapy or ecology of memory, then forgiveness is not pure – nor is its concept. Forgiveness is not, should not be, normal, normative, normalising. It should remain *exceptional and extraordinary*, in the face of the impossible: as if interrupted the course of historical temporality (ibid:32).

Derrida is very clear that forgiveness must not become instrumentalised as a political or social tool but must remain limitless and extraordinary and “outside the world of mundane pardons and reconciliation” (Verdeja 2004:25). As such forgiveness must preclude any form of apology in order to retain its connection to ontological evil that is a necessity if it to keep its aporetic nature and thus its ability to transform and to heal.

An aporia is counterintuitive, but necessarily so and we therefore cannot resolve it but what we can do is reconsider it. In this thesis I have already reassessed the Girardian modernist binary between order and disorder, violence and non-violence and have suggested that the sacred is structured not by the binary opposition between chaos and order, but in post-Newtonian terms by their generative interaction. We may thus say that forgiveness in its purest form is non-teleological, as Derrida supports, “In principle, there is no limit to forgiveness, no measure, no moderation, no ‘to what point?’” (2001:27). It is not a linear progression to an end point (be it social unity, the end of violence, economic reparation and so forth) but rather *an open and unending aporetic process*. It is a dynamic interplay between violence (that is radically evil) and forgiveness (that is intrinsically impossible) as a manifestation of the sacred. I consequently believe that the aporetic power of forgiveness lies in a unity of generation and destruction. It is where an unthinkable destructive form of violence meets with the unthinkable thought that it may be forgiven. The two forces contradict and define one another – not as a binary that opposes, but as an interplay that enhances. It is not possible fully to represent exactly how this is possible as the aporia of forgiveness is a manifestation of the sacred and thus like the horror it seeks to transcend, it lies beyond human comprehension. But it is precisely because such “forgiveness is beyond understanding that it has the power to heal” (Praeg 2000:271). The *aporia* of forgiveness is considered to be a magical or miraculous healer in the sense that it required to be *qua* generative cultural response to the sacred.

In possessing both the power to heal and destroy, the aporia embodies the logic of the pharmakon. In the purest form of the faculty, forgiveness possesses the divine ability to transform chaos and conflict into order and peace. Girard claims that all primitive divinities have a double nature as they display both beneficent and maleficent behaviour (Girard 1977) and are thus perceived as supernatural beings, capable of absorbing both 'good' and 'bad' violence. Mandela is mythologised as one such contemporary "deity". Kader Asmal writes

For many he has become a disembodied myth – a repository of hopes and fears. For millions he was the symbol of liberation from oppression, for a few he epitomised terror and destruction (2003:95).

Although Mandela was not a surrogate victim, he effectively did the work that we thought only the sacrificial scapegoat could do in guiding the transition to a new political form. Historically, the transformation to a new social order has been mediated by "a supernatural being who sows violence to reap peace" (Girard 1977:86). However Madiba offered a 'gratuitous gift of non-violence' and confronted the ontological connection to its radically violent past. He *shunned violence to reap peace*. To this end, the nature of Mandela's forgiveness is perplexing. As I argued before it is unconditional, but it appears here that it also contains a sacred generative dimension. Is it then aporetic? It is widely believed that South Africa's transition is miraculous and that Mandela is a "saint", whose beneficent embrace of forgiveness allowed us to take the path to a new, democratic society instead of the (anticipated) path to civil war. Clearly resonating here is Derrida's quasi-miraculous definition of forgiveness as in forgiving radical evil, or 'forgiving the unforgivable'. Despite the extremity of the horror of Apartheid, it did not cause Mandela to suspend his belief in the humanness and interrelatedness of the people of South Africa. He fostered an ethical obligation to the oppressors in the face of radically evil crimes that they committed. I therefore believe that his forgiveness was not (only) unconditional forgiveness but (also partly) aporetic insofar as Mandela embraced a forgiveness so profound that it transcended the relation 'between 'I' and 'we' to ascend to the status of the sacred.

## 5.8. To harm and to heal

In complexity terms, the aporia of forgiveness can be conceived as an attractor state that exists at the edge of chaos to which creative and destructive forces, at once complementary and contradictory, are drawn. The boundaries between attractors are not clear and there is often considerable complex overlap between them. Therefore I believe that there are other non-violent mediating forces that occupy the “same time-space dimensions” (Milovanovic 1997:31) as forgiveness. Here, I propose dialogue and mourning as two further post-sacrificial galvanising forces that must be discussed to gain a holistic understanding of the community’s generative experience.

Debating, speaking, writing, and weeping are all forms of expression or outlets employed to channel a wide range of emotions including anger, aggression, pain, despair, depression, love, euphoria and compassion. According to Kristeva (1989) the violent birth of subjectivity demands the abjection of the mother that creates a profound melancholic depression in the subject who experiences an “impossible mourning” for the lost “maternal object”. Such sentiments of sadness, grief and despair are born from the agonizing double-bind paradox that the subject feels the need to mourn the loss of the mother, yet such mourning is impossible as this maternal sacrifice is a biological and psychic necessity of the subject’s birth (Tsu-Chung Su 2005: 169) and subjectivity as such. Kristeva suggests that the cure for melancholia is the *act of writing* – to substitute the maternal melancholy for melancholy language, “‘I have lost an essential object that happens to be, in the final analysis, my mother’ is what the speaking subject seems to be saying. ‘But no, I have found her again is signs, or rather since I consent to lose her I have not lost her. I can recover her in language’” (1989:43). Therefore Kristeva presents writing as a therapeutic way of curbing mourning. It gives meaning to the loss of the maternal object and it constitutes part of a *creative healing process*, as Kristeva explained in an interview

Depression is at the threshold of creativity. When depression becomes creative, however it has been given a name and has therefore been overcome [...]. Depression becomes a secret force, *perhaps even a modern form of sacredness* (in Tsu-Chung Su 2005:182; emphasis added).

Depression then is a melancholic response to the destructive aspect of the sacred. However we understand that destructive *and* creative forces are enmeshed in the lived experience of subjectivity because they are interwoven at the origin of each. In other

words, the response to subjectivity regeneration must be both creative and destructive. If abjection is the destructive dimension then there must be other catalysts that account for the creative aspect. Mourning is one such response. We have read the violence of abjection in terms of order-disorder interplay and thus we must interpret ritual mourning in such a frame. It serves a vital generative function in channelling melancholia and becomes “a blessed curse and source of creativity and insight” (Tsu-Chung Su 2005:186). As such, it is essential for human existence, as a constant source of inspiration and a perpetual promise of self-destruction.

Given the organistic framework employed here, one in which the processes of individual and social identity formation display a self-similarity, the description of mourning and melancholia at an individual level provides a vocabulary that may help us understand the role of these emotions in the construction of a social or national identity. Durrant (2004:10-11) observes such a connection and writes, “melancholic rituals may accrue a wider political significance and thus need to be re-interpreted as modes of collective mourning”. This was precisely the task of the TRC – to facilitate the growth of a collective memory since remembering allows the opportunity to mourn and to mourn allows for the possibility of cultural re-birth. As Kader Asmal expresses,

Without sustained *remembrance and debate*, it will be difficult to develop a new South African culture with its various strains intertwined in *constructive friction*, rather than in mere conflict and mutual strangulation. This talk of shared memory must not be misunderstood or mystified. It is not the creation of a post apartheid *volk* or a stifling homogenous nation; nor a new fatherland. Nor is it merely the equivalent of every individual’s mental ability to retain facts and arguments at the front of her consciousness, such analogies are unhelpful. Rather shared memory, in the intended sense, is a process of historical accountability (in Rotberg and Thompson 2000:95; emphasis added).

Dialogue and debate form another such *creative process* that provides for the possibility that the narratives of subjugation, oppression and sacrifice that were hidden in the previous cultural order may become public (Rotberg and Thompson 2000:82), which in turn allows for the renunciation of such narratives, that nurtures the move toward an open and accountable society. The dialectic between individual and collective narratives facilitated the emergence of a ‘dialogue truth’ which Constitutional Court judge Albie Sachs summarised as follows: “Microscopic truth is factual and verifiable and can be documented and proved. Dialogue truth on the other

hand, is social truth, truth of experience that is established through interaction, discussion and debate” (in *ibid*:152). It was hoped that collective remembrance could create a bastion against the repetition of our horrendous past by channelling violent impulses through dialogue. Can we then begin to conceive of dialogue as another edge of chaos catalyst that compliments forgiveness? Alex Boraine’s (in *ibid*.) suggestion that a humanist moral *dialogical discourse* as a basis for the new South Africa, whose national unity is forged not through retribution but rather reconciliation, would suggest so. The emphasis is clearly on reconciliation and rebuilding of broken relationships and it is a ‘potent force to *transformation and healing*’ (*ibid*:157) in deeply wounded communities.

This goes a long way in understanding Tutu’s urging of perpetrators (including political leaders) to *apologize publicly* (Graybill 2002:39) as this provides a platform from which to engage in public discussion. Successful reconciliatory acts, which rejuvenate a decayed moral order, require *unanimity*. Girard contends that the generative mechanism of violent culture is the ‘unanimity-minus-one’ principle – the entire community unified against the scapegoat. Such unanimous action requires *visible public spectacle* that can mobilise the masses. If we are to plausibly argue that forgiveness may do the political work traditionally done by violence, it too requires the force of unanimity. It must be able to galvanise or cohere the collective, pull them together “like a magnet” (Baillie 1995:121) in the same way that mimetically inspired violence does. It is therefore vital that victims voice their pain in a public arena and have their voices heard, for the purposes of individual and collective therapy. As Martha Minow elaborates, “to know *one’s tears are seen* may grant a sense of acknowledgement that makes grief less lonely and terrifying” (Rotberg and Thompson 2000:83; emphasis added). One of the most powerful images to emerge from the TRC was Archbishop Tutu’s emotional response to the testimony of Singqokwana Earnest Malgas (in *ibid*:247). Whilst a sobbing Malgas related his horrific tales of torture on Robben Island and the brutal police murder of his sons with acid, Tutu buried his head in his hands, and wept. For Martha Minow this moment “exemplified the complex and deep processes of acknowledging, bearing witness to, and mourning the atrocities committed under Apartheid. It also restored dignity to those whose very being had been so deeply violated” (*ibid*:247). The public broadcast of the hearings on television and radio and in newspapers, allowed “the people” of South Africa to share in processes of dialogue that facilitate confession and

forgiveness. Such “a cathartic outpouring at a mass scale” (Christie 2002:146) provided the opportunity to privately and publicly lament our legacy of hatred, violence and death, which ultimately allows us to construe the TRC process as an act of mourning by the South African community, in the regeneration of that very community.

### **5.9. Ethics, complexity and community**

The essence of *ubuntu* as “delicate networks of interdependence” (Daye 2004:161) succinctly captures complexity’s focus on the interconnectivity and interdependence of entities within a complex system. Indeed, all complex systems “are defined not as atomistic and separate but as delineated through connection” (Malan and Cilliers 2004:5). By emphasising the interconnectivity of human beings in society as a complex system, it denotes a fundamental shift in thinking from the individual as atomised to interdependent. This highlights the complexity of the rich dynamic interaction and co-evolution between entities that occupy a shared ‘fitness landscape’ (Walby 2003). Within this ever-changing terrain, the identity of each system is no longer defined in abstracted terms of autonomy but relationally as a function of the interaction with others, and with this come a number of associated concepts such as respect, tolerance, responsibility and care (Malan & Cilliers 2004). The link between *ubuntu* and complexity is clear to see, as in both there is no such thing as the isolated self, however it is on this point that complexity departs from *ubuntu*. If the logic of *ubuntu* is taken to its furthest extreme we arrive at an understanding that, “Interdependence is necessary for persons to exercise, develop and fulfil their potential to be both individuals and a community. *Only* by means of *absolute dependence* on God and neighbour...can *true human identity* be discovered” (in Daye 2004:161; emphasis added). Complexity on the contrary argues it is necessary to occupy the middle ground between *absolute dependence* as purported by such a Christianised *ubuntu* view and the *absolute independence* of Western modernism. Conceiving the individual (*qua* complex system) as a holon provides a clear model from which we arrive at a post-Newtonian understanding of self-identity as a dynamic function of autonomy from, but also dependence upon others. A shift to complexity enlarges, perhaps even universalises, the logic of *ubuntu* by not merely casting the ‘self as other’ (‘I’ purely in terms of ‘we’) but rather by providing a model of self-identity that accommodates both dependence and independence. Only in

acknowledging the complexity generated from the *interplay between terms* (between 'I' and 'we') can we begin to articulate a holistic reading of the processes and ethics involved in constructing a post-sacrificial community.

By post-sacrificial I am suggesting that identity formation is structured by the generative interaction between chaos and order, dependence (dissipation) and autonomy (autopoiesis) and not by binary opposition. The distinguishing feature of this chapter's catalysts toward a post-sacrificial communality is that they unify the destructive and creative aspects of the sacred *and* in so doing they generate a new form of community that is not necessarily forged in violence. In other words, by situating a number of creative catalysts in unity with the destructive aspect of the sacred at the edge of chaos, we begin to understand that a new cultural and moral community does not emerge (only) sacrificially by virtue of the exclusion of the Other but (also) as a function of the way complex dynamical or open systems self-organise – as an interplay of creation and destruction; order and disorder; 'I' and 'we'.

Gilligan proposed that such a moral transformation could be created and sustained through "a dialectical tension *between justice and care*" (in Malan & Cilliers 2004:8). She acknowledges that an ethic of care is not sufficient in and of itself and justice requires the force of law to uphold it – care cannot enforce justice and justice without care is stripped of morality (in *ibid*:17). It is therefore the dynamic interplay between justice (as violence) and care (as non-violence) that create a broad ethic of responsibility at the edge of chaos. This is the space that the TRC occupied. It was not intended as a substitute for criminal justice (Rotberg and Thompson 2000:149). The 'justice of law' still existed but the overarching emphasis was on restorative rather than retributive justice, which is not such much about punishment as it is about "restoring victims, restoring offenders and restoring communities" (Bell 2002:90). Unlike amnesties that blanket or suppress truths, a truth commission seeks to establish a common narrative of a shared past necessarily engaging a personal truth and a social truth (*ibid.*) – to allow both the 'I' and 'we', victim and perpetrator(s) to tell their stories. Consequently, how forgiveness becomes intelligible "results from the interaction between the victim's conception of forgiveness and its broader societal and ethical understandings" (Verdeja 2004:35). In complexity terms, it is this open dynamic and continuous interaction of complex systems with their environments (the engagement between 'I' and 'we') that allows them to generate and regenerate themselves by self-organising to changing circumstances and changing meanings.

This resonates in the method of the TRC as it encouraged dialogue, reciprocity and feedback, with the aspiration that parties could share their versions of past events and, with time, come to share responsibility for those very events.

This chapter sought to engage with the complex relationship between confession, forgiveness and social reconciliation with the prospect of rejuvenating the social order. The potent force of forgiveness as a non-violent catalyst seems to present itself in the construction of subjectivities and collectivities. It is a systemic testament to the creative aspect of the sacred. The point is not to say that forgiveness has the same *telos* as violence (Verdeja 2004:39) in the regeneration of society – as this is once again in the realm of binary thought in proposing that either violence or non-violence can save society from itself – but rather that the dynamic interplay of destructive and creative forces that presents a macro reflection of a systemic phenomenon already observed at the level of subjectivities. Whether forgiveness is ultimately sustainable as a force of social generation and regeneration or not, we cannot say. But what we *can* say is these forces did the political work that for Girard has historically been the domain of violence. We therefore have the originary experience of a community that metamorphosed from violent disorder into a new inclusive social order by integrating an ethic of forgiveness (and including associated values of interdependence, care and co-operation) rather than falling uncritically and instinctually back onto violence.

### **5.10. Conclusion**

From the Newtonian worldview, the identity of the self and the social, its autonomy and/or sovereignty, is necessarily achieved sacrificially through processes of violent exclusion, and any belief in the transformative power of co-operation, interdependence and forgiveness has historically been dismissed as “naïve” and idealistic. Working from within this modernist paradigm, Girard postulated violence as the *single modus* to community (re)generation as the autonomy of the social order was a function of the sacrificial expulsion of disorder, enacted through the scapegoat mechanism. Apartheid, by its very definition as ‘apartness’, was premised upon such an ethic of violent (material and ideational) exclusion. In its function as sacrificial galvanist, violence embodies the duality of the pharmakon, as Thorton describes in the context of South Africa “the endemic conflict that characterised South African

history...is the *source of both the stability and disintegration*" (in Christie 2002:108; emphasis added).

In refuting this rigid violence-identity nexus, I have argued that the violent world of Western modernity, represented by individualism and statism, seems to be on the wane. Alternative ways of conceiving both individual and collective identities are being articulated and the fact that the analyses of post-sacrificial subject and community formations are being *engaged at the same time*, suggests something more fundamental than mere coincidence. I believe that this is a further reflection of a total shift, a shift of the magnitude that signalled the shift away from a medieval organismic world towards a Newtonian mechanistic world. We currently find ourselves living the transition to a post-Newtonian world, which has called into question many of the key assumptions that have historically constructed violence as the default state of human existence. In such a world, defined by the profound interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals and collectives, we may situate the generators of culture at the edge of chaos where we find the *unity* of order and chaos, which challenges the historical emphasis on autonomy and separation, violently assured.

Furthermore, at the edge of chaos we find a fractal dimension, which allows us to speak of the (re) construction of individual and collective identities in holistic terms. At the micro level of subjectivity, Kristeva's subject embodies the destructive capacity of murder (matricide) with the generative capacity of love. Self-similarly at the macro level, society follows the same pattern of interaction, precariously balanced between stabilising and destabilising forces in dynamic interplay, which defines its identity. All galvanists that contribute to the creation of community display this ambiguity associated with the pharmakon and in this chapter I have sought to understand how collectivities engage *post-sacrificial* mechanisms of identity formation such as forgiveness, dialogue and mourning and how these catalysts contribute to the construction of a post-sacrificial communality. I framed my specific discussion of the transitory experience of South Africa with the philosophy of *ubuntu* that resonates better with a pre-modern organismic and now again, post-modern complexity world-view; and which presented us with the ethical imperative between victim and victimiser to confess-and-forgive because the humanity of both depends upon it. Whilst this ethic is important as it emphasises co-responsibility (rather than obligation) and the interdependence of human beings (rather than autonomy), it is not

an adequate solution to the quandary of post-sacrificial identity formation as it is not applicable in Western communities. However the logic of the Africanist ethic can be universalised if Derrida's aporia is read in terms of complexity as the generative interplay between the *destructive aspect (qua radical evil)* and *creative aspect (qua extraordinary forgiveness)* of the sacred. Derrida argues that we are unable to experience such an aporia, as it requires an (impossibly) absolute embrace of the other. He contends that *if* we would experience that we are absolutely interdependent on (an) other and submit to a definition of humanness in terms of interdependence, then we would understand that no extremity of violence could cause us to renounce an ethical obligation to forgive the other as a condition of self. To do so is impossible; however it is this very impossibility that becomes the horizon to which we must aspire if we are to invoke forgiveness as a catalyst in the generation of a post-sacrificial community.

In its creative capacity forgiveness allows for the therapeutic healing of a badly traumatised social order, as Govier (2002:80) supports that forgiveness acted as a catalyst for the repair of a badly fractured human relation. Indeed the very origin of the word in Greek is linked to concepts of purification, catharsis and spiritual renewal (Asmal *et al* 1997:48). In creating a national solidarity; in bringing about a social reconciliation; or in bringing to a close viscous cycles of reciprocal violence and revenge, forgiveness effectively does all those things that Girard says only violence can do. This testifies to the fact that *forgiveness shares a basic structural similarity with sacrifice* (Verdeja 2004:39). However I am not postulating *either forgiveness or violence* as the primary (default) modus that creates community. Neither am I suggesting that *either expelling or embracing* the Other can re-enact the social bond, and I am certainly not looking to replace violence with non-violence as this would entail reproducing problematic Newtonian binaries. Rather, using post-Newtonian discourse, I believe we are able to reassess the way in which individual and collective identities are formed – not in terms of battle between creative and destructive impulses but as a generative interplay of these contradictory forces. Indeed it is the very mark of a post-sacrificial galvanist that it unifies the destructive and generative aspects of the sacred and does so in a way that creates community. The fact that we find ourselves in the domain of the sacred illuminates the belief that South Africa's transition from one political system to another was miraculously mediated by

forgiveness, as a creative aspect of sacred. It is an impossible aporetic unity between pure evil and pure forgiveness that is a revelation of transcendence.

Ultimately, I believe to discuss the possibility of such alternative creative mechanisms of collective rejuvenation; to acknowledge that in the past violence was detrimental to the social order and deformed social bonds and to create awareness about myths that enabled the modes of sacrificial violence is a constructive move. It speaks to the winds of change. It speaks to the possibility of responding to sacrificial violence, not with vengeance or forgetfulness, but in post-sacrificial ways. And, in a time fraught with unleashed violence, to engage even with the *possibility* of an alternative future is in itself a positive, creative response to our excessively violent and inhumane past.

## Conclusion

### Toward a Post-sacrificial Future

In a speech entitled “I See the Promised Land” delivered in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. famously stated that “The question is no longer between violence and non-violence; it is between non-violence and non-existence”. In reading Modernist accounts of the origin of culture (Girard) and the birth of the subject (Lacan, Kristeva) we have gained a clear understanding of the former distinction. The identity or autonomy of an entity is defined sacrificially and violence employed in such processes has been posited as a historical and conceptual inevitability. As a result in the contemporary world violence is set as the default-state and *non-violence* as an alternative is not defined in a positive sense but in the derogatory terms of binary opposition as what it is not, namely violence. In recent times a gamut of forces (most notably post-Newtonianism, post-feminism, post-colonialism and the emerging human rights culture) have begun rigorously contesting the notion of violence as the default-state. As a result, the legitimacy of sacrifice as the primary modus to an autonomous selfhood has been radically called into question and it urges us to acknowledge that whilst violence has historically played a central role in defining *who we are* as individuals and as a collective; violence need not dictate *what we may become*. Nonetheless the impulse to violence has been historically ingrained at all levels of existence, and so exposure to the sacrificial logic that (re) generates culture led to *an escalation* in victims as communities attempt with increasing vehemence and apocalyptic futility to assert and sustain their autonomy sacrificially. Girard argues that this ‘sacrificial crisis’ leaves us staring down the barrel of a desperate ultimatum between renunciation of violence or annihilation by violence; between ‘non-violence’ and ‘non-existence’.

The grisly reality of this choice is evident in the experiences of African post-colonial states that are incapable of inventing their sovereignty sacrificially yet seem unwilling (or unable?) of detaching from the logic of ancient sacrificial rituals. Consequently, the employ of violence in a bid to assert autonomy is as futile as it has become ubiquitous. Commenting on the observed correspondence between the disintegration of culture and the desperation of violence in this context, Arjun Appadurai writes:

Wherever the testimony is sufficiently graphic... it becomes clear that even the worst act of degradation – involving faeces, urine, body parts, beheading, impaling, gutting, sawing, raping, burning, hanging and suffocating – have macabre forms of cultural design (in Broch-Due 2005:24).

The current crisis of violence and identity formation is not a problem of individuals, *or* communities, *or* states. It is a systemic problem. Broch-Due (2005:6) writes “the quest for identity and belonging in post-colonial Africa is fought out at every level of social existence”. To this end, a fragmented Modernist/Newtonian methodology is wholly inadequate in grappling with nature of the crisis and the possibility of transcending it. Indeed, I believe that the crux of the crisis is encapsulated in the paradigmatic shift away from such Newtonian thought toward a post-Newtonian worldview, which refutes the fearsome obsession with order and autonomy violently assured, as it does the unyielding binary between violence and non-violence that has forced us to confront the possibility of non-existence.

In seeking to challenge the assumption of violence-as-default, I translated the comprehensive sacrificial nature of collective identity and subjectivity into a complexity-based model that allowed me to make *three crucial conceptual moves* toward a comprehensive understanding of *post-sacrificial* identities that occupy an important place in a post-Newtonian world.

### **6.1. From autonomy to interdependence**

Throughout this thesis I argued that modernist accounts of self and collective identity are unified by the shared root metaphor of autonomy that is pursued violently. This assumption is exemplified by 17<sup>th</sup> century contract theory that obeyed a Newtonian ontology and thus viewed entities in atomistic terms as manifest in a concern with the nature and behaviour of *autonomous* individuals and *sovereign* states. In addition, the invention of ‘masculinised’ human nature and the ‘manly’ state was premised upon the sacrificial exclusion of the feminine. The change from Modernist/Newtonian to post-Newtonian thought has challenged the assumptions that supported the Hobbesian myth of autonomy/sovereignty sacrificially achieved. Whilst acknowledging that autonomy is a critical concept in the analysis of the identity-as-violence phenomenon, I believe that the notion of Newtonian autonomy that underpinned both the Hobbesian view of human nature and the extrapolated Realist view of state that we are dealt with in our illustration of systemic nature of the

identity-violence nexus is and always has been illusory. In truth, neither atoms nor men nor states are *naturally* autonomous and it is in attempts to invent this mythical autonomy that we find recourse to violence. When the myth fails we witness the violent (sacrificial) expunging of an identified enemy-other with a view to reinventing an autonomous selfhood.

From a post-Newtonian perspective, it becomes possible to disengage from the violence of inventing and sustaining the autonomy of individuals and states, by debunking the epistemology that makes systemic violence both necessary and possible. On this view, the world is no longer understood as a reducible *bête-machine* but one holistic, interdependent and indivisible, dynamic whole whose parts are interrelated (Capra 1982:66). Within such a system, entities are not understood in isolation but rather in terms of interconnections, as Bohr explains “Isolated material particles are abstractions, their properties being definable and observable only through their interaction with other systems” (in *ibid*:69). This understood it becomes possible to argue that the emergence of the subject and society are not associated exclusively with violence and that individual/collective identities and their formation may be articulated outside or beyond a concern with their ‘autonomy’. This also entails an ontological shift as it compels us to engage with the most profound question of how we understand “entities” (be it a cell, an individual or a state) in taking as a point of departure not autonomy but interdependence. In other words, if the root assumption of complexity is relational then violence can/will no longer be invoked to sustain the myth of autonomy.

## **6.2. From analogy to self-similarity**

In order to comprehensively challenge the assumption of sacrificial exclusion that lies at the base of subjectivity and the way communities conceive of their identity, I argued for the systemic nature of sacrificial violence. Theorists like Hobbes, Kant and Spinoza provided a quasi-hypothesis that the nexus between violence and identity resonates at the level of man and state, however the nature of the relation was not accounted for in a methodologically adequate manner. Using the new emerging organismic paradigm of complexity I re-represented Hobbesian “just so” analogies as self-similarities. In understanding society as a complex dynamical self-organising system, we can expect such a system to display the characteristics of other such living organisms, notably a self-similar or analogical relation between the parts

and the whole. More specifically, I used the notion of the fractal implicit in this ontology to account for the assumed “analogy” between micro and macro, which allowed me to speak of the relationship between subjectivity violence and collectivity violence in terms of their organic self-similarity. With the benefit of such a unified systemic model of identity formation, it is possible to argue that the individual, the society and the state are linked or are generated by the *same algorithm* that accounts for the patterns whereby self-identity is sacrificially created and sustained. In other words, by casting individual and social explanations of identity formation in the holistic mould of society, it becomes possible to account for the violence-identity nexus ontologically at all levels.

Beyond this, in contemporary culture, a generative redefinition of the modern individual and the modern state in the masculine terms of autonomy/sovereignty sacrificially achieved is increasingly impossible. Given the organistic framework employed here, one in which the processes of individual and social identity formation display a self-similarity, it facilitates an ontological move away from the violence of traditional metaphysics toward a *post-sacrificial epistemology* valid for both collective identities and subjectivity. Whilst conceding that violence is an extremely fundamental aspect of cultural formation, it is not the only aspect and this realisation has compelled me to seek out alternative means to coalesce the collective and stabilizing the subject beyond murderous violence.

### **6.3. From binary to interplay**

How then are we to conceive of post-sacrificial generators of identity? The key is to situate the identity of the self and society *qua* complex systems at the edge of chaos that is described as “a ferociously active frontier that has been found to exist between stability and incomprehensible disorder” (Hawkins 1996:8). In stark contrast to Newtonian thought, order and disorder are not rigid binary rivals but rather two faces of the same dynamic phenomenon (Baker 1993). From here, it allows us to construe the system’s capacity for consistency or change as a function of the order-disorder exchange. At the micro level, I re-read Kristeva to cast the quest for self-identity as a constant conflictual dialectical interplay between the symbolic (as order) and the semiotic (as disorder) that accounts for change (in Tsu-Chung Su 2005:184). Rather than necessitating the sacrificial abjection of the maternal semiotic, subjectivity is understood in terms of the pharmakon as an ambiguous reconciliation

of forces of destruction and creation that causes the subject to move fluidly *between* the semiotic and the symbolic in the regeneration of their identity. We thus arrive at a post-Newtonian understanding of subjectivity that “no longer resorts to violence...to maintain its sense of coherence” (Chapman and Rutherford in Gamble 2001:57) but rather finds coherence in acknowledging the dynamic and unpredictable interchange of order and disorder.

In the case of communities, Girard contends that the sacred is all that has been sacrificed in order for culture to be born and must be sacrificed for any subsequent cultural renaissance. As Woodward (1997:30) supports “The sacred, that which is set apart, is defined and marked out as different in relation to the profane, to which the sacred is in opposition and from which it is entirely excluded”. Where Girard collapses the order-disorder interplay into violence, or the sacred as the force of disorder that threatens the order of culture, through the lens of complexity, I re-cast his modernist binary relation of violence and the sacred in post-Newtonian terms to argue that the force of culture is the interface between order and disorder. The sanctity of the social order is not achieved simply by the expulsion of disorder through the sacrificial mechanism, but rather that violence exists *as* the sacred in the sense of being a unified destructive/generative force. As Beardsworth (2000:141) writes, “the scapegoat shift ambivalently between a ‘victim’ whose attributes are those of monstrosity and dereliction and a ‘saviour’ whose attributes are those of divinity, fertility and/or resurrection”. The scapegoat is pharmakon – both destroyer and restorer – and the embodiment of the ambiguous potential that may be harvested in the order-disorder interplay.

The logic of the pharmakon provides the conceptual hinge needed to articulate the self-similarity in two forms of *post*-sacrificial identity formation. The aim is not to create non-violence as an idealised default state that usurps the hegemonic position of violence, but rather to create a frame in which neither violence nor a non-violent alternative is pronounced more fundamental. Undoubtedly, violence is integral to human culture and the human condition (Broch-Due 2005:17), but what this thesis has offered is a clearer understanding of the complex and intricate ways that violent and non-violent; destructive and creative forces are structured not by the binary opposition, but by their generative interaction at the origin of the subject and society. This dynamic interplay allows a system to maintain or transform its identity through the power of the attractors that operate at the edge of chaos, which exists as a function

of the continuous and self-organised oscillation between chaos and order. The holistic model developed here can account for the regeneration or decay of a complex system in a holistic, systemic way and thus allows us to say that subjectivity is not simply a reduplicated maternal sacrifice and the future of community is not inevitably defined by its violent past.

#### **6.4. Forging a post-sacrificial path**

In final synopsis, the complex system's methodology as mapped out in this thesis, has offered new ways of looking at the age-old violence-identity nexus, by engaging identity formation as a hybrid phenomenon or a fusion of the natural and social sciences. The ability to do so testifies to the magnitude of total shift currently being engaged from Newtonian to post-Newtonian worldview that has fundamentally altered the way we think of chaos, order and interdependence and has thus had profound consequence for the way we conceive of individual and collective identity construction. By situating my study in the context of this paradigm shift I have employed an alternative epistemology that takes as its point of departure identity defined in relational terms as interdependent rather than autonomous. Thus instead of pursuing a new mythology of violence (by reading non-violence in sacrificial terms), I have begun to conceive of the emergence of the subject and society in terms that are not exclusively destructive and associated with violence. This conclusion led me to speculate about possible creative forces of individual and cultural renewal, which entailed opening up a post-sacrificial space to integrate values such as forgiveness, co-operation, interdependence and care that pose a profound and creative *response to violence*, or the destructive aspect of the sacred. I believe that Derrida's aporetic form of forgiveness is one such generative cultural response to the violence of the sacred, which is extraordinary as it only responds to the most radical and sinister of evils. An aporia by definition is something beyond human comprehension, as Lucy (2004:1) explains, "an aporia takes the form of something that cannot be explained within standard rules of logic". It is precisely in the aporetic nature of forgiveness – as an unthinkable response to an unthinkable evil – that it may inspire the possibility of change (in Reynolds and Roffe 2004:32). Pure forgiveness thus exists in unity with extreme violence – with its own impossibility – and in generating this unity of creation and destruction, an aporia generates the miraculous and mysterious transformative power of the pharmakon. To this end, Derrida's aporetic forgiveness is

a *bona fide* post-sacrificial galvanist as it embodies the intimate unity of *destructive forces and creative responses* to the sacred.

By situating the originary formation of the subject and society in systemic terms at the edge of chaos, I have read the violence/forgiveness interface as a representation of the destructive/generative aspect of the sacred. This post-Newtonian reading has cleared the conceptual space that would suggest there might yet be hope for a future that does not embrace violence as default-state. As testament to this very possibility, the post-1994 South Africa offered a non-violent quasi-aporetic response to the wreckage of a violent past. In theorising this extraordinary renunciation of vengeance and violence in a world, which as we have seen, has historically defined itself in these very terms, this thesis offers one step in the 'long walk' to a post-sacrificial future.

## Bibliography

- Allen, P (1999) "Warfare, Endemic Violence and State Collapse in Africa" in *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 81: 367 – 384 ROAPE Publications Ltd.
- Allison, H. E (1987) *Benedict de Spinoza: an Introduction*, New Haven: Yale University Press
- An-Na'im, A.A and Deng, F.M eds. (1990) *Human rights in Africa: cross-cultural perspectives* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.
- Anderson, P-S (2000) "Sacrificed lives: mimetic desire, sexual difference and murder" in *Cultural Values* Volume 4 Number 2 pp.216 – 227
- Andreski, S (1971) *Herbert Spencer: structure, function and evolution* London: Joseph
- Appigananesi, R and Garratt, C (1995) *Introducing Postmodernism* Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd.
- Arendt, H (1958) *The Human Condition* Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Asmal, K Chidester, D and James, W (2003) *Nelson Mandela: From Freedom to the Future* Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishing
- Asmal, K (1997) *Reconciliation through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance* Cape Town: Dave Phillips Publishing
- Bailie, I (1995) *Violence unveiled: humanity at the crossroads* New York: Crossroad
- Baker, P (1993) "Chaos, Order and Sociological Theory" in *Sociological Inquiry* Vol. 63, No. 2 Austin: University of Texas Press
- Bataille, G (1991) *The Accursed Share. Volume One: Consumption* New York: Zone Books
- Baudrillard, J (1981) *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* St Louis: Telos Press
- Beardsworth, R (2000) "Logics of Violence: Religion and the Practice of Philosophy murder" in *Cultural Values* Volume 4 Number 2 pp.137-166
- Bell, R.H. (2002) *Understanding African Philosophy: A Cross-cultural Approach to Classical and Contemporary Issues* London and New York: Routledge
- Berlin, I (1969) *Four essays on liberty* London: Oxford University Press
- Bird, R.J. (2003) *Chaos and Life: Complexity and Order in Evolution and Thought* New York: Columbia University Press

- Bowie, M (1991) *Reading Lacan* London: Harvard University Press
- Broch-Due, V (2005) *Violence and belonging: The quest for identity in post-colonial Africa* London and New York: Routledge
- Butler, J (1999) *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* New York: Columbia University Press
- Butler, J and Scott, J (1992) *Feminists Theorise the Political* London: Routledge
- Byrne, D (1998) *Complexity and the Social Sciences* London: Routledge
- Capra, F (1982) *The Turning Point: Science, Society and Rising Culture* London: Flamingo
- Christie, K (2000) *The South African Truth Commission* New York: MacMillan Press
- Cilliers, P (1998) *Complexity and Postmodernism: Understanding Complex Systems* London: Routledge
- Clément, C., and Kristeva, J (2001) *The feminine and the sacred* New York: Columbia University Press
- Collins, J and Mayblin, B (1996) *Introducing Derrida* Duxford: Icon Books
- Davis, C (2000) "Fathers, Others: The Sacrificial Victim in Freud, Girard and Levinas" in *Cultural Values*, Vol. 4, Issue 2
- Daye, F (2004) *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa* New York: Orbis Books
- Debus, A (1978) *Man and Nature in the Renaissance* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Derrida, J  
 (1976) *Of grammatology* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press  
 (1978) *Writing and Difference* London: Routledge  
 (2001) *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness (Thinking in Action)* London: Routledge
- DiProse, R (1994) *The Bodies of women: Ethics, Embodiment and Sexual Difference* London: Routledge
- Doane, J and Hodges, D (1992) *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the "Good Enough" Mother* Michigan: University of Michigan Press

Dor, J (1997) *Introduction to the reading of Lacan: the unconscious structured like a language* Northvale: Jason Aronson

Dumouchel, P ed. (1988) "Introduction" in *Violence and Truth* Stanford: Stanford University Press

Durrant, S (2004) *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning* New York: State University of New York Press

Elshtain, J (1985) *Women and War* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press

Enloe, C (1988) *Does khaki become you: the militarization of women's lives* London: Pandora

Foucault, M (1972) *The archaeology of knowledge* London: Tavistock

Fletcher & Benjamin (eds.) (1990) *Abjection, Melancholia and Love* New York: Routledge

Freud, S

(1913) *Totem and taboo: resemblances between the psychic lives of savages and neurotics* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin

(1921) *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* London: Hogarth Press and the International Psycho-Analytical Library

(1923) *The Ego and the Id* London: Hogarth Press

Gallop, J (1985) *Reading Lacan* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press

Gamble, S (2001) *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* London and New York: Routledge

Gare, A (2000) "Systems Theory and Complexity Introduction" in *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 6, No. 3.

Gatens, M (1991). *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality* Indiana: Indiana University Press

Gilligan, C (1983) *A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Girard, R

(1977) *Violence and the Sacred* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

(1986) *The Scapegoat* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

(1987) "Generative Scapegoating." in *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (ed.) Robert Hamerton-Kelly. Stanford: Stanford UP

- (1991) *Theatre of Envy* New York: Oxford University Press
- (2001) *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* New York: Orbis Books
- Girard, R and Anspach, M "A Response: Reflections from the Perspective of Mimetic Theory" in *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World* Mark Juergensmeyer ed. (1992) London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd
- Girard, R, Oughourlian, J and Lefort, G. (1987) *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Girard, R and Williams, J. G. eds. (1996) *The Girard Reader* New York: Crossroad
- Gleick (1987) *Chaos: Making a New Science* New York: Viking
- Gobodo-Madikizela, P (2000) *Legacies of violence: An in-depth analysis of two case studies based on interviews with perpetrators of a 'necklace' murder and with 'Eugene de Cock'*: 1-313. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cape Town
- Govier, T (2002) *Forgiveness and Revenge* London: Routledge
- Graybill, L (2002) *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model?* London: Lynne Rienner Publishers
- Grene, M ed. (1979) *Spinoza: a Collection of Critical Essays* Indiana: University of Notre dame Press
- Grosz, E (1990) *Jacques Lacan: a feminist introduction* London: Routledge
- Hall, N (1994) *Exploring Chaos: A Guide to the New Science of Disorder* New York: WW Norton
- Hand, S (1989) *The Levinas reader* Oxford: Blackwell
- Hamerton-Kelly, R (1994) *The Gospel and the Sacred: Poetics of Violence in Mark* Minneapolis: Fortress Press
- Hampton, J (1996) *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hawkins, H (1995) *Strange attractors: literature, culture, and chaos theory* New York: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Hayles, K (1991) *Chaos and order: complex dynamics in literature and science* Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Henry, J (1997) *The Scientific Revolution and the Origins of Modern Science* London: MacMillan Press Ltd
- Hobbes, T (1914) *Leviathan* London: J.M. Dent

- Hook, D.W (2003) "Language and the Flesh: Psychoanalysis and the Limits of Discourse" in *Pretexts: literary and cultural studies*, Vol. 12, No.1
- Huskinson, L (2002) "The Self as violent Other: The Problem of Defining the Self" in *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 47, 437–458
- Irigaray, L (1985) *This Sex Which Is Not One* Ithaca: Cornell University Press
- Jervis, R (1997) *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press
- Kamuf, K ed. (1990) *A Derrida reader: between the blinds* New York: Columbia University Press
- Kearney, R ed. (1994) *Routledge History of Philosophy: Vol. VIII: Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy* London: Routledge
- Kearney, R (1999) "Aliens and Others: Between Girard and Derrida" in *Cultural Values* Vol. 3, Issue 3
- Kellner (1989) *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Post-Marxism and Beyond* Cambridge: Polity Press
- Keltner, S (2004) "Sacrificial Promises in the Time of the Obsession: Kristeva and the Sexual Contract" in *Southern Journal of Philosophy* Vol. XLII.
- Kristeva, J  
 (1982) *Powers of horror: an essay on abjection* New York: Columbia University Press
- (1984) *Revolution in poetic language* New York: Columbia University Press
- (1986) *The Kristeva reader* (ed. T. Moi) New York: Columbia University Press
- (1987a) *In the beginning was love: psychoanalysis and faith* New York: Columbia University Press
- (1987b) *Tales of love* New York: Columbia University Press
- (1989) *Black sun: depression and melancholia* New York: Columbia University Press
- (1991) *Strangers to ourselves* New York: Columbia University Press
- (1995) "Strangers to ourselves: the hope of the singular" in *States of Mind* ed. Kearney, M. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- (1995) *New maladies of the soul* New York: Columbia University Press

Lacan, J (1968) *The Language of the Self: the function of language in Psychoanalysis* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

Lefebure, L.D (1996) "Victims, Violence and the Sacred: The Thought of Rene Girard" in *Christian Century*, Vol. 113, Issue 36

Leader, D and Groves, J (1996) *Introducing Lacan* New York: Totem Books

Lechte (1990) *Julia Kristeva* London and New York: Routledge

Levinas, E (1969) *Totality and infinity: an essay on exteriority* Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press

Lewin, R (1992) *Complexity: Life at the Edge of Chaos* New York: Macmillan

Lucy, N (2004) *A Derrida Dictionary* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Malan, Yvonne and Cilliers, Paul (2004) "Gillian and complexity: reinterpreting the 'ethic of care'" in *Acta Academia* 2004, 36(3): 1-20.

Mandelbrot, B (1982) *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* New York: W.H Freeman

MacKinnon, C (1987) *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* Harvard: Harvard University Press

Marx, K (1977) *A contribution to the critique to political economy* Moscow: Progress Publishers

McKenna, A (1992) *Violence and Difference: Girard, Derrida, and Deconstruction* Urbana: Illinois University Press

Menninghaus, W (2003) *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation* Albany: SUNY Press

Merchant, C (1983) *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* San Francisco: Harper and Row

Miller, M. (1999) "Chaos, Complexity and Psychoanalysis" in *Psychoanalytic Psychology* Volume 16 Issue 3

Milovanovic, D (1997) *Chaos, Criminology and Social Justice* Westport: Praeger

Minow, M (2000) "The Hope for Healing" in *Truth vs. Justice*, ed. Rothberg, R.I and Thompson, D. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press

Moghadam, V (1994) *Identity, Politics and Women* Boulder: Westview Press

Moi, T ed. (1986) *The Kristeva Reader* Cambridge: Basil Blackwell

- Nisbet, R.A (1970) *The sociological tradition* London: Heinemann Educational
- Nye, J. S. Jnr (2002) *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's only remaining superpower can't go it alone*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Oliver, K  
 (1993) *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the double-bind* Bloomington: Indiana University
- Kristeva and Feminism* 1998 (Online)  
<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/Oliver.htm> August 24 2004
- (2002) *The Portable Kristeva* New York: Columbia University Press
- Palmer, D. D (1997) *Structuralism and Poststructuralism for Beginners* New York: Writers and Readers
- Pateman, C  
 (1988) *The Sexual Contract* Cambridge: Polity Press
- (1989) *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism, and Political Theory* Cambridge: Polity Press
- Pateman, C and Shanley, M (1991) *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* Cambridge: Polity Press
- Pateman, C and Gross, E (1986) *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory* London: Allen and Unwin
- Pettman, J.J. (1996) *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* London: Routledge
- Pollis, A and Schwab, P eds. (1979) *Human rights: cultural and ideological perspectives* New York: Praeger
- Praeg, L (2000) *African Philosophy and the Quest for Autonomy: A philosophical investigation*. Atlanta/Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi.
- Rader, M. M. (1979) *Marx's Interpretation of History* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ragland-Sullivan, E. (1986) *Jacques Lacan and the philosophy of psychoanalysis* Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois
- Redwood, J (1977) *European Science in the Seventeenth Century* New York: Barnes and Noble
- Reynolds, J and Roffe, J eds. (2004) *Understanding Derrida* New York and London: Continuum

- Rifkin, J (1980) *Entropy: a new world view* New York: Viking Press
- Robinson, S (04/10/2004) "The tragedy of the Sudan" article in *Time*
- Rotberg, R.I and Thompson, D (2000) *Truth v. Justice* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press
- Ricoeur, P. (1970) *Freud and Philosophy: an essay on interpretation* New Haven and London: Yale University Press
- Rihani, S (2002) *Complex Systems Theory and Development Practice* London and New York:
- Reineke, M. J. (1997) *Sacrificed Lives: Kristeva on Women and Violence*.  
Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press
- Rorty, R (1989) *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Roy, A (2001) *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* Flamingo: London
- Rumney, J (1934) *Herbert Spencer's sociology: a study in the history of social theory*  
London: Williams and Norgate
- Sadar, Z and Abrams, I (1998) *Introducing Chaos* Cambridge: Icon
- Sanderson, S. K. (1990) *Social evolutionism: a critical history* Cambridge: Blackwell
- Saussure, F de (1974) *Course in General Linguistics* London: Fontana/Collins
- Scruton, R (1986) *Spinoza* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Skyrms, B (2004) *Stag Hunt and the Evolution of Social Structure* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Spencer H (1911) *First principles* London: Williams and Norgate
- Taylor, C (1989) *Sources of the Self* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Thompson, W.R. (2000) *The Emergence of the Global Political Economy* London and New York: Routledge
- Thrift, N. (1999) "The Place of Complexity" in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16:31-70.
- Tickner, J A (1992) *Gender in International Relations: Feminists Perspectives* New York: Columbia University Press



Tsu-Chung Su (2005) "Writing the Melancholic: The Dynamics of Melancholia in Julia Kristeva's *Black Sun*" in *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* (January 2005) pp. 163 – 191

Tutu, D (2004) *God has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time* Johannesburg: Rider

Urry, J (2003) *Global Complexity* Cambridge: Polity Press

Ushedo, B.O (2001) "Unloading Guilt: the Innocent Victim As Illustrated by James Baldwin and René Girard" in *The Journal of Religious Thought* pp. 131 – 148

Vandersluis, S.O and Yeros, P eds. (1999) *Poverty in world politics: whose global era?* Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan

Verdeja, E (2004) "Derrida and the Impossibility of Forgiveness" in *Contemporary Political Theory* Vol. 3, pp. 23–47 Palgrave Macmillan Ltd

Walby, S (2003) British Sociological Association Conference Paper "*Complexity Theory, Globalisation and Diversity*" Professor in Political Sciences, University of York.

Waldrop, M.M. (1992) *Complexity: the emerging science at the edge of order and chaos* New York: Simon & Schuster

Waltz, K. N. (2001) *Man, the state, and war: a theoretical analysis* New York: Columbia University Press

West, D (1996) *An Introduction to Continental Philosophy* London: Polity Press

Whitford, M ed. (1991) *The Irigaray Reader* Cambridge: Basil Blackwell

Wolfson, H. A. (1958) *The Philosophy of Spinoza* New York: Meridian Books

Woodfield, A.W. (1976) *Teleology* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Woodward, K ed. (1997) *Identity and Difference* London: Sage

Zohar, D and Marshall, I (1999) *The Quantum Society: Mind, Physics and a New Social Vision* London: Flamingo