

THE BIOLOGICAL SUBJECT:
REWORKING JUDITH BUTLER'S
THEORY OF GENDER
PERFORMATIVITY THROUGH HENRI
BERGSON'S *MATTER AND MEMORY*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis expands the currently available approaches to theorising the relation between subjectivity and the body – by developing a notion of an embodied subject. This is done by exploring the implications which Henri Bergson’s process philosophy has for understanding Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity.

I undertake an analysis of Butler’s account of the gendered subject, demonstrating its value for thinking the politics of sexual difference but emphasising its methodological shortcomings. Specifically, I criticise her reduction of the body to a signifying effect, her exclusion of a notion of self-reflexivity, and the way she explains the psychic investment in gender through a principle of melancholia. Taken together, I argue that these theoretical perspectives become problematic because they radically limit an understanding of how and why hegemonic subjects repeat normative signifying practices. In turn, this limitation distorts Butler’s understanding of how subversive repetitions can effectively de-naturalise gender norms.

Following this critique, I use Bergson’s temporalised understanding of the relation between consciousness and language to theorise an account of the gendered self which conforms to Butler’s ideas concerning regulated subject positions, but provides the possibility of attaining reflexive distance from the norms of gender intelligibility. I then develop Bergson’s sensory-motor conception of the body, and its relation to

consciousness and memory, in order to re-evaluate the lived dynamics of repetition, gender investment, and identification.

Through Bergson, I will demonstrate how historically sedimented gender practices are reproduced by forming the motor habits of individual bodies. This allows me to explain the circulation of gender norms in terms of bodily processes and tension rather than signifying effects and, I argue, grounds the basis of gender investment in the familiarity which habits provide for action. I then use Bergson's principles that consciousness expands when action is indeterminate, and that memory forms general ideas in response to the present moment of action, to explore how variable processes of gender identification develop when habits are subverted.

Through these perspectives I re-describe Butler's notion of performativity as a lived, embodied process in which gender investment and identification are contingent upon an individual subject's reflexive responses to the immediate social conditions of action. In order to clarify the nature of these responses I then call upon Yaak Panksepp's neurological theory of emotion to characterise several prominent tendencies and, ultimately, argue that the effectiveness of subversive repetition depends upon producing the right emotional response. This, I suggest, provides a more diverse explanation of the naturalisation and potential transformation of signifying practices than is available in Butler's own theoretical framework.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis has developed, on the one hand, from the contention that Henri Bergson's philosophical works provide a rich, and as yet largely untapped, resource for cultural theory. While Bergson's work has received increased attention in recent years, particularly in relation to his influence on Gilles Deleuze, this has largely been a philosophical enterprise which has attempted to explicate and clarify the nature of his ideas. There has, however, been little effort to apply his ideas directly to the use of cultural analysis, and as far as Bergson does enter the fray of cultural theory it is generally as a passing reference within a Deleuzian approach.¹ One of the driving forces behind this thesis is, therefore, to begin opening up Bergson's oeuvre to uses other than those already achieved within Deleuze studies. I will do this, primarily, by engaging his work with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, but also by developing aspects of his philosophy, such as his conception of the nervous system, which have yet to receive significant attention.

On the other hand, this thesis has also developed from an interest in the implications and possibilities of developing biological accounts of subjectivity, by which I mean any attempt to draw upon biological science

¹ Notable exceptions to this can be found within the discipline of sociology. For instance, there has been cluster of articles which have used Bergson to present alternative ways to theorise processes of organisation within diverse areas such as community, office management and product innovation (Calori 2002; Chea 1999; Chea and King 1998; Hatzenberger 2003; Linstead 2002; O'Shea 2002; Styhre 2003; Wood 2002). In turn, Ann Game's *Undoing the Social* has put Bergson to use in a more extended reflection which aims towards a 'sociology concerned with the immediate, the lived of the everyday, and with transformations in the now' (ix).

in order to view the self and sociality in relation to the body's organic materiality. More specifically, my initial concern has been with the type of fraught relation which such accounts have with theories which prioritise language as the basis of subjectivity, particularly insofar as such theories tend to foreclose the biological as a theoretical point of reference.

In the context of gender, and particularly feminist discourse, the implied danger of the biological sciences is that they result in the ideal of an essential and unchanging sexed nature which unilaterally produces behaviour. Butler herself has developed such a critique, arguing that biology does not reference a pure body but, rather, enacts a 'construction of the gendered body through a series of exclusions and denials' (2008: 184). That is, biology does not simply reveal objective facts about the sexed body, but composes an object domain by limiting its field of reference. Insofar as this field of reference is 'structured along matrices of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality' (198), then, Butler's driving point is that biology does not so much reveal the true nature of sex as it re-enforces a 'regulatory ideal' (Butler 1993: 2) of sexual difference.

The biological therefore can, and has, been used to justify the status quo by imposing false limits on the possibility of gendered life. However, while this is a genuine danger, the potential uses of the biological for understanding both the self and sociality are not exhausted by attempts to objectify sexual difference. For instance, my own recourse to a biological notion of the body will not attempt to define the nature of sex, but to clarify and explore how individuals respond to their discursively structured subject positions within concrete social situations.

Thought of from this perspective, the implied limitation of presenting the subject purely as 'a linguistic category' (Butler 1997a: 10) is that it produces only an abstract view of signification. As Veronica Vasterling has argued, explicitly referring to Butler, a 'one-sided focus on language' (2001: 121) neglects a consideration of how 'what we see and understand [...] is also a result of the body's intentionality' (213). What is at stake here, then, is the idea that meaning is 'dependant on, but not completely determined by, language' (213), and that 'the body's passage through the world' (213) is one aspect of the contingent production of meaning which requires exploration in the context of linguistic theories of the subject.

Despite the potential complementarity of this perspective, language based theories of subjectivity are still pervaded by what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank have called a 'reflexive antibiologism' (16). In general terms, this is a phrase they use to define what they feel is an unwarrantedly hostile attitude towards biology, whereby the 'distance of [any theoretical account of subjectivity] from a biological basis is assumed to correlate near-precisely with its potential for doing justice to difference' (1). In other words, it denotes a tendency in which a necessary caution against essentialism has subtly transformed into 'heurist habits and positing procedures' (1) which automatically view the biological as necessarily essentialist.

I share Sedgwick and Frank's commitment to drawing upon biological insights as well as their concern with persisting habits which resist such engagements, (although I believe the current anti-biological climate is less extreme now than when they were writing in 1995).

However, I do not share their dismissive attitude towards language based models of subjectivity, which they broadly characterise as ‘a bipolar analytic framework that can all too adequately be summarized as “kinda subversive, kinda hegemonic”’ (5). This kind of attitude, I would argue, is unnecessarily reactive, and not only devalues the complexity of such work but continues to create a divisive atmosphere which prevents more productive dialogues emerging. In this light, part of what this thesis aims to provide is an inroads towards a more balanced approach to theorising the relation between language and the body within subjectivity.

The reason Butler’s work has been chosen for this task is because her theory of gender performativity is an extremely subtle, insightful and valuable version of language based subjectivity which, nonetheless, is limited by its methodological foreclosure of the body. Indeed, Butler’s conceptual perspective tends toward the kind of dichotomy which Sedgwick and Frank caution against, whereby if the body is not presented in terms of its discursive constitution then it is being presented in terms of an essential nature.

However, insofar as I take a critical attitude towards Butler on this point, my aim is not so much to discredit her theory of performativity, and certainly not to dismiss its claims as “kinda subversive, kinda hegemonic.” Rather, it is to show that Butler’s foreclosure of the body’s dynamic relation to discourse becomes detrimental to her own ideas concerning the potential for subversion and the persistence of hegemony. By demonstrating the body’s active role in signification, and incorporating a notion of embodied, self-reflexivity into her discursive theory of the subject,

I aim to develop a more comprehensive account of performative processes and their potential to be transformed.

Bergson, as I will demonstrate, is a particularly apt figure through which to develop such a biological subject, since his work contains both a non-essentialist conception of the body and a critique of language which is relatable to constructionist views on subjectivity. Moreover, since Bergson's notions of the body and language are developed within a broader theory of temporality and movement, he provides a common framework for them to be thought in conjunction. From this perspective, my intention is to bring the relationship between the body and language, as claims on subjectivity, closer together by conceiving the subject primarily in terms of action.

Aside from its potential to draw language and the lived body into a common framework, Bergson's work may at first glance appear an unlikely candidate for a productive engagement with Butler. He is, after all, a philosopher acutely associated with unrestricted creativity and change while Butler, as something of an antinomy, focuses on systems of regulation. Moreover, there is also a considerable difference between the historical contexts of their work, which in turn imply striking differences in both their methods and socio-political contexts. Butler, on the one hand, is working in the context of American feminism. Her writings date from the late 1980's to the present day, and can be theoretically situated within the debates of French post-structuralist thought and the Anglo-American sex/gender distinction. Bergson, on the other hand, is working in the tradition of metaphysical philosophy in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth century France. His work does not engage the politics of sexual difference at all, but rather involves a sustained engagement with the emerging scientific knowledge of his time.

However, despite these differences, there are important thematic congruencies which link their work in an uneasy alignment. Specifically, both advocate a non-spatialised view of temporality, and both share a critique of the metaphysics of substance which emerges as a suspicion of the reifying effects of language. Moreover, because the questions I am exploring in relation to Butler emerge as problems of lived experience and change, the different implications Bergson gives to these points of alignment are perfectly suited to address the problematic points which I will isolate in Butler's texts. My thesis, in this sense, maintains the political motivation of Butler's work as an object of analysis, reading and re-interpreting her account of hegemonic gender regulation *through* Bergson.

What I particularly wish to retain from Butler's politicised approach is the idea that gendered acts, meanings and identities are not simply expressive of a natural body. They are performative in the sense that they only become intelligible *through* historically sedimented discursive practices. In turn, I will generally maintain the view that these discursive practices are structured primarily through laws, prohibitions and taboos which regulate the meaning of a body's acts, gestures and desires.

What Butler legitimately seeks to expose through this perspective is a 'surface politics of the body' (2008: 185) in which signifying practices tie certain types of body styles to an exclusive identification with either male or female bodies. Signifying practices, in this sense, constitute a system of

authorisation and punishment through which individuals become legitimised and humanised through the normative 'stylization of the body' (191). Gender is thus 'a performance with clearly punitive consequences' (190) for those who do not conform to the strict limits of these cultural articulations, and part of my explicit aim will be to further explore how punitive attitudes towards de-legitimised subjects emerge as contingent processes of identification.

The primary issue I will take up with Butler is that she confines her discussion of performativity to an analysis of discourse alone. Insofar as Butler's analysis focuses on the way the regulation of gender is a historically sedimented but unstable construct of discourse, she tends to present social relations purely as positions in language. In other words, she does not account for the way an 'individual's specific passage through the world [inflects] the meaning of what s/he sees and understands' (Vasterling 2001: 213), and is therefore a source of experiencing social relations which in certain respects exceeds discursive structures.

For Butler, discourse itself produces 'a domain of abject beings' (1993: 3) as an excluded otherness which is inherent to the structure of the hegemonic subject. My emphasis, on the other hand, will be on the way the discursively structured domains of subject positions are variably experienced by individuals through on-going psychological and embodied processes which exceed the constraints of discourse. Ultimately, what I am arguing in this respect is that in marginalising the *lived temporality* of signifying practices, Butler excludes an important aspect of how individuals respond reflexively to otherness. Her model, therefore, as Lois

McNay argues, is 'far from adequate in capturing the complex dynamics of social change' (1999: 178), and in understanding how the possibility of transforming discursive practices can emerge within immediate processes of signification.

It is in the context of theorising an experiential dimension which exceeds discursive intelligibility that I will turn to Bergson's concept of duration. In Bergson's oeuvre, duration designates a continuous endurance of the past within the present moment, such that the past accumulates efficaciously. In contrast to Butler, the past is presented here as a fundamental source of change rather than a sedimented effect which regulates the present. In other words, duration means that 'consciousness cannot go through the same state twice' (Bergson 1960: 6) because it is 'being built up each instant with its accumulated experience' (6). Consciousness, therefore, 'changes without ceasing' (6), and the endurance of the past 'prevents any state, although superficially identical with another, from ever repeating in its depth' (6).

As an adaptation of Bergson into the context of Butler's work, I will use this notion of duration and consciousness to define a 'psychical life unfolding beneath the symbols which conceal it' (Bergson 1960: 4). More specifically, I will extrapolate from Bergson's explicit insights a notion of qualitative experience within which an individual undergoes a continual process of change but which, in the everyday dynamics of sociality, is generally concealed by the performative effects of signifying practices and habitual acts. However, because this qualitative process constitutes a mode of experience which exceeds the discursive structures of

intelligibility, I will argue that it can potentially enable individuals to transform their relations to their subject positions.

What will be at stake in my Bergsonian engagement with Butler, however, is not simply an assertion of the creative potential of duration over the effects of sedimentation, but an attempt to understand the efficacy of duration in tension with the reiterative practices of performativity. In this sense, the type of questions I am asking from the outset are, for instance: given the sedimented effects of discourse how, specifically, can duration become a creative resource within the processes of re-signification?; or, conversely, given the creative potential of duration, what are the specific resistances to change which occur within social relations?

In this respect, it is important to emphasise that Bergson's work does not simply function as a celebration of change, and that my reading resists the tendency which sometimes infuses the secondary literature to simply present his work in terms of a set of rhetorical possibilities. Elizabeth Grosz, for instance, optimistically writes: Bergson's 'concept of the virtual may prove central in reinvigorating the concept of an open future by [...] linking it to the unpredictable, uncertain actualization of virtualities' (2005: 110). While I take no issue with this type of invocation as such, I would argue that such focus betrays a tendency to neglect the conditions of constraint which resist change. Furthermore, it is these kinds of rhetorical invocations which have led Joan Copjec to write: there is a 'contamination of modern thought by Bergsonian evolutionism [which] is so thorough that it often goes unnoticed and unquestioned' (58).

What Copjec is warning against here is ‘an apolitical (naive) optimism regarding the inevitability of change [which] gives the slip to the rigidifying structures of the social order’ (58), and I would argue that this is an important caveat insofar as it portrays an atmosphere which occasionally surrounds Bergson’s work. At any rate, Butler’s work demands that I account for rigidifying social structures, rather than simply invoking the idea of an open future, in order for my thesis to engage a *Bergsonian interpretation of performativity* rather than an outright rejection of Butler’s premises. Accordingly, then, my own reading of Bergson will emphasise the way each of his texts depict processes of repetition and ossification which resist the effects of duration. Indeed, against Copjec’s inference that Bergson naively asserts the inevitability of change as a political premise, I will argue that Bergson’s conceptions of habit and conceptual language can be seen as producing reifying and naturalising effects within the way we construct our identities and the way we interact socially. As Bergson himself writes, for instance: ‘perception, thought, language, all the individual and social activities of the mind, conspire to bring us face to face [...] with persons, including our own, which will become in our eyes objects and, at the same time, invariable substances’ (2002: 70).

As I intimated above, an important correlation emerges here between Bergson’s assertion of the solidifying effects of language and Butler’s argument that the repetition of gender norms work to ‘produce the effect of an internal core or substance’ (Butler 2008: 185). Indeed, extrapolating from Bergson’s own arguments, he can be seen to resonate

with Butler's claim that, in gender identity, 'the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe' (192).

However, what is significant about Bergson's own presentation of the substantialising effects of language is that our investment in them, as a formation of knowledge, can be understood as tied primarily to the possibilities of action which they enable. For instance, Bergson writes: 'We do not, in general, aim at knowing for the sake of knowing, but [...] to satisfy an interest [and to find out] what kind of action, step or attitude [an object] should suggest to us' (2002: 177). My own argument in this respect is that this view provides a more nuanced approach to understanding the dynamics of identity. This is because, I will argue, the self-coherence achieved by repeating gender norms does not stem primarily from an investment in the regulatory borders of intelligibility. Rather, within the immediate process of signification, the feeling of self-coherence stems from the orientation which the expectations of the norm provide for action.

The role of Bergson's sensory-motor body comes in here in an attempt to clarify how normative gender expectations become 'deeply entrenched and sedimented' (Butler 1988: 524), on an individual level, through the body's motor habits. By locating the naturalising effects of discursive regulation within the body's active processes, I will ground the psychic investment in gender in a process of habit which is 'lived and acted, rather than represented' (Bergson 2005a: 81). Following this, my point is that when the naturalising effects of habit are disrupted, and

gender recognition becomes actively represented, the psychic processes of intelligibility and identification which result are equally a response to the body's present moment of action.

This is to say that unstable investments in gender do not follow unilaterally from the structure of discursive injunctions, but develop as contingent relations to these injunctions which can potentially unfold in different directions. Because the primary investment in gender is a non-discursive attachment, unstable investments do not have ready-made responses in which, for instance, the hegemonic response to otherness is inherently one of abjection. Rather, the immediate dynamics of identity and exclusion develop variably depending upon the specific tensions towards action which an individual experiences within a scene of signification.

Part of what will be at stake in this perspective, then, is the claim that subversion primarily disrupts the temporal dynamics of an act rather than a sedimented attachment to meaning. In turn, the meaning processes by which an individual responds to this disruption aim at re-orientating the self within its field of action rather than actually confirming self-knowledge. Thus, thought of in terms of an immediate process of signification, Butler's claim that 'new conceptual horizons [can be] opened up by anomalous or subversive practices' (2004a: 14) cannot work simply by disrupting 'the internal fixity of the self' (2008: 183) in a way which challenges 'the meaning and necessity of [its] terms' (182). It is also dependant on fostering a field of action in which hegemonic subjects can orientate themselves so that they aspire to new conceptual horizons. In other

words, only under specific conditions of action can an individual's relation to the meaning and necessity of discursive regulation be transformed.

In the thesis I will explore these ideas by developing the relations which Bergson describes between consciousness, memory and the body in which, he argues, 'psychic life may be lived at different heights, now closer to action, now further removed from it' (2005a: 14). This means, for Bergson, that 'consciousness narrows or enlarges the development of its [memory] content' (166) depending upon how immediate or hesitant an action is in response to stimulus. Memory, thus, contextualises the present moment differently depending on the indeterminacy of action, and my extrapolation of this insight in relation to Butler is that the recognition of gender norms varies according to this relation between memory and action. In other words, specific ways in which indeterminacy unfolds allow the conscious representation of gender to open up the conceptual content of identity to past experience in different ways.

In short, my argument here is that memory contingently inflects the intelligible relation between self and other with individual nuances, of varying degrees of complexity, depending upon the body's specific tension towards action. I will argue, on the one hand, that because the conscious representation of an act tends to be 'diminished whenever a stable habit has been formed' (Bergson 2005a: 45), self-knowledge tends towards an unreflective identification with discourse. However, when habits are interrupted by subversive repetitions, identity processes become more complex because the tension towards action is rendered indeterminate. Memory is therefore allowed to inflect the discursive domain of intelligibility

with a greater degree of personal context, and which exceeds the shared structures of the norm in a way which facilitates variable interpretations of discursive borders.

Finally, in order to explore different ways in which the tension of action can unfold I will sketch out a theory of emotion, which I will develop partly from Bergson's theory of affection and his conception of the brain and nervous system in *Matter and Memory*, but also from Yaak Panksepp's neurological research into the bodily basis of emotion. Drawing from these references, I will define emotion in terms of an anticipatory feeling of indeterminacy which spontaneously motivates action, and thereby produces different intensities of investment.

In this respect, Bergson's work already contains the basis of conceiving how 'indetermination [...] is implied in the structure of the nervous system' (Bergson 2005a: 33), and how affection can be conceived as 'consciousness [...] in the form of a feeling' (18) which acts as a motivating force during spontaneous actions. However, I will use Panksepp as a means to develop such principles in the light of modern neurological research. This is because Panksepp's work contains two key factors which make it particularly apt for such an engagement.

Firstly, his major work on this subject, *Affective Neuroscience*, brings together a vast amount of research which had formerly remained scattered and relatively unconnected. It thus stands as a highly comprehensive neurological study of emotion. Secondly, while Panksepp analyses an array of rigorous objective data drawn from behavioural neuroscience and other biological and psychological disciplines, he also

puts 'a new twist on the evidence' (Panksepp 1998: 6) which aligns him closely with Bergson. Specifically, he seeks to reverse a dominant trend in behavioural biology which treats organisms like 'passive reflex machines' (38), and which has also tended to treat human emotion in a similar fashion. Against this convention, Panksepp argues parallel to Bergson that the conscious feeling which accompanies the neural state of emotion is the vital element of its motivating force. His interpretation of the neurological evidence thus offers a solid conceptual basis by which to unite him with Bergson's views on consciousness and the brain, while his in-depth study of emotion provides a way to explore the embodied dynamics of performativity and subversion more thoroughly than Bergson's work alone would permit.

Ultimately, my aim is to explore the persistence and instabilities of gender performativity in terms of immediate processes of action, expanding the object of analysis beyond discourse while maintaining Butler's overall perspective of identity as a regulated signifying effect. This will, in the final analysis, produce an image of performativity which is quite different from that which resides in Butler's own texts. In turn, it will produce an application of Bergson's work which is equally different from his own philosophical intentions. However, I believe my adaptation of these two thinkers will enable a more comprehensive view of temporally unfolding processes of identity, and therefore the potential to transform them.

CHAPTER ONE: THE THEORETICAL LIMITS OF PERFORMATIVITY

Against the current of Butler's own work, my approach to gender performativity will attempt to understand the regulated processes of signification in terms of a lived, embodied experience which exceeds discourse. That is, I maintain Butler's definition of *gender* as a discursive 'apparatus of production' (2008: 10) which regulates the social intelligibility of sexed bodies and identities. However, my emphasis on the actual process of *performativity* shifts away from Butler's purely discursive definition as 'that power of discourse to produce effects through iteration' (1993: 20), and moves towards understanding the actual lived process of repeating.²

What I want to clarify in these introductory remarks to this chapter is the particular strength of Butler's purely discursive approach to understanding the subject, and the precise points at which I believe it becomes necessary to theorise performativity from the perspective of

² My move away from Butler's discursive definition of the subject towards a notion of lived experience should be distinguished from a common reservation towards Butler's work, which has been influentially voiced by Nancy Fraser and concerns the 'deeply antihumanist' (1995a: 67) language through which Butler presents her ideas. Fraser writes:

This idiom is far enough removed from our everyday ways of thinking about ourselves to require some justification. Why should we use such a self-distancing idiom? What are its theoretical advantages (and disadvantages)? What is its likely political impact? (67).

In response to this, I would agree with Butler that her antihumanist language is theoretically useful precisely because 'the received meanings that we have of gender are so entrenched in our everyday way of talking' (Butler 2001a: 23). Thus, alternative modes of language are necessary, on the one hand, to provide a distance necessary to critique everyday meanings. On the other hand, if that critique was only made in an everyday idiom 'we would, to some extent, be reaffirming the very language that we seek to subject to critical scrutiny (23). In this way, as I will clarify below, I support Butler's "self-distancing idiom" insofar as it provides a unique means of critique, but take issue with the way this idiom tends to rigidify into an abstract view of the self.

experience. This will involve a more detailed overview of the political strategy which Butler develops, and the theoretical implications which her deconstructive work has for understanding her invocation of subversive repetition.

An important part of what gender performativity means for Butler is that, because signifying acts are part of a 'reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names' (1993: 2), an individual cannot be thought of as the author or initiator of their gendered acts. From a political standpoint, part of what Butler legitimately seeks to emphasise here is that 'there is no possibility of agency or reality outside of the discursive practices that give those terms the intelligibility that they have' (2008: 202). Agency, in this way, is 'not a relation of external opposition to power' (1993: 15) because the 'subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms' (15).

The political salience of this point is the insight that positions of resistance are already radically co-opted and constrained by the terms of intelligibility which must be taken up in order to become subjects. I believe this argument is important, from a feminist perspective for instance, because it foregrounds that 'the ways in which women are said to "know" or "be known" are already orchestrated by power precisely at the moment in which the terms of "acceptable" categorization are instituted' (2004: 215). Thus, to assume a politics which insists upon a coherent identity as

its point of departure precludes a consideration of how that identity is constituted by the very power formations it resists.³

Two objectives follow from this rejection of stable identity positions, each of which has the same purpose of producing a politics which takes place as a struggle to expose and de-naturalise the effects of signification. Firstly, there is the invocation of subversive repetition, as a social practice, which aims to assist 'a radical resignification of the symbolic domain [by] deviating the citational chain' (Butler 1993: 22). In this strategy there is no need to assert a position of identity because, Butler argues, the very 'destabilizing [of] substantive [hegemonic] identity' (2008: 200) would have the effect of 'proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculine domination and compulsory heterosexuality' (193).

Secondly, there is a strategy of deconstructive analysis which 'asks after the conditions of [...] emergence and operation' (1993: 7) through

³ For Butler, the 'internal paradox' (2008: 203) of such a politics is that it unreflectively 'presumes, fixes, and constrains the very "subjects" that it hopes to represent and liberate' (203). Moreover, identity politics tends to enact a 'false uniformity' (1993: 116) on its protagonists which can only consolidate its identity through a set of exclusions. In its worse cases, therefore, 'a policing of identity takes the place of a politics in which identity works dynamically in the service of a broader cultural struggle' (117), and 'the strategies of abjection wielded through and by hegemonic subject-positions [...] come to structure and contain the articulatory struggles of those in subordinate or erased positionalities' (112).

This definition of identity politics, and Butler's correlative focus on negativity and exclusion as the ground of politics, commonly raises concerns that she limits the political field too harshly. Fraser, for instance, argues that it 'surrenders the normative moment' (1995a: 69) by which individuals find common ground in order to rally effective activism. Likewise, Kathy Dow-Magnus suggests that a 'negative notion of agency [...] fails to express the full range of possibilities for subjective agency. Butler underestimates the power of subjects to work together to determine their lives and the social conditions that structure their existence' (83).

For Fraser and Magnus: 'Feminists need both deconstruction and reconstruction' (Fraser 1995a: 71) and they assert, moreover, that 'we do not need to view these two positions as antithetical' (Magnus: 81). Indeed, Butler herself has similarly qualified her work with the notion of 'a double movement' in which political groups 'provisionally [...] institute an identity [but] at the same time open the category as cite of permanent political contest' (1993: 222).

Ultimately, what is at stake here is understanding how identity can be invoked as a rallying point without it rigidifying into a violent system of exclusion, and I will argue in the second section of this chapter that it is necessary to theorise a sense of reflexivity in order to account for this possibility.

which subject positions are produced. Rather than assuming a politics on behalf of an individual or group who is thought to simply will an action, this strategy interrogates the discursive 'matrix through which all willing first becomes possible' (7). It aims, in this way, at 'tracing the lines in which identification is implicated in what it excludes' (119), and exposing the complex insidious workings and dissimulations which surround political struggles.

My purpose in distinguishing these two strategies here is to make the argument that they represent divergent aspects of Butler's work which, in effect, require different frameworks of understanding in order to support their aims. In turn, what I am suggesting is that, insofar as these different requirements are not recognised by Butler, the deconstructive strategy overshadows and tacitly provides the model for the way gender regulation works both within real events of subversion, and in signifying processes more generally. Indeed, while subversive repetition is Butler's invocation for agency within the social dimension of gendered politics, most of her actual work takes the form of deconstruction, and thereby hampers a realistic theoretical account of subversion.

I would contend that deconstruction is a highly cogent method of thinking through issues of discursive constitution and gender hegemony, and is particularly effective in Butler's analysis of the way legal structures coerce and limit the kind of political struggles available to subjects.⁴ Thus,

⁴ A good example of how Butler demonstrates the insidious problems of identity politics – and, more generally, of forming any type of political critique – is her analysis of the controversies surrounding the legality of gay marriage. She argues that the way the politics of this issue is constituted 'demands that we take a stand, for or against gay marriage' (2004: 107). However, while Butler does not oppose such a political struggle as

my argument that Butler requires a notion of lived, embodied experience does not impinge on this aspect of her work, since in these contexts discourse *can* be analysed purely for its structural exclusions and implications. However, the problem of ‘assisting a radical resignification’ (22) is quite different from analysing the implicit structures of discourse because it involves active confrontations and ongoing temporal experiences.

Butler’s sole emphasis on discursive constitution becomes problematic in this context; but this is not because it requires the subject who resists hegemony to presume a self-present, pre-discursive identity in order to ground the intentions of a subversive act. Rather, it becomes problematic because it misses the need to demonstrate how the discursive effects of subversion are reflexively experienced *by hegemonic subjects*, and therefore does not inquire into the experiential conditions which make subversion effective. From this perspective, subversion is not simply a matter of changing the way discourse signifies, but of changing the way a psychic economy relates to discourse.

such, she brings into focus how ‘the sexual field is forcibly constricted by accepting those terms’ (107).

Deconstructing the terms of this debate reveals, for Butler, how closely ‘sexuality is already thought of in terms of marriage and marriage is already thought of in terms of legitimacy’ (106). Thus, by shifting the claims for sexual legitimacy onto an argument about who will be legitimately included in the norm of marriage, the debate ‘unwittingly performs’ (108) a foreclosure which narrows the terms by which sexuality itself can be legitimised. From within these narrowed terms, then, ‘new hierarchies emerge in public discourse [which] produce tacit distinctions among forms of illegitimacy’ (106). For instance, it makes gay partnerships which seek marriage ‘eligible for future legitimacy’ (106) while leaving others outside the struggle for legitimisation.

From this perspective, Butler argues, ‘the proposition that marriage should become the only way to sanction or legitimate sexuality is unacceptably conservative’ (109). However, her point is not to oppose the struggle for gay marriage, but to show how the ‘urgency to stake a political claim’ (108) can lead to a further naturalisation of the very oppressive options which are resisted.

In this respect, one of the vital points where Butler's deconstructive method becomes problematic is in the limitation she places on theorising the body as an active influence within contingent signifying processes. This will be the subject of the first section of this chapter, where I will argue that deconstruction is an important reading method insofar as it exposes the regulatory principles which tacitly inform biological research into the body. However, it also commits Butler to an abstract account of the body in relation to performative acts.

In this light, part of my aim in section one will be to present the case that understanding performativity and subversion, as immediate social processes, benefits from Bergson's sensory-motor understanding of the body. While Butler's deconstructive perspective validly aims to expose the exclusions and de-legitimisations which take place through epistemological frameworks for understanding the body, it does not consider how the body's intentional relation to its environment forms part of the dynamics of any signifying event. What I want to account for is an understanding of social regulation in which gender norms and subversive repetitions work directly upon the body's expectations and responsiveness, and provides a contingent basis for the reflexivity of signifying acts which is dependent on specific tensions towards action. This section, then, will lay out the rationale for this argument in terms of a response to Butler's own theorisation of the body.

Following this, my second section in this chapter will explore the need to account for a flexible, contingently specific experience of subject positions through the notion of a self which Bergson can provide.

Focussing primarily on the subject's experiential relation to otherness, I will argue that Butler's early account of abjection as a discursive structure does not theorise the self-reflexive distance from discursive intelligibility necessary to enable the possibility of its transformation. I will also show how Butler's later work does actually acknowledge the need to theorise the psychic processes of the self, as distinct from the subject, and attempts to do this through Hegel's notion of recognition. However, I will argue that this perspective still does not provide enough variability for the way the other can be experienced in order to account for the potential effectiveness of subversion.

Aside from her adaptation of Hegelian recognition, Butler has also attempted to theorise the psyche through a psychoanalytic notion of the unconscious. This aspect of her work will be the subject of my final section, particularly insofar as it provides a model to understand how hegemonic subjects invest in gender norms.

Butler's aim is to defend her work from accusations of behaviourism by demonstrating that the unconscious exceeds and resists the interpellation of discourse. However, as I will argue in relation to her idea of gender melancholy, her model of the unconscious still remains too heavily modelled on her understanding of discursive structures. It thus problematically excludes individually contingent motivations for gender investment and, again, does not theorise the conditions and variability of lived experience necessary to analyse the effectiveness of subversive repetition as a political strategy of social transformation.

The Materiality of the Body.

In her work on performativity, one of Butler's most general concerns is to expose a 'surface politics of the body' (2008: 184) in which a series of laws, prohibitions and taboos discursively regulate the social intelligibility of the body's signifying meaning. These regulatory structures enforce 'the restriction of gender within [a] binary pair' (30), whereby the 'unifying principle of the embodied self [is maintained] over and against an "opposite sex" whose structure is presumed to maintain a parallel but oppositional internal coherence' (30). Moreover, this unifying principle is 'structured along matrices of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality' (198) which suppress and, at its worst dehumanise, those who do not perform their gender within the bounds of its regulation.

For Butler, this regulatory principle tacitly guides epistemological research into the body, particularly, but not restricted to, research related to the biological sciences. Such knowledge forms are, she argues, driven by a 'desire to determine sex once and for all' (150), and determine it through 'the construction of the clear and univocal identities and positions of sexed bodies with respect to each other' (150). In this way, the very 'category of "sex" is, from the start, normative' (Butler 1993: 1). It functions as 'an ideal construct' (1) which regulates in advance the framework in which research is undertaken. Sexual difference, as it is discovered and presented through such research, is therefore 'never simply a function of

material differences' (1) because such differentiation is always 'in some way both marked and formed by discursive practices' (1).

Butler's work, then, demands that the body be viewed in terms of the discursive apparatus which both enable and regulate our understanding of it, and that such apparatus be deconstructed in order to expose its implicit normativity. While I generally endorse the politicised perspective this understanding of the body provides, a contention of this project is that, in relation to the lived processes of performativity, Butler's purely deconstructive approach to the body occludes important aspects of the body's role in signifying acts. My aim in this respect is to use Bergson's sensory-motor understanding of the body in order to support and develop Butler's arguments concerning the discursive regulation of the body.

In this sense, my thesis does not encroach upon Butler's emphatic critique of aspects of biological science which continue to determine the category of sex 'within the framework of reproductive sexuality' (2008: 150). However, because I approach the body in terms of its processes rather than as a signifying surface, my project still crosses the stringent requirements which Butler's deconstructive method places on theorising the body. It is necessary in this section, therefore, to negotiate the relation between my own approach to the body and Butler's deconstructive methodology, and to justify my approach within the broader context of gender regulation.

In doing this I will, firstly, clarify some of the confusion which surrounds the difficulty of reading Butler's comments on the body. This is to say, I will determine more precisely how Butler understands the

relationship between discourse and the body, while illuminating the benefits and limitations of this approach. What I aim to show is that Butler's deconstructive method alone is not sufficient for a politics of the body. It also requires positive statements to be made about the body's nature, both in order to reformulate and expand the way the body is signified within epistemological and social contexts, and to further explore the means by which gender is regulated.

In respect to this latter point – which is the direction my thesis aims towards – this section's focal point will be to highlight how Butler's analysis of the body solely in terms of its visual signifying surface leads to an abstract account of the body's role in signifying practices. Specifically, this perspective omits a consideration of how the body's intentional relation towards its social environment contingently influences the way individuals interpret signifying events. At the end of the section, then, I will begin clarifying how Bergson's sensory-motor framework for understanding the relation between the body and consciousness can compensate for this omission.

Firstly, however, the question needs to be resolved of how Butler's notion of the body should be understood, particularly insofar as her purely deconstructive approach to biology has led critics such as Maxine Sheets-Johnstone to accuse Butler of having 'spirited-away' (155) the body. On a similar note, Carrie Hull has also written that 'Butler [...] makes the Hegelian error of asserting that the object itself is nothing but what discourse claims of it' (24). However, against the implication of such critiques, it must be insisted that Butler herself does not want to deny the

body a “natural” existence as such, but only to emphasise that the materiality of the body can only be made intelligible *through* discourse. Indeed, in *Bodies That Matter*, materiality means for Butler the way the body is forcibly brought into intelligibility through discursive production. In this sense, ‘to claim that discourse is formative [of the body] is not to claim that it originates, causes, or exhaustively composes [it]’ (Butler 1993: 10), as Hull and Sheets-Johnstone suggest. Rather, it is to claim that there can be ‘no reference to a pure body [which is not] always to some degree performative’ (10, 11).⁵

⁵ Sheets-Johnstone’s critique of Butler is particularly apt in demonstrating some of the subtle issues involved in Butler’s relation to biology, specifically in providing insight into the way tendencies to read Butler as denying the body a biological status confounds the very problematic which Butler’s work actually aims to expose. While I am in sympathy with Sheets-Johnstone’s most general position, which ‘urges [...] an acknowledgement and closer examination of biology [within the context of constructionist theories]’ (155), her reading of Butler’s idea of the body as ‘an immaculate linguistic conception’ (155) is slightly distorted.

Butler insists, rather, that “the point [in deconstruction] has never been that “everything is discursively constructed”” (1993: 8) but only that discourse creates the appearance of a stable referent through a set of exclusions which limit the realm of intelligibility. In this sense, her attitude towards biology is not one which denies the body its complexity as a biological entity as such, but one which emphasises that scientific research into biological sex also frames its object through sets of exclusions. Butler writes, for instance, that it is ‘possible to concede and affirm an array of “materialities” that pertain to the body’ (66), and cites ‘the domains of biology, anatomy, physiology [and] hormonal and chemical composition’ (66) as examples. However, the ‘undeniability of these “materialities” in no way implies what it means to affirm them [or] what interpretive matrices condition, enable and limit [those affirmations]’ (67). In other words, descriptive accounts of a biological object always occur within a history of discursive arrangements of power which affect the way those objects are interpreted and circulated as knowledge. Butler’s critical focus emerges, then, in relation to the implicit normative intentions of such power relations, which are disavowed when materialities are presented as purely objective facts.

Sheets-Johnstone’s own approach to biology could be viewed as problematic for precisely this reason. For instance, in response to what she sees as Butler’s denial that the body has an evolutionary history in favour of the body as ‘a mere synecdoche for a social system’ (155), she writes: ‘the evolutionary body [...] does not stand for, refer, or function as a trope in any way’ (155), and has ‘an established identity [...] that bind us to certain corporeal acts, dispositions, and possibilities’ (155). Here, then, there is a claim that evolutionary science can begin with ‘descriptive accounts of what is actually there’ (155) without considering how such descriptions are always already framed by the effects of discursive power relations.

The problem I want to outline here is that of reading Butler’s work as an ontological claim about the body which implies, in Butler’s words, that ‘perhaps I really thought that words alone had the power to craft bodies from their own linguistic substance’ (1993: x). Once Sheets-Johnstone makes this assumption, then her

When Butler stresses that the body is always and only a discursive construction, she is attempting to expose the moments when ‘material positivities appear [to be] *outside* discourse and power, as its incontestable referents, its transcendental signifieds’ (35). Indeed, what Butler is most concerned to convey in her emphasis on the discursive production of the body is that power is most effective when its construction is dissimulated, and ideas concerning the sexed nature of the body are made to seem like a natural given. If discourse always creates an ‘object domain, a field of intelligibility’ (35) through exclusion and delimitation, then, it is when this object domain comes to be seen as a ‘taken-for-granted ontology’ (35) that power is at its most effective and dangerous.

In this sense, Butler does not legitimate Hull’s accusation that the body is ‘nothing but what discourse claims of it’ (24). Indeed, part of Butler’s point concerning the discursive production of the body is that ‘bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is compelled’ (Butler 1993: 2), and the way the “real” body exceeds its discursive constitution and returns to ‘haunt the field of intelligible bodily life’ (54) is an important aspect of Butler’s notion of resistance. Thus, while Butler claims that discourse and materiality are ‘fully embedded in each

opposition to this misattributed premise over-shadows Butler’s more salient cautionary arguments about the very possibility of making ontological claims about the body.

As a rejoinder to these kind of divisive debates, I would argue that what is most valuable about Butler’s politicised theory of the body is that it foregoes questions of what *is* a *real* gendered body or identity, asking instead *how* an assumption of an ontological status becomes constituted, and through such questions ‘tracing the lines in which identification is implicated in what it excludes’ (1993: 119). As Butler has commented in interview:

My work has always been undertaken with the aim to expand and enhance a field of possibilities for gendered life. My earlier emphasis on denaturalization was not so much an opposition to nature as it was an invocation of nature as a way of setting necessary limits on gendered life (1998b: 277).

other' (69), she also recognises they are 'never fully collapsed into one another' (69).

The confusion arises, I think, from the particular way Butler conceives this "real" body as an 'elusive referent' (1193: 90) which is irreducible to language. In her deconstructive framework, this irreducibility should not be thought of as 'an ontological thereness' (8) which can, potentially, be entirely disclosed by discursive means. Rather, the 'referent persists only as a kind of absence or loss, that which language does not capture' (67), and that which 'cannot be wholly fixed or defined by the reiterative labor of [the] norm' (10). The body itself constitutes only 'that which escapes or exceeds the norm' (10), but which 'takes its place in language as an insistent call or demand' (67) which language 'repeatedly' (67) attempts to capture but inevitably fails. As an elusive referent for discursive construction, then, the body represents for Butler only the 'gaps and fissures [which] are opened up as the constitutive instabilities of such constructions' (10), but not positive attributes or values. As a disruptive effect of what cannot be contained within discursive definitions, these gaps and fissures haunt the domain of intelligibility and secure for Butler the idea that discursive construction 'is itself a temporal process which operates through the [unstable] reiteration of norms' (10).

Again, this not a denial of the body as such but an attempt to retain focus on the 'constitutive force of exclusion [and] erasure' (8) in any given signifying process. It emphasises that these constitutive exclusions 'can only be thought – when [they] can – in relation to that discourse, at and as its most tenuous border' (8). The political imperative of Butler's

deconstructive approach is, in this way, not a naming process which would attempt to fill the gaps and fissures in discursive constitutions. This would, for her, only lead to new constitutive exclusions. Rather, it is an attempt to 'understand how what has been foreclosed or banished from the proper domain of "sex" [...] might be produced as a troubling return' (23) which provides the 'deconstituting possibility [of putting] the norms of "sex" into a potentially productive crisis' (10). It advocates, then, a 'preservation of the outside, [as] the site where discourse meets its limits, [whereby] the opacity of what is not included [...] acts as a disruptive site of linguistic impropriety and unrepresentability' (53).

What this means, in effect, is that the excesses of discursive regulation 'cannot be translated into anything more specific for Butler because a positive description of material reality would become a statement of metaphysical primacy' (Hull: 26). In this sense, Butler's deconstructive approach remains exemplary in its aim of examining the conditions of statements concerning the body for implicit exclusions and regulatory ideals. However, taken as a singular method of theorising the body it becomes a highly limiting, even counter-productive, strategy. In other words, political work on the body also requires positive conceptions which produce new ways in which the body becomes intelligible, and therefore actively works to counter-act hegemonic models.

While such work obviously cannot be undertaken within the framework of Butler's deconstructive methodology, I would argue that it can be a vital resource in her broader political aim of 'proliferating gender configurations' (Butler 2008: 193). My concern with Butler's work, then, is

not with the value of deconstruction in and of itself, but with the tendency of that framework to be interpreted or used rigidly. Indeed, Butler's insistence on the sedimented historicity of discourse sometimes attempts to undermine in advance the potential to engage productive dialogues with biology, and theories of materiality more generally. For instance, after a discussion of Plato's association of matter with a denigration of women in *Bodies That Matter*, she writes: 'to invoke matter is to invoke a sedimented history of sexual hierarchy and sexual erasures which should surely be an *object* of feminist inquiry, but would be quite problematic as a *ground* of feminist theory' (49).

This argument seems to miss Butler's own assertion that the most important aspect of her deconstructive approach is to repeat signifying conventions subversively, and thereby to de-naturalise the effects of their sedimented history. As she writes, for instance: 'To deconstruct the concept of matter or that of bodies is not to negate or refuse either term [...] but to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of power' (1995a: 51). In this sense, to engage in new theories of matter or the body, which produce new types of contextual associations, also provides a way in which hegemony can be displaced and re-signified. To foreclose in advance the possibility that a theory of matter, or biological investigations into the body, might have positive repercussions is to deny their potential for 'deviating the citational chain [and therefore changing] the very meaning of what counts as a valued and valuable body' (Butler 1993: 22).

My argument in this respect is that while theories about the body should be provisional and open-ended – and interminably subject to deconstruction after the fact – they are still necessary in order to subvert current ways of thinking. Moreover, it is important to recognise that not all statements about the body make ontological claims in the same way. Some, for instance, can be made to subvert a prior claim to ontology, others might be necessary to relieve a suffering. As Susan Bordo notes, ‘determining whether a particular act or stance is resistant or subversive’ (1995: 292) cannot be achieved in advance. It ‘requires an examination of its practical, historical, [and] institutional reverberations’ (292).

Introduction to the Sensory-Motor Body:

In the context of this thesis, what is actually at stake is not primarily an assertion of the value of theorising a subversive ontology of the body. It is a demonstration of how an understanding of the body’s processes can provide a different view of the temporality of repetition. When Butler herself proposes that the body exceeds its significations she has in mind a temporal instability – a ‘mode of becoming’ (Butler 2004: 217) – which is, to a large extent, conceived in terms of its visual signifying surface. Thus, because bodies are always ‘aging, altering shape, altering signification – depending on their interactions’ (217), these visual and contextual vicissitudes of the body imply that it can ‘occupy the norm in a myriad of ways, exceed the norm, rework the norm, and expose realities to which we thought we were confined as open to transformation’ (217).

While I find no fault with this argument as such, this perspective leads to a limited view of how the body relates to its discursive regulation. In terms of the lived processes of signification, the body is only thought of by Butler as an object of knowledge, whereby this knowledge constitutes the body as 'a surface whose permeability is politically regulated' (Butler 2008: 189). Even though her point, ultimately, is that the body itself remains an 'elusive referent' (1993: 90) for its significations, and therefore 'haunt[s] the field of intelligible bodily life' (54), her understanding of the body itself remains limited to the signifying effects of its visual surface.

My question is whether this perspective exhausts the options of how the body's relation to performativity can be usefully understood. Confining the theorisation of the body to its surface signification may function well, from a theoretical perspective, as strategy which exposes the insidious workings of those signifying practices. However, it simultaneously excludes the way the body's processes are always responding to the relations it encounters in the world, and thereby influences the way individuals experience their acts of signification.

As I have intimated already, my aim in this respect is to think of the body in terms of its 'sensori-motor processes' (Bergson 2005a: 42), and to place this way of understanding at the centre of performative acts. Viewed from Butler's deconstructive perspective it could be argued this is a 'reference to a pure body' (1993: 10) which is thought to be prior to the constituting effects of discourse. Nonetheless, in the context of my engagement with Butler, what it means to affirm the body as a sensory-motor system does not imply a problematic assertion of a gendered

ontology, or a view of the body which would be radically free of power formations. It thus avoids the main critical concerns of Butler's work.

What it beneficially provides is a way of understanding *how* the body itself can be contingently formed by the power relations it encounters, and some of the general processes it goes through during its social encounters. As far as the body is concerned, Butler's prioritisation of discourse as an object of analysis commits her to an abstract appraisal of these processes. Indeed, because she only conceives the body through the way its visual outline signifies meaning effects, its socio-historical formation is conceived only in terms of the 'construction of stable *bodily contours*' (2008: 180; my italics).

In effect, everything plays out for Butler on the level of signifying effects. Discourse constrains the intelligibility of the body's visual surface, and these constraints compel the repetition of such signifying effects. What this omits is a consideration of how the body itself tends to undergo physiological transformation due to the formative influence of its physical interactions. More specifically, I want to suggest that the enforced repetition of the body's literal acts produce habituated body attitudes which, eventually, incline the body towards naturalised repetitions.⁶

⁶ The idea that performativity can be explained through habit has also been suggested by Shannon Sullivan. She uses John Dewey's assertion that 'individual habits are formed under conditions set by cultural configurations that precede the individual' (Sullivan: 28) to suggest an explanation of how we 'stylize our being in accord to those norms' (32). The idea of habit, she argues, 'allows us to understand Butler's claim that performances constitute our bodily selves in a "deep" and thorough going way' (31). Habits are formed which 'are familiar and comfortable to us because they *are* us' (32), and this familiarity is what grounds our attachments to broader discursive structures of power.

The reason why Butler herself does not consider such an explanation of performativity is evidenced in *Excitable Speech* by her critique of Pierre Bourdieu, whose concept of habitus has certain similarities to Sullivan's portrayal of Dewey. In particular, while both provide a sense of how socio-historical conditions form the body, there is also an implication that the formation of the body is constitutive of an individual's being: 'What

In order to better understand the lived process of repetition it becomes necessary, I would argue, to move beyond the idea of the body as a signifying surface and towards that of the body as an open material system. Bergson's sensory-motor understanding of the body, described in terms of the nervous system, can be understood as such a model insofar as it is said that a body 'borrows its physical properties from the relations which it maintains with all others' (Bergson 2005a: 24). In such a perspective, an individual body 'owes each of its determinations, and, consequently, its very existence, to the place it occupies in the universe as a whole' (24). Therefore, insofar as the relations between bodies are conditioned by the pre-established constraints of power, this view is capable of maintaining a correlation between the body and discursive injunctions. What it implies in distinction from Butler, however, is that the basis of naturalising gender norms is a process by which the body itself learns how to act in its environment.

In Bergson's relational understanding of the body, the nervous system is described as a 'conductor [for] transmitting, sending back or inhibiting [material] movement' (45) which is 'interposed between the objects which affect my body and those which I can influence' (44, 45).

is "learned by the body" is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something one is' (Bourdieu: 73).

For Butler, this formulation is *too* constitutive of the body. It results in a model in which the habitus simply 'generates *dispositions* which "incline" the social subject to act in relative conformity' (Butler 1997b: 155), but provides no indication of how resistance is possible. Her chief worry is the suggestion that 'the body does not merely act in accordance with certain regularised or ritualised practices [but rather] *is* this sedimented ritual activity' (154). Such a perspective 'presupposes [...] that this forming is effective' (156), and therefore misses both the regulatory force of interpellation and the possibility of its failure.

My own formulation of habit will, like Sullivan and Bourdieu, look to explain the sedimentation of social practices. However, in contrast, I will also place an emphasis on the susceptibility of habit to be interrupted and, as such, account for the instability of power which Butler insists upon.

Every event which is sensed in the world constitutes, for Bergson, a kind of virtual action upon the body which, in turn, 'provokes [...] movements, at least nascent, whereby we adapt ourselves to it' (84). In short, the function of the nervous system is to receive the stimulus which acts upon the body and 'convert it into practical deeds' (44).

In my use of Bergson, this perspective provides an alternative way to demonstrate how the bodies of hegemonic subjects naturalise gender norms. Through it, I will speculate upon how the discursive 'stylization of the body' (Butler 2008: 191) becomes incorporated into habituated action tendencies of individuals.

Important here is the idea that, as the relationship between particular sensory impressions and particular movements of the body are repeated, the association between them becomes consolidated and 'stored up in a mechanism [within the brain]' (Bergson 2005a: 80). This constitutes a process by which the body organises together the visual outline of a gendered body with a set of motor expectations for how that body should act, and a set of motor responses by which it adapts to its gendered others. Thus, when a habit has been formed, 'the body responds to a perception that recurs by a movement or attitude which has become automatic' (237). In this way, the body itself becomes familiarised with the social expectations of gender *through* its motor habits, and the tendency to repeat these norms unreflectively provides a basis to understand how individuals sediment the social expectations of gender.

This perspective has implications for exploring how gender norms come to be 'perform[ed] in the mode of belief' (Butler 2008: 192), and how

the effects of subversive de-naturalisation are reflexively experienced by hegemonic subjects. Because habit is 'lived and acted, rather than represented' (Bergson 2005a: 81) its performance takes place in conformity with, but in excess of, signifying meaning. Indeed, the principle I will work from is that habit generates a tendency to repeat signifying norms unreflectively. It thus operates beneath the level of discursive meaning because 'a movement is learned when the body has been made to understand it' (112). Thus, because this learning involves setting up motor mechanisms which 'concern action, and action alone' (33), they operate through an entirely different logic to discourse and 'remain absolutely foreign to the process of representation' (33).

This is not to say that discursive structures have no role in acts of repetition, but that I will base lived processes of performativity on a principle of action. While I will argue that habit preserves gender norms in the form of motor mechanisms that are repeated inattentively, for Bergson the '*past survives under two distinct forms*' (78). In addition to motor habit, there are also '*independent recollections*' (78) which I will use to theorise the way gender is consciously represented.

In this respect, part of what will be at stake in my re-theorising of the body will be using the relation it has with memory to explore the immediate dynamics of meaning processes. As Bergson puts it: 'intellectual life rests [...] upon the sensori-motor functions' (175). This is not only because it is through the body that consciousness 'inserts itself into the present [moment of] reality' (175), but also because the manner in which individual memories inflect the present moment is, in an important

way, both invoked and limited by the body's tension towards action. Indeed, 'consciousness narrows or enlarges the development of its [memory] content' (166) depending upon the immediacy or hesitation of action.

As I will discuss further in my following sections, this facilitates a more nuanced image of gender intelligibility and investment than Butler's model. Similarly, I will argue that habit enables a socially naturalised and regulated tendency of gender repetition which can be destabilised by a 'failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition' (Butler 2008: 192). However, rather than defining the effect of this subversion in terms of the incoherence of gender intelligibility, I will focus on the way it renders the immediate action tendencies of hegemonic subjects indeterminate. As such, I will explore the way subversion initiates a series of variable psycho-physical responses by which individuals adapt indeterminacy.

To my mind, the relation between consciousness and the body which Bergson describes is an important part of the temporal dynamics of a signifying act, and one which requires a re-examination of Butler's work on performativity. It enables a more complete demonstration of how an individual's psychic economy relates to the discursive structures of signification. It can thus examine more closely how such an economy changes in response to subversion and can, potentially, lead to transformations in the social practices of signification itself.

In the following sections of this chapter I will explore in more detail the way Butler herself conceives the dynamics of intelligibility and gender investment, and introduce more explicitly how I am using Bergson's

notions of the body and consciousness to respond to the problems I find in these conceptions. What it remains to reiterate here is that Butler's deconstructive strategy overshadows the need to demonstrate how the body responds to signifying events, and how the body's responsiveness affects processes of conscious identification. In effect, Butler can demonstrate only how 'a body shows [...] its cultural signification[s]' (2008: 192) *through the signifying effects of its acts*, but not the dynamics of the act itself as it temporally unfolds in relation to its social environment. In the following section I will continue the general critical perspective that Butler provides only an abstract view of signifying acts which excludes its lived temporal dynamics, only in relation to her theorisation of the subject, the self, and the other rather than the body.

The Subject and the Self.

As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, Butler's paradigm usefully moves political analysis back a step to the discursive 'matrix through which all willing first becomes possible' (1993: 7). However, the disadvantage which follows from this perspective is that Butler is led to a view of signification which is abstracted from the real processes of experience, and this is particularly problematic for her strategy of subversive repetition. For Butler, the protagonist of performativity is the subject which, 'rather than [being] identified with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a place holder, a structure in

formation' (1997a: 10). From this perspective, 'it makes little sense to treat "the individual" as an intelligible term if individuals are said to acquire their intelligibility [only] by becoming subjects (11). However, in contradiction to this, my argument is that it is necessary to theorise a notion of an individual self, who reflexively experiences their subject positions, in order to understand the way these subject positions become sedimented and how they can be transformed.

In order to further justify this claim I will, in this section, explore this aspect of gender performativity in relation to prominent critiques of Butler's work, and some of the directions she has developed in response to these critiques. This will help clarify the reasons why the complementary theory of self-reflexivity I will offer in this thesis is necessary. I will also outline along the way some of the specific directions this theory will take in relation to my use of Bergson's work.

I will begin with Butler's initial foreclosure of the self in her early work. Here, I will assert the need to distinguish the self from the subject in order to account for a reflexive distance from discursive intelligibility which makes resistance and re-signification possible. This will lead to a more detailed exploration of Butler's structural account of abjection and self-coherence, which necessitates a consideration of the temporal experience of acts of signification in order to understand how subversive repetition is experienced by hegemonic subjects, and how signification remains open enough to be transformed. Finally, I will explore the more recent development of Butler's work in which she has begun to reconsider a theory of the self, as distinct from discursive subject positions, through a

Hegelian notion of recognition. This aspect of her work, I will argue, remains problematic in relation to performativity because it still fails to account for a dynamic relation between self and other that can demonstrate the relation between sedimentation and potential transformation within signifying practices.

The Theorisation of Self-reflexivity:

In respect to performativity, then, Butler forecloses recourse to an individual self insofar as it displaces a consideration of the political constitution of the subject. She insists, for instance: 'If the "cause" of desire, gesture, and act can be localized within the "self" of the actor, then the political regulations and disciplinary practices which produce that ostensibly coherent gender are effectively displaced from view' (2008: 186). As I have previously argued, this perspective is productive insofar as it maintains a politicisation of gender which cautions against the often hidden implications of identity politics. Moreover, it is extremely successful in Butler's own analysis of the discursive effects of law, and in analysing the 'conditions of emergence and operation' (1993: 7) of political agency.

However, Butler's strict adherence to discursive causality prevents a more dynamic account of subjectivity which is both historically produced, but also admits some kind of conscious reflexivity. Indeed, in her texts on performativity Butler presumes that a theory of self-reflexivity is detrimental to an understanding of the subject as a discursive structure. She thus presents it in an entirely dismissive fashion: as either 'a transcendental

subject who enables action' (2008: 199), or 'a capacity for reflexive mediation, which remains intact regardless of its cultural embeddedness' (195).

By presuming that any recourse to reflexivity must be based on an ideal of autonomy, Butler sets up a theoretical position which propagates what Lise Nelson has called a false dichotomy. It is false, that is, because the 'dichotomy between the subject as a node in the discursive matrix [and] a notion of subjectivity as transparent and whole' (Nelson: 336) effectively forecloses a more nuanced account of the self.⁷

⁷ Nelson's critique here revolves around the difficulties of using performativity for the purposes of analysing the way institutions change over time, and she cites examples from her field of geography which 'smuggle' (344) notions of intentionality into performativity while wrongly attributing it to Butler herself. This demonstrates, for Nelson, a fundamental shortcoming of Butler's work because without 'some notion of self-reflexivity and intentionality [it is difficult to use] performativity to analyze the production and *contestation* of heterosexualized spaces within particular spatial/temporal contexts' (343). She thus concludes that, since Butler does not theorize a more complex reflexivity, it becomes almost inevitable that ideals of autonomous intentionality slip back into applications of her work.

Nelson is right here to point towards the theoretical limitations of Butler's model insofar as it has difficulty in capturing the 'complex inter-subjective dynamics' (344) at work within contextually specific gender configurations. However, it is quite different to claim that Butler's work is haunted by autonomy because she fundamentally 'forecloses inquiry into agency, change and the spatiality of identity formation' (346, 347), and that 'Butler problematically jettisons agency altogether' (332). Such statements seem to miss the purpose and the specific range of Butler's work, which strives to analyse *the discursive conditions* of agency and the insidious implications of a subject's discursively constituted intentions.

From this perspective, Catherine Mills correctly counter-argues that 'Nelson attributes much more weight to intentionality than is necessary' (276). That is, in Mills' terms, Nelson loses sight of 'a crucial difference between the intentions of a subject to perform certain actions and their capacity to control or fix the effects of those actions' (276). Indeed, within the course of her relatively level-headed critique of Butler, Nelson subtly reverts to a notion of reflexivity conceived in terms of intentional choices, whereby individuals 'choose to create a particular image [of identity]' (Nelson: 344).

Because of this slippage, Butler's assertion that performativity 'in no way presupposes a choosing subject' (Butler 1993: 15) is read by Nelson to imply that individuals are 'incapable of reflexive thought' (Nelson: 350). However, Butler's aim is not to deny that individuals are in capable of choosing between, for instance, wearing different styles of clothing that have different gendered connotations. Rather, it is to create a framework from which to analyse the way such choices are always already constrained by the discursive effects of power, and to show the ways that these constraints are dissimulated when gender is considered in terms of a free choice.

What I wish this critical perspective to highlight here is the difficulty of affirming a notion of self-reflexivity without undermining Butler's specific theorisation of discursive constraint. Nelson admits that her aim of analysing the specific temporal and

Nelson's important argument is that Butler 'ontologically assumes an abstracted subject (ie, abstracted as a subject *position* in a given discourse)' (332). Butler 'thus provides no space for conscious reflexivity [...] in the doing of identity' (332); and Nelson asserts such reflexivity should be considered in relation to specific institutions and social groups rather than the broadly applicable notion of law and prohibition which Butler tends to explicate. Indeed, developing Butler's work in this direction is a necessity for the kind of sociological studies Nelson has in mind.

However, the related point I want to emphasise here does not concern the specificity of Nelson's 'historical or geographical concrete subjects' (332) as such. Rather, it is that by making the possibility of re-signification 'primarily a capacity of symbolic structures rather than individuals' (McNay 1999: 178), Butler draws focus away from the specific psychic and embodied processes through which signifying effects are experienced from moment to moment.

This has implications for analysing the dynamics of change. In effect, the dichotomy by which Butler excludes self-reflexivity means her theoretical framework can only re-examine contingent changes in signifying practices for the structural exclusions and hierarchies which either become temporarily disrupted or remain inherent within them. It cannot account for how such changes impact on, or are enabled by, the

geographical influences on identity is an 'ontologically distinct project' (348) from Butler's, but insofar as this is true both the image of a choosing self she invokes and the reasons for her critique are not directly applicable to Butler's model. In contrast, my recourse to a self aims to have specific relevance for Butler's notion of subversive repetition, using a very different notion of reflexive experience in order to explore the relation between the sedimented mechanisms of power and their instability.

variable experiences of the subjects who participate in them. It is in this sense that Seyla Benhabib has argued:

A speech-act theory of performative gender constitution cannot give us a sufficiently thick and rich account of gender formation that would explain the capacities of human agents for self determination. [...] What psychic, intellectual or other sources of creativity and resistance must we attribute to human subjects for [...] variation to be possible? (1995b: 110).

While Benhabib's reading of Butler is a poor interpretation of her actual theoretical perspective, it raises a genuine concern about where the capacity to resist and the creativity to re-signify comes from. In order to account for such a capacity it is necessary to theorise a performative subject whose agency and social intelligibility is at once conditioned by historically sedimented practices of signification, yet attains a degree of self-reflexivity which is not reducible to those signifying positions.⁸

⁸ The problem with Benhabib's reading is apparent in the question she asks just before the above quotation: 'How can one be constituted by discourse without being determined by it?' (Benhabib 1995b: 110). Benhabib initially reads Butler's statements concerning gender constitution as implying that 'we are no more than the sum total of the gendered expressions we perform' (Benhabib 1995a: 21). She thus fails to recognise that Butler's notion of the subject is 'distinct from what Benhabib will call a "self"' (Butler 1995b: 134, 135). She therefore 'proceeds to reduce "performative constitution" to a behaviorist model' (134).

What Benhabib fails to adequately recognise here is Butler's emphasis on performativity as a constitutive process of *unstable repetition* which never finally establishes its effects. Subject positions are never fully determined precisely because they must be continually repeated, and the 'constitutive instabilities' (Butler 1993: 10) within these repetitions enable the possibility of their transformation. There is, however, no possibility of deriving a position of resistance outside of established discursive structures. What Butler's concept of the subject intends to emphasise, therefore, is the 'difficult labor of deriving agency from the very power regimes which constitute us' (Butler 1995b: 136).

As I explained in my introduction, my approach to this problem will, in Chapter Two, draw from Bergson's *Time and Free Will* in which he depicts two aspects of the self. On the one hand, there is 'the deep-seated self' (Bergson 1971: 125) of duration in which even 'the simplest psychic elements [...] are in a constant state of becoming' (200). An apperception of such deep-seated change can, therefore, account for a certain capacity for creativity and resistance because it denotes an underlying experience which continually exceeds the norm of intelligibility. On the other hand, there is a 'superficial psychic life' (125) whereby the ready-made structures of language 'covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness' (132). This superficial self is like an 'external projection' (231) or 'social representation' (231) of durational experience within language. It thus constrains the possibilities of self-determination in a similar way to Butler's model of discursive subject positions.

Importantly, these two selves are not separable for Bergson, but exist in a constant process of exchange and tension. The changing self must reduce itself into conventional subject positions in order to communicate, and in this sense does not exist as the possibility of an identity which can maintain integrity as an external opposition to discourse. At the same time, because it is constantly changing, duration

Ultimately, Benhabib's dispute with Butler rests on her assertion that Butler's 'dissolution of the [autonomous] subject' (Benhabib 1995a: 20) is 'not compatible with the goals of feminism' (20). Benhabib, rather, believes that 'female emancipation' (21) can only be achieved when it 'strives towards autonomy' (21). In this sense, the notion of self which Benhabib offers is incompatible with Butler's concerns, and while I agree with Benhabib that Butler's notion of the subject requires a self-reflexive 'distance between itself and the chain of significations' (20), I side with Butler on the point that the agency of such a self should not be understood as autonomous. Indeed, Butler's theory of discursive constitution is intended to subvert the 'unnecessary binarism between free will and determinacy' (Butler 2008: 201) which structures Benhabib's politics.

accounts for a degree of unique reflexivity in which subject positions are always taken up variably, and can therefore facilitate creative engagements with discourse.

At any rate, the issue of creativity and resistance raised by Benhabib is only one aspect of the problem posed by Butler's reduction of signifying practices to discursive structures. More urgent to her concerns about the potential for re-signification, I would suggest, is that her abstract model does not fully account for the effects of re-signification on individuals who are invested in norms. It cannot, that is, account for why and how a subversive act would attain the desired effect of transforming the subject's naturalised relation to hegemonic power.

In this sense, the reason why Butler's work requires a compatible model of self-reflexivity is because, by focussing only on the discursive level, her work neglects the psychological and emotional conditions necessary for re-signification to have lasting effects. Indeed, as McNay argues, one of the effects of 'regarding gender identity largely as a question of position in language and not as a lived social relation is that the dominant is left unproblematized' (2004: 185). It is left unproblematized, that is, because although Butler suggests that identities are inherently complex, in her texts on performativity these complexities are depicted only in terms of the 'relational nature of language' (185). The ongoing conflicts, negotiations and tensions through which hegemonic identities develop are therefore 'obscured' (185) in Butler's work because such dynamics 'can only be perceived from the perspective of experience' (185).

This argument is particularly apt in relation to the account Butler provides of the conflict between the coherence of hegemonic gender identities and their abject others. The logic of Butler's perspective here stems from the idea that discourse can only produce coherent objects through a set of exclusions which limit the realm of intelligibility. In terms of subject formation, these discursive exclusions produce 'the schemes of recognition that are available to us' (Butler 2004: 2), and create a realm of intelligibility which determines 'who qualifies as the recognizably human and who does not' (2). In other words, the coherence of the gendered subject can only be constituted and sustained through an exclusion which creates a 'domain of deauthorized subjects, presubjects, figures of abjection, populations erased from view' (Butler 1995a: 47).

In terms of self-coherence, these exclusions form what Butler calls a 'constitutive or relative outside' (1993: 39) which is 'nevertheless *internal* to that system as its own nonthematizable necessity' (39). Importantly, these constitutive exclusions emerge 'within the system as incoherence, disruption, a threat to its own systematicity' (39), and so always perform a 'disruptive return within the very terms of its discursive legitimacy' (8). Every assertion of coherence, therefore, entails for Butler a correlative process of abjection that haunts authoritative subjects from within. This, indeed, is for Butler the reason why hegemonic positions are repeated: 'norms are continually haunted by their own inefficiency; hence, the anxiously repeated effort to install and augment their jurisdiction' (237).

While not wishing to deny constitutive exclusions as an inherent aspect of subject formation, I believe there is a need to distinguish more

closely between the structural factors of discourse and the experiential factors of abjection and disruption. If the shoring up of incoherence through abjection is fundamental to all hegemonic repetition then there is good reason to believe that subverting the coherence of subject positions can only result in a violent rejection of that subversion. In order to understand the conditions under which the subversive de-naturalising of gender norms might result in a transformation rather than in a further abjection, then, it becomes necessary to conceptualise performativity as a more versatile and self-reflexive experience.

The temporal dynamics of the self:

Butler herself has voiced a more nuanced explanation of subject formation when responding to criticism by Nancy Fraser, and it is useful here to briefly outline this response. This is because, in this context, Butler suggests that abjection is not the only possibility of subject formation, but nonetheless continues to exclude the experiencing self in favour of the discursive subject. It can thus help to clarify the need to account for experiential factors within processes of repetition and intelligibility.

Responding to Butler's condemnation of identity politics, Fraser's critique calls for the need to 'distinguish legitimate from illegitimate exclusions' (1995a: 68). In her reply, Butler qualifies her usual position – which presents abjection as a fundamental characteristic of the subject – and presents it as only the worst kind of subject formation. She writes, for instance: 'whereas every subject is formed through a process of

differentiation, [...] there are better and worse forms of differentiation, and [...] the worse kinds tend to abject and degrade those from whom the “I” is distinguished’ (Butler 1995b: 140).

With these worst kinds of subjects, then, ‘abjection is installed as the condition of [the] “I” (140), as it is in my explication above. From the opposite perspective, however, Butler also concedes the possibility of a subject whereby ‘an “I” is differentiated from another [but] does not mean that the other becomes unthinkable in its difference’ (139). Indeed, these types of subject are what Butler’s work calls for: ‘the development of forms of differentiation which lead to fundamentally more capricious, generous, and “unthreatened” bearings on the self in the midst of community’ (140).

With this admission, a kind of implicit polarity can be detected in Butler’s notion of subject positions: one which ranges from the explicit need to repeat violent degradations to those ‘in which the violence of exclusion is perpetually in the process of being overcome’ (Butler 1993: 53). The problem with Butler’s formulation is that, because of her reluctance to theorise an experiencing self, this polarity is presented only as a characteristic of the discursive system itself. That is, a subject position can be structured, *in its discursive formation*, as either violently abjecting or as unthreatened by difference.

The point I want to emphasise here is not only that there are better and worse ways of *experiencing* subject positions. It is also that such differentiable relations to discourse *must* be available to individuals in order to account for a movement from a rigid system of discursive exclusion to one in which the violence of exclusion is overcome. This is to

say that, even thought of as a socio-historic process of change, discursive structures can only become more open through a process by which individuals negotiate their own tensions between the ideal of self-coherence and discursive structures of exclusion.

While part of my own analysis of the lived dimensions of self-coherence and abjection will be explored in relation to emotional responsiveness, my definition of emotion itself will be drawn out within a broader framework of temporality. Before I introduce the role of emotion more fully in my next section, then, it is necessary to begin clarifying the more general role which temporality will play in this thesis. Indeed, in order to properly analyse Butler's own conception of performativity and de-naturalisation, it is necessary to look closer at the temporal relations inherent in her model of signification. What I want to specifically suggest in this respect is that, insofar as performativity is essentially described as 'a constituted *social temporality*' (Butler 2008: 191), a certain reflexive experience of temporality is actually already implicit in Butler's work.

Butler wishes to emphasise that signification is 'not a function of an individual's *intention*, but [...] an effect of historically sedimented linguistic conventions' (1995b: 134). She thus describes the temporal modality of performativity primarily in terms of discursive citations. In order for a present act of signification to attain the authoritative force of normativity, she argues, it 'must draw upon and recite a set of linguistic conventions which have traditionally worked to bind or engage certain kinds of effects' (134). Temporality is, in this way, first and foremost an accumulation of *signifying effects* which congeal over time. Nonetheless, re-reading

Butler's ideas on normative repetition in relation to that of re-signification, the implication of a reflexive experience of signification is actually quite close to the surface of her work.

It is clear from Butler's texts that gender is at its most normative, and differentiation is most prone to violent exclusion, when the 'subject takes itself as the single origin of its actions' (Butler 1995a: 43). In such cases, the subject cites the sedimented conventions of the past but, in order to naturalise them and to produce the effect of an interior and autonomous essence of gender, 'conceals and dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition' (Butler 1993: 12). Performativity thus has a certain relation to the past, whereby the effect of repetition accumulates and sediments to the extent that *each individual performer* disavows their gendered acts as being a re-citation. In effect, the aim of re-signification is to de-naturalise this relation to the past, disrupting its dissimulated status and therefore allowing the possibility of 'reworking the historicity of the signifier' (Butler 1995b: 136). For re-signification to be effective, then, a hegemonic subject's psychic relation to the past must be at least temporarily altered, allowing the effects of signification to emerge as a historical construction.

The importance of temporality within immediate acts of performativity and re-signification is further underlined by Butler's invocations of the future. On the one hand, 'gender [...] operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the phenomenon that it anticipates' (Butler 2008: xv). To put it another way, we might say that normative significations project their

authority into the immediate future as an expectation which, in turn, is confirmed by the signifying act itself.

On the other hand, a correlative image of the future is associated with the contestation of exclusionary structures of discourse. For instance, in order to perpetually overcome the violence of exclusion we must, Butler argues, 'refigure this necessary "outside" as a future horizon' (1993: 53). We must, in other words, withdraw the sedimented expectation which 'attributes a certain force to the law' (Butler 2008: xv), and *actively* leave the future of differentiation open to contestation and change.

These arguments imply that there is more potential agency to transform the discursive structures of differentiation when the future is open than when it is constrained within the bounds of an expectation, and when the past is consciously represented as a set of formative conventions rather than being disavowed. However, insofar as this temporal modality is presented as a function of discourse itself, it remains unclear how it is possible to pass from one state to the other. In order for a subversive repetition to have the effect of denaturalisation it must, in the first place, be enacted upon a psyche capable of changing its relation to the temporal modality of performativity.

In short, 'to open [a discursive] category as a site of permanent political contest' (Butler 1993: 222) requires a sense of reflexive temporality which effects the psychic act of intelligibility. It requires that, within the very act of using the category to form an intelligible object domain, the individual actor remains self-consciously open to its provisional nature and the possibility of its future reformation. Such

temporal reflexivity is not given by the discursive structure itself, but is precisely a *variable experience* of discursive borders, of the force of convention, and of the relation between the intelligible and the unintelligible.

This, in turn, means that the exclusionary borders of subject positions do not unilaterally determine the way that differentiation is psychically distributed, or the force by which such structures are regulated. While discursive conventions supply the socio-historic form of gender legitimacy and agency, the lived act of intelligibility is given, at least in part, by a variable psychic and temporal economy of responsiveness that is contingent to each immediate act. Without accounting for such a diverse potential of the experiencing self it is difficult to locate the mechanisms by which power is actively perpetuated or successfully rendered unstable.

It is in response to this problem that I will draw upon Bergson's last book, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, in Chapter Two. Extrapolating from Bergson, I will argue that even though 'the subject is an accomplishment regulated and produced in advance' (Butler 1995a: 47), the social relation between self and other manifests in a constantly changing tension between two opposing moral dispositions which Bergson calls obligation and aspiration.

In this context, what is significant about Bergson's model of aspiration and obligation is that it enables a view of signification in which, even within a single discursive convention, the response to its thematic incoherence is contingent to each specific signifying event. This is because the way the discursively produced "I" is internally differentiated

within a temporally unfolding event can be seen to depend upon the way an individual's own immediate temporal apperceptions fluctuate.

On the one hand, obligation is a tendency to conserve the past as an expectation, and to consolidate identity within 'ready-made rules' (Bergson 1935: 46). Here, I will argue, discourse becomes a rigid space because the past is presented to the self as a signifying expectation which is projected into the future, meaning that otherness is experienced by the self as disruption of these expectations. In this disposition, then, difference is externalised and, pace Butler, functions through the degradation of others who mark the borders of identity.

On the other hand, however, for Bergson the past also accumulates efficaciously within duration. As a direct apperception of duration, the disposition of aspiration facilitates an open relation towards the immediate future. This is because the point of departure for experiencing the intelligibility of a signifying event is no longer an attempt to stabilise ready-made meanings. It is an individual's own internal experience of change. Thus, because the past is not psychically represented as a rigid expectation, an individual's relation to discursive borders and otherness becomes much more fluid.

In this way, aspiration can be thought of as an open reflexivity. It allows the self to change in response to otherness so that, in this state, subversion can indeed 'compel a radical rethinking of the psychological presuppositions of gender identity' (Butler 2008: 189). The apperception of duration, as an on-going and inexpressible movement, allows a more radical internal differentiation of the self's relation to otherness than

discursive structures do. The other is 'not [...] unthinkable in its difference' (Butler 1995a: 139), but is thinkable through a creative relation to the past and discourse which enables new experiences of intelligibility and recognition to emerge. Rather than shoring up its borders through abjection, the self's response to discursive incoherence can be developed in relation to 'a forward thrust, a demand for movement' (Bergson 1935: 45). In this moment, then, an aspirational impulse can emerge from an act of de-naturalisation which can motivate a receptive attitude towards re-signification.

Ultimately, as a transformative tendency of the self, aspiration can only be a rare transitional potential. This is to say, it cannot be maintained as a continuous relation towards otherness because the tendency towards obligation is a more prominent characteristic of everyday psychic life. Indeed, once aspiration has opened up an individual's psychic relation to the other, it 'tends to materialize by assuming the form of strict obligation' (Bergson 1935: 51), thus returning the self to a closed disposition.

At any rate, I will discuss the limits and possibilities of aspiration more fully in my following chapter. My primary point here is that Bergson's framework can allow me to theorise a notion of the self without radically contradicting Butler's view of the subject as a regulated position in a discursive matrix. Duration is not an unchanging essence which causes discrete gender identifications, but an immanent process of continual change. It therefore cannot be responsible for initiating the 'illusion of an interior and organizing gender core' (Butler 2008: 186) by which 'political regulations [...] are effectively displaced from view' (186).

Theories of Recognition:

It should be noted that Butler herself would be likely to resist my use of duration, as a means to understanding certain dynamics of the self, on the basis that it tends towards ideal of unity. I say this specifically in the light of some of her more recent work in which, through a reading of Hegel's dialectic of recognition, she develops her own notion of the self. For the remainder of this section, therefore, I will address this aspect of her work in relation to my own interpretation of performativity. I will firstly examine the reasons behind Butler's probable complaint against aspiration, and defend my own perspective as a valid way of thinking of the self. I will then explore more specifically why Butler's own notion of self is insufficient to fully deal with the problem of transforming discursive structures. Finally, these reflections will lead me to foreshadow the role Bergson's conception of the body and memory will play in conceptualising processes of self-coherence and instability.

As with Butler's theory of performativity and discursive intelligibility, her notion of the self begins with the idea that recognition is, from the start, beyond the control of any individual. However, in addition to the dependence on discourse to provide the structure of gender recognition, Butler reflects upon the ontology of self-knowledge implied by the need to have recognition conferred upon us by others. Insofar as 'it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially viable beings' (Butler 2004: 2) we are not only interpellated by

desires and identities which 'do not originate with our individual personhood' (2). The self is also 'marked by a primary enthrallment with the Other [...] in which that self is put at risk' (149).

This is to say that it is 'the Other who secures that self's existence' (149), and who therefore 'poses the possibility of both securing *and undermining* self-knowledge' (148; my italics). In Butler's model: 'whatever consciousness is, whatever the self is, [it] will find itself only through a reflection of itself in another' (147). The dynamics of consciousness – or, more specifically, self-conscious awareness – are thus characterised by Butler by an 'ontological primacy of relationality itself' (150). The self that seeks recognition is never, in the first place, a self-presence which is there to be recognised. To find recognition for itself within the world, 'it must pass through [a] self-loss' (147) which condemns its ideal of self-determination to a vulnerable, dependant, and 'invariably ambivalent' (147) relation to the other. It is a self, then, which is necessarily 'outside itself, not self-identical, differentiated from the start. [...] Its ontology is precisely to be divided and spanned in irrevocable ways' (148).

Thought of in this way, Butler's notion of the self is certainly 'one way of disputing the self-sufficiency of the subject' (150). Because, in every act of recognition, the self is 'ambiguously installed outside itself' (150), this decentred relationality positions the self irrevocably beyond its own autonomous control. The conceit of self-determined identity which facilitates the naturalisation of gender norms is, therefore, continuously rendered unstable. While a sense of ambivalence and vulnerability can be covered over quite successfully by psychic acts of disavowal and

repression, such processes cannot finally disown the self's dependency on the other. A hegemonic subject, or self, must continuously 'shore up what it knows, [and often violently] expunge what threatens it with not knowing' (35).

From this perspective, Butler asserts the imperative of 'thinking the self in its necessary (and ethically consequential) disunity' (150). She argues, for instance, that a 'nonviolent response lives with its unknowingness about the Other' (35), and therefore lives with the ambivalence of not knowing the self. Ethics, in this sense, becomes an attempt to 'learn to live in the anxiety of that challenge' (35).

It is this ethical standpoint which, I suspect, would lead Butler to read aspiration as an ideal of unity. This is to say that a notion of aspiration, as an internal experience of the self's on-going processes of duration, would imply for Butler a model of consciousness in which the 'ontological status of the self is self-sufficient' (150). Because it does not define the relation to the other as an invariable ambivalence and fundamental vulnerability, Butler would infer an assumption of transparent knowledge.

In response to this probable critique I would like to stress that aspiration is the apperception of a *movement* within the self. While it proceeds through a process of differentiation which is internal to the self's duration, such differentiation does not reveal the self as a unity in the sense of being a transparent and stable source of identity. Duration is a unity only in the sense that every passing moment consists of 'a thousand

different elements *which dissolve into and permeate one another without precise outline*' (Bergson 1971: 132; my italics).

In the context of Butler's conceptual framework, then, the apperception of this movement cannot be adequately characterised as knowledge because, at every moment, the self is in continuous fluid change. Therefore, because there is no stable experience of the self from which to confer recognition, aspiration provides an alternative way of theorising a movement 'that [...] takes the Other out of the narcissistic circuit of the subject' (Butler 2004: 149). Insofar as an on-going apperception of change can be a source of experiencing the other, it provides a way of determining how relationality unfolds experientially which is neither an ideal of self-identity nor an ambivalent movement of self loss.

Butler's portrayal of recognition as a decentred process provides an insightful account of why the self should not be conceived as an autonomous entity. My concern is that her insistence that the self is not a unity pushes forward a perspective which denies other important dynamics, such as duration, which exist within the orbit of the self's relationality. In effect, Butler conveys a monochromatic spectrum of psychic life which measures the dynamics of relationality through a sharp polarity between the ideal of autonomous self-knowledge and ambivalence. This framework, then, hinders an understanding of performativity and subversion in the sense that it elides the efficacy of the self to achieve many radically different states of consciousness, and therefore many varying relations towards the other.

The issue of theorising an experiencing self is not just a matter of demonstrating an excess of discursive positions, but of determining how change develops during immediate processes of signification. For instance, if a subversive repetition forces the coherence of the self to undergo a movement from relative stability to radical instability, what are the factors and variations which determine how that self regains stability? What different kinds of process lead an experience of ambivalence towards a state which lives with unknowingness rather than one which violently shores up what it knows? What psychic processes initiate changes in an individual's relation to the past, and therefore the authority and conceptual content of signification, that may help determine *how* subversions may facilitate better or worse processes of intelligibility?

When the self undergoes change, this change is not conceived by Butler as an experiential content which can be registered by the self, and through which that self can, for instance, draw from its past experience in a positive way. There is, simply, 'a constitutive loss in the process of recognition, a transformation that does not bring all that once was forward with it, one that forecloses upon the past in an irreversible way' (Butler 2001b: 23). The self is displaced from its former state, transforming into 'a self it never was' (Butler 2004: 148). Aside from ambivalence, this notion of change does not entail any real efficacy in respect to that self's on-going relation to its subject positions.

In contrast, my point is that recognition can develop along different paths, which not only have varying degrees of violence towards the other, but vary the memory content of consciousness by which the past informs

the present moment of signification. This is not just a question of invoking aspiration as transformative process, but of exploring the way recognition is 'the concrete process by which we grasp the past in the present' (Bergson 2005a: 90). Indeed, while I will invoke aspiration as potential means to relinquish attachments to meaning, this is only one part of my response to Butler. My main focus in chapters three and four will be on analysing the 'utilitarian character of our mental functions' (16) which influence the way the conceptual content of consciousness unfolds.

Bergson's 'psycho-physical' (131) framework provides a different way to reflect upon gender recognition, whereby knowledge of the other develops in the service of practical action. This is to say, we 'do not, in general, aim at knowing for the sake of knowing, but [to find out] what kind of action, step or attitude [an object] should suggest to us' (Bergson 2002: 177). In any contingent moment, consciousness varies its content according to the specific needs of the present, bringing forward congruent memories which will 'illuminate the present situation with a view to action' (Bergson 2005a: 179). Thus, while 'a contemporary "act" [only] emerges in the context of a chain of binding conventions' (Butler 1993: 225), the way these conventions are consciously represented has a degree of individual variability.

Rather than focussing on the decentring effects of a process in which 'recognition [...] becomes self-conscious' (Butler 2004: 147), as is the case with Butler's model of the self, I will use this aspect of Bergson's work to explore the underlying psychic faculties which produce meaning. What is important in respect to both normative and unstable

representations of gender is the idea that 'psychic life may be lived at different heights, now nearer to action, now further removed from it' (Bergson 2005a: 14). That is, consciousness narrows or enlarges its memory content depending on how immediate or indeterminate an act is.

As I discussed in section one, the sensory-motor body has a certain relational dependency on other bodies. However, this relationality is most generally played out through habituated acts which, pace Butler, have been naturalised by repetition. Following Bergson, I will explore the way habit facilitates a form of '*instantaneous* recognition, of which the body is capable by itself' (92), and which selectively discerns object domains of perception without the need for self-conscious reflection.

In short, the 'basis of recognition [is] a phenomenon of a motor order' (93) that has organised together movements and perceptions in order to create a sense of familiarity which guides action. I will argue that, as long as the body's motor discernment is automatically converted into an action, this form of recognition inhibits 'the decentering effects that [...] relationality entails' (Butler 2004: 151). In other words, it stabilises an individual's sense of relationality insofar as recognition remains inattentive. Nonetheless, because the body itself is relational, I will also argue that the tendencies of habit can be interrupted by the performances of other bodies.

By disrupting the projected continuity of habit, then, subversive repetitions can render action indeterminate. When this happens, the impending act requires a conscious effort to complete it, and the psychic relation between self and other can indeed become unstable and

ambivalent in the ways which Butler suggests. However, my own focus on how this indeterminacy unfolds will not be on characterising the self as decentred, but on the psycho-physical processes by which individuals attempt to re-establish order.

Adapting Bergson to the problem of understanding hegemonic responses to subversion, I will explore the way consciousness expands its memory content in order to re-affirm gender norms and restore familiarity to the field of action. In this process, consciousness spontaneously responds to the disruption of inattentive recognition through 'a series of attempts at synthesis, [by which] memory chooses, one after the other, various analogous images which it launches in the direction of the new perception' (Bergson 2005a: 102). Memory thus modifies the way the past informs the present moment of signification in order to accommodate and, ultimately, appropriate the intended incoherence of meaning imposed on the recipient of subversion.

This model can facilitate a more subtle interpretation of the ongoing stability and instability of gender norms. It suggests that the way processes of identification unfold in everyday practices of signification are more flexible than Butler's perspective allows. Rather than a monochromatic polarity between 'a conceit of autonomous self-determination' (Butler 2004: 149) and ambivalence, it draws into focus the processes by which gender intelligibility simplifies or complicates itself. For instance, the recognition of gender will 'take a more common form when memory shrinks most, more personal when it widens out' (Bergson 2005a: 169). There are, in this way, multiple psychic tensions by which a

hegemonic subject can form their conception of discursive structures and their knowledge of self and other.

In order to convey the situated and relational dynamics of this process, I will emphasise that these tensions of memory respond reflexively to the conditions of action rather to an ideal of self-identity. This is to say that the self's primary relation to meaning is not a matter of securing the coherence of identity but of negotiating possible actions in relation to the other. Indeed, I am suggesting a more primary level of experience in which the unfamiliarity of the other manifests not as a disruption of self-knowledge but as an inability to act.

As such, what I will explore is the way the pervasive naturalisation of gender, and the more intermittent tendencies to actively assert the coherence of its borders, are impelled by the needs of action. This framework, whereby the other appears differently depending upon the force by which action is disrupted and remains indeterminate, allows processes of relationality and identification to be differentiated in a much more complex way. Unlike Butler's conceptualisation of recognition, the unstable achievement of normative gender identity is not just a matter of concealing the inconsistencies of intelligibility. It involves a complex psycho-physical process, by which memory-images attempt to project a sense of familiarity that facilitates action. In turn, responses to subversion can be thought out in terms of various types of relational instability which develop in response to indeterminacy, rather than a singular notion of ambivalence.

In closing, then, my central contention in this section has been that Butler requires a notion of reflexive experience in order to account for the lived process of signification and the potential effectiveness of subversive repetition. While I maintain Butler's contention that discursive constraints set out the parameters of social intelligibility, I have attempted to show that her own analysis of gender intelligibility and repetition is insufficient. Thinking performativity purely in terms of the subject's discursive constitution leads to an abstract account of the way hegemonic subjects relate to their gendered others, and an abstract account of the temporal dynamics of signification. Bergson, on the other hand, can provide a model which accounts for the performative repetition of subject positions while showing how the psychic and temporal economy of differentiation are variably determined in relation to the discursive structures of social intelligibility.

Butler's later work has gestured towards a notion of the self which exceeds discourse, and thus acknowledges the need to theorise experiences which cannot be characterised through the intelligibility of subject positions. However, because it reduces the relation between self and other to an impassable ambivalence, it lacks the nuances which Bergson's framework can provide for understanding the diversity of this relation. As with Butler's foreclosure of self-reflexivity in her earlier work, the question of how and why psychic states are capable of dynamic changes is side-lined. The insistence that the self is not a self-presence supersedes the issue of how something can be recuperated from a process of de-naturalisation, but also evacuates experiential content from

its depiction of consciousness and change. It therefore reveals very little about the actual psychic processes involved in either the dynamics of complex relational experiences or the hegemonic response of shoring up knowledge.

In the following section I will explore a similar problem, which occurs within a different aspect of Butler's work but still concerns the theorisation of experiences beyond the discursive constitution of the subject. In this line of analysis Butler turns to psychoanalysis in order to demonstrate how the unconscious exceeds the interpellation force of discourse. While this offers a very different perspective than her Hegelian model of the self, my concern will be that discourse again remains too operative within her description of psychic processes.

Gender investment and the Unconscious.

In her later work, and particularly in *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler turns to psychoanalysis in order to address 'the inadequacy of the Foucauldian theory of the subject' (Butler 2000c: 151). This is an inadequacy which her own formulation of gender has been accused, and which Butler describes – in terms which echo Benhabib's criticism of her – as relying upon a 'behaviourist notion of mechanically reproduced behaviour' (151).⁹

⁹ As I have previously argued, Benhabib has misread Butler's theory of performativity in terms of 'a behaviorist model' (Butler 1995b: 134) in which 'we are no more than the sum total of the gendered expressions we perform' (Benhabib 1995a: 21). Butler has therefore

Butler engages psychoanalysis, then, to provide an account of how, from the perspective of the psyche, 'the social norms which work on the subject [...] do not operate unilaterally' (151). As she argues, 'the entire domain of the psyche remain[s] largely unremarked in [Foucault's] theory' (1997a: 2), and her response to this is to assert that 'the psyche, which includes the unconscious, is very different from the subject' (86).

Butler presents the unconscious as an '*an ongoing psychic condition in which norms are registered in both normalizing and non-normalizing ways*' (2000c: 153). However, because this model confines psychic resistance to the unconscious, and so does not give enough credence to the dynamics through which gender norms are consciously experienced in ways which resist the normalising effects of discourse, Butler again provides little insight into the variability by which subject

legitimately defended against this accusation on the ground that performativity is not a theory of the self but an analysis of the non-subjective production of power relations. Since Butler takes many of her cues for understanding the subject and power from Foucault, then, it is somewhat unfair that she accuses him of a presenting a mechanical account of behaviour without presenting his ideas on the same grounds that she defends her own work.

Foucault's own work analyses power relations as 'both intentional and nonsubjective' (Foucault 1998: 94) because, although power is always exercised with 'a series of aims and objectives' (95), it is 'often the case that no one is there to have invented them' (95). In this sense, although power produces objective effects 'that are often quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed' (95), as with Butler's theory of performativity this 'does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject' (95). This perspective, however, is not intended to reduce individuals to mechanical effects of discourse, but to critique an outmoded view of power as 'something that one holds on to or allows to slip away' (94) and replace it with a view in which 'power is exercised from innumerable points' (94) that are irreducible to an ideal of transparent decision making.

While Butler continues Foucault's view of power as having objective aims which do not manifest from the choice of individuals, she believes a psychoanalytic theory of the psyche is necessary in order to demonstrate how these objective aims do not result in entirely efficacious effects of interpellation. It should be noted, then, that Benhabib's critique of the 'unthoughtout implications in [Butler's] theory' (Benhabib 1995b: 120) is not only aimed at her general theory of the subject, but also at the 'interesting tension, almost a fissure, [between] psychoanalytic theory and Foucauldianism' (120) in Butler's work. From this perspective, I think *Psychic Life* can be understood as both an attempt to further defend and distance her own work from accusations of behaviourism, and to clarify her own specific way of understanding the relation between her use of Foucault to define the subject, and her complex relation to psychoanalysis.

positions are experienced. In addition, I will argue in this section that the ongoing processes which Butler ascribes to the unconscious are still modelled too rigidly on discursive structures, and do not provide a sufficiently dynamic view of unconscious processes.

These problems are particularly apparent in Butler's concept of gender melancholy, which will be my primary object of analysis in this section. This theory problematically bases heterosexual gender investment on an unconscious repudiation of its sexed others which is developed in infancy. It thus obscures the way investments are developed through experience, and I will argue that rather than simply securing the sense of historical contingency which Butler intends, it produces a reified model of identification which precludes individual contingency. Moreover, it implies a temporal modality which, having a distinct moment of origin in infancy, contradicts the idea that 'the ground of gender identity is the stylized *repetition of acts through time*' (2008: 192; my italics).

A further reason for Bergson's sensory-motor understanding of the body emerges here. I have already foreshadowed how relationality is stabilised when motor habits unreflectively enact processes of recognition, and I will add in this section a preliminary sketch of how the familiarity and coherence which habits produce provides an alternative basis to understand gender investment. This perspective conforms to the performative model of identity because habits are developed through acts of repetition rather than an inaugural moment. It also provides a way to conceive the individual contingency of gender investment which is missing in Butler's account.

Just as habits provide a normative basis for processes of recognition, which become more complex when the indeterminacy of action allows memory to inflect meaning processes, I will argue that the indeterminacy of action affects the intensity by which individuals invest in these meaning processes. What will be at stake here is describing an account of *emotion as an experience of indeterminacy* which produces contingent states of investment when habits are disrupted. This will allow me to speculate upon a relation between memory and emotion which can replace the role of psychoanalysis in Butler's work.

Butler's Appropriation of Psychoanalysis:

Importantly, Butler's recourse to psychoanalysis is not simply a critique of Foucault, but also aims to intervene in what she perceives as heteronormative and a-historical tendencies in psychoanalytic accounts of the unconscious. Indeed, she aims to correct this *through* Foucault's model, and her stated aim in *Psychic Life* is to 'explore provisional perspectives from which each theory illuminates the other' (1997a: 3). From this perspective, she aims to produce a historically and discursively contextualised theory of the psyche. Therefore, while the focus of this section is to critique the primacy of gender melancholia in the psychic constitution of the subject, some preliminary points about Butler's critique of psychoanalysis are necessary in order to contextualise her ideas.

One of Butler's specific lines of attack on this point is the Lacanian concept of the real, which she defines in *Bodies That Matter* as 'that which

any account of “reality” fails to include’ (192). While this concept has distinct similarities to Butler’s own notion of the constitutive outside, she takes issue with the idea that the real is impossible to symbolise by definition, and that it is presented as having no specific content. Butler sees this notion of the real as ‘structurally static’ (Butler 2000a: 6), arguing that in psychoanalytic theory it is presented as ‘a quasi-transcendental limitation on all possible subject-formation and, hence, as indifferent to politics’ (6). However, despite Butler’s belief that Lacan presents a ‘fixity and universality of this relation between language and the real’ (Butler 1993: 207), it can be suggested that the real, far from implying the historical stasis of subject positions, has an absolute contingency which actually prevents the symbolic from becoming stable.¹⁰

Part of Butler’s problem here is that, in her haste to critique what she sees as the exclusively heterosexual framework that Lacan works within, she reads the notion that the real is unsymbolisable too closely in relation to her own notion of unintelligibility. That is, she reads the real in

¹⁰ Butler’s writing on this matter is generally aimed at Slavoj Žižek’s application of Lacan into cultural theory rather than an explicit engagement with Lacan’s texts. Her problem, in this respect, ‘is related to the “quasi-transcendental” status Žižek attributes to sexual difference [as real]. If he is right, then sexual difference, in its most fundamental aspect, is outside the struggle for hegemony’ (Butler 2000c: 143).

Contra Butler’s reading, Žižek rightly points out that: ‘For Lacan, sexual difference is not a firm set of “static” symbolic oppositions [...] but the name of a deadlock, of a trauma, of an open question’ (2000a: 110, 111). To put this in a slightly different way: Lacan’s theory of sexual difference is *not* about the way symbolic norms of recognition dictate the possibility of becoming a subject, although this seems to be the context through which Butler reads Lacan. Rather, it has to do with the way the symbolic structures and imaginary meanings which are ascribed to sexual difference always fail. In Lacan’s words: ‘the signified misses the referent’ (1999: 20).

The trauma, or the open question, which Žižek refers to is, in part, the ongoing, impossible attempt to unify the terms of sexual difference into a stable, complementary category which Lacan has referred to as the ideal of ‘the One’ (7). Sexual difference, he argues, ‘is marked and dominated by the impossibility of establishing as such, anywhere in the enunciable, the sole One that interests us, the One of the relation “sexual relationship”’ (6, 7). As such, the real is not a limitation placed on the possibility of becoming a subject, as Butler is inclined to read it. It is the name given to the contingent failure of any assumption of meaning to stabilise itself.

terms of that which is forcibly excluded from social intelligibility rather than that which exceeds and disrupts any particular instance of social intelligibility. From this perspective, 'Butler becomes blind to the fact that [from Lacan's psychoanalytical perspective] the symbolic, and the Law, are not the same for everyone in the social field, nor could they be' (Rothenberg: 88). In this sense, Butler's critique of Lacan reflects the general problem with Butler's work which I outlined in my previous section: that she does not give enough weight to the way individuals inflect the shared structures of discourse with personal meanings.

Nonetheless, Butler's misreading stems from a genuine concern that Lacan's psychoanalytic model elides questions of how the oppressive structures of gender work within actual historical moments. That is, this notion of the real, as an individual failure of meaning, does not meet Butler's aim 'to investigate what kinds of identifications are made possible, are fostered and compelled, within a given political field' (Butler 2000c: 150).

In Butler's view, 'what is needed is a way to assess politically how the production of cultural unintelligibility is mobilized variably to regulate the political field' (1993: 207). From this perspective, even though the concept of the real, as an excess of symbolisation, points to a psychic process in which norms never fully saturate the subject, it does not provide a way to analyse 'the historical workings of specific modalities of discourse and power' (Butler 1993: 205).

Concerned only with how the symbolic, as it were, misses its mark, and not with how it produces normative values which de-legitimise certain

subjects, Lacan's psychoanalytic model lacks insight into the compulsory elements of gender. It elides the way the symbolic produces historically contingent structures of intelligibility which humanise gendered subjects, while de-humanising others. Butler's engagement with psychoanalysis, therefore, is valid in its attempt to produce a model of the psyche and the unconscious which directly takes account of the regulative and historically contingent effects of discourse.

However, as I suggested above, Butler's attempt to theorise a psyche that is not uniform across history, but dependant on specific structures of discourse, produces a detracted view of the unconscious which is described only in terms of those discursive structures. In the move to show how the unconscious has 'no underlying essence other than the specific forms they assume [within contingent moments of history] (Butler 2000c: 154), Butler's engagement with psychoanalysis does not integrate the individual specificity of the unconscious. She thus severely limits an understanding of the potential psychic processes by which individuals relate to discursive structures. Her emphasis on discourse is too rigid, and her description of psychic dynamics too reliant on a principle of ambivalence. It cannot, therefore, supply the necessary psychological dimensions to understand the potential for change and resistance.

Gender Melancholy:

The specific problems which arise from this perspective are evident in Butler's theory of gender melancholy, which is her most enduring

attempt to situate psychoanalytic principles within her framework of gender discourse. In this theory Butler suggests that heterosexual orientation is conditioned along specific paths during infancy because of a discursive prohibition against sexual desire for the parent of the same sex. In doing so she confines the ongoing processes of heterosexual identification to an inaugural moment of loss which determines the way individuals invest in subject positions. This perspective, on the one hand, restricts an understanding of the motivation for heterosexual identification by reducing psychic processes to unconscious ambivalence. On the other hand, it conflicts with the temporality of performative acts because such motivation is conceived as primary to the effects of repetition.

Butler's concept entails a transformation of Freud's theory of melancholia, where he argues that an individual's acts of chronic self-berating are actually 'reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego' (Freud 1957: 248). This occurs, for Freud, when an object of love has been lost, but cannot be mourned because 'the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost' (245). The melancholic, for instance, may know '*whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him' (245). In such cases, a form of identification occurs which 'involves resurrecting a lost object within the ego' (Freud 2003: 119). This means that the attachment to the lost object is not given up and abandoned as such, but preserved within the psyche through an internalisation of the attachment. In Butler's words, 'there is no final breaking of the object attachment. There is, rather, the incorporation of the attachment as identification' (1997a: 134).

Butler, then, takes from Freud the idea that the ego is 'the sedimentation of objects loved and lost, the archaeological remainder, as it were, of unresolved grief' (Butler 1997a: 133). Following this, she asserts that 'the heterosexualizing of desire' (135) into masculine and feminine counterparts also takes place under conditions of loss which invoke melancholic characteristics. Because masculinity and femininity are discursively regulated along heterosexual lines, Butler argues that they 'are established in part through prohibitions which *demand the loss* of certain sexual attachments, and demand as well that those losses *not* be avowed, and *not* be grieved' (135). This implies, for Butler, that during infancy the love for the parent of the same sex must be abandoned, but that this loss cannot be grieved because that very attachment is foreclosed as a possibility on the discursive level.

Following the formula of melancholy, then, Butler asserts that this lost parental attachment is preserved within the ego as an unconscious investment, with the effect that 'gender identification is a kind of melancholia in which the sex of the prohibited object is internalized as a prohibition' (2008: 85, 86). In other words, the internalisation of loss produces 'a domain of homosexuality understood as unlivable passion and ungrievable loss' (1997a: 135), and which is preserved in the unconscious during infancy. From this perspective, 'masculinity and femininity emerge as traces of [this] ungrieved and ungrievable love' (140), whereby 'identification contains within it both the prohibition [of] and the desire [for] homosexual cathexis' (136). This unconscious identification therefore causes an internal ambivalence which haunts the borders of the gendered

self, and 'grounds the subject [in a contradiction] which always threatens to unsettle and disrupt that ground' (23).

This argument informs Butler's understanding of the subject by providing a rationale in which 'rigid gender boundaries invariably work to conceal [this] loss of an original love' (2008: 86). That is, in order to conceal the ambivalence of its internal relation to processes of identification, the ego patrols its borders by enacting violent repudiations of both homosexual desire and the opposite sex. Butler suggests, for instance:

Becoming a "man" within this logic requires repudiating the feminine as a precondition for the heterosexualization of sexual desire [...]. [T]he desire for the feminine is marked by that repudiation: he wants the woman he would never be. He wouldn't be caught dead being her: therefore he wants her. [...] One of the most anxious aims of this desire will be to elaborate the difference between him and her, and he will seek to discover and install proof of that difference (1997a: 137).

This formulation is problematic partly because, as Rosi Braidotti points out, it is 'reductive about heterosexual desire, as if it had to do only with domination and exclusion' (52). However, insofar as my aim here is to theorise the investment in structures of identity rather than to speculate on

the nature of sexual desire, I want to be careful not to deny that these types of repudiating identifications occur.¹¹

My focal perspective is the relation between historical and individual contingency implied by defining melancholia as an inaugural moment of gender investment. The problem, in this sense, is not that Butler's argument for a relation between a 'hyperbolic and defensive' (Butler 1997a: 139) masculine identity and a discursive foreclosure of homosexual attachments lacks coherence and credibility. Neither is it with the idea that discursive structures form a constitutive outside which can impel the psychic economy of heterosexual identity towards a repudiation of its gendered other. Rather, my concern is with the specific way repudiation is presented as a psychic 'precondition' (137) of acquiring heterosexual identity; one which is deeply sedimented during infancy and preserved as an unconscious attachment. Specifically, I aim to demonstrate the consequences of this perspective for understanding performativity as a process.

In general, Butler understands the unconscious to be produced and structured by 'originary foreclosures' (Butler 2000c: 249) which are

¹¹ It should be remembered that Butler's engagement with psychoanalysis is intended to historicise the unconscious. As such, an implicit part of her aim is to suggest that gender melancholy is not an inherent trait but a historically contingent one, and that there is therefore 'no necessary reason for [heterosexual] desire to be fuelled by repudiation' (Butler 1997a: 149).

Moreover, it can be argued that: 'For Butler, it is important that this idea of melancholia be understood not as a psychic economy, but as part of the operations of regulatory social power which are contingently organized through certain kinds of foreclosure' (McNay 1999: 186). However, Butler also begins her discussion in *Psychic Life* by claiming 'melancholic identification is central to the process whereby the ego assumes a gendered character' (133). Despite her insistence that she makes 'no empirical claims' (138), Butler's theory still results in a representation of a psychic economy whereby heterosexual desire is founded entirely on the abjection of homosexuality, as well as the opposite sex.

discursive in origin. Discourse works to 'constrain in advance the kinds of objects that can and do appear within the horizon of desire' (149), and the unconscious is the register which retains that which is denied intelligible reality. It therefore 'exceeds the imprisoning effects of the discursive demand [...] to become a coherent subject' (Butler 1997a: 86) because it preserves modes of attachment and identification which continue to exist despite their foreclosure from legitimised reality. Indeed, at one point the complex of melancholy is described as 'an unassimilable remainder' (29) which the regulatory power of discourse cannot contain.

As I have noted, part of Butler's valid enterprise is to stress that states such as gender melancholia are not inherent and historically static structures of the psyche, but the result of contingent power formations that are transformable. However, she goes a step further by presenting the unconscious as the necessary condition of resistance and historical transformation.

The idea of the unconscious as an unassimilable remainder marks, for Butler, the limit of discourse to interpellate hegemonic subjects. Melancholia 'rifts the subject' (23) because it grounds psychic investments in an ambivalence which 'always threatens to unsettle and disrupt that ground' (23). As an attachment to repudiated forms of identification, the unconscious thus 'erodes the operations of language' (143) and internally destabilises the regulatory effects of power. It is from this perspective, then, that Butler differentiates her model of discursive regulation from Foucault's 'behaviourist notion of mechanically reproduced behaviour' (Butler 2000c: 151). Norms are psychically registered in non-totalising

ways *because* of their inability to domesticate the unconscious, and this psychic instability secures the possibility of transformation.

This formulation of instability has two consequences for understanding the gendered psyche. Firstly, it implies that discourse fails to interpellate individuals *only* because the unconscious preserves prohibited spheres of attachment. As with Butler's Hegelian model of recognition, it therefore conveys unstable processes of identification with a very limited spectrum of experience. It also gives little credence to the possibility that the *conscious reflexivity* of hegemonic subjects can resist or exceed the interpellation of discursive structures.

Insofar as the only reason heterosexual psyche does not invest in gender norms with absolute conviction is because of unconscious ambivalence, Butler implicitly presumes that discursive regulation *would* be behaviourist if it were not for psychic conflict. Indeed, in a certain sense, the need to locate psychic instability and historical contingency in the unconscious is only necessary because Butler defines the conscious content of gender intelligibility in purely discursive terms. If, as discussed in my previous section, we consider that the self's immediate conscious relation to their subject positions is much more variably reflexive than Butler suggests, then there is no need to rely on the unconscious to assert the instability of gender investment. Active repudiations, in which heterosexual identification will 'seek to discover and install proof of [sexual] difference (Butler 1997a: 137), can be seen as one of many psychic possibilities rather than the absolute precondition of identification.

Secondly, just as Butler tends to collapse conscious processes of identification into discourse, there is a certain assimilation of the unconscious into an ambivalent register of discourse. This is to say that unconscious processes simply echo the constitutive exclusions of discourse, without providing a sense of how the unconscious itself might be a response to the individual contingency of lived experience and concrete social relations. The unconscious, in this way, is not simply historicised. It is enveloped into the discursively produced subject as its constitutive outside.

When Butler assumes that the discursive foreclosure of homosexuality inaugurates infants into sociality, she presents this foreclosure as *the* founding moment of a subject's unconscious within this specific historical moment. There is thus very little room to consider the contingency of individual experiences in determining the development of psychic investments, and forming the dynamics of unconscious processes. It is, for instance, a *discursive foreclosure* which is said to be internalised by the infant, and not the individually specific social relations which have occurred with the parents, or the particular way any loss of attachment might have come about.

In effect, Butler leaps straight from her analysis of discursive structures to the psychic processes of the infant. The infant's object relations are thus presented in terms of a general sexual desire and a structural foreclosure, but effectively exclude the infant's on-going emotional relations. Given this erasure, it could be questioned to what extent any concrete loss of parental attachment would result in the

internalisation of a prohibition which can be generalised for all infants. Indeed, I would argue that such discursive foreclosures only affect psychic processes in later life when they are conceivable as prohibitions, and even then develop in relation to immediate emotional experiences. At any rate, even if we presume for a moment that an un-grieved loss inaugurates the unconscious during infancy, it would still be highly reductive to equate the unconscious itself only with the ambivalent sedimentation of a discursive prohibition.

Temporal modalities of Melancholy and Emotion:

It would be unrealistic to attempt a theory of the gender investment that could fully account for the individual specificities of all personal object relations. What I will present in my subsequent chapters, rather, is a generalised image of on-going emotional relations which, as an immediate form of social responsiveness, provide the theory of performativity with an alternate basis of understanding contingent processes of instability. This view, I believe, will provide a more dynamic account of the effects of subversion and the possibility of transformation than Butler's image of a melancholic unconscious.

Butler, it should be noted, does in fact make occasional gestures towards the need for an explicit theory of emotion. For instance, there is 'negotiation with love at the level of learning norms' (Butler 2005a: 341) which, she argues, facilitates interpellation. In other words, a child's 'passionate attachment' (Butler 1997a: 7) of love for their parents is what

first 'renders the child vulnerable to subordination [to normative gender relations]' (7). However, this recourse to emotion as an on-going dynamic of sociality is again reduced to an inaugural moment which is conceptualised in terms of a sedimented unconscious complex.

In this vein, Butler argues that '[n]o subject can emerge without this attachment [of love], but no subject, in the course of its formation, can ever afford to fully "see" it' (8). The subject must 'deny its formation in dependency' (9) in order to delude itself to its autonomy, and is therefore 'condemned to re-enact that love unconsciously, repeatedly reliving and displacing that scandal' (8). As with the concept of melancholy, then, the on-going dynamics of concrete emotional experiences are over-written by an unconscious which forms the parameters of future gender identifications. The role of *conscious* emotional experiences within immediate processes of gender investment is left unconsidered.¹²

My broad argument in this respect is that Butler's theory of the unconscious does not account for the necessary dynamics to explore the variability of on-going processes of investment. It yields a narrow view of psychic instability in which the repudiation of, or dreaded identification with, homosexuality and the opposite sex are the only variants of a hegemonic subject's psyche. Moreover, as I will now discuss, situating

¹² Lois McNay has also critiqued the way 'Butler's work on melancholia [...] traces the emotional sources of agency back to a primary disjunction between psyche and society' (2004: 187). In effect, she argues that the 'problem with this narrowing of emotion to a certain delimited concept of desire' (187) is that it reduces the efficacy of emotion to a self-contained, psychic disposition which is 'detached from any social context' (187).

Similarly to my perspective, McNay wants to make room for the idea of 'emotions as a form of social interaction [...] within immediate everyday experience' (187). However, while my focus will be on describing the intensity of responsiveness to subversive repetitions, McNay takes a broader look at the role of emotion in sustaining power structures. For instance, she suggests that 'the "passionate attachment" of working-class women to a certain notion of femininity is not the result of a melancholic foreclosure but rather is a kind of emotional compensation for their marginal social standing' (188).

melancholia as the founding moment of an individual's psyche suggests a temporal modality which has contradictory consequences for Butler's more general theory of performativity and subversion as a process of unstable repetition.

In the performative understanding of identity, as individuals repeat social signifying practices their effects gradually congeal over time and 'produce the effect of an internal core or substance' (Butler 2008: 185). In this sense, the attachment to signifying norms is only developed through a process of sustained repetition. From the perspective of the individual subject, then, the psychic process of repudiation emerges in order to sustain the illusion of a gender essence developed through such repetitions. However, in the melancholic gender argument, the attachment to gender and its correlative repudiations is, from the start, motivated by 'neurotic repetitions that *restage* [...] primary scenarios' (Butler 1997a: 10).

In this sense, placing the defining characteristic of gender investment in an inaugural moment of infancy is a discrepancy in relation to the basic model of performativity. Through it, Butler implicitly sets up a temporality of the individual subject in which the psychic economy of melancholic ambivalence is primary to the effects of repetition. Identity does not emerge as 'a performative accomplishment' (Butler 2008: 192) which is congealed through repetition. It is more like a defensive mechanism which works to 'conceal the loss of an original love' (86). Indeed, Butler argues that 'the stricter and more stable the gender affinity, the less resolved the original loss' (86), so that the inaugural moment of

the unconscious becomes the driving force and measure of intensity for all future identifications.

Understanding the instability of heterosexual gender investment in this way has detrimental repercussions for the subversive repetition model of social transformation. While Butler suggests that melancholia secures the historical contingency and non-behaviourist nature of gender, this is only because the unconscious is understood to preserve attachments which cannot be consciously recognised. What I want to suggest, against this model of historical contingency, is that because these unconscious investments imply a psyche fully structured by an original melancholic identification there is actually very little room to account for contingency and change on the level of the individual.

In short, basing the failures of interpellation on an 'ungrieved and ungrievable loss' (Butler 1997a: 136) results in a much more rigid and immutable view of the individual psyche than Butler cares to realise. As an inaugural moment of the gendered psyche, melancholia does not only designate an on-going ambivalence. It suggests that a violent and defensive psychic mechanism, which conceals those psychic structures of ambivalence, is the basis of all hegemonic identification. This characterisation of gender thus marks an extremely narrow potential for relating to discursive borders. It suggests a model of a hegemonic subject's psychic investment which has little or no malleability. Insofar as a strategy of subversive de-naturalisation aims to transform a subject's investment in the borders of gender, therefore, Butler's framework of

melancholy provides no psychological leeway for such a strategy to be effective.

As a purely performative process, it is the ‘tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders [which] “compels” our belief in its necessity and naturalness’ (Butler 2008: 190). Gender is thus performed in an illusory mode of belief insofar as each repetition successfully conceals its discursive construction; but ‘identity [is] tenuously constituted in time’ (191) insofar as the ideal can never quite be inhabited by anyone. As such, the efficacy of subversion is premised on the idea that a disjunctive performance ‘exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction’ (192).

If, however, the repetition of a rigid gender identity is driven by the psychic necessity of repressing the ambivalent identifications of an un-grieved loss, then the potential effectiveness of subversive disjunctions is somewhat undermined. Rather than simply exposing the constructed nature of identity, a successful subversion would be more likely to cause a traumatic confrontation with the subject’s unconscious. This trauma, in turn, would resolve itself back into the defensive mechanism of rigid gender boundaries.

Butler’s definition of the gendered ego as ‘the sedimentation of objects loved and lost’ (1997a: 133), then, belies the corrosive potential she attributes to it insofar as it theoretically limits the potential effectiveness of subversive repetition. Because melancholia preserves an individual’s past in a specific way – as an inaugural moment which

congeals the self's on-going possibilities for identification – the psyche is not given the necessary fluidity to analyse the diverse relations to gender repetition which hegemonic subjects experience. Following this point, I want to assert that the dynamics of repetition should be maintained as the primary factor determining the consolidation of gender norms, and that a theory of performativity must look elsewhere to affirm and explore the failure of interpellation and the on-going instability of gender.

As I have begun to explain in my previous section, I will re-describe performative processes in terms of sensory-motor tensions of action. Within this perspective, gender is congealed over time because individual bodies preserve the gendered *actions of the past* in the form of motor habits. Social norms are thus familiarised through naturalised dispositions that 'determine in us [bodily] attitudes which automatically follow our perception of things' (Bergson 2005a: 84). However, it is important to recognise, firstly, that this tendency towards unreflective repetition remains inherently unstable insofar as the relationality of habit can be disrupted by incongruent performances. Secondly, when the automatic repetition of the past is interrupted, causing action to become indeterminate, consciousness expands and gender is *actively represented* by recollection memory.

I have already indicated how an important implication of this framework is that the contingent representation of gender can be drawn from an 'infinite number of possible *states* of memory' (Bergson 2005a: 168), each of which creates the influence of the past differently as a spontaneous response to the present moment of indeterminate action.

This perspective thus provides a way to integrate the naturalising congealment of gender repetition with a more diverse image of how the formative dimensions of the past vary within contingent processes of identification, and can therefore be changed. What I want to add here in this respect is an intimation of how *the experience of indeterminacy varies*, creating different forms of investment which, in turn, influence the way memory is actualised to produce representations of gender.

In *Matter and Memory*, consciousness actually has ‘two subjective elements’ (233): that of ‘affectivity and memory’ (233). Like memory, Bergson links affective states to the indeterminacy of action. They designate ‘consciousness [...] in the form of a feeling’ (18), and arise when ‘I find movements begun, but not yet executed’ (18). This is to say, they are a form of *conscious feeling* which develop within the hesitation of movement and compel spontaneous actions. What I will extrapolate from this image of affection, primarily in Chapters Three and Four, is a conception of emotional experience which motivates action in response to subversion.

When the body is tensed towards an anticipated action, the hesitation of that potential action – its indeterminacy – can be intensively charged with various kinds of feeling states, of which I will explicitly describe that of fear, anger, separation anxiety and anticipatory eagerness. Each of these emotional states, I will argue, are adaptive tendencies which orientate action and, as such, can be understood as different ways in which the familiarised expectations of gender can be subverted. Each type of emotion, in turn, calls upon different regions of

memory, causing the dynamics of identification to be formed in idiosyncratic ways which are specific to that tension of action.

This framework of automatic action and emotional indeterminacy supplies a different axis from which to co-ordinate the dynamics of gender investment. An individual's primary basis for investing in the norms of gender is not that of a psychic internalisation of the discursive structures of prohibition, or even a belief in the coherence of signifying meaning. Rather, the way a gendered self derives feelings of coherence or instability in relation to the discursive borders of intelligibility rests upon the tensions of action which they develop within any contingent social field. Indeed, the coherence of discursive intelligibility is actually secondary to the temporal process by which an act unfolds.

As a model of gender naturalisation, the norms of masculinity and femininity are consolidated into sedimented expectations simply through the repetition of past actions. There is not, in this way, an absolute identity between the acquired habit and the laws which have constrained its production. There is, instead, a tendency to repeat which *approximates law within the inattentive performance*, but is motivated by the familiarity which habit provides for the development of actions. As such, a significant aspect of the naturalisation of gender practices takes place in excess of an explicit relation to the discursive framework of intelligibility.

Because prohibition is not unconsciously internalised, forming an ambivalent but monopolistic basis of gender investment, there is no singular way in which the instability of gender develops. First and foremost, it is the projected continuity between the present and the

immediate future which is disrupted by subversion. Inattentive expectation is replaced by an active anticipation which can become emotionally charged in various ways, causing different psychic relations to the constraints of discourse. In effect, this means that an individual's gender identity is discontinuous and susceptible to change because it is re-created during each moment of indeterminacy. The exclusionary borders of discourse are thus continuously re-experienced depending on the specific character and intensity of emotional experience.

When processes such as repudiation and abjection emerge as an active part of an individual's gender investment, then, they tend to do so within emotional economies that alter the way they enter into the experience of self and other. For instance, a state of separation anxiety will tend to call upon memory-images of love and loss, and as such can form states of repudiated identification which are relatable to Butler's theory of melancholy. Indeed, I will argue that psychic complexes of melancholy can *only* develop within a state of separation anxiety, and are therefore contingent rather than fundamental relations to discourse. Alternatively, though, an emotional state of anger will tend to recall previous gender experiences which are relatable to aggression, thus recreating the force of gender norms through a very different psychic economy. In such states, processes of identification may easily repeat the degradation of others who, designated as 'abject beings' (Butler 1993: 3) by the exclusionary matrix of gender discourse, 'form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject' (3). Nonetheless, my argument will be that the force of exclusion at stake in the economy of aggressive

emotions does not involve the internal conflict which Butler designates as central to the hegemonic psyche.

This preliminary sketch will become more detailed over the course of my following chapters. It only serves here to give some idea of how gender investment and identification can, within the general constraints of social and discursive regulation, be conceived as malleable. Along with anger and separation anxiety, my model will include, firstly, the tendency towards fear, which I will discuss in relation to a generalised apprehension which promotes complicity. Secondly, there is the emotion of anticipatory eagerness, which I will argue can influence both the rationalisation of gender hierarchies and the impulse to make gender norms more inclusive. These four adaptive tendencies each constitute radically different experiences of gender hegemony which are either conflated or elided in Butler's perspective.

What I am claiming in this respect is that they form the most common emotional responses to subversion. In addition, however, there is also the notion of aspiration I outlined in section two which, as I will clarify at the end of my following chapter, can be understood as a *creative rather than adaptive emotion*. This is to say, insofar as aspiration is 'a forward thrust, a demand for movement' (Bergson 1935: 45), it is also an emotional experience of indeterminacy; but it is not an experience of indeterminacy which, like the other emotions, compels an anticipatory relation towards the other and a closed relation to discourse. Rather, it promotes an open relation to the future and otherness. Hence, it forms a

basis for investments which aim to exceed the constraints of gender, and forms a source of experience which is radically occluded by Butler's text.

In closing, these emotional tendencies provide a way to theorise the variability of individual experience. This, I propose, is necessary in order to examine the diverse impact which subversion can have on hegemonic subjects and, ultimately, to understand how subversive practices can effect change. I believe this perspective goes some way to addressing the concerns involved in Butler's critique of psychoanalytical images of the gendered psyche – concerns which, in part, initiate her development of gender melancholia into a principle of historical contingency. At any rate, my framework of habit, emotion and memory is certainly not 'structurally static' (Butler 2000a: 6), a-historical, or 'indifferent to politics' (6) in the way she accuses Lacan and Žižek's work of being. In turn, my perspective also avoids the flaws in Butler's own psychoanalytical model, and provides an image of the individual specificity of gender alongside the historical specificity premised by Butler.

Conclusion.

My aim in this chapter has been to clarify my critical perspective towards Butler, and to outline the rough direction of my responses to each specific problem I have isolated in her work. Most generally, my argument has been that in order to account for the effectiveness of subversive repetition it is necessary to view performativity as an individually

contingent process rather than a function of discourse itself. In order to do this I propose it is beneficial to theorise an embodied self which temporally experiences its subject positions in ways which exceed the structures of discursive intelligibility, and can thereby provide a more diverse account of the processes by which norms are sedimented and can be transformed.

This is necessary because Butler's own conception of the temporality of acts of gender repetition is, in general, confined to an abstract notion of reiteration in which 'the historicity of the signifier' (1995b: 136) must be reworked. She therefore confines an understanding of the body to its surface significations, and does not consider the way the body's immediate sensory-motor tensions ground social processes of signification within a situated urgency to act. In denying the need to theorise a reflexive self, she also fails to demonstrate the necessary temporal fluidity of experience which would allow the sedimented effects of signifying conventions to be opened up to a 'future horizon' (Butler 1993: 53).

Even when Butler attempts to theorise psychic processes as distinct from subject positions, her focal prioritisation of the constitutive effects of discourse remains the primary perspective by which such processes are conceived. This results, on the one hand, in a conception of consciousness which is, in effect, empty of efficacious content, and a notion of the self which is conceived only as a source of ambivalence in relation to discursive norms. On the other hand, it results in a notion of the unconscious which, equally, is only presented in terms of an ambivalent

register of discourse, and therefore excludes the effects of lived experience on psychic processes.

In my following chapters I will attempt to maintain Butler's position that 'gender ontologies always operate within established political contexts as normative injunctions, [...] setting the prescriptive requirements whereby sexed or gendered bodies come into cultural intelligibility' (2008: 203). However, by re-conceiving the processes of performativity from the perspective of individual actions, I will speculate upon a more comprehensive account of how these prescriptive requirements actually work upon the subjects who repeat them. I will thus explore in more depth the experiential dynamics necessary to transform hegemonic relations to them.

I will begin this project in the following chapter by exploring in more detail the relation between self and subject which Bergson can provide by presenting them in terms of immediate temporal experience. I will then turn my attention to a thorough analysis of the role the body plays in these temporal dynamics.

CHAPTER TWO: PERFORMATIVITY AS A LIVED PROCESS

In this chapter I will begin to explore performative processes of signification from the perspective of individual acts and selves rather than from Butler's abstract view of historically sedimented discursive practices. Specifically, by adapting Bergson's work on duration, consciousness, language and sociality into Butler's notion of discursive gender regulation, my aim here will be to provide a reformulation of the temporality of performativity.

Although Butler's explicit comments on the nature of temporality are somewhat marginalised in her texts she clearly advocates the kind of de-spatialised view which is associated with Bergson. As she writes, 'the effect of *sedimentation* that the temporality of construction implies' (Butler 1993: 245) should, pace Bergson, 'not [...] be construed as a simple succession of distinct "moments"' (244):

Such a spatialized mapping of time substitutes a certain mathematical model for the kind of duration which resists such spatializing metaphors. Efforts to describe or name this temporal span tend to engage spatial mapping, as philosophers from Bergson through Heidegger have argued (244, 245).

However, it is equally clear that, firstly, "the kind of duration" Butler has in mind here is conceived only in terms of 'the accumulation and congealing' (245) of past "moments" within acts of repetition. Secondly, this accumulation of the past is primarily understood in terms of a sedimentation of discursive practices which constrains the possibilities of signification in advance. In other words, past and present are irreducible into distinct moments because they are thought of specifically in terms of a

'citational legacy' (225) whereby 'a contemporary "act" [only] emerges in the context of a chain of binding conventions' (225).

For Bergson, on the other hand, the reason why there 'can be no question here of a mathematical instant' (2005a: 137) of time is, more generally, because 'what I call "my present" has one foot in my past and another in my future' (138). In this sense, the movement of time cannot be adequately divided into distinct moments because the present, to the extent that the immediate past is prolonged within it, comes to constitute a certain thickness of duration.

What is important in this respect, particularly in contrast to Butler, is that 'the continual progress of the past [...] gnaws into the future and [...] swells as it advances' (Bergson 1960: 4, 5). The most profound influence of the past is not its structural congelation within the regulation of meaning – although, as I will discuss below, Bergson does account for such effects. Rather, the progress of the past indicates that no moment can ever be repeated in its depth because 'consciousness cannot go through the same state twice' (6). Thus, our 'personality, which is being built up each instant with its accumulated experience, changes without ceasing' (6), and 'time is efficacious' (Bergson 2002: 26) because the past accumulates creatively rather than sediments.

In the first section below I will clarify how Bergson's definition of consciousness in *Time and Free Will*, as a qualitative accumulation of past experience within duration, can provide a notion of the self which implies that every normative signification has a variable reflexivity. The important link to Butler here is that, for Bergson, language 'cannot get hold of [this

qualitative experience] without arresting its mobility [and] making it into public property' (Bergson 1971: 129). This relation between language and duration, then, will provide a way to theorise Butler's notion of subject positions alongside a more variable process of self-reflexivity.¹³

Part of what will be at stake in this section is an attempt to work out how an *experiential tension* between duration and discursive regulation can be recuperated to enable a transformative process. However, I will also aim to show how the pressures of social regulation work upon the individual to resist such change. It is to this end that I will turn to *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, adapting Bergson's concept of moral obligation – as a 'sub-rational' (Bergson 1935: 68) tendency to become 'enclosed and materialised in ready-made rules' (46) – in order to re-describe the primary basis for repetition. The conclusion of these reflections, then, will be that both the ossification and potential transformation of signifying practices need to be thought of in terms of psychic tendencies by which individuals develop *varying relations to discourse*.

¹³ As I discussed in Chapter One, this recourse to a notion of reflexivity does not entail the same kind of projects which have previously provoked criticism of Butler on this matter. For instance, my concern is not with the 'difficulty [of] using performativity to analyze the production and *contestation* of heterosexualized spaces within particular spatial/temporal contexts' (Nelson: 343).

Nelson's argument addresses the problem of analysing case studies of institutional structures which, similarly to me, she argues requires an account of how individual's reflexively negotiate their subject positions alongside a historicised framework such as Butler's. However, her focus is on analysing a panoramic view of specific intersubjective relations over a period of days, weeks, or months. My aim, on the other hand, is to theorise the general psychological processes and tendencies which constitute the immediate experience of a signifying act. See Renold (2006) and Nayak and Kehily (2006) for the kind of sociological surveys which Nelson has in mind, each of which study the performative practices of gender within the context of school environments.

I will continue this theme in section two, exploring how these tendencies unfold within an immediate temporal process, as contingent responses to the present moment of action. Primarily, I will be concerned to begin demonstrating how the repetition of norms is driven by the sense of familiarity which habit brings to action. That is, insofar as habit unreflectively projects expectations into the immediate future, it produces a stable environment whereby the effects of discourse are passively and insidiously repeated.

Rather than disrupting an individual's attachment to the meaning of gender, I will argue that subversive repetitions primarily disrupt this temporal projection. I will also begin indicating how the resulting indeterminacy of the act affects processes of intelligibility. In short, the indeterminacy of action potentially allows qualitative experience to transform an individual's relation to the constraints of discursive intelligibility. However, the sense of uncertainty implied by an act's indeterminacy means that hegemonic subjects are more likely to re-affirm the borders of discourse in order to stabilise action.

Finally, in section three I will expand upon this dynamic of expectation and indeterminacy, introducing more explicitly the themes of motor habit and emotion which will occupy my following chapters. In distinction from Butler's claim that gender norms are 'anxiously repeated' (1993: 237) because they are 'continually haunted by their own inefficiency' (237), I will argue that habit implies an effortless and unreflective form of investment which only becomes psychologically complex when actions are driven by emotion.

The Changing Tensions of the Self and the Subject.

For Butler, the regulatory effects of discourse are inherently unstable because, insofar as discourse fails to fully constrain the object it constructs, 'gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions' (1993: 10). Her strategy of subversive repetition aims to work these instabilities to produce an 'enabling disruption' (23) of hegemony. However, I have argued that because she occludes a notion of self-reflexivity Butler portrays only an abstract account of how acts of subversion unfold within the immediate temporal processes of signification.

Butler, legitimately, wants to 'underscore the effect of *sedimentation* that the temporality of construction implies' (245). For her, the 'accumulation and congealing' (245) of the past produces what she calls a 'citational legacy' (225), in which the discursive trajectory of an "I" only 'emerges in the context of a chain of binding conventions' (225). In this context of her work, the self is thus thought of only in terms of an illusion of a stable gendered essence which disavows the construction of its identity. While this move is legitimate in its claim that 'there is no "I" who stands *behind* discourse' (225) – that is, as autonomous from its constitutive effects – what it does not account for is the way *variable experiences* of subject positions are lived through by individuals in tension with the social regulation of gender norms.

In effect, Butler excludes the temporal dynamics of the self – as an on-going experience of constraint and instability – in favour of the citational temporality of subject positions. In her account of temporality, then, the past is only conceived in terms of the sedimentation of convention within signifying practices, and social transformation inheres in the attempt to ‘undo the presumptuous force’ (225) of convention by negating the illusion of identity. However, my contention is that without a notion of a lived past, which exceeds the sedimented effects of discourse, there can be no indication how an individual might reformulate their relation to the convention.

Bergson’s notion of duration can be beneficial here because the endurance of the past implies a continual variation of experience rather than an effect of sedimentation. I will begin this section, then, by demonstrating how Bergson can enable a view of the inherent instability of gender norms in terms of a lived experience which exceeds them, but which exists in an on-going tension with the regulatory constraints of discourse. My aim will then be to speculate upon how this points towards a notion of reflexivity which enables a more thorough understanding of signifying processes in general, and the dynamics of subversion in particular.

Part of what is at stake here is the idea that the stability and instability of gender norms are not simply structures of discourse itself. Neither the fundamental attachment to regulatory norms, nor the potential to subvert them, can be clearly conceived without examining processes which take place outside the framework of discursive intelligibility. In order

to explore this idea I will turn to *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, where Bergson provides a theoretical framework to understand how different psychic 'tendencies [...], some above, some beneath [...] intelligence' (79), are 'at work on our wills' (51) within the immediate act of signification. This will enable me to begin clarifying both *how* duration can emerge as a transformative potential, and *why* this potential meets resistance from the force of socially 'binding conventions' (Butler 1993: 225).

The Deep-Seated Self of Duration:

Bergson's idea of duration, then, was first introduced in *Time and Free Will* where he observes that successive states of consciousness do not simply replace one another, as if they contained 'mutual externality' (108). This view of the mutual externality of successive moments represents, for Bergson, a spatial mapping of time in which mental states 'touch without penetrating each other' (101). It therefore implies that past states have no means to affect the present and future. In contrast to this, Bergson argues that successive moments of consciousness 'permeate one another, imperceptibly organize themselves into a whole, and bind the past to the present by this very process of connection' (121). The processes of duration, in this sense, are 'mental syntheses' (121) which 'forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole' (100) whereby the movement between them is continuous and unbroken.

Through this continuity of the immediate past and present Bergson asserts a kind of non-linear and unpredictable causality within the experiencing self. Because the past is continuous with the present it maintains an influence on the way the present is experienced. For instance, a feeling of sadness which lasted a certain amount of time would not be the same as a sadness which lasted half as long. Although superficially similar enough to define it under the same conceptual category of sadness, it 'would no longer be the same feeling; it would lack thousands of impressions which gradually thickened its substance and altered its colour' (196). Thus, as Bergson writes in *Creative Evolution*: 'Our personality [...] is being built up at each instant with its accumulated experience [and this] prevents any state, although superficially identical with another, from ever repeating in its depth' (6).

Even 'the simplest psychic elements [...] are in a constant state of becoming, and the same feeling, by the mere fact of being repeated, is a new feeling' (Bergson 1971: 200). Through this accumulation of experience 'the self grows, expands, and changes' (175), and the point I want to make here in relation to Butler is that this continual fluctuation of experience implies that, in coincidental agreement with Butler, any assertion that an individual has a stable gendered self is indeed an illusion. That is, because psychic life is in a continual process of becoming, the deep internal experience of being gendered is in a continual process of qualitative change. Even though gendered signifying acts are repeated normatively, the *experience* of this repetition is continually changing for each individual subject.

In the way I am interpreting Bergson's principle of consciousness, and adapting it to Butler's concept of the subject, my argument is thus that his assertion of change implies that there is no fundamental core to gender identity. In effect, then, Bergson's notion of a 'deep-seated self' (1971: 125) secures the inherent instability of gender norms. However, the specific way Bergson is able to deny the possibility of a stable gender essence, and thus reject the ideal of self-presence, is very different from Butler's.

Butler's own emphasis lies in the way the self's coherence depends upon a 'set of exclusions that are nevertheless *internal* to that system as its own nonthematizable necessity' (1993: 39). Within the on-going constitution of identity the self will 'only find itself through a reflection of itself in another' (Butler 2004: 147), and is therefore 'decentered through its identifications' (137). This means that the ideal of self-sufficiency only takes place within a dialectical struggle with the incoherence which the other's negating difference represents to that ideal. It means, in turn, that social transformation can only be effected *through such negations* by disrupting the illusion of coherence.

On the other hand, the reason Bergson's deep-seated self of duration cannot be conflated with a stable identity is because the movement of consciousness is, as it were, *temporally decentred* within itself rather than dialectically decentred through its relation with the other. From this view point, gender identity remains unstable because 'duration properly so called has no moments which are identical' (Bergson 1971: 120), and the progression of the self proceeds through 'an absolute

heterogeneity of elements which pass over into one another' (229).

Therefore, even though the external representation of that self – as a proscribed subject position – may appear relatively stable, there is also a constant process of internal differentiation occurring beneath that illusion of stability.

While my aim in developing this perspective is not to deny Butler's decentred understanding of recognition as such, my definite proposal is that Bergson points towards an excess of experiencing gender norms which takes place differently to Butler's notion of oppositional instability. What is particularly significant in this respect is the way Bergson defines the nature of conscious duration in terms of a 'qualitative multiplicity' (121). In the general context of reading Bergson's work, this notion of qualitative experience is vital in conceiving the type of *differential continuity* achieved within the movement of duration. In the more specific context of this thesis, it will provide a principle of differentiation which is essentially different from that achieved through language.

Bergson argues that if we reflect introspectively on the movement of our own consciousness we can see that every passing moment consists of 'a thousand different elements which dissolve into and permeate one another without precise outline' (132). Different elements of consciousness do not stand out as discrete from one another; they interconnect within a confused temporal movement and form, in their temporal continuity, a kind of open unity. There is, in other words, 'a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organisation of elements' (101) which come together to form a fluid continuity within qualitative experience.

As Pete Gunter argues, this means that ‘the unfolding of our mental life is never simply the arrangement or rearrangement of mental states with respect to each other [...], but consists instead of their global transformation’ (1971: 532). The elements of consciousness form a type of multiplicity in which each “individual part” mutually encroaches on the others. Each element ‘represents the whole’ (Bergson 1971: 101) in the sense that it intrinsically influences the qualitative nature of the others, so that any change in one specific aspect alters the entire nature of the whole.¹⁴

¹⁴ In *The Dialectic of Duration*, Gaston Bachelard makes a particularly forceful criticism of Bergson. He argues that the idea of duration ‘tones down’ (42) heterogeneity to the point where ‘succession seems like a change where things fade and merge into one another’ (42) and, in doing so, Bergson is ‘imposing an essential unity on experience as though experience could never be contradictory or dramatic’ (42). However, it could equally be said that Bachelard reduces change to dialectical opposition and abrupt discontinuity. He thus ignores Bergson’s primary insight: that the mutual encroachment and accumulation of qualitative consciousness *is a deeper stratum of experience* than dialectical change.

Moreover, because Bachelard reads Bergson’s language of fading and merging as metaphors which homogenise dialectical processes he fails to acknowledge precisely *how* the indivisibility of duration results in a process of differentiation. As Deleuze points out,

it would [...] be a serious mistake to think that duration was simply the indivisible, although for convenience, Bergson often expresses himself this way. In reality, duration divides up and does so constantly: That is why it is a multiplicity. But it does not divide up without changing in kind, it changes in kind in the process of dividing up. This is why [...] we can speak of “indivisibles” at each stage of the division (1991: 42).

This is perhaps best clarified through the description of duration as ‘a unity resembling that of a phrase in a melody’ (Bergson 1971: 111). Bergson observes that, in the apperception of a melody, each new note blends with the memory of the previous ones to produce a specific musical effect. The continuous act of duration ‘keeps successive [notes] in mind and synthesises them’ (111) within the present moment. This synthesis then produces a form of organisation through which ‘sounds form an indivisible melody [and thus] give rise to a dynamic progress’ (125). In effect, this means that the successive notes ‘permeate one another without precise outline’ (132); but as they do so the experiential effect of music changes at each moment.

As each new note synthesises with the previous ones it produces a ‘qualitative change [...] in the whole of the musical phrase’ (101). For instance, if a note were changed or paced differently in a familiar piece of music the qualitative effect of the whole would be entirely different. This is why Bergson argues that each new element of consciousness ‘represents the whole’ (101). Its place in the global unfolding of a mental state is neither a mere addition nor an abrupt discontinuity. It constitutes the emergence of a new synthesis which results in a profound differentiation in the quality of experience.

This perspective, then, describes a movement of change which is different from the temporality of self-coherence and negation which, through her analysis of discursive structures, Butler ascribes to performativity. It will, therefore, be important below in counter-acting Butler's assumption that otherness is always and only experienced as a negation of self-identity, and that social transformation *only* occurs through such negations. However, the point here is not to deny Butler's conception of identity and otherness, but to suggest that where Butler sees only a discursive logic of external difference, 'we must admit two kinds of multiplicity, two possible senses of the word "distinguish," two conceptions [...] of the difference between *same* and *other*' (121).

For my purposes, the other type of multiplicity Bergson depicts, what he calls a 'discrete multiplicity' (121), can be thought of in terms of the 'well-defined outlines' (132) of conceptual language which order phenomena into distinct and homogenous categories. Similarly to Butler's notion of gender discourse, it differentiates same and other through 'stable, common, and consequently impersonal [...] impressions' (132) which are sedimented in language conventions.

Part of the significance Bergson draws from his reflection is that because qualitative experience contains only interpenetrating elements, whereas a discrete multiplicity is formed on the basis of distinct borders, our deep conscious experiences of our selves are not definable through the shared structures of language. Indeed, he goes so far as to assert that 'there is no common measure between mind and language' (164, 165).

Each "moment" of duration thus brings with it a global transformation that divides it from the effects of the previous moment because it has transformed into something new.

Different elements of consciousness 'cannot be distinguished or isolated from [each other] except by abstract thought' (101), and when we attempt to do so through conceptual language we inevitably resolve the qualitative, heterogeneous movement of experience into 'general and homogeneous elements which might be compared with each other' (200).¹⁵

So, even though the qualitative processes of change which occur within the deep-seated self is Bergson's primary insight, he also asserts that 'our perceptions, sensations, emotions and ideas occur under two aspects: the one clear and precise, but impersonal; the other confused, ever changing, and inexpressible' (129). Moreover, insofar as the necessity of language makes it 'extraordinarily difficult to think of duration in its original purity' (106), he implies that we tend to derive our understanding of what is natural and real primarily from the homogenising and ossifying effects of language.

In this way, the concepts we apply to our experience in order to comprehend it – for instance, that of stable gender dualism – can only ever solidify the internal differentiation of that movement into homogeneous categories. If, then, my gender appears to me to be a stable and unchanging attribute 'it is because I perceive it through [...] the word which translates it' (131) rather than through the deeper underlying

¹⁵ Critiquing this relation between the self and language, Dan Zahavi has argued that 'Bergson might be faulted for operating within too narrow an understanding of both conceptualisation and language' (126), and that language can take 'a multiplicity of forms' (126) which are not all reducible to homogenisation. Indeed, insofar as Bergson defines language as a discrete multiplicity, Zahavi is justifiable in the claim that he tends to 'underestimate the protean character of language' (126), or at least that he tends to shroud the potential of language to 'enrich' (126) our experiences rather than to simply 'falsify and distort them' (129). However, for the specific purpose of developing Butler's account of the regulatory effects of discourse Bergson's narrow view of language, and its relation to duration, is an effective perspective.

processes of duration. Within everyday experience, the distinct and impersonal differentiations of discourse 'overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness' (132) and produces a 'superficial psychic life' (125) characteristic of repetition and stability.

This part of Bergson's argument marks a vital correlation with Butler's concept of the subject. The superficial self 'is, as it were, the external projection of the [durational self], its spatial and, so to speak, social representation' (231). Like Butler's conception of discourse, language conventions constitute 'a set of meanings already socially established' (Butler 2008: 191) which represent a limit on the way the self and other become intelligible within the midst of social interactions. In turn, because the effects of language ossify and, as it were, performatively name and overwhelm the apperception of duration, it can be understood to produce the tenuous 'illusion of an abiding gendered self' (191).

Nonetheless, as I suggested above, from Bergson's perspective the reason why the illusion of substance can be understood as tenuous is, contra to Butler's work, because it only occurs in a kind of tension with the more profound reality of duration. The important point of emphasis I want to develop in this respect, however, is not simply that language covers over the processes of duration and produces an illusion of substance. This, in effect, would be to simply repeat Butler's claims through a different conceptual framework. Rather, I want to emphasise that the tension which qualitative experience attains with discursive intelligibility constitutes a radically contingent experience of gender which is both *closer to the*

surface effects of signification and potentially more reflexive and positive, than Butler believes it can be.

Butler herself says, in interview, that 'I do not think there is a normative gendered life that does not know – at some level – its own radical contingency, the possibility of being otherwise' (2001a: 22). However, she only conceives this contingency of normative gender as an experience of anxiety and ambivalence. She thus excludes the potential of more productive experiences of otherness which are necessary for radical re-signification. In turn, Butler excludes a consideration of reflexivity insofar as, in the theoretical paradigms she criticises, it is 'usually figured as the capacity for reflexive mediation' (2008: 195) in which the self which reflexively mediates is thought to have 'some stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiates' (195).

It should be noted in respect to this latter point, then, that because the qualitative experience of duration is, essentially, 'inexpressible' (Bergson 1971: 129) within the spatialising effects of language, the notion of reflexivity I am considering here does not manifest as a capacity to speak or act beyond the productive effects of discourse. Neither does it manifest as a capacity for contemplation and intentionality through which the self might autonomously master the effects of discourse or reveal a true or stable essence of gendered experience. Rather, my contention is that the efficacy of duration can manifest as a transitional momentum in which the proscribed stability of the self's subject positions are related to a deeper, on-going process of qualitative change in which 'no moments [...] are identical' (120). Because this aspect of experience is 'confused [and]

ever changing' (129), it produces both an apperception of the self and a qualitative sense of relationality which cannot be contained within the distinct meanings which characterise those positions.

Duration, therefore, constitutes a productive reflexivity only insofar as the self's continual processes of qualitative differentiation can reveal gender norms as approximations and false resting places imposed upon the fluid nature of experience. It provides a deep-seated experience of contingency that exceeds and is irreducible to the discursive structures of gender, and can produce a reflexive distance from the effect of signifying constraints.

Reflexivity, in this sense, is simply an ability to shift attention from the substantialising effects of gender norms towards the apperception of qualitative change in such a way that the self resists their totalising effects. What can be recuperated through this reflexivity is not the meaning of a true gendered experience or an ultimate liberation from the constraints of discourse, but a lived sense of the inherent instability of gender norms in which difference is, temporarily, no longer measured in relation to the ossifying and externally exclusive structures of identity.

What is at stake in this assertion is not so much a critique of Butler's general view of discourse but of the type of reflexive activity which is presumed to enable transformations of the discursive structures of intelligibility. However, while Bergson's notion of duration is important as a means to *productively* de-naturalise identity, it is also necessary to look closer at the tendency towards naturalisation. That is, it is necessary to develop an account of the *attachment* to discourse as a dynamic process

which is susceptible to change, but also provides resistance to such potential transformations.

Obligation and Aspiration:

Developing a Bergsonian account of sedimented attachments to gender discourse requires more than simply attributing externality and ossification to language itself. It requires thinking of the stability of gender norms in terms of a movement, as it were, of the self *towards* ossification. This will allow a demonstration of how the relation between stability and instability develops as on-going tension within processes of signification. It is for this purpose that it is necessary to move beyond the framework of *Time and Free Will*, where the superficial self is, like Butler's notion of the subject, a structure of language, and instead engage the account of sociality which Bergson conveys in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

Bergson develops there a study of what he calls a closed moral disposition of obligation and an open moral disposition of aspiration. However, it is not so much Bergson's notion of morality which concerns me as it is his depiction of obligation and aspiration as 'two forces to which society owes its stability and mobility' (Bergson 1935: 74). By adapting his account of these moral forces into a more general understanding of sociality, I will develop a more thorough explanation of the tendencies

through which individuals variably relate to discursive structures of intelligibility.¹⁶

¹⁶ Before I begin my development of obligation and aspiration it should be noted, firstly, that Bergson derives his understanding of these tendencies from the evolutionary perspective he develops in *Creative Evolution*. Secondly, insofar as my own aim is only to *adapt* the general dynamics of obligation and aspiration into an account of signifying practices, I will not explicitly take up the evolutionary context of *The Two Sources* in my primary discussion. Indeed, while I will discuss the evolution of the body and consciousness in my following chapter this will take place in the context of Bergson's earlier work of *Matter and Memory*, which has a less developed philosophy of evolution than his two later books. Nonetheless, it is worth taking a cursory glance at some of the broader issues at stake in *Creative Evolution* and *The Two Sources* which, although omitted from my immediate concerns, remain on the periphery.

In *The Two Sources* 'all morality, be it [obligation] or aspiration, is in essence biological' (82). Bergson's framework is thus an exercise in socio-biology. However, as John Mullarkey observes, 'there is no hint here that [Bergson] wishes to deflate culture to "merely" animal, biological or genetic forces' (1999a: 89).

In order to fully understand these claims we must first 'give to the word biology the very wide meaning [which it has in *Creative Evolution*]' (Bergson 1935: 82), where Bergson argues that scientific analysis cannot disclose the vitality of life. What the conventional practice of biology provides us with are in fact '*partial views*' (Bergson 1960: 32) of organisms: views in which 'the mechanism of parts [are] artificially isolated within the whole' (32). However, it is only by reflecting upon the 'unity and continuity of [...] animated matter' (39) – through which 'duration marks the living being with its imprint' (39) – that we can rediscover the vitality of life. Thus, while isolating the 'mechanistic tendencies of physiology' (37) can explain the 'functional activity of the living being' (38), Bergson suggests that the 'real whole' (32) of a living organism is better understood in terms of the kind of 'indivisible continuity' (32) characteristic of duration.

This is to say that Bergson translates his principles of duration and space into biological exigencies which, like the two selves of *Time and Free Will*, denote a force of change and a counter-active process of ossification. On the one hand, we should see in evolution 'an inward impulse that [...] carries life forward [...] towards an ever higher complexity' (Bergson 1935: 93). What this image of an inward impulse should suggest to us is that of 'a real and effective duration which is the essential attribute of life' (95). On the other hand, there is also the 'resistance life meets from inert matter' (Bergson 1960: 103). This image should suggest to us the admittance of natural laws which impede the inward impulse of life, but also an understanding of matter as the medium through which specific organic forms are created.

In effect, evolution is characterised as a '*modus vivendi*' (263) between the tendency for living bodies to become fixed in relatively stable forms and the tendency for the vitality of life to break out of these fixed forms. Indeed, all organic life displays this conflict between indeterminacy and material constraint – albeit in different ways, and to different degrees, depending on both the species and the moment to moment experience of the individual. While the partial views of biology can provide a precise knowledge of the functional aspects of the body, this perspective conceives only the sedimented results of the evolutionary process. It generally fails to recognise the vital indeterminacy which also resides in and infuses those bodies.

As such, practices which call upon biology to explain human society often gravitate towards deterministic explanations of power formations and behaviour. They focus only on the sedimented effects of evolution, while excluding Bergson's wider meaning of biology as an inward impulse pertaining to the vitality of life itself.

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's work, for instance, legitimately seeks to explore how the evolution of what she calls the body's '*animate form*' (156) facilitates 'certain distinctive behavioral possibilities and not others' (156). Rhetorically put, having 'a human body [rather than] a crow body' (156) means that 'I can run [but] I cannot fly' (156). Thinking about the relational dynamics of such correlative limitations and potentials as

Generally speaking, my analysis of aspiration below will continue the account of qualitative experience which I have begun above, only really expanding upon the way its potential for transformation manifests socially. More radically, what obligation brings to this discussion is a theoretical framework which distinguishes discursive structures – which regulate gender by constraining the possibility of social intelligibility – from the psychic tendency to repeat and preserve these structures within a concrete process of signification. It will thus provide a way to understand ossification as a process in which the ontological weight and exclusionary force of identity is not given solely by discourse itself, but develops contingently as a variable *relation* to discourse. In addition, *The Two Sources* provides a way to understand how the tendencies of ossification and qualitative change ‘meet [...] in that region of the mind where concepts are formed’ (51), and it is this perspective which will enable me

the result of an evolutionary process, Sheets-Johnstone argues, provides a biological basis for social analysis outside of the more usual anatomical or genetic perspectives. However, when she actually applies this principle of analysis to the sexed bodies of men and women she ultimately derives an extremely narrow view of sexual politics.

She not only reduces human sexual dynamics to a comparative study of primate oestrus cycles and practices of presenting – from which she infers evolutionary meaning into social conventions such as the ‘proscription against human females’ adopting “legs-spread” sitting postures, and the correlatively unconstrained adoption of “legs-spread” sitting postures by human males’ (163). She also conceives this perspective as a more or less deterministic constraint: ‘sexed primate bodies [...] are linked *inescapably* to certain power relations’ (157; my italics). In this way, Sheets-Johnstone presents the influence of evolutionary characteristics as relatively fixed formations of power, and forecloses the possibility that aspects of sociality can exceed those influences.

Bergson’s socio-biology, on the other hand, generalises the tendency of life to establish itself in fixed forms into a correlative tendency for social structures to find and maintain stability. Nonetheless, this is simply a tendency for social groups to naturalise contingent formations of power. It is not, as with Sheets-Johnstone, an assertion that evolution has tied us irrevocably to any specific social structure which may presently exist. Indeed, Bergson insists on the inherent potential for social formations to become infused with the inward impulse which drives evolution. Thus, the point I want to close with here is that:

the error of false sociobiology is its search for legitimising natural essences, when in truth the “sources” of society provide us only with natural tendencies, one of which will actually be the tendency to renounce all notions of natural essence in favour of the continual creation of new social forms (Mullarkey 1999a: 89).

to explore the stability and instability of signifying practices in terms of an on-going and variable tension which develops *within* psychic processes of intelligibility.

Firstly, then, the disposition of obligation is a tendency to become 'enclosed and materialised in ready-made rules' (46). In this sense, it echoes Butler's emphasis on gender as the ritualised 'repetition [...] of a set of meanings already socially established' (Butler 2008: 191) in which the past is sedimented within the effects of discourse. A further correlation, moreover, can be seen in the association of obligation with the need for stability and exclusion. On the one hand, Bergson writes that in closed societies 'immutability is rated higher than mutability, which implies a [...] quest of the unchanging form' (1935: 209). On the other hand, the 'essential characteristic' (20) of a closed disposition is 'to include at any moment a certain number of individuals, and exclude others' (20).

An equally important correlation is that the specific direction which inclusion and exclusion takes is 'ingrained in the customs, the ideas [and] the institutions' (232) of a society. Similarly to Butler, for Bergson such customs amount to 'a system of *orders* dictated by *impersonal* social requirements' (68), and result in 'an ideal being set up as a pattern [of behaviour]' (65). Indeed, in a passage which might be mistaken for Butler, Bergson argues that it is through such rules and ideals that 'that our ego generally finds its point of attachment [and] is itself socialized' (6). This means that to cohere within a group 'will mean to follow these rules, to conform to this ideal' (65).

In this way, then, social cohesion is achieved for Bergson through a set of inclusive ideals which 'binds [individuals] to the other members of society' (67) by creating points of identification. Moreover, insofar as the truth effects of identity are constructed by these ideals, there is also an agreement between Bergson and Butler that 'the adherence of each individual is reinforced by the adherence of the all' (168), so that 'truth will as a rule *be* this [universal] assent' (168).

The primary difference which I want to emphasise here is the manner by which truth and meaning are involved in social dynamics. For Butler, the unstable 'reenactment and reexperiencing of [gendered] meanings' (2008: 191) play a primary role in the repetition and de-naturalisation of performativity. In *The Two Sources*, on the other hand, the 'forces which act upon us' (51) when we assent to the truth effects of exclusionary social ideals are not purely those of meaning itself. This suggests a crucial difference in the way we might understand both everyday gender attachments and the possible outcome of subversive repetitions.

Butler's political strategy aims to 'expose the limits and regulatory aims of [*the discursive*] domain of intelligibility' (Butler 2008: 24). In effect, her model of subversion aims to effect social transformation by de-naturalising and disrupting the coherence of meaning. Thought of from Bergson's perspective, however, I want to suggest that disrupting the coherence of meaning is, in itself, insufficient to radically transform an individual's relation to their subject positions.

This is because ‘the usefulness of the rule solely accrues [...] from the fact of our submission to it’ (Bergson 1935: 14). In Bergson’s model, discursive structures of intelligibility can be understood to ‘supply our [social] activity with a definite object’ (72). Nonetheless, the basis of conforming to the truth of these objects ‘does not come from intelligence’ (76). Rather, the peremptory force of law acts upon the will via psychic dispositions which are ‘something less than intelligence’ (50). In short, the ‘original and fundamental elements’ (68) of obligation are, for Bergson, ‘sub-rational’ (68).

Butler does in fact convey the idea of sub-rational tendencies when, for instance, she argues that gender norms are always ‘anxiously repeated’ (1993: 237). However, my point in this respect is that she misrecognises the way hegemonic subjects live their sub-rational relations to everyday signifying practices. Anxiety is said to drive gender identity, in part, because ‘our belief in its necessity and naturalness’ (Butler 2008: 190) is compelled by the ‘punishments that attend not agreeing to believe’ (2008:190). Thus, conformity is *forcibly* compelled, even upon hegemonic subjects. From my alternate Bergsonian perspective, social pressure will interpellate the individual into discursive practices, not because of the punishments involved in not repeating but by ‘weighing on the will like a habit’ (Bergson 1935: 15). The ‘tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete polar genders’ (Butler 2008: 190) is, in this way, not compelled by anxiety. More fundamentally, hegemonic subjects are, as it were, placated by the need for the familiarised and stable social environment which the collective agreement provides.

I will discuss the role of habit in performativity separately, in my following sections, because my own interpretation involves a development away from Bergson's explicit concept of obligation. For the present moment, I am more concerned to emphasise Butler's tendency to subordinate psychic and sub-rational processes to her analysis of abstract discursive structures. In effect, she makes such processes equivalent to the stabilities and inconsistencies of discourse, so that whenever the structures of discourse are rendered incoherent it exposes the illusion of an abiding gendered self and makes transformation possible.

If however, pace Bergson, we differentiate more strongly between the intellectual recognition of a gender norm and the sub-intellectual need for social familiarity, then we may be led to a different conclusion. Because 'the obedience of everyone to laws, even absurd ones, assures greater cohesion to the community' (Bergson 1935: 14), the mere possibility of rendering the meaning effects of these laws incoherent does not necessarily affect a change in an individual's attachment to them.

What this implies for a reconsideration of performativity is that approaching an understanding of subversive practices only as a disruption of meaning becomes inadequate to understand the responses to such subversions. While social coherence requires distinct object domains and discursive borders in order to produce a consistent social field in which to identify, rendering the borders of this domain incoherent becomes a problematic strategy of transformation. The tendency to conserve identity persists, regardless of the strain its thematic coherence is placed under, because it is not driven by an individual's need for the intelligibility of

gender to remain coherent. Indeed, I will argue that in many cases such de-naturalising incoherence further enforces the imperative to abject that which is excluded, and if anything makes the tendency towards conservation more complex and resistant to change.

In short, disrupting 'the internal fixity of the self' (Butler 2008: 183), specifically by challenging 'the meaning and necessity of [its] terms' (182), does not necessarily affect the deeper need for social stability which is derived from them. Given, then, that the subversion of meaning does not trouble the primary attachment to norms, my concern now is attempting to draw from Bergson an understanding of *how* 'our fundamental categories can [...] expand to become more inclusive and more responsive to the full range of cultural populations' (Butler 2004: 223, 224).

As I suggested above, Bergson's notion of duration can produce a reflexive distance from signifying constraints by enabling a qualitative sense of relationality which exceeds the discursive structures of identity and exclusion. In *The Two Sources* the correlate of this idea is the moral tendency of aspiration, which is capable of 'opening what was closed' (230) because it creates a social disposition which is not dependent on ready-made social practices. My initial claim in this respect is that social transformation is more readily possible on the basis of aspiration than it is through Butler's strategy of negating identity.

From my Bergsonian perspective, the problem with Butler's framework is that she places the dynamics of exclusionary closure and inclusive openness on the same level of signifying meaning. What Bergson's work implies, on the other hand, is that there are two opposing

tendencies by which individual's relate to sociality and discourse, and that we 'must discriminate the one from the other [if we are not] to misunderstand the nature of social evolution' (65). In other words, the 'mistake is to believe that it is possible to pass, by a mere process of enlargement or improvement, from the static to the dynamic' (231). Whether we think of signification from a social or a psychological perspective, we cannot pass from a process of violent exclusion to one in which the excluded become included 'by any mere broadening out' (230) of the dynamic of exclusion itself.

Such an opening up of that which was closed, thought of as a transformation of an individual's relation to signifying practices, requires a psychic process which is different in kind from that in which self coherence is achieved through the abjection of an other. Thus, if we postulate, as Butler does, only a discursively structured identity in which the excluded other poses a 'fundamental threat to [that identity's] continuity' (1993: 53), and which therefore leads to anxiety and aggression in the face of the other, can we further postulate the expansion of exclusionary categories without including some other factor by which individuals relate to discourse? For subversive acts to perform effective de-naturalisations, they cannot simply negate the coherence of subject positions. They require the production of the kind of psychic attitude which Bergson associates with the moral disposition of aspiration.

In Bergson's formulation, aspiration is an 'act by which the soul opens out' (1935: 46), and through this opening out 'broadens and raises [the aspect of the self which] is enclosed in ready-made rules' (46).

Whereas obligation is ‘something less than intelligence’ (50) because it provides a peremptory force to the discursive object domain, aspiration is something ‘more than intelligence’ (50) in the sense that it ‘does not yield to the attraction of [a distinct] object’ (27). In the context of Butler, however, what needs to be worked out in this formulation, as a development of Bergson’s explicit ideas, is how specifically this ‘supra-rational’ (68) notion of aspiration can produce a transformative process which is different from negation.

The notion of aspiration I am attempting to convey here can be understood as ‘a return to [the] movement’ (40) of qualitative experience which I described above. Such a return can produce the ‘capricious, generous, and “unthreatened” bearings on the self’ (Butler 1995b: 140) which Butler calls for because it develops through a form of differentiation which does not produce a distinct object domain. Indeed, the qualitative multiplicity of duration progresses through ‘an absolute heterogeneity of elements’ (Bergson 1971: 229), which nonetheless ‘dissolve into and permeate one another without precise outline’ (132). Thus, because difference is imperceptibly organised into a whole, the qualitative apperception of social relations exceeds the exclusionary differentiations of discursive intelligibility. It can therefore influence sociality in potentially productive ways. For instance, rather than negating identity the self’s experience of otherness can, as it were, momentarily transcend the proscribed borders of gender recognition.¹⁷

¹⁷ The correlation between aspiration and the qualitative process of duration has also been suggested by Emmanuel Levinas. Nonetheless, his reason for making this association is quite different from my own, and draws upon Bergson’s account of religion rather than morality. The primary source of reference in this respect is the non-deifying

Insofar as this differentiation is achievable within the immediate dynamics of social responsiveness, my argument is that an apperception of duration can enable the spontaneous creation of 'a new social atmosphere' (Bergson 1935: 64). More specifically, as a means of transforming an individual's relation to structures of discursive regulation, this qualitative social atmosphere 'vivifies' (34) processes of intelligibility by producing the 'enthusiasm of a forward movement' (39). That is, because duration 'implicitly contains the feeling of progress' (39), this atmosphere can develop as 'an impetus' (230) which is capable of opening up an individual's relation to the closed structures of discourse.

As I outlined above, an apperception of duration can provide a reflexive distance from the substantialising effects of discourse. However, in the *Time and Free Will* model language has an ultimately distortive relation with the qualitative movement of the self. What Bergson additionally implies in *The Two Sources* is that this movement can also

idea that 'the creative energy [of the vital impetus] is to be defined as love' (Bergson 1935: 220), and that 'God [...] is this energy itself' (220, 221).

Levinas argues, then, that: 'In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, the [duration] of *Time and Free Will* [...] means love of my neighbor' (2006: 153). In this vein, he is reading Bergson's initial invocation of duration as 'the refusal to seek the meaning of reality in the persistence of solids' (194). This refusal, in turn, ultimately implies for him 'the transcendence of a relationship with someone' (194) beyond the ready-made and into a notion of 'love, friendship, sympathy' (194) which is characteristic of aspiration, and which can thereby be 'interpreted as [an ethical] relation with the other and with God' (194).

Thus, Levinas is portraying a straight forward progression in which the former work on duration has developed in the latter work to imply love, and a notion of God which can correlate to Levinas' own theological enterprise. This, indeed, may be a more or less accurate interpretation of Bergson's oeuvre, and Levinas is certainly right to associate aspiration with a refusal of solids that results in a state which is 'all love' (Bergson 1935: 27). However, this is certainly not the only way to characterise the movements in Bergson's work, and the deeper theological implications of *The Two Sources* would be an unnecessary excursion in the context of performativity. Moreover, Bergson's own views on God, while clearly in some way synonymous with the creative impetus of evolution, ultimately remain somewhat ambiguous. As Nicolas de Warren points out: 'Bergson stresses [...] the philosophical ambivalence of any pronouncement on the question of God. Philosophical method remains solidly welded to experience, thus prohibiting any presumed knowledge that would exceed the given' (185).

work in the opposite direction, so that qualitative experience 'vitalises [...] the intellectual elements with which it is destined to unite' (34). It is not that qualitative experience produces a new intellectual representation of gender, but that its intangible excesses can be gathered into an impetus which *aspires* to new gender formations. As a potential of the self which is different from the faculty of distinct intelligibility, then, qualitative experience is capable of opening the closed representations of discourse in the sense that it 'drives intelligence forwards in spite of obstacles' (34). Ultimately, my argument is that it is by 'absorbing aspiration' (51) in this way, rather than through a process of negating the borders of identity, that 'obligation tends to expand and broaden out' (51).

What I want to derive from Bergson's text in this respect is the idea of a kind of psychic topology which begins to demonstrate more clearly how this works. As psychic tendencies, aspiration and obligation are 'forces which are not strictly and exclusively moral' (78), but can be understood more generally as different types of psychic tension or motivation which produce reflexive attachments to sociality, discourse and difference. As 'two [opposing] forces which act upon us' (51), they are 'projected on to the intermediary plane, which is that of intelligence' (68) where they 'intermingle and interpenetrate' (68). Thus, as forces operating within intelligibility, the one 'sub-rational [the other] supra-rational' (68), they converge 'in that region of the mind where concepts are formed' (51).

Bergson describes obligation and aspiration as the 'difference between repose and movement' (45) *within a society as a whole*.

However, what I am suggesting is that they constitute a variable dynamic

by which an individual's relation to social norms either sediments or changes. In effect, my argument is that within the contingent production of a mental concept there is a tension 'at work on our wills' (51) which drives individual relations to meaning in different directions. Thus, signifying practices become subject to 'stability and mobility' (74) depending on which force is more prominent at a specific contingent moment.

What obligation adds to the immediate production of a mental concept is the force by which the discursive object domain becomes a 'taken-for granted ontology' (Butler 1993: 35). Its tendency is to 'alight directly on an object which attracts it' (Bergson 1935: 27), and is 'more unalloyed' (23) the more it is 'reduced to impersonal formulae' (23). It therefore becomes 'more potent' (24) as the dynamics of social intelligibility become 'more distinctly broke up into [the] impersonal' (24) framework of discourse.

In contrast, aspiration becomes 'more cogent' (24) as mental concepts 'merge more completely with a man's unity and individuality' (24). That is, within the immediate impetus of aspiration the process of social intelligibility 'does not yield to the attraction of [a distinct] object' (27). Rather, it draws the dynamics of relationality away from the homogenising impersonality of signifying norms, and towards an apperception of individually contingent aspects of experience. If we understand this assertion in terms of Bergson's deep-seated self, then, aspiration implies an experience of sociality in which 'elements [of qualitative difference] dissolve into and permeate one another without precise outline' (Bergson 1971: 132). It lacks a distinct object or identity

because sociality is experienced through a qualitative multiplicity in which relations interpenetrate, and thereby provides a psychic process of relationality which exceeds the meanings regulated by the discursive object domain. It produces instead an ineffable quality within the conception of meaning which is 'confused, ever changing, and inexpressible' (129).

Within this experience of qualitative change there lies an inherent potential to reform social relations to discursive structures because it allows the immediate relation to the other to arise without a predetermined intellectual object or aim. The more the 'mutual [...] interconnexion and organisation of elements' (101) becomes efficacious within a context of social recognition, the less the relation between self and other is derived from a logic of external difference by which social coherence is achieved through exclusion. Aspiration, therefore, produces 'a new social atmosphere' (Bergson 1935: 64) insofar as qualitative differentiations can become a point of departure for experiencing the relational dynamics of sociality.

Rather than conserving identity, and exacerbating the peremptory force of regulation and exclusion within the moment of interaction, this enables the reflexive experience of the self to change in response to its relation to alterity. Because the self's relationality 'does not originate in an idea' (200) but in a process, self-coherence is, at least momentarily, no longer achieved on the basis of a rigid ontological assumption but through an open-ended experience. Thus, insofar as the self gains its source of social coherence from qualitative differentiations in which self and other

interpenetrate without implying distinct object domains, the immediate response to de-naturalisation is not experienced as an abrupt negation but can develop through a more fluid dynamic of relationality.

Indeed, in its simplest definition, a state of aspiration can be understood as a 'faculty of adapting and re-adapting oneself to circumstances, in firmness combined with suppleness (195). In turn, the simplest formulation of my argument is that a subversive repetition must aim to produce such supple, re-adaptive responses for it to properly enact an 'enabling disruption' (Butler 1993: 23) within the experience of hegemonic subjects. A 'radical rearticulation of the symbolic horizon' (Butler 1993: 23) becomes possible not when identity is rendered ambiguous by a violent negation of its presumed certainty, but when the self strives to transfigure its underlying process of qualitative change into the 'enthusiasm of a forward movement' (Bergson 1935: 39). Thus, when 'a parodic repetition [...] exposes the phantasmatic effect of an abiding identity' (Butler 2008: 192) it produces a responsiveness in which the object domain can be rendered incoherent in a productive way.

However, while my assertion is that this 'return to movement' (Bergson 1935: 40) of aspiration is a potential of any gendered subject to re-adapt their relation to proscribed meaning structures, it must be kept in mind that as a radically transformative process it is rare and exceptional. Obligation is a more prominent relation to discourse because it is through the submission to rules and ideals 'that our ego generally finds its point of attachment [and] is itself socialized' (6). Thus, because the nature of subversion is to de-naturalise the coherence of normative identities

structured by gender ideals it is inherently difficult to invoke aspiration within the midst of social dynamics.

As I will clarify in the following section, the general relation between qualitative experience and language which I outlined above suggests that the impetus of aspiration cannot sustain itself within the structures of signifying practices. Because 'our intelligence and our language deal in fact with things' (45) they 'are less at home in representing transitions or progress' (45). There is, in other words, an unavoidable return to identification in which 'the circle that was momentarily opened [necessarily] closes again' (230), and 'individual aspiration [will again] become social pressure' (230).

To reiterate, then, my aim in this section has not been to deny the constitutive effects of discourse in producing gendered identities but, firstly, to incorporate into Butler's model a notion of the self who reflexively experiences difference in ways which exceed, and can potentially transform, their relation to gender norms. Secondly, it has been to argue that subversive repetitions cannot transform identities by negation alone because the fundamental attachment to discursive practices is a 'sub-rational' (68) tendency which remains unaffected by rendering meaning incoherent. By pointing towards a tension between obligation and aspiration within the contingent formation of mental concepts, I have then begun to explore a model of signifying practices by which individuals project either peremptory or expansive dispositions into their relations to discourse.

What remains to be drawn out more explicitly is *how* the tension between aspiration and obligation develops experientially within the immediate temporal process of an act. This involves more than simply invoking the efficacious influence of duration against the constraints of discursive regulation. It requires an exploration of how a process of intelligibility unfolds, as a variable relation to discourse, amidst the pressures of social interaction.

What is at stake here as far as temporality is concerned is the idea that the experiential dimensions of the past, present and future have reciprocal influences on each other which are themselves dependant on the tensions towards action which develop contingently within a social scene. In short, the way in which the past influences the present moment of intelligibility – either through the qualitative accumulation of experience associated with aspiration or the conservation of convention implied by obligation – depends upon the way the future is anticipated within that moment. In the following section, it is through this dynamic of temporality – thought of as a variable relation to the immediate process of action – that I will attempt to re-describe the way the tendencies of aspiration and obligation develop within concrete signifying practices.

Action and Temporality.

A vital part of my engagement with Butler is an attempt to reformulate her abstract account of temporality as ‘citational legacy’ (1993:

225). Equally, an important part of this involves the way Bergson's notion of duration can help analyse the lived dimensions of signification.

However, ultimately it is a more specific account of temporality which I am aiming to describe. It is one which *adapts* Bergson's notions of duration *and* sedimentation to the political problems of Butler's work, and attempts to outline the dynamics of an on-going process by which an individual subject acts within a regulated social field. My critique is not, then, simply a case of asserting Bergson's central philosophical premise that '*Time is invention or nothing at all*' (1960: 361), but of exploring how the efficacy of duration varies within the immediate process of signification.

What I want to first make clear in this section, then, is the difference between my approach to the idea of social transformation and a more popular approach to Bergson which presents Deleuze's interpretation of the virtual and actual as the unifying principles of his work. Rather than emphasising the *tension* between change and constraint which is apparent, for instance, in Bergson's work on aspiration and obligation, this approach tends to emphasise the potential for radical emergence as a general principle of unpredictable change. It therefore develops in a direction which is problematic in relation to Butler because it excludes the social conditions of constraint which characterise performativity.¹⁸

¹⁸ While my primary concern is with the specific way Mikko Tuhkanen uses the virtual and actual, John Mullarkey has issued a much broader critique of this framework. Mullarkey argues, for instance, that 'the biases [Deleuze] brings to his readings of Bergson' (2004a: 469) result in explications of Bergson placing 'an excessive weight on the concept of the "*virtual*"' (469). For Mullarkey, this common tendency – which is 'rapidly becoming an unchallenged "-ism"' (469) – is structured so that 'the virtual is given its ascendancy at the expense of the actual' (470). This ascendancy therefore 'generates an imbalance that fails to recognise the importance of concepts of *actuality*, like space or psychology' (469).

There is perhaps some truth to this, and I agree with Mullarkey's comment that the hegemony of such practices tends to occlude 'other readings of Bergson which are

This approach, then, has been presented by Mikko Tuhkanen in terms of an explicit critique of Butler, and I will begin this section by analysing his article in order to highlight more clearly its problematic relation to Butler. What is specifically at stake in this analysis is the idea that Tuhkanen's emphasis on the radical openness of the future, thought of in terms of performativity, effaces the much more pertinent issue of how the immediate future is *experienced as anticipation*. I will argue that an inherent part of aspiration is, pace Tuhkanen, the way the immediate future is lived as radically open. However, this openness is an achievement which must first overcome a tension with the more common tendency of obligation to anticipate the future in terms of sedimented expectations.

In this way, while I have so far remained relatively close to Bergson's text in describing obligation in terms of the necessity for 'social cohesion' (Bergson 1935: 22), in this section I will develop a more interpretive perspective. I will argue that a basic means of social coherence is achieved by anticipating the immediate future. This is because the projection of sedimented expectations creates a familiarised and stable social field of action by which individuals can become

not so heavily mediated in one direction' (2004a: 469). However, I do not agree with his much more damning argument that: 'The *passage* of time [...] is unthinkable in itself [...] and to pretend to think it through what we call "the virtual" is philosophically confused' (473, 474). This seems to deny one of the primary tenets of Bergsonism: that 'the very operation of life [...] consists in the gradual passage from the less realized to the more realized, from the intensive to the extensive' (Bergson 2007: 185, 186) – in other words, from the virtual to the actual.

Furthermore, other commentators such as Frederic Keck have conveyed a more balanced view of the relations between the virtual and actual. Keck argues, for instance, for understanding of 'the virtual, the symbolic, and the actual' (1134) as 'three degrees of experience that are intertwined in complex and productive ways' (1134). He thus not only complicates the virtual/actual framework with a third term – the symbolic – but, in doing so, uses the idea of the virtual and actual to facilitate a more sophisticated image of the role language plays in Bergson's work.

comfortably orientated. This development provides the opportunity to re-think the conservative tendencies of obligation as complex attachments which vary depending upon the way immediate processes of action are rendered indeterminate.

In short, when entrenched expectations are disrupted by subversive repetitions, the indeterminacy of the future does not simply present itself to the individual as a radically open potential. Rather, the disruption of familiarity means that an individual is likely to experience an uncertain relation to the immediate future. This uncertainty then results in complex processes of intelligibility which ultimately aim to re-establish a sense of familiarity through identification. Thus, we cannot simply assume a 'process of radical emergence' (Tuhkanen: 21), as Tuhkanen does, because this uncertainty overwhelms the open relation to the future necessary for aspiration. It thereby produces complex psychological responses, but not necessarily transformative ones.

Tuhkanen argues, then, that while 'the thrust behind the theory of performativity is her concern with *becoming*' (2), Butler's attempt to 'build a philosophy of becoming on the negative' (2) means that 'performativity does not allow us to think forms of existence that radically diverge from what is currently available to us' (22). For Tuhkanen, the emphasis on negativity in Butler's 'Hegelian-inflected paradigm' (26) is problematic because it commits her to an idea of change which is only a realisation of 'already existing possibilities' (22). In other words, the claim here is that Butler does not adequately theorise the process of change because she thinks of the future only in terms of the present.

This assertion stems directly from the conception of the virtual and actual which Deleuze extrapolates from Bergson, and which Tuhkanen puts forwards as a favourable alternative to Butler's conception of change. The virtual, in Tuhkanen's account, designates the efficacy of the past as 'an undifferentiated realm of potentiality that in no way predicts the actual forms of existence it produces' (20). The actual, on the other hand, denotes the 'potential process of radical emergence' (21) which follows from this potentiality of the past, and Tuhkanen's general argument is that this 'creative dimension is absent in [Butler's account of] performative repetitions' (22).¹⁹

This potential of radical emergence constituted by the virtual and the actualisation of the virtual is contrasted by Tuhkanen, following Deleuze, to Bergson's critique of possibility. For Bergson, the notion of possibility denotes a conception of the future which does not account for the effects of real duration. Briefly stated, his argument is that when we form an idea of something being possible in the future we are only reconstructing elements already in existence, and so 'reduce the new to a

¹⁹ Part of my underlying issue with Tuhkanen is that his account lacks specificity as to what the passage from virtual to actual involves. The concept of the virtual has been associated primarily with the qualitative experience of duration and, as I will discuss in my following chapter, memory. However, in each case the term is used to describe a different kind of process. Indeed, Keith Ansell-Pearson (2002; 2005a) has been particularly prominent in outlining how the idea of the virtual does highly specific conceptual work in each context it is applied to, and can provide insight not only into duration and memory but also evolution and perception.

My critique of Tuhkanen should, in turn, not be conflated with a judgement of Deleuze's work, which is equally specific and diverse in its use of the virtual and actual. For instance, in *Difference and Repetition* the virtual is described in relation to memory but it is also given a broader meaning which denotes the way actual objects enter into contextual associative relations. In this context, 'reality of the virtual consists of [...] differential elements and relations' (Deleuze 2008: 260) *which exist between actual material objects*. The modality of the virtual thus describes the indeterminate intensities which emerge in the relations between objects and, as a dimension of becoming, influences experience by contingently giving significance to those objects.

mere rearrangement of former elements' (Bergson 2002: 104). In projecting an idea of the future in this way we eclipse the real conditions of creation – which are contained in an immanent relation between the actual present and the virtual past – and therefore 'disregard the radical novelty of each moment of evolution' (99). We thus misrepresent the future as something which 'can be thought of before being realized' (100).

Tuhkanen places Butler's conception of change firmly in the realm of the possible, and for this reason asserts that Bergson's model of temporality is 'unthinkable' (Tuhkanen: 25) in terms of performativity. However, this flat assertion of incommensurability does not consider that, for Bergson, concepts like the possible and obligation depict aspects of experience which are different in kind to the virtual and aspiration but quite thinkable in relation to them. Moreover, insofar as the idea of unpredictability is put forward as a general principle of change it excludes Butler's central concern with the way discursive regulations set limits to the present moment of becoming.

In this sense, Tuhkanen's 'Deleuzian (or Bergsonian) assessment of performativity' (6) is not an assessment of performativity at all because it does not attempt to re-conceive the virtual and the actual within a framework of discursive constraint. Tuhkanen simply summarises Butler's 'goal of resignifying dialectics' (26), describing it as 'the political work of realization [and] legitimation' (25) which involves 'the reordering of symbolic reality' (25) into more inclusive forms of social recognition. Thus, because this goal only involves the reordering of a pre-existing symbolic

reality, Tuhkanen concludes that these 'dynamics of recognition do not adequately describe the process of actualisation (25).

Superficially, this critique is similar to my arguments that the negation of *discursive coherence* does not describe the *lived responses* to such negations, and that negation tends to produce only further abjection rather than transformation. However, the way Tuhkanen constructs his critique poses the problem entirely in terms of a paradigmatic opposition between Hegelian and Bergsonian becoming, *as philosophical principles*, and therefore does not actually re-assess the dynamics of regulation. In effect, Tuhkanen displaces the main concerns of Butler's concept of performativity, *as a social system of regulation*, and focuses only on the limitations of the theoretical framework which Butler uses to define temporality.

My point here is that when Tuhkanen argues that 'performativity has trouble conceptualizing becoming as a radically open and unpredictable process' (6) it should rightly be countered that part of Butler's aim is precisely to show that becoming is *not* radically open. It is not simply that Butler develops 'a notion of becoming that makes assessable the possible, and not the virtual' (26). Rather, it is that her object of analysis is itself a domain in which the possible governs over sociality.

Discursive regulations do not simply form a realm of intelligibility, but also act by 'foreclosing the possibility of articulation' (Butler 1996b: 68) to anything outside that realm. If certain articulations are foreclosed by normative expectations then certain virtual potentials, however

unpredictable their potential emergence may be, have no way to become actualised within the social. What happens to the virtual, for instance, when its actualisation would transgress a constitutive prohibition? What happens when the radical emergences of one person becomes an object of violent abjection for another?

From this perspective, the temporal problem inherent within performativity is not so much a theoretical one in which Butler's 'Hegelianism cannot tolerate [the theorisation of] openness' (Tuhkanen: 26) – even though this may well be the case. Rather, the problem is whether or not *hegemonic attachments* to discursive structures of intelligibility can tolerate openness. It is, in other words, hegemonic subjects who project 'deeply entrenched and sedimented expectations' (Butler 1988: 524) into the future; and it is these *lived expectations* of the possible which blocks the potentiality of the virtual. What needs theorising in this respect, then, is an exploration of how, from a psychological perspective, entrenched expectations unfold dynamically when they are rendered unstable, and an indication of how these expectations can be, as it were, virtualised.

In this light, neither Butler nor Tuhkanen provide satisfactory accounts of performativity and change. For Butler, on the one hand, a signifying act is 'always a reiteration of a set of norms' (1993: 12). The past is theorised *only* as a meaning sedimented within discourse, which 'confer[s] a binding power on the action performed' (1993: 225) through its 'presumptive force' (225). Thus, because gender expectations are only defined in terms of discursive structures, she provides no account of how

these expectations develop experientially when their naturalising effects are disrupted. Tuhkanen's critique becomes pertinent here insofar as it is the virtual potential of the past, within the immediate qualitative experience of duration, which enables the self's closed relation to discourse to become open enough to enable its re-articulation. On the other hand, however, Tuhkanen himself invokes the virtuality of the past without considering the dynamics of regulation, and thus omits the question of how entrenched expectations can be overcome. Indeed, critiquing Butler's concept of negation only 'as a philosophical paradigm' (6), he does not consider that it is an inherent aspect of sociality which, in turn, constitutes a certain type of temporal movement that resists virtuality.

Given the complementarity of these respective limitations, I want to argue that it is necessary to think of the virtual and the possible in terms of different relations to a gendered act or a process of intelligibility. Rather than two incommensurable philosophical positions, they constitute radically different ways by which the past and future unfold experientially within the immediacy of an act. Thinking of the virtual and the possible in this way, as tendencies of the self, thus enables the question to be asked: how exactly do we pass from a state of normative gender expectation to that of actualising the virtual potential of gender?

As I suggested in my previous section, in the form of aspiration and obligation these radically different tendencies 'meet [...] in that region of the mind where concepts are formed' (Bergson 1935: 51). More precisely, we can say that within the immediate temporal process of forming a mental concept there is the capacity for both tendencies to mediate the

dynamics of intelligibility. Nonetheless, this is not for Bergson an evenly balanced potential, but a tension which favours obligation. Because 'our intelligence and our language deal in fact with things [rather than] transitions' (45), the formation of a concept will always tend more readily to obligation. Therefore, while aspiration 'tends to expand and broaden out' (51) the sedimented expectations of signifying practices, this momentary opening of virtuality always returns to the constraints of expectation.

If we think of this tension in terms of an experience of the imminent future it is possible to add a further, and perhaps more important, reason why obligation dominates the contingent production of mental concepts. It is also possible to discern more clearly the experiential conditions which enable the virtual past to produce creative relations to gendered meaning. On the one hand, the tendency towards the possible enacts a conservation of the past which constrains the future as a projected expectation. In this case, self-coherence is achieved in accordance to how closely those expectations are satisfied, and the result is the tendency towards normative signification. On the other hand, the tendency towards the virtual derives the self's coherence from the on-going qualitative organisation of duration. In this case, the reflexive experience of the self apperceives the open-ended progress of duration, and thereby at once ceases to anticipate the future as an expectation and, pace Tuhkanen, virtualises the past as a potential.

My point is, firstly, that the influence which duration and constrained expectation have on processes of intelligibility varies according to the contingent dynamics of practical interaction. Secondly, the problem of re-

signification – that is, whether a subversive repetition effects change or is resisted by hegemonic subjects – lies in the dynamics of action rather than meaning. Bergson himself intimates that it is ‘not the idea [contained within a norm], but its action, which makes it obligatory’ (1935: 233), and my re-interpretation of this point is that the action which the norm performs is the feeling of familiarity it gives to sociality. In an on-going experience of performativity, the gender expectations of past performances produce a sense of familiarity which orientates the self within the moment of action by anticipating the immediate future. In terms of the action of an individual, then, this familiarity provides the sense of social coherence which drives the self’s attachment to normativity.

From this perspective, the danger of using subversive repetitions as a means of social transformation is that they do not change the primary attachment to the idea. Rather, because they interrupt the immediate temporal coherence of an act, they may result in giving greater peremptory force to normativity. For a subversion to be successful it is necessary for the causal expectations, which familiarity provides for action, to be replaced by a forward momentum which opens up the self’s relation towards the future. Self-coherence can thus be derived from the dynamic, virtual causality of qualitative change.

However, in the context of socially regulated acts, the emergence of this virtual potential of the self is not a given, as Tuhkanen suggests, but an achievement in which we ‘recover possession of oneself, and [...] get back to pure duration (Bergson 1971: 232). In other words, the *virtual potential of an individual* is limited by the constraints placed on the *social*

possibilities of action, and are therefore not easily attainable within a social field structured by these constraints.

In general, we can presume that the possible is always a prominent element of sociality because knowing in advance the general parameters in which both self and other should and will act makes an individual's immediate process of action easier. Conforming to the homogenising tendencies of law and signifying practices will, as Bergson notes in *Time and Free Will*, enable the individual to 'answer better to the requirements of social life' (139). Even when an individual does recover possession of duration's virtual potential, the constraint placed on action and intelligibility 'is not abolished' (Bergson 1935: 46) because they are still repeated by other individuals. This means that once aspiration has been actualised it again becomes subjected to social requirements, and 'tends to materialize by assuming the form of strict obligation' (51).

Thus, virtuality is closed off to experience at either side of its potential emergence, and we should be careful about how far we understand its 'creative dimension' (Tuhkanen: 22) to produce effects upon broad social structures. It is not enough, however, to simply assert that the beneficial familiarity which expectation provides for action prevents the emergence of the virtual. Rather, it is necessary to look closer at how the relation between the possible and the virtual develop within the immediate temporal dynamics of action, and how this tension influences processes of intelligibility.

As I suggested in the previous section, 'obeying laws and submitting to obligations [...] is almost always done automatically'

(Bergson 1935: 10), through habit. In such cases a conscious representation of gender is minimal because 'an action started automatically passes almost unperceived' (10). From this perspective, then, an analysis of an act's temporality needs to begin with habit, as a non-representational mode of repetition, and show how an active process of intelligibility is always in some way a response to the interruption of a habit.

Part of what is at stake here is the idea that 'psychic life may be lived at different heights, now nearer to action, now further removed from it' (Bergson 2005a: 14). The self's relation to knowledge varies depending upon its specific tension towards action because 'consciousness narrows or enlarges' (166) according to how immediate or hesitant an act is. On the one hand, consciousness diminishes when an act is automatic precisely because the immediacy of the act renders conscious awareness of it unnecessary. On the other hand, however, actions are 'accompanied by acute consciousness' (Bergson 1935: 10) when, by whatever means, they are rendered hesitant. In fact, for Bergson 'consciousness is this hesitation itself' (10), and its role is to 'preside over action' (2005a: 141) by allowing the past to inflect the present and influence an impending act.

When we act through habit, we repeat the borders of gender norms unreflectively, and their sedimented expectations are, generally speaking, 'lived and acted, rather than represented' (Bergson 2005a: 81). In a certain respect 'we "are acted" rather than act ourselves' (Bergson 1971: 231), so that repetition is, as it were, a passive and unreflective effect of conventional discursive practices. In turn, because consciousness 'is

diminished whenever a stable habit is formed' (Bergson 2005a: 45), this indicates that the virtual potential of the past simply fades into inefficacy.

Subversive repetition may be an important strategy in this context because it disrupts the passive repetition of habits, and *potentially* allows processes of aspiration to develop within the expansion of consciousness. However, we cannot take this virtual potential for granted, and my aim is primarily to explore the reasons why subversion may prevent it. In short, thought of in the context of an immediately impending act, the interruption of habituated expectations disrupts the sense of stability by which an individual orientates their actions. Thus, insofar as subversion disorientates the individual within their field of action, their experience of the immediate future does not become radically open to new emergences. Rather, it becomes a realm of uncertainty.

There is, within this uncertain indeterminacy, a need to regain the coherence of the act which, I would argue, is most easily achieved by re-asserting the borders of gender which have been subverted. This is because conceptual language gives us 'the plan of our possible action on things' (Bergson 1960: 165), and has a primarily pragmatic function which is 'relative to the needs of action' (161). Conceptual knowledge, in other words, helps 'to tell us in precise terms the kind of action or attitude [an] object is to suggest to us' (Bergson 2002: 177), and therefore provides the most direct means to restore coherence to the social field.

What is significant here is that the discreteness of gender borders are now *actively represented* and consciously projected as a de-legitimising expectation. The virtual potential of qualitative experience no

longer simply fades, as it does with habit. Rather, to borrow Butler's terminology, its experiential excesses must be actively disavowed, and therefore radically foreclosed, so that the differences between gendered objects can remain fully externalised. By actively re-asserting the stability of an object domain, this response closes off the virtuality of the past in a more peremptory way than is the case with habitual repetitions. Thus, again, my point is that strategies of subversive repetition must avoid this type of response because it makes re-signification less likely.

In conclusion, what I am outlining here, as a response to subversion, is a series of psychic changes in which a passive expectation first of all turns into a reactive experience of uncertainty, and then into an active projection of regulatory structures which aims to resolve this uncertainty. Insofar as the psychic process of intelligibility becomes a willed projection of gender regulation, my argument is that the peremptory force given to these norms depends upon how intensely the initial feeling of uncertainty is experienced as a lack of self-coherence.

This, it should be noted, is a very general summary of these dynamics, which it will be the work of my following chapters to explain in more detail. In particular, I will develop an account of emotion as an experience of indeterminacy in order to differentiate a series of variable responses to uncertainty. I will also extrapolate from Bergson's theory of memory a way to understand more precisely how processes of intelligibility develop in response to indeterminacy. However, remaining in these general terms for the time being, the point is that this action-orientated view of the psyche provides the opportunity to differentiate a whole range

of tensions or intensities by which the apperception of the past and future unfold to produce contingent processes of intelligibility.

In the following section I will continue this theme of exploring the dynamics of gender signification directly in relation to the immediate tension of action, specifically by relating the processes of habit and indeterminacy to the context of gender investment.

Habit and Emotion.

In further preparation for my following chapters on the body, this section will expand upon the relation between habit and the indeterminacy of action within processes of signification and subversion. In doing so I will continue to move away from Bergson's broadly stated concept of obligation in order to provide a more complex image of interpellation as both a normative and unstable process of repetition. Nonetheless, there are still relevant insights into the nature of gender investment which can be drawn from the account of habit and emotion provided in *The Two Sources*. Specifically, I will first reflect upon the relation between habit and regulation. I will then introduce the way I will use Bergson's formula of two types of emotion to define different types of indeterminacy and gender instability.

A large part of what is at stake here is a critique of 'the psychic form power takes' (Butler 1997a: 2) in Butler's model. For Bergson, as for Butler, it 'is impossible [to live in a society] without obeying rules and

submitting to obligations' (Bergson 1935: 10). However, contra Butler's analysis of this 'mandatory submission' (Butler 1997a: 7), which is 'traced in the peculiar turning of a subject against itself' (18, 19), Bergson describes obligation as 'a system of more or less deeply rooted habits' (Bergson 1935: 2). What this means, for Bergson, is that 'if we restrict ourselves to the most usual case [of submitting to laws]' (10) then it is clear that conformity 'is almost always [performed] automatically' (10), and that 'there is no effort' (10) involved in submitting to social pressures.

On the one hand, then, Butler seeks to define the attachment to law within psychic processes of internalisation that take place, for instance, 'in acts of self-reproach, conscience, and melancholia' (Butler 1997a: 18, 19). The hegemonic assumption of power is thus characterised by a psychological struggle in which each act of repetition fundamentally involves a complex dynamic of repression and anxiety. Norms, in other words, are always 'anxiously repeated' (Butler 1993: 237) by hegemonic subjects because the discursive borders of those norms constitute an ideal which nobody can fully inhabit, and because what is excluded from the coherence of gender internally haunts its borders. Indeed, as I discussed in my final section of Chapter One, Butler's theory of gender melancholy asserts that 'rigid [heterosexual] gender boundaries invariably work to conceal the loss of an original [homosexual] love' (2008: 86) which cannot be acknowledged within the framework of normative discourse. The original love therefore lives on only as an unconscious identification, and while Butler suggests that the ambivalence of the unconscious 'erodes the operations of language' (1997a: 143) it also continues to motivate

normative repetitions insofar as this ambivalence threatens the gendered self with dissolution.

For Bergson, on the other hand, obligation 'coincides with a tendency, so habitual that we find it natural, to play in society the part which our station assigns to us' (Bergson 1935: 10). This means that 'so long as we yield to this tendency, we scarcely feel it' (10), and that when 'we lay down that obedience is primarily a struggle with the self [...] we make a psychological error' (11).

While I am not denying that psychological complexes such as melancholia and self-reproach should form part of an overall account of gender, my point is that they do not 'work in tandem with processes of social regulation' (Butler 1997a: 19) in precisely the way Butler suggests. The problem is that the very psychic processes of anxiety and melancholia which, in her model, are responsible for the instability of interpellation are also said to drive normative repetitions of gender. As such, subversion can only have limited effects because it works upon a single complex which is already understood to compel the repetition of rigid gender identities. For instance, if such identities are, in the first place, a defensive mechanism which attempts to conceal melancholic identifications, then can a subversion which attempts to expose such ambivalence achieve anything other than reinforcing a defensive posture? At any rate, my recourse to habit, as a different basis for understanding the failures of interpellation,

aims to re-conceive gender investment as a dynamic which has a more diverse relation to subversion and potential transformation.²⁰

As with Butler, habits may be acquired and socially regulated through injunctions, such as “be more ladylike” or “act like a man” imposed on children. My model is thus still in agreement with Butler that the subject is produced as an effect of pre-existing forms of power which individuals must repeat in order to remain humanised. The difference is that individual subjects incorporate these norms into the body by actually performing acts rather than through internalising discursive limits. In other words, social injunctions are sedimented into the behaviours and investments of individuals primarily through a naturalising *formation of the body’s motor tendencies*.

Within the immediacy of an unreflective act, what these motor tendencies repeat is not a complex of anxiety and repression but the ‘coordinated movements [of] accumulated efforts’ (Bergson 2005a: 82). Thought of as coordinated movements rather than signifying meanings, the habitual repetition of gender is thus a non-representational process. It takes place, as it were, beyond an explicit relation to the logic of prohibition and negation which Butler ascribes to discursive structures. In short, habituated processes of repetition are not invested in the ‘exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed’ (Butler 1993: 3), but only in the expectations of action they project.

²⁰ See Rosi Braidotti (2002) for different kind of critique of Butler’s use of psychoanalysis and its implications for transformation. Braidotti finds some of Butler’s view ‘problematic both conceptually and ethically’ (43). She argues that in a psychoanalytical model of the psyche ‘changes hurt and transformations are painful’ (43), and she ‘finds insufficient respect for the pain of in-depth changes in Butler’s account’ (43).

It is useful here to invoke the more phenomenological perspective of Marcel Mauss' body techniques, and Edward Casey's development of this idea. Echoing Butler in some ways, Mauss describes the cultural and historical contingency of the way the body is styled in activities such as swimming and marching, stressing that although these styles feel natural they are acquired through education rather than being biologically intrinsic (Mauss: 97-105). Reflecting on how this education is conveyed in the specific example of swimming, Casey adds to this that there is a distance between the acclimatisation of the habit, the image we have of ourselves acting, and the rule which it follows. He writes: 'neither the image nor the rule needs to be stated in so many words, that is, in anything like a text. [...] Ultimately, the water I place myself in and the body placed there teach me more than any set of words I read or hear' (2004: 211).

My point is that while the enforced imposition of laws and prohibitions may be necessary to produce gendered habits in their social generality, their embodiment within an individual is not inscribed through the same logic of negativity which is apparent on the discursive level. As Nick Crossley writes, also commenting on Mauss: 'Embodied Knowledge is not discursive knowledge [...] Knowing how to swim just is being able to do it' (87). Just so, a habitual performance of gender can be understood as 'lived and acted, rather than represented' (Bergson 2005a: 81). Once a habit is acquired it is not strictly tied to or compelled by the prohibitions, exclusions and repudiations which regulate it at the level of discursive intelligibility. Performances are motivated, rather, by a 'logic of the body'

(112) which acts inattentively by producing '[bodily] attitudes which automatically follow our perception of things' (84).

This contiguity of response, whereby the body's role 'is to perform the appropriate gesture on any and every occasion' (Bergson 1935: 272), explains why gender norms are so easily naturalised, and why they are so easily concealed as constructed norms. This is to say, because the body's inattentive acts are 'so habitual that we find it natural' (10), they appear to express an essence of the body much more than they do a regulated 'stylization of the body' (Butler 2008: 191) or a signifying effect. Nonetheless, I need to be careful here to retain a sense that 'power is not mechanically reproduced when it is assumed' (Butler 1997a: 21), and so always 'runs the risk of assuming another form and direction' (21).

It is not that habits are mechanical or deterministic, and therefore cannot be changed and efficaciously interrupted. Indeed, as is the case with Butler's subversion of signifying meaning, habits can be interrupted in a way which de-naturalises the expectations of the act. Rather, the point is that habits tend to produce unreflective acts which, in relation to the conscious representation of gender, 'maintains in a virtual state anything likely to hamper action by becoming actual' (Bergson 1935: 272).

As such, gendered acts may *appear* to be the result of a complete and successful interpellation of hegemonic subjects into the behaviours and attitudes compelled by discursive structures. This is not the case, however, since the co-ordinated motor responses which constitute the actual physical performance are only an approximation of the laws which effect its constrained production. Individual subjects may repeat the norm

inattentively, and therefore repeat the exclusions and injunctions which structure the signifying meaning of that norm, but this does not mean that their conscious selves are interpellated in a behaviouristic manner.

In turn, because the sedimentation and naturalisation of norms takes place primarily through a formation of the body's motor habits there is no need to seek confirmation of the failures of interpellation within the unconscious. We do not, in other words, have to presume a fundamental psychic domain which represses a 'dreaded identification' (Butler 1993: 3) in order to ensure the unstable assumption of a hegemonic identity. The inconsistencies and experiential excesses of the norm, which might trouble the naturalised status of gender if they were to become conscious, are simply inhibited by the immediacy of habitual acts. Nonetheless, as soon as habits are interrupted, actions are 'accompanied by acute consciousness' (Bergson 1935: 10). The inconsistencies of discourse, and the psychic complexes of anxiety and repression which Butler describes, *can* therefore emerge when action becomes indeterminate.

This model can provide a much more diverse account of the relation between naturalised processes of repetition and the instabilities of gender investment. To begin with, insofar as gender is performed habitually, it can be said with some certainty that the sedimented psychological relations by which Butler characterises the hegemonic psyche do not form a continuous and fundamental basis for investment. My contention on this note is that Butler takes only the most extreme hegemonic relations to discourse and objectifies them as the underlying experience of all gender repetition. In effect, she has 'confused the [...] tranquil state akin to

inclination' (Bergson 1935: 11), which constitutes the primary mode of habituated investment, with 'the violent effort we now and again exert on ourselves' (11) when this inclination is disrupted.

Following Bergson's example in *The Two Sources*, then, I want to completely reverse Butler's claim that repetition is usually performed as a response to anxiety. In fact, it is more accurate to say that the familiarity which habit brings to action enables a 'feeling [...] of individual and social well-being' (39). This is why Bergson describes obligation as a tranquil state or an inclination rather than a struggle with the self, and why habit provides a much more pervasive rationale for the 'tacit, collective agreement to perform [gender norms]' (Butler 2008: 190). In a naturalised environment in which one feels comfortable there is nothing easier than performing the norm. Gender repetition, therefore, is unlikely to be underlined and motivated by anxiety in situations where it is supported by the universal consent of the social field because 'the adherence of each individual [to the norm] is reinforced by the adherence of the all' (Bergson 1935: 168).

As well as providing a less complex mode of attachment, thinking through gender investment in terms of action also facilitates a more variable image of how unstable processes of investment unfold in response to subversion. Ultimately, my point is that the physical tendencies and relationality of movement is more influential in acts of performative repetition and subversion than the meanings of signifying norms. Because the investment in gender is not tied primarily to the coherence of meaning, but to the immediate dynamics of action, specific

responses to the relational tensions of action allow an individual's relation to gendered meaning to change in different ways. In short, the force and conviction by which individuals invest in the exclusionary borders of gender is contingent upon the way indeterminacy is emotionally experienced.

Thought of as a lived temporal experience, what is disrupted by a subversive act is not the coherence of a gender ideal. It is the projected continuity between the present moment and the immediate future which the expectations of habit provide for an action. The response to this sudden indeterminacy is, in this way, also underlined by a reflexive temporal experience which anticipates the future in order to re-orientate disrupted expectations. As such, it is the different ways the indeterminate future is experienced or anticipated emotionally which indicate distinct and variable types of response to subversion and, subsequently, different investments in the borders of discourse.

In my following chapter I will develop this idea of emotion as an anticipatory tension towards action more concretely and, as I discussed at the end of Chapter One, my key guidance for this will be Bergson's *Matter and Memory*. Nonetheless, in closing here, it is useful to reflect upon some of the brief statements Bergson makes about the relation between emotion and morality in *The Two Sources*. This will help clarify how emotion needs to be theorised in the context of subversion in order to account for adverse responses which resist the subversion, but also more receptive responses that can facilitate transformation.

In 'attributing to emotion a large share in the genesis of the moral disposition' (Bergson 1935: 35), Bergson not only points towards a connection between feeling and action within the interpretation of law. He also argues that we 'must distinguish between two types of emotion [or] two varieties of feeling' (31) which he differentiates by their relation to action and representation.

On the one hand, there is a creative form of emotion which is synonymous with aspiration. This type of emotion is 'not attached to anything in particular' (29). It is *not* caused by 'the attraction of [a pre-existing moral] object' (27), and therefore does not seek to constrain meaning or identity within the ready-made terms of language. Rather, as I have discussed previously, it enacts an 'upheaval of the depths' (31) of the self which is capable of transforming an individual's relation to discursive practices. On the other hand, however, there is a second type of emotion associated with obligation which Bergson describes in terms of a 'surface agitation' (31). In distinction from creative emotions, which we might say exceed the constraints of discourse, they are depicted as a 'restlessness following upon a representation' (216).

The type of feelings which Bergson associates with obligation and agitation are 'states of emotion caused in effect by certain things' (29), and are 'destined to spur us on to acts answering needs' (29). Moving beyond Bergson's text somewhat, I understand them as adaptive responses to uncertainties within the immediate future.

In the context of subversion, these types of emotion agitate the self in the sense that they restlessly compel actions which abate

indeterminacy. For instance, fear might prompt a movement away from the field of subverted action, and will intensify feelings of apprehension until the de-naturalising effects of subversion are repudiated. Alternatively, anger will promote aggressive actions which seek to dominate the source of subversion and restore familiarity through active processes of abjection. As a motivation for the conscious representation of gender, adaptive emotions thus compel attempts to regain self-coherence by the kind of reflexive actions and attitudes they cultivate. In doing so, they may necessitate re-arrangements of the conceptual dimensions of identity, driving an individual's conscious representation of gender in certain directions and emphasising the regulatory effects of gender in different ways. However, they do not tend to stir the kind of radical crisis of identification which Butler intends for subversion. Indeed, they may ultimately have the effect of reinforcing an individual's relation to their subject positions and producing more forceful investments in the borders of discourse.

In contrast, the reflexivity of creative emotions orientates the self within a field of action in an entirely different way, and therefore influences the ensuing dynamics of meaning differently. Because this emotion is not attracted by an object, its development during a moment of indeterminacy does not anticipate or compel a specific course of action. It unfolds within the immanent flow of duration, such that the self is at ease with the openness of its immediate future. Following the initial impact of subversion, this openness abates the need for a determinate identity by which to consciously represent the self, just as it counterweighs the need

for the feeling of social well-being derived from familiarity. The quality of feeling which arises, Bergson argues, 'implicitly contains the feeling of progress' (39); but it is not the progress of an explicit aim or definitive action. It is 'the enthusiasm of a forward movement' (39), where the enthusiasm itself is its own sense of reflexive growth.

In this way, creative emotions obviously provide a productive source of experience from which to respond to the intended de-naturalising effects of subversion. In Bergson's terms, the conscious apperception of self and other 'no longer starts from a multiplicity of ready-made elements' (34), and would therefore resist the totalising effects of gender regulation. The self would be 'transported at a bound to something [...] which will contrive later to express itself, more or less satisfactorily, in concepts' (34, 35), and which would aspire to change the discursive structures of meaning. Although such attempts at expression would still be constrained by discursive practices, and are essentially reducible to 'a set of meanings already socially established' (Butler 2008: 191), the emotion itself would produce a reflexive distance from the effects of those signifying constraints. It would form an open attitude which 'vivifies [...] the intellectual elements with which it is destined to unite' (Bergson 1935: 34).

These two different types of emotional tensions, then, arise within moments of indeterminacy and form radically contrasting relations to regulatory practices. The point I will be most concerned to develop, particularly in Chapter Four, is that understanding how emotions form and develop provides a useful way to strategize subversive practices. This is

because it suggests a way in which the efficacy of subversion can, to some degree, be predicted and guided.

For example, while Butler claims that the instability of gender causes anxiety, under what specific social conditions might such anxiety actually 'compel a radical rethinking [...] of gender identity' (Butler 2008: 189) rather than cause an even more resolute repetition of a norm? While I have argued that a productive aim should be to invoke a creative emotion, we should ask the question: whether a certain act of subversion would be more likely to provoke an adaptive response such as anger? Attempting to answer questions like these is, firstly, an issue of comprehending how different emotions are responses to the specific way subversion impacts on the preceding state of action. Secondly, it is a matter of intuiting how any specific emotion will develop differently depending on the social context in which they unfold. This is to say, their effects will either dissipate or be extenuated according to whether their suggested actions are completed or remain indeterminate. The culmination of my thesis in Chapter Four will, therefore, aim not only to differentiate some common responses to subversion, but to distinguish the social contexts which cause and support them.

In summary, the primary claim of this section is that habits sediment expectations; and these expectations form a basis for gender investment which is not strictly identical to Butler's views on the exclusionary structures of discourse. Hegemonic identification does not involve an inherent melancholic ambivalence, and repetition is not fundamentally motivated by anxiety. Gender norms, as habituated acts, can thus be

interrupted in various ways, producing different emotional responses which, in turn, facilitate greater or lesser potentials for effective de-naturalisation.

I will explore this relation between expectation and interruption more closely in my following chapter. Firstly, I will develop a more detailed account of the relation between the sensory-motor processes of the body, consciousness and discourse. Secondly, I will draw upon Yaak Panksepp's neurological account of emotion as a 'value-laden internal guidance for behavior' (2005: 46) in order to conceptualise the body's specific role in emotion. Linking Panksepp to *Matter and Memory* through Bergson's concept of the brain, I will use his conception of 'fear, anger, sorrow [and] anticipatory eagerness' (Panksepp 1998: 47) to work towards clarifying the most common hegemonic responses to subversion. Finally, I will explore the role the body and memory play in producing contingent processes of meaning.

Conclusion.

My aim in this chapter has been to begin describing performativity in terms of a self which variably experiences their hegemonic subject positions, specifically in order to move beyond Butler's abstract view of repetition as citation. Alternatively, I have devised a framework which theorises the lived processes of signification, and which I believe can better understand the dynamics of change and sedimentation.

I have argued that these dynamics can be understood in terms of an on-going tension between a tendency to experience sociality through a process of qualitative change and an opposite tendency of the self to become enclosed in the ready-made structures of discourse. Thought of in terms of an on-going process in which an individual subject acts within a regulated social field, I have then begun to clarify this tension specifically as a relation towards the future. On the one hand, an apperception of qualitative experience can enable an open relation towards the immediate future which is capable of transforming an individual's relation to discursive constraints. However, for subversive repetitions to achieve this they must disrupt the habituated tendency to project expectations into the future, and avoid the counter-productive emotional responses by which individuals respond to indeterminacy.

I have, in this way, presented the efficacy of both normative and subversive significations in terms of the immediate temporal dynamics of action rather than in an investment in the coherence of meaning. What remains to be further explored in this respect is the way processes of intelligibility develop in response to the present moment of action because of the way the body 'fixes our mind, and gives it ballast and poise' (Bergson 2005a: 173). This will allow me to explore in greater depth how and why negative emotional responses develop during moments of indeterminacy, and thus to begin speculating upon how aspiration is achievable within on-going processes of signification. Indeed, while I have so far formulated the dynamics of action largely through Bergson's conceptual terms of obligation and aspiration, ultimately this duality does

not provide sufficient insight into how the tension between these tendencies changes.

In part, this is because the notion of obligation lacks the precision to fully explore the immediate dynamics of action. Therefore, in my following chapter I will turn to Bergson's sensory-motor understanding of the body in *Matter and Memory* in order to explore these processes in more detail. This will provide a more thorough account of how norms are sedimented in the body's motor habits as a primary basis of gender attachment, as well as a more diverse conception of emotion and its relation to intelligibility. In turn, while thinking of consciousness in terms of the qualitative differentiations of duration will remain important in theorising how the self can re-orientate its relation towards otherness, my primary aim is to explore how the conscious representation of the self develops during adverse responses to subversion. For this purpose, the perspective in *Matter and Memory* of 'different *planes of consciousness*' (241), which result from the way the indeterminacy of an act allows consciousness to narrow or expand 'the development of its content' (166), will be more useful.

Following this point, it can be added that obligation and aspiration designate only social dispositions, in which an individual's relation towards signifying practices tends either towards transformative or conservative tendencies. While I have argued that they influence processes of intelligibility by increasing the peremptory force of discourse or providing a lived sense of its contingency, this perspective lacks insight into the specific psychic processes by which conceptual content is actually

developed. What *Matter and Memory* offers in this respect is the opportunity to explore the way the conceptual content of meaning is derived from associative powers of memory, and inflects discourse variably depending on an individual's tension towards action.

CHAPTER THREE: PERFORMATIVITY, THE BODY, AND MEMORY

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson understands the body as a 'center of action' (138) which is, 'in its essence, sensori-motor' (138). In turn, consciousness is conceived in terms of a capacity to retain the past and anticipate the future which 'narrows and enlarges' (166) depending how immediate or hesitant an action becomes.

I have already begun to demonstrate how this way of understanding the body and consciousness can be used to develop an account of performativity. However, this has been largely limited to the general claim that gender is usually performed inattentively, through habit, while conscious processes of identification only develop when action becomes indeterminate. What I will introduce in this chapter is Bergson's conception of the nervous system in *Matter and Memory*: as a system of material movements – 'interposed between the objects which affect my body and those which I can influence' (44, 45) – which delay an organism's response to material stimulus. Through this perspective I aim to produce a more comprehensive explication of *how* motor habits are formed, and a more precise analysis of the body's on-going involvement in gender signification.

For Butler, the meaning and stability of a signifying act is dependent on a certain 'congealment of the past' (1993: 244), whereby the present moment of signification is given the authority of a gender norm through the 'invocation of convention' (225). However, Butler does not explore how

this congealment and invocation is *variably re-experienced by individuals* within each act of signification. In order to explore how the relation between the past and meaning is *dynamically experienced* I will draw upon Bergson's idea that the past is preserved in two different ways, each of which has a radically different relation to the nervous system.

On the one hand, consistent acts of repetition result in 'a record of the past in the form of motor habits' (Bergson 2005a: 84). This record is conserved in the motor mechanisms of the brain, and sustains a form of '*instantaneous* recognition' (92). I will use this notion of motor recognition to explore how the body's perceptive processes come to influence the normative repetition of gender. In short, when 'swayed by habit' (155), we come to see 'in any situation [only] that aspect in which it practically *resembles* former situations' (155).

On the other hand, the past is also preserved in what Bergson calls pure memory. In this form of memory the past is not stored in the brain, and reproduced through acts of repetition. Rather, all the individual events of a person's life are retained in '*unconscious psychical states*' (141). When this form of memory is freely invoked we tend to see how any particular situation '*differs* from others and not how it resembles them' (155). I will thus use this aspect of Bergson's work to think about the variable influence of the past within the reproduction of gendered meaning.

Ultimately, I aim to explore how complex processes of meaning and recognition develop through a changing relation between the body's motor tendencies and unstable invocations of memory. In preparation for this I

will make some introductory remarks concerning Bergson's understanding of the nervous system, consciousness and memory. Drawing out the key factors which have influenced my use of *Matter and Memory*, I will then briefly sketch out the trajectory of the chapter.

The Evolution of the Nervous System and Consciousness:

Bergson's main objective in *Matter and Memory* is to determine a 'point of contact between consciousness [...] and the body' (65), and part of his method of demonstrating this contact is the bottom-up approach he takes to the evolutionary emergence of consciousness. Simply put, Bergson characterises evolution in terms of an ever increasing capacity for indeterminate action. He then correlates this increased potential for action with a 'growing and accompanying tension of consciousness' (248). In this way, he argues that consciousness emerges 'at the precise moment when a stimulation received by matter is not prolonged into a necessary action' (32). Consciousness is therefore associated with the body through 'a strict law' (31) which connects the intensity of consciousness to the 'intensity of action at the disposal of the living being' (31).

Constructing this argument, Bergson develops a pared-down image of the nervous system. This is to say he focuses only on its primary function, which is 'to receive stimulation [and] to provide motor apparatus [for the response to stimulus]' (31).

Following this reduction, Bergson observes that the evolutionary 'progress of living matter consists in [...] the increasing complication of a

nervous system' (248). As we move higher up the organic series of life we can see the activity of organisms moving further away from mere reflex in precise accordance to the complexity of their nervous systems and brains. This is because, Bergson argues, the passage which a stimulus takes passes through 'a great multitude of motor tracts' (30) and allows the response to be delayed.

In other words, the growing complexity of the nervous system means that the stimulus of an organism's environment is brought into relation to an ever greater number of motor mechanisms. Rather than causing an immediate and determinate response, therefore, a stimulus may 'dissipate itself in innumerable motor reactions which are merely nascent' (30). In effect, this dissipation introduces into organic life a 'faculty of waiting before reacting' (222) and, ultimately, allows the development of increasingly indeterminate and spontaneous actions.

This, in itself, is a relatively uncontroversial argument given the observable correlation between the complexity of an organism's nervous system and their capacity for indeterminate and spontaneous actions. However, Bergson's more profound insight is that the delay between stimulus and response which is enabled by the nervous system is 'only the outward aspect' (222) of indeterminacy. The more radical effect of this delay is that an organism's moment of response attains a certain thickness of duration, and therefore manifests as consciousness.

As I will discuss in section two, what is at stake here is the contention that consciousness is something more than the cerebral state which accompanies it. Consciousness is 'made manifest [...] by a greater

development of the sensori-motor system' (221) because the delay between stimulus and response extends the moment which constitutes an organism's present. The 'present necessarily occupies a duration' (137) during this delay because the original stimulus is already in the past, being considered as a course of action, while the action itself is in the future being anticipated. Nonetheless, the dissipation of the stimulus along the motor tracts of the brain is itself only a material movement, and is therefore confined to the quasi-instantaneous existence of material reality.

The experiential phenomena of hesitation is thus, properly speaking, the domain of consciousness rather than the brain because only consciousness 'prolongs a plurality of moments into each other, contracting them into a single intuition' (219). It is, in turn, the growing development of consciousness rather than the nervous system itself which enables the evolution of free, indeterminate actions. Able to retain the past for prolonged moments, consciousness 'throws light on the immediate antecedents of [a] decision' (141) so that it can 'preside over action and enlighten choice' (141).²¹

²¹ Bergson's evolutionism, and his general account of the nervous system, is thus much more than a purely biological account of living bodies. Indeed, it is a broad metaphysical image of the tendencies that pertain to life which, as I noted in Chapter Two, finds its fuller expression in *Creative Evolution*.

Nonetheless, while it is clear that Bergson extends his principle of life beyond the biological, it is equally clear that in both *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution* the specific developments of this principle remain in close proximity to the empirical facts of biology and physics. Thus, while the general idea of a vital impetus has been Bergson's primary philosophical legacy to date, there have also been more concentrated attempts to update his work through integrations with modern biology. See, for instance: Wolsky and Wolsky (1992) who invoke Bergson in relation to knowledge about DNA-RNA-Protein transitions; Michael Vaughan (2007) who applies Bergson to the theoretical biology of Brain Goodwin; Pete Gunter (1999a) who examines the issues of ecology from a Bergsonian perspective; Erol Basar and Bahar Guntekin (2007; 2009a; 2009b) who apply Bergson to problems in understanding the quantum dynamics of the brain; and Milič Čapek (1971) who focusses primarily on Bergson's relation to physics.

In effect, what is implied by these studies is that Bergson's conceptions of evolution and the body are unfinished, heuristic principles capable of being refined and

Bergson concludes three related things from this perspective by which he characterises the relation between the brain, consciousness and memory. As I intimated above, I will use the dynamics of these relations to explore the psychic states involved in performativity.

Firstly, Bergson asserts that, within the synthesis of duration, there is a 'complete and independent [...] survival of the past *per se*' (2005a: 149), and that this preservation of the past 'may cease to belong to consciousness without therefore ceasing to exist in some manner' (141). In effect, he is arguing that once a moment of experience has passed by it has not 'ceased to exist' (149), but 'has simply ceased to be useful' (149). In other words, the memory of the whole of our past continues to exist within the present moment, only in an unconscious, 'latent state' (141).

developed through their interaction with emerging biological research. In the more pessimistic view, Bergson's part in such engagements provides only a philosophical antidote to the more mechanistic perspectives of the natural sciences:

Bergson's relevance for modern biology lies in his natural philosophy which, although not acceptable as such to the scientist, still has importance. [...] It is not so much Bergson's ideas as he originally phrased them, but his concern which keeps us awake (Wolsky and Wolsky: 168, 169).

However, the more profound interaction must aim to place science and metaphysics in a position of 'mutual aid and reciprocal verification' (Bergson 2002: 44). Indeed, while they 'mark divergent directions of the activity of thought' (44), Bergson believed that their progressive interchange could drive both towards greater clarity. 'Metaphysics will thus, by its peripheral part, exert a salutary influence of science. Conversely, science will communicate to metaphysics habits of precision' (44).

In this sense, it is not enough to say that science is mechanistic, or that life is an expression of vitality: 'this must be demonstrated by a careful interpretation of the latest research' (Vaughan: 20). In turn, this demonstration must ultimately have an advantageous interpretability rather than simply aiming to discredit science as the merely mechanistic. Following this line of thought, Vaughan invokes the 'appropriation of *Creative Evolution* for contemporary problems in biology' (19) such as the need to 'establish a perspective on biology that transcends genetic determinism' (20). As he notes, this is not just a philosophical issue. It is a problem which biologists such as Brain Goodwin struggle with as they attempt to formulate new research methods and interpretive frameworks which can account for 'the dynamic organization of an organism in a way that re-integrates it in its real environment' (21). In this respect, then, Bergson's work may indeed hold the possibility of having a 'salutary influence' (Bergson 2002: 44) on contemporary biology.

Specific memories are only recalled by consciousness by 'adopting the appropriate attitude' (134) which makes them useful again.

Secondly, while the brain is not itself the repository of consciousness or memory, it does have the specific role of allowing or inhibiting the retrieval of memory. Bergson argues that the function of the brain is *only* to receive stimulation and to turn it into a motor response. However, in doing so it determines what he calls 'our *attention to life*' (14). It 'fixes our mind, and gives it ballast and poise' (173) by grounding it in a present moment of material action. In this way, the 'sensory-motor equilibrium' (95) of the body has the capacity of 'directing memory towards the real and binding it to the present' (177), so that only memories which are useful to the moment of action emerge into consciousness.

Thirdly, insofar as both the body and consciousness have evolved in relation to action, Bergson insists upon the centrality of action as the basis of everyday experience. He writes for instance that 'perception [...] has its true and final explanation in the tendency of the body towards movement' (45), and that 'we must never forget the utilitarian character of our mental functions' (16).

My aim in section one will be to adapt Bergson's utilitarian principle to the repetition of gender performativity. I will reflect upon the way pre-existing power relations form the sensory-motor dynamics of the body, not only by conserving habituated actions but by constraining tendencies of perceptual recognition. This, I will argue, provides a way to understand how the normative relations between gendered bodies are circulated through a process of mutual accommodation.

My second section will look more closely at the implications of Bergson's understanding of the nervous system and brain. Specifically, I will focus on his relation to modern neurology and to the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. I will use these engagements to develop insights into Bergson's work which point towards possible developments, but also to clarify how my own reading of *Matter and Memory* provides a limited way to understand the lived body during processes of performativity. Ultimately, these reflections will prepare the developments I will make to Bergson, through the work of Yaak Panksepp, concerning the experience of emotion during moments of indeterminate action.

Finally, in my third section I will explore Bergson's theory of memory in more depth. My aim here will be to adapt his general principles of the unconscious and his utilitarian psychology into a model which can account for complex processes of gender identification.

Gender Repetition and the Sensory-Motor Body.

In *Matter and Memory*, part of Bergson's aim is to argue against perspectives which 'sever [the body's] motor activity from the perceptive process' (46). For instance, he criticises forms of what he calls 'materialistic realism' (26) in which perception is regarded purely in terms of the sensory apparatus. In such views, 'to perceive means to know' (28), but the perceived object 'possesses an absolute value' (26) which is then simply revealed by the senses as a kind of '*pure knowledge*' (28) of the

object. Perception is therefore imagined to be ‘a kind of photographic view of things [...] which would then be developed in the brain’ (38).

For Bergson, on the other hand, ‘the *actuality* of our perception [...] lies in its *activity*’ (68), and what he aims to show is that ‘there is a purely utilitarian origin of our perception of things’ (158). Perception is, from the start, *sensory-motor*. It reflects the capacity of an organism for activity within its material environment. It does not simply reveal an object, but selectively discerns it from a broader field of material reality. Neither does this discernment have ‘a purely speculative interest’ (137), but rather discerns the material world according to the elements within it which ‘can respond to a tendency or a need’ (158).²²

The important points in respect to this section are, firstly, that “knowing” an object is never simply a transparent act of perceiving it. Rather, it is an act of selective discernment which primarily involves ‘knowing how to use [the object]’ (93). Secondly, for my purpose of analysing gender regulation, such discernment can be understood to take place to a large extent through the production and enactment of motor habits.

In Bergson’s terms, these motor habits produce a ‘similarity of reaction’ (160) from stimuli in the environment which are ‘superficially

²² In an informative piece of commentary, Milič Čapek explains this argument using the example that human perception cannot detect infrared or ultraviolet light. Bees, however, can detect ultraviolet because some flowers reflect that part of the spectrum, while rattlesnakes detect infrared because it allows them to sense their prey (Čapek 1971: 36). Perception, in this way, can be seen to divide and delimit a broader field of material reality according to what is useful for an organism’s potential actions, while disregarding ‘those external influences which are indifferent to them’ (Bergson 2005a: 36). However, while Čapek’s commentary remains focussed on the emergence of perception from material reality, and its varied manifestation in different species, my focus below will be on the adaptability of human perception to produce more subtle discernments.

different' (160). They create a kind of normative mode of recognition which 'cares little for individual differences' (158), but which rather 'goes straight to the resemblance[s]' (158) which exist between bodies. In relation to gender, therefore, this process of perceptual deprivation can be seen as part of how the visual surfaces of recognisable objects are produced as signifying events. Just as discourse produces 'an object domain, a field of intelligibility' (Butler 1993: 35) through structures of exclusion, the body adapts to this domain in a relatable fashion. It produces a distinct field of objects by selectively excluding elements of the environment from its perceptual tendencies. It thereby forms part of the process by which the acts and gestures of bodies become associated with 'discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between "feminine" and "masculine" [genders]' (Butler 2008: 24).

In this section, then, I will explore these relational processes in depth. I will argue that part of the way the discursive structures of recognition sediments itself, on an individual level, is by shaping the ontogenetic development of the brain, thereby constraining the body's perceptive processes. I will also demonstrate the implications of this perspective for understanding the social dynamics of performativity. I will then conclude this section by briefly foreshadowing how *Matter and Memory* influences my explanation of the instability of gender norms. This will involve sketching out the body's role in actualising memories during moments of indeterminate action, and clarifying the way I will use Bergson's concept of affection.

The Naturalisation of Gender Relationality:

Ann Game has argued that an implication of Bergson's notion of the body is that, 'like Foucault, [he] emphasises bodies acting in relation to each other' (61). This is to say, via the associative invocation of Foucault, that the body has an inherently malleable relation to power. Moreover, from this perspective, Game affirms that it is possible to derive from Bergson a relational ontology in which bodies only come into being in relation to other bodies.

What Bergson specifically asserts in this respect is that 'the fiction of an isolated material object [implies] a kind of absurdity' (Bergson 2005a: 24). Because objects and living bodies are bound by the actions and potential actions they perform on each other, each 'borrows its physical properties from the relations which it maintains with all others' (24). A body remains inseparable from the rest of the material world, and therefore 'owes each of its determinations, and, consequently its very existence, to the place it occupies in the universe as a whole' (24). We should not, then, 'regard the living body as a world within a world' (44), from which it has a separate and autonomous relation. At any specific moment the existence of that body is constituted by the material movements which act upon it.

This view offers the possibility of theorising 'a materialist, relational and mobile conception of "the subject"' (Game: 61). That is, for Game, neither the body nor the subject is self-sufficient because the way in which an individual self develops 'cannot be accounted for by taking [that] self as a reference point (60). Because it is always a centre within a broader

environment which constitutes it, Bergson's notion of the body is understood by Game as an idea which 'radically refutes a conception of the subject as a source of meaning and action' (60).

While I sympathise with this reading insofar as it provides one way to draw Bergson into a dialogue with post-structuralism, Game's own definition of the subject does not capture Butler's emphasis on the way discursive injunctions constrain the possibility of becoming a subject. Indeed, Game's reading of Bergson specifically constructs his relational view of the body as a 'contribution to an understanding of the potential for transformation' (61). It does not, in other words, consider how the body's sensory-motor relations are also part of the process by which power is maintained. In contrast, by placing Bergson's notion of the body into Butler's socio-historic context of gender regulation, I will explore the basis for the formative effects of discourse.

What I take from Game's reading is the general assertion that an individual body is not the origin of its own relation to the world. From this starting point, my own use of Bergson takes a more specific turn in which the permeability of the body does not simply imply its transformative potential but, more importantly, the susceptibility of individual bodies to be moulded by existing power relations.

In Bergson's explicit words, 'perception [...] does not go from my body to other bodies; it is, to begin with, in the aggregate of bodies, then gradually limits itself and adopts my body as a centre' (2005a: 61). In distinction from Game, who draws out the image of an aggregate of bodies as an implication of power's inherent mobility, I am more interested in the

process of limiting by which the body adopts itself as a distinct centre within this aggregate.

It does so, for Bergson, through the 'experience of [...] performing actions and feeling affections' (61). For instance, it is through the 'comparisons and inductions' (48) enabled by actions, and the internal feelings experienced in relation to external stimuli which affect the body, that the body comes to distinguish other bodies with which it can enter into distinct relations. Equally, it is through these relations that the body begins to discern itself as a distinct being which forms 'the physical basis of my personality' (61). Correlatively, then, this process can account for the way the body achieves 'a sense of stable contour, and the fixing of [a] spatial boundary' (Butler 1993: 14).²³

Thought of from Butler's politicised perspective, we must conceive the aggregate of social bodies as arranged according to a form of power which pre-exists any individual body. The body, therefore, only adopts itself as a distinct being, a centre of action, by performing actions which are always already constrained by the social field which that body enters. What is at stake here, however, is not simply the idea that the material world limits the body's tendencies to act. Rather, the point is also that the motor habits which are formed within the bounds of these limitations form the very perceptive processes by which the visual surface of gendered

²³ Butler's own theorisation of body contours and boundaries includes a psychoanalytical image of 'bodily egos' (1993: 64). This perspective echoes her notion of gender melancholia in the sense that 'the way in which we achieve an "idea" of our own body' (64) is haunted by what that idea excludes. See Chapter One of Jay Prosser's *Second Skins* for a compelling critique of Butler's misinterpretation of Freud, which wrongly defines the body ego as a psychic construction, and of her general denial of the body's interiority as a discernible reference to its own experience.

bodies are formed as recognisable signifying objects. Indeed, from a more general perspective, part of the implication which can be drawn from *Matter and Memory* is that the specific ways in which the material world appears in terms of distinct objects is contingently developed rather than absolutely inherent to the body's senses.

Bergson notes, for instance, that during infancy, neither 'sight nor touch is able at the outset to localize impressions' (2005a: 48). In a certain respect, the visual and tactile world that we take for granted is only formed for us through 'a series of comparisons and inductions [...] whereby we gradually coordinate one impression with another' (48). In other words, 'our senses require education' (48), but not because of a poverty in the sensory organs themselves. Rather, it is because the potentiality of stimulus has yet to be coordinated with the body's own position as a centre of action within the aggregate of stimulating images. It is only by gradually relating the confused movements of other bodies back to our own body's internal feelings and its potential for action that the perceived world becomes a distinct object domain. In this light, then, the 'training of the senses consists in just the sum of the connections established between the sensory impression and the movement which makes use of it' (94).

Thought of from Bergson's non-representational understanding of the nervous system, the reason why an infant's perceptions are confused is because they receive an excess of stimuli which they cannot yet convert into a response. The ontogenetic development of the brain occurs, for Bergson, precisely 'with a view to the building up of motor apparatus

linked [...] with sense stimuli' (94). Through this growing organisation between the senses and motor tendencies, the body gradually discerns its over-determined environment according to the type of action it enables. More specifically, the development of motor tendencies establishes discontinuities in the material environment by diminishing certain aspects of stimulus while bringing others into clarity.

What I want to emphasise here in relation to Butler is that, for Bergson, the development of motor responses is 'equivalent to the suppression of all those parts of objects in which [the body's] functions find no interest' (36). The world can thus appear to us as occupied by stable gendered bodies because the qualities which appear to be stable and unchanging are isolated from extraneous and inconsistent stimuli, and therefore 'become "perceptions" by their very isolation' (36). In short, there is an elementary form of classification and generalisation at work in the body's processes which, similarly to Butler's notion of discourse, creates objects through a fundamental process of exclusion.

This similarity should be emphasised with caution. Being part of a bodily process, the selective suppressions at work in Bergson's notion of perception obviously function in a different way to Butler's discursive constraints. Most importantly, for Butler discourse does not suppress a material reality as such, but rather the possibility of a body being socially valued. What is outside the borders of discourse is not an 'ontological thereness' (Butler 1993: 8), but a domain excluded from legitimacy through a 'violent foreclosure' (8). Gender norms, in this way, are conceived by Butler as an 'ideal construct' (1), to which the excluded

outside constitutes 'a site of dreaded identification' (3) that threatens the subject's 'own claim to autonomy' (3).

In contrast, the exclusions which the body itself effects within its material environment concern action alone. The 'body extracts from the material or moral environment whatever has been able to influence it, whatever interests it' (Bergson 2002: 55), on the basis of its potential action rather than a direct relation to prohibition. While 'material reality [...] outrun[s] perception on every side' (Bergson 2005a: 229), that which is suppressed does not imply for Bergson 'the threat of psychosis, abjection, psychic unlivability' (Butler 1993: 15) but simply indifference. In turn, the objects formed by motor recognition do not have an idealised value in relation to the body's actual processes, but a practical one.

As I have begun to show in my previous chapter, this enables an account of the peremptory force of gender norms in terms of the coherence which their projected expectations provide for the immediate future of an act. In turn, complex relations to gender norms develop contingently through the processes of emotion and memory which occur when actions become indeterminate. I am thus not denying the existence of gender idealisation and dreaded points of identification, and I will continue developing my own Bergsonian perspective on this matter below. Rather, I am asserting that while discursive structures of exclusion are primary in the sense that they predate and constrain the formation of individual bodies, such structures are not the most basic aspects of immediate processes of relationality.

Motor Recognition as Gender Categorisation:

What needs to be clarified in more depth, then, is the precise role the body's selective processes play in the naturalisation of gender signification. Because motor habits are 'acquired by the repetition of the same effort' (Bergson 2005a: 80) their production is, as I have argued, constrained by the actions and body styles which are already prevalent in an individual's social environment. In this way, the discursive constraints which, for Butler, structure the social on a historically contingent level tend to compel the actions by which an individual body forms its object domains and sense of self. Thus, whether it is due to direct injunction, its inverse counterpart of encouragement, or simple mimicry, gender norms 'contrive a mechanism for themselves [within the brain and] grow into a habit' (84).

However, motor mechanisms do not simply preserve past actions for Bergson. More specifically, they result in 'organizing together movements and perceptions' (94), so that a complementarity between stimulus and response is 'gradually built up by familiar relations' (82). Even from infancy, as the senses are being trained, a relational sense of the environment is being conserved by this organisation. In respect to gender we might expect male and female adults to respond differently to children, and to expect and constrain different behavioural responses from boys than from girls. As such relations are repeated, the connections between different gendered stimuli and conventionally appropriate responses are consolidated within the ontogenetic organisation of the brain. This process therefore creates a tendency for the stimulus of a

familiarised object's presence to be followed by motor mechanisms which automatically 'guide the body toward the appropriate mechanical reaction' (93).

Simultaneously, what this organisation means is that gender is being classified and generalised at the level of sensory-motor perceptions. Insofar as male and female bodies are consistently performed as 'discrete and asymmetrical oppositions' (Butler 2008: 24), they each constitute distinct stimuli for the development of recognition. Motor habits thus begin to distinguish sexed bodies according to the acts, gestures and other visually distinct differences which are already established between conventionally male and female bodies.

Gendered bodies become generalised through this process because, as Bergson puts it, motor recognition 'cares little for individual differences' (2005a: 158). If stimuli can 'impress upon the body the same [motor] attitude, something common will issue from them' (160). Indeed, once such motor attitudes are formed they will tend to automatically 'seize from their surroundings that which [...] interests them practically, [...] simply because the rest of their surroundings takes no hold on them' (159, 160).

This generalisation is 'not an effort of a psychological nature' (159). The motor tendency to generalise bodies according to their common traits does not internalise the signifying constraints of gender regulation, and the similarities between gendered bodies are *not consciously represented* within this process of recognition. Rather, 'this [kind of] similarity acts objectively like a force [which] provokes reactions' (159). Normative

gendered traits are thus experienced through a 'similarity [which is] felt and lived, or, if you prefer the expression, a similarity which is automatically acted' (160), while the individual differences go unnoticed because they provoke no response. In this way, then, bodies which are 'as different as possible in their superficial details' (160) tend to be homogeneously recognised according to the norm prior to the possibility of distinguishing individual distinctions.

Equally, by generalising the effect which individual bodies have on each other, motor processes tend to consolidate the asymmetry by which gender styles and expectations are normatively classified. That is, by consolidating *a whole set of gendered stimuli* with the generality of a motor response, they can be seen to naturalise the normative associative expectations of gender. For instance, insofar as female anatomic forms are already normatively performed with feminine gestures, my contention is that these associative characteristics become, as it were, recorded in motor attitudes.

Motor recognition, therefore, organises specific types of gesture exclusively with either male or female bodies, so that the distinct borders of gender dualism become sedimented within the body's perceptive tendencies. Subsequently, when a motor habit seizes upon a resemblance it diminishes the subtle inconsistencies which exist between gender norms and the individual bodies of hegemonic subjects. In other words, even where the associations of gender are not performed entirely consistently, motor habits produce an economical mode of recognition which sharpens

and amplifies the perception that masculine and feminine traits are exclusively performed by male and female bodies respectively.

In summary, my point for the moment is that, once the sensory-motor processes have organised together associative stimulus and relational responses, motor recognition becomes part of the way gender norms reproduce themselves. The visual stimulus of familiarised environments 'transmits itself to motor mechanisms' (Bergson 2005a: 84), and these mechanisms 'determine in us attitudes which automatically follow our perception of things' (84). This motor disposition simultaneously recognises the stimulus according to a selective process which intensifies the resemblances between bodies which conform to gender norms, while diminishing subtle inconsistencies which exceed the norm. Motor tendencies thus become part of hegemonic gender signification in the sense that they reinforce the appearance that gender is a stable entity. However, they do this in a way which is 'felt and passively experienced, before being represented' (160), and which therefore precedes and prepares the conscious awareness of gender as a signifying event.

The Circulation and Interruption of Habit:

Before I discuss the conscious representation of gender, I want to underscore that the production and repetition of motor mechanisms is not a deterministic process but, as it were, a performative one. What must be

accounted for is the idea that ‘bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled’ (Butler 1993: 2); and that ‘gender discontinuities’ (Butler 2008: 185) do not simply apply to abject subjects, but also ‘run rampant in heterosexual [...] contexts’ (185). My contention in this respect is that motor habits *extract and project* stability through their processes of recognition and automatic acts, but they do not totalise it.

In fact, no one performs gender in precisely the same way, and no one develops habits of gender that conform strictly to its idealised status. Nonetheless, because motor attitudes are more prone to become sensible of the resemblances which exist between same sex bodies, perception tends to conceal these discontinuities. Thought of as a mode of performativity, then, the generalising effect of motor recognition sustains the appearance of gender consistency without actually homogenising the bodies which circulate its effects.

It is fruitful, here, to think of social interaction as ‘a physical system of perpetual, mutual, material adjustment and accommodation’ (Watson: 30), as Sean Watson does in an article relating Bergson to complexity theory.²⁴ As part of such a field of mutual physical influences, each body exceeds the norm in some way and constitutes an excess of possible actions for each other body. As a mode of responsiveness, habit reduces the indeterminacy of these interactions by diminishing the effect of excessive stimuli, and by adopting a prepared attitude towards action. Thus, in this sense, habits do not have explicitly *regulatory* intentions but simply adaptive ones.

²⁴ Hugo Letiche (2000) and Jure Gantar (1999) have also made gestures towards integrating of Bergson’s work with the principles of complexity theory.

Because these adaptive processes occur prior to the conscious representation of gender, the body thus *tends* to form a dissimulated basis for the gendered relation between self and other. However, habit can only reproduce the inattentive appearance that gender is a stable essence to the extent that extraneous and disjunctive stimuli can indeed be suppressed.

This is to say that the efficacy of habit to sustain a diminished field of recognition is dependent upon the subsequent actions of other bodies. In order for habit to form the basis of a socially normative field of action, it is not enough for one body to project its own repetitive tendencies into the present moment. There must be, in Watson's words, a '*circulation of processes of simplification, constraint and limitation*' (37).

What I am pointing towards here is a kind of circuit – between motor recognition, the habituated movements which it provokes, and the subsequent actions of the other – which must be maintained in order for gender repetition to remain unreflective. In Bergson's words, 'every perception has its organised motor accompaniment' (2005a: 94), and the series of habituated movements provoked by a perception are 'connected, continuous and called up by one another' (93). Each stage of a habituated movement 'seems to lean over into the next' (94) and, as it were, projects its following movement in the form of an expectation before it actually manifests as an act. Indeed, it is the 'consciousness of these nascent movements' (94) which constitutes 'the foundation of [a] sense of familiarity' (93) for Bergson.

This means that the 'ordinary feeling' (94) of motor recognition 'virtually contains' (94) all of the movements which succeed it, and can only remain inattentive insofar as these virtual acts are followed immediately into actual acts. By extension, my argument here is that these virtual acts can only follow inattentively into actual acts to the extent they are accommodated by the consistent actions of others. That is, because bodies and actions are essentially relational, in order for the continuous movements of a habit to be sustained the bodies which that habit interacts with must continue to circulate its motor expectations.

In short, the naturalising effect of selective discernment is dependent on the mutual agreement of other bodies, which accommodate that process of constraint by performing consistently with it. If, say, we take a homosocial male environment in which an individual suddenly performs a feminine gesture, this gesture interrupts the inattentive motions of those perceiving the act. The sudden inconsistency halts the circulation of habit, and brings the instability of gendered performances to the explicit attention of consciousness.

On the other hand, social situations become, as it were, self-regulating insofar as every individual's gendered habits mutually accommodate each other. They therefore close up the circuit of recognition and response, and circulate normative processes of discernment. For instance, when a motor mechanism of an individual body seizes upon a conventionally gendered trait, that body will tend to respond with a complementary action. The performance of that conventionally gendered act therefore narrows the overall field of stimuli, and the

narrowed stimuli provides greater likelihood that the motor recognition of other bodies will develop into a habitual act.

Within this pattern, the mutual adjustment of bodies to each other is directed along a specific path whereby social situations become progressively normative. Each act prompts a correlative process of recognition, and that recognition prompts further habituated acts. Gender norms are thus not only circulated within this process of simplification, but the circulation itself also tends to narrow into a more constrained, continuous and naturalised pattern. These increasingly naturalised movements therefore provide a bodily basis for 'notions of [...] a true or abiding masculinity or femininity' (Butler 2008: 192).

My underlining point to all this is that, within processes of material relationality, the role of motor recognition can be thought of as performative in several senses that Butler gives to the concept. Firstly, similarly to the way performativity is a 'reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains' (Butler 1993: 2), motor habits subtly delimit the visual surface of bodies. Perception does not simply reveal a gendered object but, by a process of selective discernment, produces the phenomena which it appears simply to perceive. In turn, because motor habits project past repetitions into the present they can also be thought of in terms of 'an expectation which ends up producing the phenomena that it anticipates' (Butler 2008: xv). In effect, they behave like a prospective tendency which discovers in diverse objects the similarities which comply with their actions.

Finally, the socially sustained and perpetuated circulation of habit can perhaps be thought of in Butler's terms of a 'tacit collective agreement [...] to sustain discrete and polar genders' (190). As I previously argued in relation to obligation, this is because the lived experience of habit provides a sense of 'individual and social well-being' (Bergson 1935: 39) which prompts the collective acceptance of normative laws. There is thus an implicit agreement to sustain this feeling of social well-being which helps sustain the naturalisation of motor recognition and, in turn, facilitates the 'illusion of an abiding gendered self' (Butler 2008: 191).

As with my discussion of habit in Chapter Two, the implication of thinking about performativity as a bodily process is that the dynamics of repetition unfold in relation to the pressures of action rather than those of prohibition. While the discernments of motor recognition take place *in approximation* with gender injunctions, they account for the way hegemonic subjects naturalise gender norms without internalising the borders of discourse. Thus, when habits are subverted, and the regulatory force of prohibition becomes part of the conscious representation of gender, discursive structures themselves do not unilaterally determine every aspect of investment and identification.

Following this re-statement of my previous chapter, I want to close this section by sketching out the new developments I will make to the dynamics of identification and investment through the course of this chapter. I have previously argued that an individual's active representation of discursive structures is a response to indeterminacy and aims, primarily, to restore familiarity to the field of action. What *Matter and Memory* adds to

this is an account of how memory re-constructs the signifying effects of gender and produces variable processes of identification. I have also argued that the peremptory force by which gender is represented depends upon the intensity by which the indeterminate future is anticipated; and I will clarify below how Bergson's concept of affection has influenced this assertion.

First of all, Bergson's understanding of memory provides the opportunity for a more complex analysis of how meaning is produced during moments of indeterminacy. From a Bergsonian perspective, we can understand the contingent production of gender intelligibility to occur 'at the meeting [place of] two currents' (155). On the one hand, there is the 'perception of resemblances' (155) given to us by motor recognition. As I have demonstrated, this current of experience will tend to extract from any situation 'a similarity which is automatically acted' (160). On the other hand, there is recollection memory which, on its own, would draw upon entirely unique memories and show us how each situation '*differs* from others and not how it resembles them' (155). It is the combination of these two processes, by which Bergson characterises the 'internal mechanisms of psychical and psycho-physical actions' (131), which contingently produces conscious representations of gender.

In other words, the generalised discernments of motor recognition will tend to call upon analogous memories which, effectively, go about 'embroidering upon the similarity [a] variety of individual differences' (165). My point is, then, that insofar as the response to subversion is to actively assert the discursive borders of intelligibility, the actualisation of different

memory-images makes it possible to form an 'unlimited number of general notions' (161) of gender. If the idealised "truth" of gender is supported by the 'invocation of convention' (Butler 1993: 225), by which the historicity of the past 'authorizes' (225) the legitimacy of signifying practices, then the authoritative force of the norm will be interpreted differently by different memories. What constitutes the acceptable borders of gender will be reconstructed according to the specific memory-images which are called upon, each of which form different kinds of connection between past experience and the present moment of action.

It is important to note that the unlimited associative possibilities of memory do not imply that the psychic representation of gender is radically free to reform an individual's relation discourse. Equally, while the spontaneous actualisation of memory-images aims to restore familiarity rather than to sustain the ideal of gender, it is likely that the associative image which restores familiarity will simply be a different way of asserting the ideal. As such, what I am indicating here is an interpretive variability which operates largely within with the bounds of the norm.

For Bergson 'our psychic life may be lived at different heights, now nearer action, now further removed from it' (14), and depending on these different tensions towards action 'consciousness narrows and enlarges the development of its content' (166). Whatever the state of action, consciousness will be 'preoccupied in [...] determining an undetermined future' (150), and its means of doing this is to actualise memories 'which can be usefully combined with our present state' (150). This means that consciousness can ultimately draw from memory 'only that which can fit

into the sensori-motor state [...] from the point of view of the action to be accomplished' (168). These processes are, therefore, still subject to the relational circulation of motor recognition which persists in normative environments.

In short, a 'mental attitude [...] must itself be engrafted on an attitude of the body' (120), and the body attitudes which respond to subversion tend to facilitate normative images more readily than they do radical reformations of gender. This is not only because memory is constrained by the sedimented tendencies of motor recognition, but because responses to subversion tend to be followed by emotional tensions towards action which also play a role in directing the course of memory and identification. As I will clarify in my following section, emotional states are more complex than motor recognition because their body attitudes are accompanied by feeling states which intensify moments of indeterminacy. As such, they produce heightened investments in the immediate moment of action, and tend to evoke memory-images which produce more extreme or complex interpretations of gender.

Bergson himself does not make these kinds of arguments in *Matter and Memory*, but his notion of affection as a feeling state which 'arises within our body' (58) provides several key guidelines for my own approach. Primarily, I have developed his association of feeling states with action and indeterminacy. However, I have also implicitly drawn upon Bergson's rationale for the organic purpose of affections, which is to give 'warning to the species [...] of the general dangers which threaten it' (18) while 'leaving to the individual the precautions necessary for escaping

them' (18). This latter point provides the opportunity to characterise feeling states as spontaneous adaptive tendencies, and facilitates the integration of Yaak Panksepp's evolutionary understanding of emotion into Bergson's framework.²⁵

At any rate, Bergson writes that affection is 'consciousness [...] in the form of a feeling' (18), and arises in moments when we find 'movements [which are] begun, but not yet executed' (18). This is to say that affective states develop in moments of hesitation and indeterminate action. Like reflective consciousness and memory they guide action, but they do so *through feelings* which give the 'indication of a more or less useful decision' (18) and have an 'undetermined influence' (17) on the nascent movements which are about to be made. These principles, I want to argue, provide the ground work for understanding emotional states such as aggression or anxiety as a 'value-laden internal guidance of behavior' (Panksepp 2005: 46) which intensify responses to subversion.

²⁵ Dorothea Olkowski has invoked Bergson's notion of affection for a rather different purpose. Primarily, she extrapolates from the idea that 'affections [...] always interpose themselves between the excitations that I receive from without and the movements which I am about to execute' (Bergson 2005a: 17), and argues that this presents the possibility of a fluidity ontology. The purpose of this assertion is part of a feminist project which follows the work of Luce Irigaray. The idea behind it is that the 'mastery of the concepts that determine women' (Olkowski 2000: 80) are based a logic of solid bodies and '[s]tatic modes of representation' (78).

In effect, Olkowski follows Irigaray in arguing that 'what is silenced [by patriarchal modes of representation] is fluidity' (79), and that such representational structures can be challenged and disrupted by finding ways to discover and express the fluidity of bodily experience and relationality. Such a possibility, then, 'arises in Henri Bergson's conceptualization of the [...] interval of duration between affective excitation and reaction' (82). During this interval, Olkowski argues, the 'flow of affective sensations constitutes [...] a world memory in which nothing is originally separated from anything else' (82). Indeed, 'the body of affection is a fluid ontological memory' (84). Its 'streams of affectivity' (80) produces 'a becoming which orientates itself in accordance with its [...] connectedness to the world' (83) – a fluid connectedness which defies the mastery of language. Thus, instead of presenting Bergson's affection as a way to describe an adaptive relation to the world – one which ultimately drives meaning – Olkowski uses it to invoke a mode of fluid experience which 'resists adequate symbolization' (78).

In conclusion, this section has constructed an embodied model of performativity by which historically sedimented gender practices are circulated by individuals through the repetition of motor habits. In distinction from my previous chapter, this understanding of habit organises the body's tendencies towards movement with its capacities of sensory discernment. As such, I have shown how a relational process of motor discernment grounds the everyday perpetuation of gender categorisation. Whilst I have also begun to explain the relation which develops between motor recognition, memory and emotion when the inattentive acts of habit are disrupted, a more comprehensive account of these processes will be given in my following sections.

The Broader Reflections on the Sensory-Motor Body.

In this section I will explore Bergson's description of the body in terms of the nervous system and brain more closely. The purpose of this evaluation is, firstly, to elucidate the specific theoretical scope of Bergson's insights. In respect to performativity, it will also act as a guide to illustrate more explicitly how I am conceiving the sensory-motor body as a basis for the lived experience of gender. Secondly, it will facilitate the integration of Panksepp's neurological theory of emotion into the sensory-motor framework of habit and indeterminacy I developed in the previous section.

I will first analyse how Bergson's framework for understanding the brain, consciousness and memory differs from the methodological paradigm of modern neurology. Primarily, I will discuss how *Matter and Memory* provides a unique insight which can translate neurological research into much more than a scientific image of the self. However, I will also infer that there can, and should, be something more at stake in Bergson's sensory-motor image of the body than an objective understanding of the brain. Specifically, I will argue that his conceptual terminology of body attitudes and tensions also suggests the need to apperceive the body within the process of acting as part of a methodological approach.

I will continue this reflection on body attitudes, apperception and objectification in relation to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective on the lived body. As a comparative analysis, this discussion will mark out some specific limitations of Bergson's notion of the body and consciousness. However, it will ultimately claim that their parameters for understanding subjectivity remain well suited to explore the issues of performativity and subversion.

Finally, having established that Bergson's work can draw upon modern neurological research while retaining a more expansive view of experience, I will put this claim to work. Specifically, I will draw upon Yaak Panksepp's evolutionary account of the brain and emotion in order to demonstrate an affinity with Bergson's evolutionary model of consciousness; and his explication of discrete emotional circuits in order to expand upon and develop Bergson's account of nascent acts.

To a large extent, Panksepp's *Affective Neuroscience* offers itself as exemplary for this purpose because it draws together in one comprehensive text all of the data which had been compiled on the neurological correlates of emotion during the latter part of the Twentieth Century. This is to say that prior to Panksepp's publication such data was being developed within separate scientific fields and institutes, but had yet to be linked together as part of the same research direction. His work thus contains the first extensive neurological study of emotion, and in effect it inaugurated affective neuroscience as a distinct scientific discipline.

However, it is also the way Panksepp conceptualises emotion which makes his approach fitting for an engagement with Bergson. Indeed, while Panksepp's actual hands-on research constitutes only a small part of the knowledge conveyed in *Affective Neuroscience*, his more profound importance lies in the way he conceptualises that knowledge into an overall theory of emotion. In this vein, he outlines criteria for defining emotion as an objective category for scientific study; but he also 'reinterprets many of the brain-behavior findings to try to account for the central neuropsychic states of organisms' (Panksepp 1998: 6). In other words, Panksepp argues that both the objective neurological state *and* the subjective, psychical feeling of emotion should be bound up within the same strategy of analysis. Against the grain of behaviourist models of emotional responsiveness, therefore, he defines emotional feelings as a form of 'simple value-coding' (14) which provides 'self-referential salience' (14) for *all* mammalian life; and I will argue below that it is this

acknowledgement of conscious, subjective feelings which opens up explicit links to Bergson.²⁶

²⁶ Panksepp's 'objective neural criteria' (1998: 48) for defining emotion focusses only on a certain type of basic emotion. Primarily, the 'underlying circuits' (48) of these emotional systems must be seen to 'respond unconditionally to stimuli arising from major life challenging circumstances' (48). For example, the emotions I will draw upon – fear, rage, anticipator eagerness, separation anxiety – are all characterised by behavioural motivations which 'have proved adaptive in the face of [...] life challenging situations' (49) such as threats from predators, the need to forage for food, and the relative safety of community over isolation. As adaptive behaviours, the circuits which correspond to these emotions should also be seen to exhibit the criterion of initiating physiological changes in the body. That is, they initiate 'motor subroutines and concurrent autonomic-hormonal changes' (49) which prepare the body's readiness for action, and also 'change the sensitivities of sensory systems that are relevant for the behavioural sequences that have been aroused' (49).

These criteria, then, confine Panksepp's study of emotion to a fairly narrow range of experience, and he acknowledges that there are, of course, 'many more affective feelings, such as hunger, thirst, tiredness, illness, surprise, disgust, and others' (47). However, an underlying contention here is that 'emotions, feelings, and moods come in several natural types' (47) other than the ones discussed by Panksepp, and part of his aim in this respect is to 'establish better taxonomies' (47) for categorising them. Through Panksepp's taxonomic criteria, for instance, it becomes clear that affective states like hunger or tiredness are different forms of feeling to his adaptive emotions. For one thing, they respond to the internal regulatory processes of the body rather than external stimuli. Panksepp also highlights that they are associated with radically different brain regions, while their physiological dimensions relate to regulatory balances rather than adaptive sensory and motor changes (164-186). In a different vein, more complex social emotions such as contempt or shame fall short of Panksepp's criteria because they are not basic evolutionary adaptations in the way fear or aggression are. Such distinctly human emotions are, at least from a neurological point of view, 'a consequence of [the] neural expansion' (302) of the human cortex. Thus, while Panksepp speculates that these more refined social emotions may be 'linked critically to the more primitive affective substrates' (301), he also presumes that their neurobiological characteristics cannot be isolated to those regions.

Since its first formulation, Panksepp's conceptualisation of emotion has had some influence on the field of neuropsychology. Most notably, Mark Solms has attempted to draw upon his work to form a biological basis for Freudian principles. See, for instance, his *The Neuropsychology of Dreams: A Clinico-Anatomical Study* (2014). However, there are also valid approaches to emotion, based on conventional forms of definition and visual markers, which draw out different but important dimensions of affective experience.

One relatively prominent approach in psychology is to categorise and conceptualise emotion based on facial-feedback and posture. Silvan Tomkins' work, which has recently been popularised for use in cultural analysis by Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank, is a good example of how such frameworks can lead in interesting and insightful directions which are quite different from Panksepp's. Tomkins categorises nine types of affect – shame, interest, surprise, joy, anger, fear, distress, disgust, and contempt – and emphasises the 'dominance of the face' (Tomkins 1963: 208) in experiencing and expressing these affects.

All in all, each affect is analysed as a diverse model of responsiveness and reciprocal interaction, and Tomkins even begins to draw out a picture of how all nine affects interact with each other. So rather than the relatively simple motivational force which characterises both Panksepp's subjective feelings and his objective criteria, we are presented with much more of an intricate picture of social relationality. Conversely, however, the actual feelings and motivational tendencies of states like fear and anger tend to get swept under the carpet. In Panksepp's view, therefore, 'taxonomies [...] of

It should be said, on this note, that Panksepp controversially advocates an interdisciplinary approach to emotion which attempts to 'synthesize behavioural, psychological, and neurological perspectives' (Panksepp 1998: 5). This is unusual because there 'is presently no umbrella discipline' (5) which 'utilizes all of these approaches in a balanced manner' (31) – scientific and psychological disciplines usually preferring to focus on only two of the three. For example, cognitive neuroscience and neuropsychology both seek to explore the relation between the brain and mind, but rarely complement such research through experimentation on behaviour. Cognitive psychology, in contrast, studies mental processes such as attention, problem solving, language skills and

facial expressions' (1998: 46) are a 'less important criterion than an overall neurobehavioral analysis of action tendencies' (46), at least in working towards an understanding of the most basic evolutionary origins of emotion.

Aside from the issues of taxonomy and social complexity, the broader issue of what actually causes emotional feelings is far from reaching consensus. Still popular today is the James-Lange theory, which was put forward over a hundred years ago. It argues that emotions are a result of the physiological changes which happen to the body in direct response to stimuli, but that the actual quality of an emotion is a result of becoming aware of those changes and interpreting them.

Antonio Damasio's research in neurobiology (2000, 2003) has led him to draw out a particularly sophisticated version of this approach, based on modern research. Panksepp's contention here, however, is that feelings themselves – what he calls the 'raw feels' (1998: 38) of emotion – are generated directly by the neural state rather than a self-reflective act of interpretation. As such, there is an open debate between him and Damasio on this issue which I will touch upon again in footnote thirty-two.

In addition to this, there is also a wide-spread strategy in psychology to explain feelings purely in terms of the cognitive appraisal we make of different life situations. The strong versions of this theory thus exclude any physiological or innate origins of emotion, and are at the heart of Panksepp's criticism that the ancient origins of emotion 'have been neglected by mainstream psychology' (4). Nonetheless, such approaches do seek to answer important questions such as why different cultures have different psycho-social relations to complex emotions like shame and envy, or why different people can have unique emotional responses to the same stimuli.

It should be noted, then, that Panksepp does accept the idea that the subjective feelings of emotion can be 'filtered and modified by higher cognitive activity' (122), as well as being influenced by social conventions and language. That, in fact, is part of his assertion that a full account of emotion needs to engage the subjective feeling state of emotion alongside objective studies. Again, however, the bottom line for Panksepp is that 'available evidence now overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that basic emotional processes emerge from homologous brain mechanisms in all mammals' (51). In this light, his criteria does seem to be the best starting place to 'provisionally' (48) define the nature of emotion, so long as other areas of psychological and social research is kept in close proximity.

creativity through a vast array of behavioural experimentation which, for instance, show how different contextual situations elicit different psychological states. On the whole, however, it has little direct experimental engagement with the brain. Finally, behavioural neuroscience will generally work with experiments that relate observations in human and animal behaviour to brain functions, but is traditionally reluctant to draw conclusions concerning the subjective state of consciousness. This is partly because of the belief which I will discuss in the first part of this section that conscious states are coded in the brain, and partly because much of the behavioural and neurological data is drawn from animal research where subjective states are impossible to verify.

As someone working primarily in the field of behavioural neuroscience, Panksepp has come under criticism from others doing parallel research on emotion precisely because he is seen to place too much weight on the idea that animals feel emotions. Joseph LeDoux, in particular, has taken issue with Panksepp's contention that, firstly, 'most animals – certainly all mammals – are "active agents" in their environments and that they have at least rudimentary representations of subjectivity and a sense of self' (Panksepp 1998: 6). Secondly, there is an even greater resistance to the idea that, through 'such assumptions, we can create a more realistic and richer science by recognising the number of basic processes we share with our kindred animals' (6). The perceived problem here is that 'we end up with a gap between what emotion theories are about (feelings) and what brain researchers can actually measure

(behaviour)' (LeDoux 2002: 202). We cannot reliably 'investigate feelings in animals' (202) because they cannot tell us what or even if they feel, yet 'most of what we know about the detailed brain mechanisms of emotion [...] comes from brain research [...] conducted in animals' (202). Hence, there is a 'credibility problem' (202) when the brain states of animals are correlated to the subjective feeling states of humans.

In LeDoux's view, then, 'Panksepp takes this approach in *Affective Neuroscience*' (204), and apparently claims that because 'animals and humans behave similarly when emotionally aroused [...] they must experience the same subjective states as well' (204). In Panksepp's defence, however, he is certainly not making the wild claim to know *what* animals feel, but only making the much more reasonable assumption that animals do actually experience emotional feelings. Nor is Panksepp suggesting that the feelings of mammals' are necessarily the same as human feelings. Indeed, there is an explicit need to recognise that basic subjective states of emotion such as fear or aggression 'probably vary widely from species to species' (Panksepp 1998: 4) due to 'a host of variables' (29) such as physiology, anatomy, environment, and the way higher brain regions interact with lower.

Similarly, the claim that Panksepp makes concerning research into emotion is less radical than LeDoux depicts it. He argues that 'carefully chosen animal models' (3), in which the neural substrates of emotion are demonstrably homologous in humans and mammals, can legitimately become a source of knowledge about the neural basis of human emotions. This is not, then, as LeDoux interprets it, a case of correlating animal brain

states with human *subjective* states. It is a case of provisionally correlating animal brain states with human *brain* states.

In this way, gaps in the evidence of human brain research can be filled in by 'utilizing information derived from simpler brains' (Panksepp 1998: 4). It can, that is, provide knowledge of the lower regions of our brains which evolved during a shared evolutionary past, and have changed little since. This, in turn, is possible because '[a]lthough detailed differences in these systems exist across species, they are not sufficiently large to hinder our ability to discern general patterns' (4). Such knowledge of general patterns can *then* be related to human subjective, behavioural and brain research to begin drawing out a fuller picture emotion.

While LeDoux finds this approach dubious, not least because he takes a fairly behaviourist approach to emotion in which 'the brain achieves its behavioural goals in the absence of robust awareness' (LeDoux 1999: 17), for Panksepp this is the only approach that can eventually lead to a realistic science of emotion. In other words, the only way a 'comprehensive discussion of emotions' (Panksepp 1998: 34) can progress is through 'a difficult triangulation' (34) in which 'various lines of knowledge need to be blended together into an integrated whole' (34). Despite LeDoux's doubts, then, the brain, the mind and behaviour are interconnecting elements in emotional processes, and accepting the importance of subjective feelings *and* the common ancestry of those feelings with that of other mammals is a necessary leap neurobiology has to make.

At any rate, this is a dispute about the nature of consciousness and the possibility of interdisciplinary approaches which is confined to behavioural neuroscience. My own position will follow Bergson's understanding of consciousness and the brain, which I will discuss shortly; and from that point of view Panksepp's assertion of subjectively experienced emotions is not at all a problematic issue. Indeed, from a Bergsonian perspective, LeDoux's presumption that the behavioural responses of animals are not indicators that they feel would amount to a mechanisation of life. It reduces animals to 'passive reflex machines' (Panksepp 1998: 38), whereas Panksepp's account of emotion as subjective states which prompt spontaneous action feeds directly into Bergson's evolutionary account of life. His conceptualisation of basic emotions as adaptive tendencies also supports my own theoretical need to account for spontaneous emotional states of gender performativity.

My final part of this section, therefore, will explore these latter issues in more depth. By adapting Panksepp's research into the affective dimensions of the brain and conscious feeling states into Bergson's model I will clarify my own view of emotion as a temporal experience of indeterminacy. I will then sketch out some of the relevant insights which Panksepp's text can reveal in relation to the process of subversion.

Reflections on the Brain and Consciousness:

It might be noted that the field of neurology has progressed significantly since Bergson's own era. Nonetheless, despite this advance, I

would argue that Bergson's ultimate assertion that '*memory is something other than a function of the brain*' (2005a: 236) still remains a relevant insight of potentially wide reaching impact. What I want to point towards first in this respect is how the perennial problem in neurology remains that of determining how memory is stored. I will then characterise Bergson's solution to this problem as a framework for re-interpreting the neurological underpinnings of the self.

Bergson's claim that memory is preserved in 'unconscious psychical states' (141), which are independent of the material processes of the brain, would no doubt be deemed a controversial statement. As Steven Rose observes, neuroscientists like himself 'are committed to the view that [...] the workings of the mind [...] can be described in terms of the properties [...] of the brain' (2003: 3). Within this framework, then, memories must be seen as 'embedded in the structure and processes of the brain' (3), and the basic premise is that they can be accounted for in terms of changes which occur within its cellular structure and processes.

In short, Rose summarises that when 'an animal [...] confronts some novel experience' (370), this experience can be registered on a neurological level because 'cells in its central nervous system change their properties' (370). Specifically, changes occur both within the electrical and chemical processes involved in the firing of synapses and, perhaps more importantly, within the connections which exist between synapses. If such changes are 'prevented from occurring' (370), Rose explains, then 'my experimental subjects cannot remember' (370). It is thus presumed that 'memory [is] coded for by the strengthening of synaptic connections' (345).

In effect, this is just the same principle of adaptation which Bergson ascribes to motor recognition, only the understanding of the brain has now been extended beyond Bergson's general inference of neural connectivity to a precise knowledge of the brain's fundamental elements. However, unlike Bergson's insistence that changes in the brain 'concern action, and action alone' (2005a: 33), the neuro-scientific perspective attributes to the change in synaptic connections a representation of the event.

The problem with conceptualising changes in the brain's connectivity as a stored representation of events is one that Rose himself recognises, but has no alternate paradigm through which to resolve it. That is: how are material changes in synapses able to store, and bring back to remembrance, the events of diverse psychic and perceptual phenomena? How can details such as 'the sequential memory of an entire scene' (Rose 2003: 381) – with all the sensations we experience from moment to moment, and all the conceptual details and interpretations of events which we experience – be contained within those changes in a way which actually correlates to the lived phenomena of memory?²⁷

²⁷ It is notable that modern neuroscience has developed a similar distinction as Bergson between habit-memory and recollection-memory. On the one hand, there is what is termed implicit or non-declarative memory, which denotes 'an unconscious, automatic basis of responding that does not rely on the ability to recollect' (Hay et al 2002b: 1324). On the other hand, there is explicit or declarative memory which is 'characterised by a conscious, intentional and effortful ability to recollect a previous episode' (1324).

This distinction is not only designed for conceptual purposes, but because these types of memory have been shown to correspond to different localised areas in the brain: 'the neural mechanisms that give rise to [...] automatic responding are different from the neural mechanisms involved in declarative memory' (1325). It should be emphasised, then, that discovering localised areas of the brain to be associated with specific types of memory does not contradict Bergson's model. In this respect, the appropriate Bergsonian caveat would be that such areas are not involved in storing memory, but in producing the motor-attitude which allows recollection to emerge in consciousness.

If the brain is presumed to store memories, then the totality of that scene's perceptual and conceptual experience would have to be simultaneously and collectively preserved within the synaptic changes which occurred in the brain during each of its successive moments. Moreover, such changes would also need to account for the diverse and complex ways such memories are reformed in consciousness – sometimes appearing to be forgotten, but eventually remembered with sustained effort; sometimes being half-remembered as a general impression, but given as vivid but discontinuous and incomplete details at another. In the final analysis, Rose has to admit: 'psychotherapists can share a field day with the novelists in describing the phenomena of memory [...] without us being able to even define the corresponding neurobiological tasks' (381). Indeed: 'Truth to tell, [...] we still haven't the slightest idea of just how re-remembering occurs' (381).

From Bergson's perspective, neurology reaches this impasse because it is structured by the idea of a 'parallelism between the [...] psychical and physiological' (Bergson 2005a: 12). That is, it presumes that the state of the brain at any one moment correlates precisely to the state of consciousness, so that 'mental states and brain states are held to be two different versions, in two different languages, of one and the same original' (12). Rose, for instance, betrays this in his claim that synaptic changes '*are* memory, as written in the language of biochemistry and physiology' (2003: 364).

While there is obviously a connection between the brain and consciousness, Bergson insists that there can be no parallelism because

'there is infinitely more, in human consciousness, than in the corresponding brain' (Bergson 2007: 40). The brain is, in Bergson's model, just what neurology studies it as – a system of material movements, which have now been resolved into the subtle distinctions of chemical and electrical changes. However, the phenomenon of consciousness is much more than a material process because it partakes of a temporal synthesis which prolongs the past within the present. If, in this way, we think of 'inward experience [as] a "substance" whose very essence is to endure' (Bergson 2002: 74), there is no need to determine *where* memories are stored. The immediate past persists within a present moment of consciousness because of its inherently temporal nature as a process of duration. The psyche preserves the totality of this past independently of the brain for the same reason, although in a virtual and unconscious state.

Re-Interpreting Neurology:

Part of what is broadly at stake here is the nature of the self. While the brain can be studied objectively, such studies cannot for Bergson reveal 'every detail of what is going on in the corresponding consciousness' (Bergson 2005a: 12). Subjective experience ultimately exceeds anything which can be determined by analysing the brain. Nonetheless, it is just this excess which the methodological frameworks of neurology are, to varying degrees, satisfied to ignore. Thus, part of what

Bergson offers to cultural theory – and, indeed, neurology itself – is a way to engage knowledge of the brain without reducing the self to its chemical and physiological processes.²⁸

A Bergsonian interaction with neurology is neither one which accepts an objective view of the self in terms of the brain's functions and structures, nor one that is entirely divisive towards such perspectives. In other words, if the relation between consciousness and the brain categorically differentiates Bergson from the disciplinary domain of neurology, this is not just the position of a critical antagonist. It is a whole interpretative framework for determining the specific role of the brain in conscious thought. It provides the possibility of extending the research of neurology beyond the paradigmatic borders of that discipline, and putting such knowledge to use within an alternative psychological framework.

The key to this interpretation is identifying the brain as a complex sensory-motor organ which focusses the attention of consciousness on a moment of action. In effect, the present state of the nervous system provides motor cues that tend to evoke the actualisation of similar memories and, at the same time, hinders memories which cannot be easily embodied within the sensory-motor situation. Thus, while *Matter and Memory* denounces the possibility that memory can be stored in the brain it also presents the general idea that 'memories need, for their

²⁸ See Catherine Malabou (2008) for an adaptation of neurology into cultural theory which propagates almost the opposite view. She argues, for instance, that: 'The self is a synthesis of all the plastic processes at work in the brain' (58).

See, also, Chapter Seven of Nikolas Rose (2007) for one aspect of the complex politics involved in viewing the self only in terms of the brain. Broadly speaking, Rose analyses how the ideal of 'neurochemical selves' (188), which are open to precise chemical intervention, has been driven largely by the profiteering of pharmaceutical companies and has problematic implications for the way the social perception of mental health is understood and addressed.

actualization, a motor ally' (120). While Bergson 'considers memory itself as absolutely independent of matter' (177) the brain nonetheless contributes to the recollection of useful memories, and provisionally inhibits others, because it directs consciousness along a specific path.

In respect to my own use of Bergson, I have already intimated the importance of the principle that a 'mental attitude [...] must itself be engrafted upon an attitude of the body' (120). Insofar as the motor state of action inhibits or facilitates certain kinds of memories, different bodily tensions fundamentally influence the 'invocation of convention' (Butler 1993: 225) which binds and authorises normative acts of signification. What I want to add here, as part of an explanation of my own methodological approach, is a brief reflection on why translating modern neurological insights into Bergson's psychology is necessary in relation to expanding the scope of his own work.

Understanding more about the mechanisms of the brain is important insofar as it suggests a way to expand the notion of a 'bodily attitude' (Bergson 2005a: 106) or a tension towards action which prepares memory and thought. For instance, the psychology of *Matter and Memory* revolves around the idea that the associative dynamics of meaning develop through the interpenetration of, and oscillation between, 'two extreme states' (155) of memory and action. There is the disposition towards immediate response which gives us the resemblances of motor recognition, and there is what Bergson refers to as the 'plane of dream' (242) in which action is completely relaxed and memories proliferate capriciously. In this way, we are presented with a polarity which, I would

argue, demonstrates certain diversities within the movement of memory but fails to identify the qualitatively different motor states which guide this movement.

Bergson himself stipulates that between the poles of dream and immediate response there are an 'infinite number of possible *states* of memory' (168), each effectively corresponding to a different tension of action. Nonetheless, this qualification remains vague and undeveloped. It provides a framework for the laws of association – as I will discuss in the final section of this chapter – but it lacks insight into the complex motor states which might develop within the social reality of gender dynamics.

What neurological research can potentially add to Bergson's psychology is precisely a subtler and more diverse image of body attitudes. It can contribute more specific examples of the kind of motor tendencies which can influence the direction of memory and thought. It can also elaborate upon the way the brain, as an 'intermediary between sensation and movement' (177) can mediate and delay action in radically different ways.²⁹

²⁹ Bergson's contention that sensory-motor actions ground psychic processes has in fact been taken up, independently of his influence, by a neurologically based field of research broadly referred to as embodiment psychology. See, for instance: Hosttetter and Alibali (2008); Niedenthal, Barsalou et al (2005); Niedenthal, Winkielman et al (2009); Oosterwijk et al (2009); Wilson (2002).

The profound correlation to Bergson is that mental concepts require '*actual bodily states and [...] simulations of experience*' (Niedenthal, Barsalou et al: 184) in order to bring them to consciousness awareness. This means that 'the inhibition or facilitation of a specific motor behavior [...] correspondingly inhibits or facilitates conceptual processing' (205). What it usefully provides, as a possible extension of Bergson's work, is a broadened image of what might constitute a bodily attitude. For example, it demonstrates how motor activities such as smiling and frowning, affect the way judgements are made (Niedenthal, Winkielman et al). In parallel to this, experiments have also shown how being engaged in conceptual activities such as evaluating happiness or sadness result in correlative changes to the subject's body posture (Oosterwijk et al).

At any rate, thought of as a way to explore the psychological processes of identification, Bergson's texts only take the possibilities of his psycho-physical model so far. I will thus further develop his account of the brain and the motor states of action in the second half of this section, and I will begin to widen the psychological diversity of memory in my following section. Before moving on to these discussions, however, what needs to be brought to light more clearly is the specific role which objective knowledge of the brain plays in Bergson's overall method.

Apperceiving Body Attitudes:

While Bergson constructs his view of the body from knowledge of the physiological and anatomical structure of the nervous system, his understanding of bodily attitudes and tensions is not a simple matter of reiterating objective knowledge. In practice, reflecting on the body as a centre of indeterminate action, and intuiting the body's direct relation to changes in consciousness, requires a methodological approach which exceeds a strictly neurological account of the brain. This is not just because Bergson asserts the immaterial reality of consciousness and memory. It is also because fully comprehending the way bodily tensions prepare or inhibit consciousness and memory involves directly apperceiving such attitudes as a lived process.

In fact, I want to argue that there is an implicit oscillation in Bergson's thinking whereby his analysis of the internal structure of sensory-motor processes informs, but makes way for, reflections on

distinct experiential dimensions of the body's action tendencies. Given this assertion, it is useful to draw out its validity in relation to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who explicitly criticises Bergson for lacking a sense of the lived body. This will allow me to place Bergson in the broader context of phenomenology, and facilitate a more precise outline of the limitations and benefits of my reading of *Matter and Memory*.

As Mark Sinclair explains, Merleau-Ponty's work is premised on the idea that we 'exist as embodied beings in a manner that both escapes and precedes the objectifying approach to the body in the modern sciences' (Sinclair: 187). What neurology gives us in this respect is 'a set of processes in the third person' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 87). It thereby provides a kind of 'removed knowledge of [the body]' (87), and it is only by 'going back to the body which I experience' (87) that philosophy can properly 'understand the function of the living body' (87). From Merleau-Ponty's perspective, then, Bergson's emphasis on the nervous system and the motor pathways of the brain means that 'the body remains for him what we have called the objective body' (91).

To be clear, I do not dispute the strict opposition which Merleau-Ponty sets up between the objectification of the body and its direct apperception insofar as it clarifies the parameters of his own work. Indeed, in emphasising ways in which the immediate experience of one's body is irreducible to objective analysis, he opens up an array of insights into bodily experience which makes Bergson's sensory-motor perspective appear lacklustre and unsophisticated in comparison. Considering the human body as 'the outward manifestation of a certain manner of being-in-

the-world' (64), Merleau-Ponty seeks to discover the way 'existence realizes itself through the body' (192) and 'establishes our first consonance with the world' (192). Rather than isolating aspects of the body in terms of discrete functions and systems, as is the manner of biological research, he thereby gives us a framework for reflecting upon the body as a primordial 'unity of the world and our life' (xx).

That said, I would still question Merleau-Ponty's absolute claim on what constitutes a direct experience of the lived body and, hence, whether a project of going back to experience is strictly incommensurable with the physiological insights of neurology. While Bergson's analysis of the nervous system and brain no doubt diverts reflection away from the deep phenomenological experience of the body's being-in-the-world, it offers something that is both more than a simple objectification of the body but also something more than a rejection of objective knowledge. It conveys a rather narrow range of focus through which we might consider the lived activities of the body, but one which is no less valid as a mode of reflection.

This is perhaps best surmised from the passages in *Matter and Memory* on attention. When Bergson defines attention as 'an adaptation of the body' (100), he does indeed go on to talk about the physiological mechanisms involved in visual and auditory recognition. However, this analysis is underlined by the more general image of adopting dispositions towards objects or interlocutors. Bergson argues that when we listen attentively, with the 'desire to understand' (121) another's words, we do not simply passively wait for the combination of motor recognition and

memory to interpret the others intended meaning. Rather, we actively involve ourselves in listening by 'adopting a certain disposition, which varies with our interlocutor, [and] with the nature of the ideas he expresses' (121).

In effect, what Bergson is deliberating on is a process by which we actively adjust the tensions and postures of our body, and therefore the tensions of consciousness, 'as if we were choosing the key in which our own intellect is called upon to play' (121). For example, understanding the explanation of a complex intellectual problem, following an emotional event, or judging the legitimacy of a gendered act, requires a very different attitude of attention in each case. What is common to all, however, is the development of a circuit in which the object of contemplation, the motor attitude which adapts itself to the object, and the memory-images which interpret it 'hold each other in a state of mutual tension' (104).

In adapting our bodily dispositions to receive the meanings of another, we prepare consciousness to accommodate appropriate thought processes. In other words, 'we jump at once into a certain class of abstract ideas' (Bergson 2007: 167) which then go to work interpreting and re-creating meaning. My point is that in order to fully grasp the kind of processes being presented here it is necessary to actively observe our self performing an act of attention. Indeed, Bergson himself implores us to 'question our own consciousness, and ask of it what happens when we listen' (2005a: 121). If we take this instruction seriously, then, we are no longer thinking about the body in terms of a third person perspective, but

as part of the dynamic progress of a psycho-physical circuit that is lived subjectively.

What Bergson wants us to conceive is not a set of isolatable physiological facts, but 'the fluidity of a continuous undivided process' (123). In doing so we may first obtain insights into the body attitudes of such processes through an objective study of the brain but, pace Merleau-Ponty, the process as a whole should also be understood as a subjective act of concentration. Insofar as the body situates the mind within this act, it is necessary to re-enact the lived attitudes of the body and attempt to reflect upon the way they are directly involved in the world and directly involved in consciousness. The objective analysis of the body is thus revealed to be a stage in a description of the body which ends up being re-imagined in terms of the lived postures and 'movements of one's own body' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 370).

It should be noted that Bergson's own emphasis prioritises consciousness and memory as the primary object of apperception, and that this is an important point which differentiates his work from the wider field of embodiment at stake in Merleau-Ponty's work. What would be fundamental to analysing Bergson's psycho-physical process of attention is an apperception of the way the body discerns its object of recognition, and inhibits or directs the subjective processes of memory according to its possible actions. In effect, the body is thought of primarily as the 'pointed end [...] in the shifting plane of experience' (Bergson 2005a: 152), through which consciousness and memory are directed towards a present moment of action. It is not considered in relation to the more refined phenomenal

experiences of the body which interest Merleau-Ponty, such as the conscious feeling of tactility or how the apprehension of sensory phenomena is 'bound up with a whole perceptual context' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 9).

On this note, it can be affirmed that the main reason Bergson cannot convey the 'body as a genuine subject' (Sinclair: 198), at least in Merleau-Ponty's terms, is 'because of his basic dualist position' (198). This is to say that 'memory constitutes the very essence of the self' (198) for Bergson. He reserves for memory alone certain aspects of subjective experience which, for Merleau-Ponty, would belong to a more intimate and ambiguous relation between body and mind. Whether we focus on the dynamics of physiology or lived experience, understanding the body's relation to the world is limited to the way sensory-motor processes of discernment and tensions of action orientate the memory content of consciousness.

I have already suggested that this provides a narrow image of embodied experience in comparison to Merleau-Ponty, and in my conclusion to this thesis I will discuss some of the broader possibilities which phenomenology offers in relation to Butler. Suffice to say here the idea of disclosing the 'global presence of a situation' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 91), as an intimate collusion between the body and the world, might provide a deeper understanding of the acquired harmony of gender norms and expressive tendencies of the body. For example, the project of apperceiving the 'synergic totality' (369) of the perceptual field, or 'the melodic unity of my behaviour' (67), may show more clearly than my own

image of familiarised expectations how gender hegemony is lived as a substantial identity. Nonetheless, far from being a simple deficiency, the different relations Bergson depicts between the sensory-motor processes of the body, consciousness, and the world have definite theoretical benefits in relation to Butler.³⁰

Part of what constitutes a living body for Bergson is its ability to discern certain aspects of its environment while excluding others. In relation to perception, then, '*dissociation* is what we begin with' (Bergson 2005a: 165) rather than unity. His work therefore prompts us to explore how the experiential unity of the perceptual field is bound up with a simultaneous diminishment of the body's object domain. As I discussed in my previous section, this process of motor discernment provides a useful way to explore how norms are circulated, but also remain inherently unstable insofar as they are dependent on the accommodation of other bodies. In turn, the framework of different tensions of action and levels of consciousness offers the possibility of exploring how gender intelligibility varies in relation to the norm, and how complex psychological states are developed in response to subversion.

What I want to emphasise in this respect is that all of the processes I have so far discussed and will continue developing can, and should, be conceived as lived experiences of the body. When, as I have argued, familiarised stimuli act upon gendered subjects like an objective force,

³⁰ Since much of Merleau-Ponty's work revolves around either an adaptation or critique of Bergson, there is a significant amount of commentary which compares their work in different ways. For essays of particular relevance to this thesis, see: Morris (2000) on Bergson's motor recognition and Merleau-Ponty's Body Schema; Casey (1984) on habit; Al Saji (2007; 2008) on temporality; Gutting (2010) on science and lived experience.

provoking prepared responses, they do so because the mechanisms of habit have been sedimented into the body's physiology. However, such mechanisms are also lived postures by which individuals dispose themselves towards their environments. I have thus used methods of apperception in order to interpret their role within the social circulation of performativity; and such methods are particularly important in conceiving the way habits involve implicit expectations which promote the temporal experience of social well-being. Equally, the role of the body in producing the variable dynamics of gender identification which I will discuss at the end of this chapter, and in Chapter Four, has been developed by shifting focus back and forth between knowledge of the brain and direct reflections upon the active processes of memory.

In summary, I want to contend that within Bergson's framework it is quite possible to translate the 'abstract schema' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 408) of neurology into a sense of first person experience. The objective study of sensory-motor processes can therefore provide knowledge of the basic functions that underpin the nature of the body's lived action tendencies, which can then be re-assessed by Bergson's understanding of psycho-physical dynamics and honed by methods of apperception. While this does not result in the kind of embodiment propagated by Merleau-Ponty, it presents the possibility of developing insights which are not necessarily obvious from a purely phenomenological reflection.

Bergson's different potential to conceive the lived body is thus in no way an inferior perspective. Rather, thought of purely in terms of what can be seen and known concerning lived bodies, Bergson simply provides an

alternative emphasis. Characterised by tensions and dispositions, his sensory-motor view facilitates a more action orientated and directly motivated apperception of social relationality than that which appears in Merleau-Ponty's work. By focussing on individual bodies as 'centers of indetermination' (Bergson 2005a: 36), as opposed to reflecting on the 'antepredicative unity of the world and our life' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: xx), his work thus allows important aspects of such actions to be clarified and explored.

For example, it draws attention to the motor discernments which underlie any given experience of unity, and so demonstrates how gendered perceptions are naturalised by diminishing a broader field of possible perceptions. Likewise, it brings into focus a greater awareness of how changes in the body's responsiveness develop as contingent modes of attention and intelligibility. Finally, Bergson's specific conception of how the body 'fixes the mind, and gives it balance and poise' (Bergson 2005a: 173), and how different attitudes towards action enable or inhibit different kinds of memory, facilitates insights into the nature of identification which would not be apparent from Merleau-Ponty's point of view. Indeed, the conception of different planes of consciousness, which follow from the body's different tensions towards action, will be a vital part of my interpretation of the sedimentations and instabilities of gender identity in Chapter Four.

Bergson's conception of the body, then, draws attention to aspects of experience and socially embodied psychic processes which are marginalised or excluded within the phenomenological perspective.

Moreover, Bergson's insights into the nature of the nervous system and brain offer a uniquely expansive view of the objective sciences which produce knowledge of them. As such, the motor tensions and discernments of sensory-motor processes can be explored through the neurosciences much more profoundly than is given credit by Merleau-Ponty.

This, however, does not mean simply resorting to 'the form which is traced out in the nervous system [...] as a set of processes in the third person' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 87). It means, firstly, gaining an intuition of 'the purpose and function of our nervous system' (Bergson 2005a: 160) in terms of an evolutionary principle whereby its increased complexity correlates with the development of increasingly spontaneous and consciously directed actions. The terms of interpretation therefore change, and the nervous system comes to be seen less as an objective structure viewed externally, and more of a 'material symbol' (222) of spontaneous, lived action. Secondly, as I have outlined above, it means confining the brain's role in consciousness to focussing attention and inhibiting or facilitating the actualisation of memory. Thinking about the sensory-motor body thus takes another step away from being an objective view of the body, and instead becomes about situating consciousness in the present moment via tensions of action which, through neurology, can be increasingly differentiated.

Thirdly, and most directly in response to the criticism that objective science turns the body into an 'interiorless thing' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 64), it means reflecting upon the actual biological processes of the body in

a highly specific and philosophical way. It means viewing any given organic process as part of an 'indivisible multiplicity' (Bergson 1960: 32), whereby the 'vital properties' (13) of organisms are 'not so much *states* as *tendencies*' (13). These tendencies, in turn, no longer constitute living bodies as interiorless things, but as vital and indeterminate wholes. Essentially, what is required here is a translation in which we 'break with scientific habits' (31) and reconceive the objective knowledge of the nervous system, or any other scientific references to the body, as inwardly experienced tensions and tendencies. Thus: 'The same thing which, seen from the outside, can be decomposed into an infinity of parts co-ordinated with one another, may perhaps appear, if realized from the inside, [as] an undivided act' (Bergson 1935: 93).

In this way, Bergson's principle of the lived body actually runs in directions other than just a return to the apperception of lived experience. Where Merleau-Ponty confines organic process to the mechanisms of objective science, Bergson's approach extends towards a principle of organic vitality. It extends towards a process of reflection which can envision the tendencies of internal processes – tendencies that, despite Merleau-Ponty's scepticism, underpin the phenomenological experiences of the lived body – without mechanising them. In the light of his philosophy, therefore, the possibility of a more advantageous engagement with neuroscience, and other biological resources, is presented.

Such an engagement is neither satisfied with a third-person conception of the brain and body, nor confined to a critique which disavows their physiological processes as a vital element of experience.

Rather, biological knowledge becomes a resource capable of being transformed into a metaphysical image of life, and as such can supply Bergson's metaphysical image with lines of fact that clarify the major tendencies of living bodies.

Modern neuroscience in particular offers a way to differentiate the body's tendencies of action. It therefore presents the possibility of extending Bergson's account of the sensory-motor tensions which orientate consciousness in new directions.

Panksepp's Theory of Emotion:

It is such a possibility which will now concern me for the remainder of this section. Using Panksepp's research into the nature of emotion I will first outline a specific way in which modern neurology can develop Bergson's image of the brain as an organ that prepares and delays action. Developing an account of how different kinds of emotional body attitudes produce conscious feeling states, I will then suggest how this perspective facilitates insights into the lived processes of subversion.

As I outlined in my previous section, there are specific correlations between Panksepp's outlook and Bergson's concept of affection. Part of the deep implication which Bergson shares with Panksepp here is the idea that the internal feeling states of the body evolved in relation to the needs of survival. The difference is that in *Matter and Memory* this correlation primarily concerns the evolutionary 'significance of pain' (55). In

Panksepp, on the other hand, an organism is motivated by a range of emotional feeling states.

In common vernacular terms these emotions can be understood as 'fear, anger, sorrow, anticipatory eagerness, play, sexual lust, and maternal nurturance' (Panksepp 1998: 47). These seven states 'provide self-referential salience' (14) which, Panksepp argues, evolved in order to inflect an organism's environment with a certain intensive relationality, and thereby give rise to spontaneous action. As such, they have provided for organic life a 'greater behavioral coherence and flexibility' (50) which guides action in 'a *variety of primal situations*' (50; my italics).³¹

While there is a definite correlation between Panksepp and Bergson in the general evolution of feeling states and action potentials,

³¹ As I noted earlier, Dorothea Olkowski has provided a very different interpretation of affection. In addition to this alternative possibility, it is worth making reference to a broader trend of theorising the body's affective capacities which is growing in popularity, and is equally different to my framework of emotion.

This trend is highly diverse. However, its salient points are, firstly, that affect often denotes an aspect of the body which exceeds representational experience, and even takes place in excess of consciousness. Thus, rather than guiding action through self-referential and subjective states, the body's affects often defy the possibility of achieving tangible relations between self and other. As such, the language of affect theory tends towards images of heterogeneity and fluidity; of the in-between rather than the positioned, the unassimilable rather than coherent, and of the pre-individual rather than the conscious.

Secondly, it is highly relevant to my own project that there is a wide-spread engagement with biology within this trend. Nonetheless, the general approach in this respect is again distinct from my own, which focusses on the relatively tangible processes of motor habits and emotional tensions and uses neurology to clarify the nature of these processes. In contrast, the emphasis in affect theory is to focus on emerging research in fields such as molecular biology and complexity theory which suggest non-linear dynamics of causality.

In short, while valuable in its implicit critique of essentialism and its exploration of the body's heterogeneity, the general manner of describing affect is inapt for my concerns regarding the regulatory dynamics of gender. However, I will actually return to this issue in the conclusion to my thesis in order to note some of the alternative opportunities that affect theory might offer to an analysis of performativity.

At any rate, for a sense of the diversity in the way affect is theorised and applied to cultural analysis see: Sara Ahmed (2010), Lauren Berlant (2010), Anna Gibbs (2010), Melissa Gregg and Gregory Siegworth (2010), Lawrence Grossberg (2010), Elspeth Probyn (2010), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (1995), Silvan Tomkins (1995), Patricia Ticineto Clough (2007), Karen Wendy Gilbert (2007), Gilles Deleuze (1998a; 1998b), Deborah Gambs (2007), Luciana Parisi (2004) and Brian Massumi (2002).

Panksepp offers a much more complex image of the brain than Bergson does. In *Matter and Memory*, the evolution of the brain is simply characterised as a complication of the sensory-motor system, whereby the greater complexity of the brain allows the passage from stimulus to response to be delayed. The actual structure and function of the brain is generalised in terms of motor pathways, so that the potential of a complex brain is that 'a great multitude of motor tracts can open simultaneously' (30). This descriptive framework, then, produces a somewhat homogeneous image of the brain in which a stimulus may either be transmitted into a definite movement or may 'dissipate itself in innumerable motor reactions which are merely nascent' (30).

Panksepp's evolutionary understanding of the nervous system is useful in this context because it associates the brain with the development of motor potentials, yet has a more differentiated account of the basis of spontaneous actions. In parallel to Bergson, he characterises evolution in terms of a passage from relatively passive reflex responses to the potential of spontaneous and indeterminate actions which, importantly, also correlate to the emergence of an efficacious consciousness. However, he differentiates the functions of the brain more subtly than Bergson, and therefore offers a more complex view of the development of spontaneous action.

Panksepp explains that there have been 'relatively long periods of stability in vertebrate brain evolution, followed by bursts of expansion' (1998: 43). These bursts have resulted in the conservation of three distinct and ascending brain areas called the basal ganglia, the limbic system and

the cortex. While 'all three [...] operate together' (61) within the everyday dynamics of behaviour, the important point is that 'each contains a variety of distinct operating systems' (61) which relate to specific action potentials.

In the lower, most ancient regions these systems are concerned with regulating 'essential bodily functions' (70) like breathing, heart rate, and 'the basic motor plans animals exhibit each day' (70). As the brain expanded along the course of evolution the 'higher levels [have provided] increasingly flexible control over these lower functions' (79): first the limbic system, which is well developed in most mammals, and then the cortex which, in the human brain, is heavily associated with language and conceptual processing. Thus, the 'stereotyped and relatively fixed behaviour patterns' (352) of lower levels become more flexible due to their interconnection with more complex brain systems.

Panksepp's research focuses on the limbic system, as it is here he discovers 'seven innate emotional systems ingrained within the mammalian brain' (1998: 47). Broadly speaking, these brain circuits are correlative with the evolution of diverse action tendencies relating to the 'environmental challenges' (50) of survival needs. They facilitate 'spontaneous psychobehavioral potentials' (24) by which mammals adapt to the immanent conditions of their environments.

In my context, what is of primary importance is that an emotional state of the nervous system is a generalised tension of the body which *indicates a possible course of action*. Rather than re-enacting a definite sequence of movements which have been preserved by past actions, as is the case with motor habit, they prepare the body only by initiating 'a host

of physiological changes' (49) such as the balance of hormone levels or tensed muscles. As such, the arousal of an emotion circuit prepares a stereotyped body attitude which is specific to each emotion, but leaves actual movements indeterminate and therefore open to spontaneous choice and hesitation. In short, we could say that each of Panksepp's emotions 'contains, after its kind, an invitation to act, with at the same time leave to wait and even do nothing' (Bergson 2005a: 17, 18).

What Panksepp provides, in addition to Bergson's model, is not only more specificity as to the nature of different affective states, but more subtlety to understanding the development of nascent acts. Every emotional system is in fact 'hierarchically arranged throughout much of the brain' (Panksepp 1998: 27), and has 'ascending interactions with higher brain areas' (27). Thus, neural interactions between these circuits and the cortex provide 'flexibility [...] for the more primitive emotional and motivational systems' (72). In Bergson's terms, this is because the passage from stimulus to response is delayed to a greater degree, allowing movement to hesitate and consciousness to expand. However, given the insights of Panksepp, we are no longer limited to the rather indistinct claim that 'the higher centers of the cortex [...] indicate a number of possible actions at once' (Bergson 2005a: 30, 31).

Because of the hierarchical structure of a sensory-motor response, the motor pathways of a hesitant act must pass through the centrally placed emotional systems before they reach the potential innumerability of the cortex. The passage from stimulus to response therefore ascends to indecision via motor tendencies which first delimit the body's tension

towards action. This means that 'diversity is always supported from below by a variety of shared mechanisms' (Panksepp 1998: 122), and a nascent act is rarely simply the sum of innumerable possible actions. Under the pressure of responding to uncertain situations the dissipation of possible motor tendencies is motivated by and constrained by the brain's affective circuits.

While this perspective alone makes it possible to re-conceive the dynamics of indeterminacy and sensory-motor responsiveness in more diverse terms, Panksepp also facilitates valuable insights into the nature of conscious reflexivity. In effect, each emotion circuit is a distinct state of the nervous system which executes stereotypical behaviour tendencies; but it is important to emphasise in this respect that, as with Bergson, Panksepp argues that the cerebral state itself does not account for the totality of behaviour. This is because the arousal of these brain systems is 'accompanied by subjectively experienced feeling states' (Panksepp 1998: 15), and these conscious feelings are not, for Panksepp, 'mechanistically passive by-products of [...] neural activities' (32). They have a real, efficacious influence on the actions of organisms.³²

³² Panksepp's primary competitors for conceptualising emotion from a neurological perspective are Joseph LeDoux (1999: 2002) and Antonio Damasio (2000, 2003). LeDoux's research focusses only on fear, and while he locates fear within the same neural substrates as Panksepp he conceptualises emotion in a relatively behaviourist manner. In other words, 'the brain accomplishes its behavioural goals in the absence of robust awareness' (LeDoux 1999: 17). While 'feelings result when we become consciously aware that an emotional system of the brain is active' (302), they have for LeDoux a relatively inefficacious role in behaviour.

Damasio also conceptualises emotion as an automatic reaction of the nervous system that is independent of consciousness, but gives more weight to feeling states in influencing behaviour. The opposition between Panksepp and Damasio is thus staged in a different way. While Panksepp fundamentally associates feeling states with motor tendencies, Damasio stresses that 'something felt [is] the result of a sensory process' (2003: 217). This is to say that 'feelings are largely a reflection of body-state changes' (Damasio 2000: 288), whereby 'somatosensory structures of the brain' (287) cause the emotional state of the body to be consciously represented. As such, feelings occur *after*

Insofar as Panksepp defines emotion in terms of motor states of the nervous system *and* conscious feeling states, then, they should be understood as both bodily and psychic processes. In fact, pace Bergson, what I am suggesting is that the sensory-motor state of an emotion adapts the body towards a tension of readiness which can be followed by an automatic action. However, when this tendency is not resolved into a direct action the moment of hesitant action begins to span a broader breadth of duration. The emotional state of action therefore emerges as a *feeling* because consciousness expands during the moment of indeterminacy.

Panksepp himself does not explicitly correlate the possibility of conscious emotional feelings with duration and indeterminacy, but he does suggest that the efficacy of emotion is due to the temporal nature of consciousness. Specifically, he argues that the evolution of 'behavioral flexibility was achieved by the conscious dwelling on events [through] emotional feelings' (38). Moreover, emotions have for Panksepp an 'anticipatory character' (39) which, as it were, foreshadow future events.

What is important in the temporal image of emotion suggested by Panksepp here is that the immediate past is retained *through* the feeling rather than in the form of recollections. Equally, we can surmise from Panksepp that it is the feeling itself which anticipates the future. From this perspective, what I want to convey is the apperception of emotional feelings as a state of temporal reflexivity, and the consciousness of these

emotions for Damasio. Their efficacy is not that of an immanent force of motivation but as a means to reflect upon emotional events. Feelings, for Damasio, thereby allow us to reason about the causes of emotion and to facilitate more considered responses in the future.

feelings as something different from reflective consciousness. In Bergson's framework consciousness has 'two subjective elements' (2005a: 233), which are 'affectivity and memory' (233). The former of these is 'consciousness [...] in the form of feeling' (18); or the consciousness of an 'internal state [which] arises within our body' (58). The latter emerges in consciousness in the form of detailed images and associations. Reflecting on this distinction as an apperception of emotion, then, I want to emphasise a specific way the temporality of a feeling emerges as an intensive experience of the moment of action.

As a temporal experience, emotion is not a consciousness which, like memory, retains 'details out of our past experience' (33). It is a reflexivity which *dwells on the past*, but not through a process which 'throws light [...] on past recollections' (141). Rather, the immediate past endures as a precursor to the immediate future *through the way it charges the present moment with fervent importance*. In turn, the feeling itself does not anticipate in a way which reflects, calculates or deliberates, but precisely through the way this fervid intensity prompts the self towards action.

In any complex psychic process emotional feeling states will actually be indivisibly unified with memory-images and reflective processes of thought. My point is that the specific role emotion plays in consciousness is that of intensifying both the need for action and the thoughts which orientate the self within moments of indeterminacy. It designates, as it were, a force of consciousness rather than its content, but nonetheless influences the course such content takes. Thus, part of

what is significant about emotional responses in the context of subversion is that the sense of intensive relationality it produces invigorates the contingent representation of gender intelligibility. Moreover, because it quickens the impulse to action, the intensity of emotion heightens when action remains indeterminate and therefore affects the processes of signification more strongly.

Emotional States of Gender Investment:

Ultimately, my development of emotion as an intensive experience of indeterminacy will take place primarily in Chapter Four. What remains to be outlined here are the specific emotional tendencies which are important in relation to subversive practices.

As I noted above, Panksepp describes seven emotional systems, but for my purposes I am only concerned with the tendencies of rage, fear, anxiety and expectation which Butler references in her work. In Panksepp's framework, these are the emotions of RAGE, FEAR, PANIC and SEEKING, which he designates through block capitals to emphasise that they represent rigorously defined neural systems. In this respect, part of what I will clarify below is how this neurologically researched classification amends the vernacular image of emotion which tacitly informs Butler's work.

Firstly, 'the SEEKING system of the brain' (1998: 144) is a 'motivationally generalized' (155) emotion which, Panksepp argues, has its evolutionary origin in activities like 'foraging [and] exploration' (145). Its

arousal produces an 'invigorated feeling of anticipation' (145) which '*drives* and *energises* many mental complexities' (145), such as 'curiosity, sensation seeking, and [...] the search for higher meaning' (145).

Unlike the other emotional systems Panksepp describes, the SEEKING system is 'commonly tonically engaged rather than phasically active' (149). In other words, it is constantly active whenever, for instance, we experience the 'impulse to become actively engaged with the world' (145). Part of my reason for including this emotion in the context of performativity is thus to emphasise the influence it has in social relationality and the formation of identity. It points towards a specific way of exploring hegemonic investments in gender norms, whereby anticipatory emotions invigorate, in Panksepp's words, 'the impulse [...] to extract meaning from our various circumstances' (145).

Butler herself, in the preface to *Gender Trouble*, associates the performativity of gendered meaning with 'an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates' (xv). I have, in turn, previously argued that the prospective tendencies of habit can be seen as an unreflective aspect of how expectations come to regulate the social field. However, the appreciation of an influential emotion which projects 'positive expectancies' (Panksepp 1998: 151) into the world provides a further means to understand this dynamic of regulation. In short, my argument is that the pleasant feelings we enjoy when we actively anticipate meaning forms part of the immediate investment hegemonic subjects place in the ideal of a true gender.

Indeed, Panksepp specifically argues that the SEEKING system may be both ‘a major source of [...] the tendency to selectively seek evidence for our hypotheses’ (145), and a primary reason why we so easily ‘yield [to] a consensual understanding of [...] a “reality” that most of the social group accepts’ (162). Thus, while habit projects a realm of familiarity by selectively discerning a normative object domain, and thereby provides a constrained focal point for individual processes of memory, the emotional states involved in expectancy provide a ‘conformational bias’ (145) for these processes.

Given this use of Panksepp to explain an aspect of gender investment, it is also useful to follow his assertion that ‘unfulfilled expectancies within the SEEKING system activate the neural patterns of frustration’ (189). These neural patterns are what Panksepp calls the RAGE circuit. They produce feelings of anger, and promote aggressively competitive and violent behaviours which, as an adaptive evolutionary tendency, ‘aim [...] to increase the probability of success in the pursuit of [...] resources’ (189, 190). As such, this system is aroused whenever, for instance, certain ‘precipitating stimuli [...] restricts our freedom’ (189), or ‘when one does not receive expected rewards’ (189).

In Chapter Four, I will discuss this emotional tendency in terms of an abjection which, pace Butler, promotes degradation and violence towards otherness but, contrary to Butler’s view, does not involve a complex of internal conflict. I will argue that when a subversive act disrupts an immediate process of gender expectation it may be experienced simply as an obstacle to that expectation rather than as a ‘nonthematizable’

(Butler 1993: 39) excess. In such cases, the hegemonic subject experiences a 'specific kind of internal pressure or force controlling [their] actions and views of the world' (Panksepp 1998: 191). For instance, it becomes easy to externalise others when under the influence of this affective pressure, and therefore to re-affirm the exclusionary structures of discourse. However, it is because this impulse to externalise originates from a sensory-motor state that I will argue that this specific response to subversion does not involve internal conflict.

A particularly significant insight which Panksepp brings to Butler's vague invocations of emotion is the distinction between two different types of anxiety. One of these comes from the FEAR system, the experience of which ranges from a 'generalised apprehensive tension' (212) to 'powerful feelings of foreboding' (214), and promotes the impulse to avoid the cause of anxiety. In Chapter Four I will discuss this emotion in terms of complicity, whereby apprehension motivates a reluctance to directly challenge gender hierarchy and prejudice. However, my primary focus will be the form of anxiety produced by the PANIC system, as this provides a means to explore more complex psychic processes such as Butler's theory of gender melancholy.

From Panksepp's evolutionary stand point the PANIC system is 'aroused when [...] animals are separated from their support system' (261), and he invokes it in order to think about the 'neurobiological nature of social bonds' (262). In the human world, for instance, it 'mediates such negative feelings as loneliness and grief' (212), but there are also 'good reasons to believe that [the] neurochemistries that specifically inhibit [this

system] also contribute substantially to the processes that create social attachments' (262). In other words, the 'affective components of this system are dichotomous' (262). They are involved in 'behaviors and feelings of separation distress on one hand, and those of social [...] comfort on the other' (262).

I suggested above that RAGE promotes processes of aggressive abjection without producing complex psychic states. Because the PANIC system has a dichotomous involvement in processes of attachment and feelings of loss, it provides a way to understand the kind of melancholic ambivalence which Butler herself associates with abjection.

In Panksepp's general terms, when the PANIC circuit is aroused 'animals seek reunion with individuals who help create the feeling [of social comfort]' (266). My question is: what happens when, as with Butler's notion of gender melancholy, the loss is in some way foreclosed by the borders of discursive intelligibility? For instance, insofar as a discursive condition for '[b]ecoming a "man" [...] requires repudiating the feminine' (Butler 1997a: 137), a subversion might expose the constructed discontinuities between masculinity and femininity. An example of this might be parodying a masculine identification with a football player through hyperbolic images which associate it with characteristic traits of a young girl's idolisation of a male pop star. In such cases, an effective subversion may unsettle a primary basis of an individual's social attachments. This then initiates an emotional impulse for social comfort and reassurance, but simultaneously taints the structures of identity through which such social attachments are formed.

In Chapter Four I will argue that internal conflicts like this result in contingent dynamics of abjection and gender melancholy similar to those Butler depicts. More generally, I will reflect on the involvement of each emotion in the contingent stability and instability of gender, and how they influence the on-going processes of identification and the potential for transformation. What will ultimately be at stake is the idea that emotions like rage and anxiety are responses to specific ways in which norms are subverted, and allow attempts to de-naturalise gender to be met by hegemonic subjects with varying degrees of efficacy. They should therefore be considered when forming strategies of subversion.

In conclusion, I have argued in this section that the insights of *Matter and Memory* provide an interpretative framework for using neurological research within cultural theory. I have then begun to convey how Panksepp's work facilitates one possible development of Bergson that can shed light on the lived processes of performativity and subversion. While Bergson's approach to the body is limited in comparison with Merleau-Ponty's, his psychological framework of tensions of action and consciousness has the benefit of specifying a more diverse image of how psychological states change. It is, therefore, to this psychology of 'psycho-physical actions' (Bergson 2005a: 131), and the possibility of developing it in relation to gender, which I will now turn.

Memory, and the Contingent Production of Meaning.

Bergson's basic principle of memory is that of a 'survival of the past *per se*' (2005a: 149). The past is never forgotten, but is rather intrinsically preserved within a 'psychical state which is unconscious' (141). Bergson argues, in this vein, that the whole of our past is preserved in its entirety and is 'continually pressing forward, so as to insert the largest possible part of itself into the present' (168). However, in our normal circumstances almost all of our past experience is 'hidden from us because it is inhibited by the necessities of action' (154). Thus, what Bergson calls pure memory has a passive and virtual psychic existence, which is '*outside of consciousness*' (142).

The existence of memory as an unconscious or 'virtual state' (240) has, for Bergson, an inherently creative potential. When the mind strives to 'transcend the conditions of the useful' (15) it may liberate the potential of memory from the constraints of action and 'come back to itself as pure creative energy' (15). As a philosopher, this creative energy is Bergson's seminal insight, and focus, throughout his oeuvre. It has, therefore, rightly been a main focus of attention in developing *Matter and Memory*.

At the end of Chapter Four I will invoke a much less radical dynamic of memory's creative power. Specifically, I will reflect upon its potential to transform the intelligibility of gender when the immediate future of an action is experienced through the open-ended disposition of aspiration. However, my main focus will be on the involvement of memory in normative relations to gender. Thus, my aim in this section is not explore how memory functions when a philosophical effort of the mind transcends the conditions of useful action. Rather, in preparation for my following

chapter, I will focus on how psychic processes develop when, in Jean Hyppolite's words, 'the spontaneous functioning of memory [...] adheres to the mechanisms of the body and is limited by them' (116).

I will begin by setting out the general parameters of the kind of 'psychological analysis' (Bergson 2005a: 16) available through *Matter and Memory*. This will involve, firstly, expanding upon Bergson's description of the process by which pure memory is actualised in order to show how such processes inform the way socially sedimented gender conventions are developed as individual representations. Secondly, my aim will be to show how 'the laws of the association of ideas' (163) which Bergson proposes can be related to the dynamics of gendered meaning. I will then suggest how these dynamics of meaning production are involved in the problems of resignification, and how we might extrapolate from Bergson's basic model of memory more complex psychic processes that can reformulate Butler's Freudian understanding of the gendered psyche.³³

³³ My focus on the everyday psychology of memory is not only a digression from Bergson's philosophical emphasis on the creative potential of memory, but from the popular Deleuzian emphasis on the ontology of pure memory. In this perspective, Deleuze draws upon Bergson's assertion that the pure, unconscious memory of the past has a real existence; and that when we are actively trying to remember we 'detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves in the past in general' (Bergson 2005a: 134). From this image, Deleuze extrapolates the initial claim that an act of memory is a 'leap into ontology' (Deleuze 1991: 57) – a 'true leap into being' (57). However this provocative catchphrase is just the surface of a profound rethinking of the nature of the past, and the passing of time, which both draws out Bergson's own implicit claims and extends them beyond their initial intentions.

For my own purposes, the deeper ontological issues at stake in Deleuze's reading have no immediate bearing on my psychological use of memory. I will thus resign myself here to two interrelated comments. Firstly, while it can be fairly claimed that 'Bergson's use of the virtual past [in *Matter and Memory*] is overtly psychological rather than ontological' (Mullarkey 2004a: 475), unlike Mullarkey I do not believe the present-day enthrallment with the ontology of memory is misplaced. In this respect, Alia Al-Saji (2005; 2007; 2008), Keith Ansell-Pearson (2002), Leonard Lawlor (2003), and Stephen Crocker (2004) all take Deleuze's ontological reading of Bergson as a primary object of explication, but each take it as a starting point which leads them in different but equally productive directions.

Secondly, it is at once an indication of Deleuze's profound influence on Bergson studies and a testament to the depth and breadth of Bergson's work to consider that rich

The Psychology of Gender Intelligibility:

In developing Bergson's psychology, whether it is for my aim of elucidating the dynamics of gender identification or any other type of social analysis, two basic premises must provide the starting point. Firstly, it is important to recall that in *Matter and Memory* 'the chief office of consciousness is to preside over action' (141). Bergson therefore highlights the essentially 'utilitarian character of our mental functions' (16) and, as I have already outlined, argues that 'a mental attitude [...] must itself be engrafted upon an attitude of the body' (120). Consequently, memory 'brings to the light of consciousness only that which can fit into the sensori-motor state' (168), and tends to actualise only 'those past recollections which can usefully combine [with the present moment]' (141).

This premise provides a basis for how, given the inherently creative potential of memory, individual representations of gender generally remain within the bounds of the habituated norm. However, it does not explain the diverse and changing potential of memory necessary to describe the instabilities of gender identification. Secondly, then, it is also important to recognise that while the past is preserved in its entirety, this preservation does not amount to a linear record of our lives. Memory has a virtual

veins of interpretive commentary thrive both with and without engaging what is now widely considered his seminal idea. For instance, commentators such as Pete Gunter (2008), Ian Alexander (1957), Milič Čapek (1987; 2002), Jean Hyppolite (2003), and A. E. Pilkington (1976), who worked prior to or contemporary with Deleuze barely, if at all, raise the issue of ontology when discussing the dynamics of memory. What this demonstrates, I believe, is the fertile philosophical ground Bergson has left, which offers multiple different directions to move in and still much to explore in each of these directions.

existence, and 'passes into something else by becoming actual' (136). This means that a memory 'actualized in an image differs [...] profoundly from pure memory' (140), and it is this translation of the virtual into actual images which makes the dynamics of recollection and recognition something much more than a simple chronicle of stable and well-defined images. In effect, memory always produces 'representations that are unstable and evanescent' (161).

In their unconscious state, individual memories do not have a 'fixed and independent being' (166), as if they were 'laid side by side like so many atoms' (171). Rather, Bergson suggests that the whole of our past exists together in an interpenetrating state. Just the individual elements of consciousness which I discussed in Chapter Two 'dissolve into and permeate one another without precise outline' (Bergson 1971: 132), so too are unconscious psychic elements organised in a kind of 'confused mass' (Bergson 2005a: 171). This is to say that in its virtual existence the whole of memory is bound up in an undivided continuity, and that it is only when it is 'materialized in an actual perception' (239) that it becomes divided into 'distinct fragments' (166).

Ultimately, this model provides the image of 'a *supple* memory which spontaneously contracts itself or develops itself according to the demands of adapting to the world' (Hyppolite: 117). When, for instance, we enact a process of recollection, we do not proceed by 'plunging into the mass of our memories, as into a bag' (171). We first focus our attention on the possibility of remembering; or, in Bergson's words, 'replace ourselves [...] in the past in general' (2005a: 134). Then, by 'a work of adjustment,

something like focussing a camera' (134), we gradually locate the certain region of memory which we seek. In this process, 'we go from the whole to the parts' (165) through an act of discernment which consists in contracting the past, in its entirety, around certain 'dominant memories' (170). However, once we have located a region of memory, the rest of our past continues to form a kind of 'vague nebulosity' (171) around these dominant images. Thus, consciousness can enact a 'growing effort of *expansion*, by which the memory [...] spreads out its recollection over a wider surface' (171), enabling more specific details of the past to be drawn into focus.

For the purposes of a psychological analysis which can provide insights into the contingent representation of gender conventions, what this description highlights is the malleability of memory. The work of adjustment I just described is capable of stopping at different levels of contraction, and at each of these levels the past, in Alia Al-Saji's words, is 'rearranged [and] undergoes transformation and fragmentation' (2005: 225). When the work of memory focuses on a dominant image the whole of the virtual past remains undivided around it, but the elastic indivisibility of the virtual past will reform itself in relation to that image. In effect, the nebulous mass of past memories will tend to re-organise themselves according to the associative connections of resemblance they have to the dominant image.

This means, on the one hand, that if an effort is made to expand the memory content into other regions of the past this process will be constrained by the nature of the initial contraction. Some memories will

thus be easier to locate than others because of their associative proximity, while others still may be completely inhibited. In this latter case, then, a renewed and separate effort of memory will be required in order to locate them. On the other hand, it also implies that if and when these nebulous images are actualised, they will tend to be divided from their original context in some way. That is, they will not necessarily emerge, in an image, as entirely detailed memories of past events. Rather, they will be fragmented according to their associative relevance, so that aspects of the memory which resemble the dominant image will be emphasised while dissimilar elements of the past will tend to be inhibited from consciousness.³⁴

This idea is important for my interpretation of gender intelligibility because it highlights the way processes of memory are not just about explicitly remembering events, but about how the past creates mental images which contextualise the present. Memory is capable of ‘distinct degrees of tension or of vitality’ (Bergson 2005a: 170), which enable consciousness to represent the past in different ways because the process of actualisation develops variably. Indeed, Bergson’s model presupposes that we can ‘discover thousands of different planes of consciousness, a thousand integral and yet diverse repetitions of the whole of the experience through which we have lived’ (241).

³⁴ Patrick McNamara has compared Bergson to a recent approach in the neurological study of memory which he calls ‘Mental Darwinism’ (1999: 1). This theoretical framework applies the principles of natural selection to the working of memory, and McNamara argues that Bergson’s notion that memory is inhibited by the needs of action places him tentatively within this category. As such, he examines neurological and psychological research uncovering ‘experimental evidence for Bergson’s model of remembering’ (44). However, in translating Bergson’s metaphysics into purely scientific terms most of the important dynamics of actualisation get lost in McNamara’s account.

There are then, in principle, an 'infinite number of [...] possible reductions of our past life' (Bergson 2005a: 169). In my context, this means that there are an infinite number of differences, both subtle and radical, by which our memory can inform the image we have of gender. For instance, on one plane of consciousness the perception of a masculine posture may recall the memory of a specific person we know making such a gesture at a specific time. In this case, the virtuality of memory becomes arranged around a precise event. An effort of expansion will thus allow the event to unfold sequentially in consciousness, or else may lead to other chains of association concerning that event or person which are grouped nebulously around the originally dominant association. On another plane, however, consciousness may remain narrow and produce an extremely contracted tension of memory. The same perception might thus cause us to think about the masculine posture more generally, but will produce more or less impersonalised images which are almost entirely fragmented from their specific context as past events.

In Bergson's framework: 'These two associations by similarity' (169) – the one which recalls specific memories of gendered acts, the other which invokes generalised images – 'are not due to [an] accidental arrival' (169). They 'answer to two different mental *dispositions*, to two distinct degrees of tension of the memory' (169), which are themselves 'determined by the needs of the moment' (169). In other words, the 'choice of one resemblance among many' (243) is 'not made at random' (243) but follows fundamental rules of association that are determined by the body's tension towards action.

The lowest plane of consciousness is 'more disposed towards an immediate response. The past is simply acted through a motor habit, and psychic life is reduced to a recognition in which similarity is 'felt and passively experienced' (160). At the highest, consciousness would be completely 'detached from action' (167), so that the 'necessities of life are no longer there to regulate the effect of similarity' (168). In this latter case, then, memories proliferate capriciously: '*any* memory may be set alongside the present situation' (167), through any kind of fanciful and weakly grounded association, because there is no purposeful discernment driving the process.

Bergson argues that 'psychical life [...] oscillates normally between these two extremes' (168). Indeed, it is to this oscillation that he attributes the formation of general ideas, and to which I will attribute the unstable representation of gender. The initial principle here is that motor recognition produces 'automatically acted generalities' (Bergson 2002: 54), and that these passively experienced resemblances are 'the essential [foundation] of generalization' (55). From this basis, on-going processes of *reflective generalisation* are formed as 'habit [rises] from the field of action to that of thought' (55). Memory will actualise similar images from past events, so that psychic acts such as inductive reasoning can develop 'general ideas which will be nothing more than ideas' (55).

Following this, my contention is that when we spontaneously develop an idea of gender – such as a normative conception of masculinity or femininity – we do not passively repeat the borders of discourse which constrain and legitimise that norm. Rather, the psychic

process begins from 'a confused sense of the *striking quality* or of resemblance' (Bergson 2005a: 158) by which motor recognition discerns the bodies around us within that contingent moment. This experience of the body's motor attitude presents us with resemblances that are only lived and felt, but which we then 'translate into generalities' (Bergson 2002: 56) when memory unifies that resemblance with images from past experience. For instance, we may recall previous events in which the same gestures were performed, thereby confirming the convention of performing gender that way. The habituated norm thus becomes a consciously represented norm, and the complexity of this representation depends upon the indeterminacy of action which allows memory to expand or narrow its range of associative images.

This process is more diverse than the 'reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established' (Butler 2008: 191) implied by Butler because it is not simply a re-experiencing of the discursive framework of law and prohibition. It is a re-experiencing and reformation of an individual's lived past, and thereby offers a multitude of possibilities for subtly re-interpreting discourse.

In general, we can say that images of gender will 'take a more common form when memory shrinks most, more personal when it widens out' (Bergson 2005a: 169), but Bergson's framework also allows the diversity of this process to be considered in more precise terms. Firstly, memory will produce different dominant images of gender depending on the initial motor resemblance; while different planes of consciousness will also represent that resemblance in different ways. Secondly, by 'grafting

distinctions upon resemblances' (160), memory may also tend to discriminate between individual nuances in the way gender norms are performed.

The Psychological Truth of Gender:

Part of the significance of this dynamic of meaning production is that it provides a way to think about the variability of gender intelligibility, while retaining a sense of how meaning is socially regulated. Our 'intellectual life rests [...] upon the sensory-motor functions by which it inserts itself into present reality' (175). Its spontaneous images therefore remain largely constrained by the circulation of motor recognition which, in section one, I argued maintains the social regulation of gender norms. My aim in this respect is not simply to affirm the potential spontaneity and variability of gender representation, over and above Butler's own perspective, but to explore the psychic tendencies which make re-signification difficult.

If bodily recognition constrains the direction of associations, and different tensions towards action allow broader or narrower planes of consciousness to contextualise the present in different ways, then each contingent plane of consciousness allows specific kinds of interpretive processes to unfold. In effect, memory associations constitute a set of contingent preconceptions which provide the semantic nuances for an individual's immediate interpretation of gender norms. On each different plane, the potential to rationalise the norms of gender or to reform its

expectations will be biased by the associations which are prominent there. Thus, because associations which are grouped 'together on one plane may be separated or allocated to different regions on another' (Al-Saji 2005: 225), our tendencies for negotiating meaningful relations to otherness may be radically different from one moment to another.

The guidance Bergson provides for understanding how these processes of memory unfold as inter-subjective relations suggests, I would argue, tendencies to misrecognise and appropriate meaning as much as it does the possibility for understanding. Once we have prepared a bodily disposition, thus taking up an attitude towards the world, 'we jump at once into a certain class of abstract ideas' (Bergson 2007: 167). Having 'adopted this intellectual tone' (167), Bergson suggests we then project the preconceptions of these ideas into the present moment of social interaction. In this way, 'to recognise intellectually, to interpret, may be summed up in a single operation' (Bergson 2005a: 117) in which we place ourselves '*at once in the midst of the corresponding ideas*' (116) and then 'reconstruct intelligently' (116) the intended meaning of whatever we aim to interpret.

In short, comprehending someone's meaning, whether we are 'following an argument, reading a book or listening to a discourse' (Bergson 2007: 165), involves recreating that meaning for ourselves. If, for instance, someone conveys to us an argument concerning the debates over gay marriage, in order to understand that argument we must first adopt a plane of consciousness sympathetic to recreating its meaning. Although that argument may, through suggestion and osmosis, guide us

towards this sympathy, it is the adoption of the proper state of consciousness which ultimately determines whether we find the argument to be true or not.

In this vein, Bergson argues that: 'when we read a psychological novel, [...] certain associations of ideas there depicted for us are true [because] they may have been lived' (2005a: 169). However, 'others offend us, or fail to give us an impression of reality' (169) when they express ideas which shift between different planes of mental life too sharply. In such cases, we feel that the connections are 'mechanically and artificially brought about' (169), and are thus dissonant to our own lived expectations.

Similarly, my contention is that the 'different mental levels' (169) we attain during our everyday interactions determine our affinities with the gendered others we encounter, and so the legitimacy of their performances. In effect, the "true" image of gender will be the one which conforms to our own contingent plane of consciousness. This truth may be more nuanced, and open to differences which exceed the norm, on some planes because the conceptual distribution of difference is made by broader ranging and more personalised associations. However, our gender expectations may be more rigid on other planes because they are disposed towards a narrower range of gender expectations. In this latter case, slight or sudden disjunctions may easily bring about dissonance and be represented as false.

Either way, the important point I want to emphasise in preparation for my analysis of re-signification in Chapter Four is that when we adopt a

mental attitude it 'throws abstract thinking into a definite direction' (Bergson 2007: 167), and we interpret the borders of discursive legitimacy by our own lights. 'Each of us has her/his own plane[s] of memory to which s/he jumps most readily' (Al Saji 2005: 225); our own habituated tendencies to contextualise and interpret gendered acts and ideals through specific tensions of memory. Whether they are rigid reiterations of discursive borders, or whether they tend to loosen the force of convention, it will always 'take a concerted effort to find and be attuned to other levels dissonant from one's own' (225, 226). Thus, while my primary aim in this section so far has been to demonstrate the potential excess of meaning over discourse, I also want to emphasise that this model of psychic life maintains an inherent difficulty in disseminating new representations.

The Complexities of Action and Psychic Repression:

The notion of gender meaning I am conveying here is, significantly, an extrapolation of Bergson's text rather than a direct translation of it. However, the most extreme divergence I am taking from Bergson's explicit psychology of memory is the general impression he conveys of 'a "well balanced" mind' (2005a: 153) which is 'nicely adapted to life' (153). A limitation of this perspective is, as Marie Cariou observes, that it portrays 'a sort of ideal functioning of memory' (104) rather than an 'exhaustive description' (104). For instance, Cariou argues that Bergson's 'concept of "utility" sometimes leads to the obscuring of many motives which could account for difficulties in evocation, or even harmful or corrupt evocations'

(104). What she thus calls for is 'a more rigorous conception of the negativity of forgetting' (104), by which Bergson's understanding of memory can be 'enriched and completed' (104) by the insights of Freudian psychoanalysis.

While it is certainly not my intention to enact a full engagement with Freud here, I will conclude this section by sketching out a Bergsonian interpretation of some of the Freudian mechanisms at play in Butler's work. Specifically, I want to offer Bergson as an alternative way to think about the complex and unstable identifications in which, for instance, 'uninhabitable' (Butler 1993: 3) zones of meaning threaten the self with 'psychotic dissolution' (243).

For Butler, these uninhabitable zones are authorised by the strict heteronormative exclusions of discourse itself. However, they constitute ambivalent psychic investments in the norm because, during infancy, the prohibition on homosexuality is understood to produce 'unresolved object relations' (Butler 2008: 86). That is, because homosexual attachments are foreclosed from possibility at the level of discursive regulation, Butler argues that the loss of an 'original' (86) homosexual love remains 'unacknowledged' (86), but nonetheless continues as an unconscious identification. The 'sedimentation of objects loved and lost' (Butler 1997a: 133) thus haunts the unstable boundaries of the gendered ego, and unconsciously drives gender investments through 'neurotic repetitions that restage [those] primary scenarios' (10).

In this way Butler, pace Freud, reduces the role of past experience in psychic life to a 'precipitate of abandoned object-relations that form the

ego' (Butler 2004: 146), and with this in mind a vital difference between Bergson and the Freudian notion of the unconscious must be noted. Bergson's notion of pure memory, as a complete preservation of the past in unconscious states, does not include the idea of repressed desires and, as such, does not store sedimented gender investments. Rather, the past is preserved in a virtual, inactive state which only becomes efficacious *in response to the present*.

This, then, is the important distinction by which I wish to reform the complexities of gender identification. By replacing Butler's view that unstable identifications revolve around sedimented structures of the psyche, I aim to construct a more variable interpretation of how ambivalent relations to meaning develop. If the on-going influence of the virtual past is indeterminate, and only becomes active through planes of consciousness which rearrange this virtual potential differently each time, then there is no fundamental psychic relation to gender. Insofar as these re-formations of the past are responses to contingent tensions of the body, rather than pre-established psychic relations to discourse, this model offers a more dynamic view of how individuals respond to subversive acts which disrupt the coherence of gender ideals.

It must be noted in this respect that 'Bergson is less attentive than Freud to the way in which [the past] reappears disguised, metamorphosed [and] transferred' (Cariou: 109). *Matter and Memory* thus lacks a direct means to account for latent psychic influences which are unacknowledged by consciousness. However, we can infer from Bergson that because memories interpenetrate in their virtual states they are, in principle,

capable of condensing an unlimited number of past moments together into a single actual image. Indeed, virtual memory 'passes into something else by becoming actual' (Bergson 2005a: 136), and tends to combine with the moment of conscious perception on the basis of resemblance. Past experience can therefore influence the present, through 'a whole work of elaboration, condensation [and] figuration' (Cariou: 104), in ways which are not explicitly conscious.

Moreover, Deleuze argues that in the movement of actualisation described by Bergson we can discern 'a psychological unconscious [which is] distinct from the ontological unconscious [of pure memory]' (1991: 71). There is, in this movement, a 'full-scale repression *originating in the present*' (72; my italics) which, in Deleuze's expository reading, will simply and effectively 'ward off useless or dangerous recollections' (72). Nonetheless, while this *completely effective* notion of psychological repression is certainly a correct interpretation of Bergson's view, there is no necessary reason to maintain it. With certain adaptations, Bergson's principles are capable of accounting for mechanisms of actualisation which induce psychic conflicts, and are only partially effective at inhibiting these conflicts from consciousness.

Bergson describes two interlinked conditions for actualisation by which memory brings to light 'what it is important to know to understand the present and anticipate the future' (Bergson 2007: 141), but only that which 'fit into the sensori-motor state [...] from the point of view of action' (Bergson 2005a: 168). These two tendencies simultaneously draw out and inhibit memory on the basis of useful resemblance. However, as Cariou

suggests, Bergson can give the impression that memory always perfectly aids the present moment of action, and part of the problem in this respect is that he presumes a simple and unified correspondence between the body's motor recognitions and the psyche's anticipatory relation to the future.

As I argued in my previous section, Bergson tends to homogenise the action tendencies of the brain in terms of habit, and I have added to his model 'affectively valenced' (Panksepp 1998: 144) neural circuits. Rather than preserving definite responses to definite stimuli, these circuits produce generalised motor responses that induce urgent impulses to act and, when these impulses remain hesitant, are accompanied by an *anticipatory feeling* which intensifies the moment of indeterminacy. My contention here, then, is that insofar as preserved motor habits and emotional tensions both project nascent actions during moments of indeterminacy, they may have a conflicting influence on the way memory responds to the present.

The image of the brain which needs to be conveyed here is one in which 'the movements of the cerebral mass [...] remain inseparably bound up with the rest of the material world' (Bergson 2005a: 24, 25). Every excitation which the body receives 'determine unceasingly, within its substance, nascent reactions' (232), so that the body is continually adapting to the changing conditions of the material present. In moments of indeterminacy, when memory is called upon to aid the moment of action, it is these adaptive responses which 'mark out the field in which we shall seek the image we need' (95). In turn, 'these images themselves are not

pictured in consciousness without some foreshadowing [...] of the movements by which these images would be acted' (13).

This means that, during the process of actualisation, memory 'enters [...] into a kind of *circuit* with the present' (Deleuze 1991: 66) whereby the object of action and the mental image refer back to one another. Analogous images are thus launched towards the object in 'a series of *attempts* at synthesis' (Bergson 2005a: 102; my italics) until one is adequately 'capable of interpreting our actual perception' (103).

Insofar as it is the body's motor attitude which provides a 'common framework' (102) for this circuit and this synthesis, my point is that Bergson only portrays the dynamics of memory in relation to a simple sensory-motor state. This is to say that his idea that the body, as it were, scans an object with habituated or 'imitative movements' (107) suggests a relatively stable basis for the circuit recognition. As such, he presumes that images either can or cannot combine usefully with the present, but not that the appeal the present makes to memory may itself be confused; nor that this confusion can lead to enigmatic, unsettling or even harmful images making their way to the fringes of consciousness where they have unproductive effects.

As an illustration of how such a process unfolds – which is certainly not comprehensive – my proposal is that during a state of *emotional indeterminacy* the body's reflexive attitude inflects the object with an intensive importance. At the very least, this relational intensity produces an unstable object of attraction for the circuit of memory which, in turn, potentially complicates the dynamics of association. More radically,

however, it may also evolve as an on-going state of anticipatory urgency which agitates the relational dynamics of recognition and, in relation to the discernment of motor habit, produces a conflicting interest in the movement of actualisation.

What I want to stress here, then, is that there can be at least two conflicting motor tendencies presiding over the circuit of memory and inhibiting the final moments of gender representation. More to the point, this sensory-motor conflict can produce conflicts of meaning and self-representation which not only necessitate repression but undergo complex processes of transformation in order to facilitate this repression. By way of suggesting how such how such psychic conflicts develop and are resolved I want to briefly return to the example I began to sketch in my previous section of how the PANIC system can be related to gender melancholy

If a subversive repetition denaturalises the constructed discontinuities between masculinity and femininity it may result in a loss of social coherence. This may then trigger the sensory-motor responsiveness of the PANIC system. Subsequently, the circuit of memory will be orientated not only by motor habits, which will tend to invoke images specifically related to the aspect of gender which has been denaturalised, but also by 'the behaviours and feelings of separation distress' (Panksepp 1998: 262).

In this way, the denaturalisation may induce a spontaneous leap into a contracted tension of memory which, responding to the anxiety to regain a feeling of social attachment, produces dominant images of gender which affirm the intentions of the subversion. Thus, memory may

produce associations with the present in which the borders of masculinity and femininity are ambiguous, and in which the gendered representation of the self does not conform to social preconceptions. However, while these associations, as images which are still confused and nebulous, may be loosely compatible with the *disrupted* tendencies of motor recognition on the virtual level of memory, they may yet still be inhibited during the final moments of actualisation. This is because the associations that can be represented on that plane of consciousness are not necessarily useful in relation to the habituated tendencies of action, which aim to discern a distinct gendered object domain.

A conflict in the production of meaning and identification arises here because, from the perspective of the feeling state, the virtual images may help to 'understand the present and anticipate the future' (Bergson 2007: 141). They will therefore tend to force themselves upon consciousness in proportion to the urgency of emotion. However, they cannot be resolved into a distinct image because they are, firstly, constrained by the relational circulation of habit, but also by the regulatory constraints of discursive intelligibility.

The virtual associations motivated by feelings of anxiety and loss cannot be avowed, and must be repressed, narrowed and transformed in order to sustain a coherent image of gender hegemony. My point is, then, that insofar as the on-going representation of gender remains motivated by those feelings, and are actualised on the same plane of consciousness initiated by the subversion, their 'uninhabitable' (Butler 1993: 3) associations cannot simply fade into 'an immense zone of obscurity'

(Bergson 2005a: 85). Rather, they remain, as it were, on the fringe of consciousness as a spectral instability.

What is at stake here is the idea that associations begun on a virtual level, once repressed, take the form of 'a repudiated identification' (Butler 1997a: 137) which continues to motivate the meaning of the norm, although unconsciously so. Normative gender representation no longer follows placidly from the appeal of habituated motor tendencies but, pace Butler, develop through 'neurotic repetitions' (10) which are truly bound up with internal conflicts and melancholic ambivalence. Nonetheless, the difference this model has from Butler's is that this on-going repression is a contingent response to the present moment of action rather than a sedimented structure of the psyche. It originates in the final moment of actualisation; and only on a specific plane of consciousness produced by an equally specific conflict of sensory-motor indeterminacy.

I will explore these dynamics of melancholic identification in more detail at the end of my following chapter. For now, I want to conclude this section by reiterating that I am using Bergson's concept of memory primarily to explore the way conscious representations of gender achieve individual nuances of meaning which exceed Butler's logic of discourse. Different conditions of action change the way meaning is produced in relation to the past, so that gender intelligibility is contingent to specific planes of consciousness rather than given entirely by socially shared discursive structures.

A gender representation which is 'prominent on one plane may be hidden on another' (Al-Saji 2005: 225), so that the possibility of changing

the way gender signifies is radically dependent upon how the associative dynamics of memory unfold on each contingent level of consciousness. One level may produce a rigid representation of convention; another, perhaps following the open-ended anticipation of aspiration, may produce 'a tone of intellectual vitality' (Bergson 2005a: 170) that may easily enable a radical transformation signifying meaning; another still may induce a melancholic relation to gender.

This model, then, provides a more variable way to understand the psychic attachments to discursive exclusions, whereby each plane of consciousness facilitates different possibilities of identification, and therefore different kinds of repression.

Conclusion.

In Chapter One I criticised Butler for reducing the psyche and the body to an effect of discourse, and therefore lacking a dynamic view of the way hegemonic subjects experience gender norms in excess of discursive structures. In response to this, I argued in Chapter Two that Bergson's 'deep-seated self' (1971: 125) constitutes a reflexive distance from the regulated structures of gender identification. I then suggested that a medium of social transformation lies in the possibility of experiencing social relationality through the qualitative experience of duration rather than through the substantialising effects of pre-established subject positions. Nonetheless, this potential is limited because qualitative

differentiations cannot be expressed in language without homogenising its effects, and is generally eclipsed by the more dominant tendency of the self to become 'enclosed and materialised in ready-made rules' (Bergson 1935: 46).

In this chapter I have extrapolated from *Matter and Memory* a sensory-motor understanding of the body's role in performativity. This framework, again, attempts to throw light on experiential aspects of hegemonic gender performances and attitudes which exceed discourse. It follows directly from Chapter Two in the sense that the theme of habit has been sustained as the primary tendency to repeat gender norms, and in the sense that gender representation varies when action becomes indeterminate. However, it has focused on different aspects of how this dynamic functions in relation to performative acts.

The understanding of the self and subject I conveyed through *Time and Free Will* and *The Two Sources* designates only a psychic tendency to conserve or transform relations to discursive structures of identity. Through *Matter and Memory* I have radically re-described the conservation and circulation of gender norms in terms of motor habits, by which existing power relations constrain the body's tendencies of inattentive recognition and action. In turn, rather than focussing on the potential for individuals to momentarily transcend their attachments to the discursive constraints of identity, I have emphasised the way 'intellectual life rests [...] upon the sensori-motor functions' (Bergson 2005a: 175). This has enabled a more dynamic view of how the conceptual content of

gender intelligibility varies, within the bounds of the norm, during the moments of attentive recognition.

In this context, then, the relation between habit and indeterminacy determines processes of meaning rather than intensity of investment. I have, however, retained from Chapter Two the idea of emotion as an agitator of gender investment. Although I have re-described emotion in terms of a sensory-motor state of the nervous system, this model continues the theme that emotion intensifies the way individuals orientate themselves during moments of indeterminate action. It thereby influences the way memory contextualises signifying processes. For instance, a gender norm conceived under the influence of an aggressive state of RAGE will be different from one developed through the separation anxiety of the PANIC system.

What remains, for the following chapter, is to take a closer look at how these processes unfold during immediate acts of performativity and responses to subversion, and to explore more explicitly what they reveal about the instability of gender recognition which Butler's framework does not.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE EMBODIED DYNAMICS OF PERFORMATIVITY AND SUBVERSION

My most general thesis on Butler is that her theory of gender performativity, thought of as an 'interrogation of the terms by which life is constrained' (Butler 2004: 4), provides a profound way to approach the political problems of sexual difference. In this respect, its usefulness lies in exploring the way historically sedimented structures of discourse confine in advance the way sexual difference is made socially intelligible. However, Butler's deconstructive framework results in an abstract account of the subject which excludes the lived and embodied dimensions of social temporality. It thus falls short of theorising the actual process through which performative significations occur. This omission, then, leads to problems in understanding both how normative attachments to gender become sedimented and how subversive repetition can work as a potential for social transformation.

Broadly speaking, my Bergsonian response to Butler has outlined three themes of experiential excess which underlie the unstable '*social temporality*' (Butler 2008: 191) of normative signifying practices. In Chapter Two I introduced Bergson's notions of duration and language as a way to emphasise the temporal experiences of individuals in relation to their discursive subject positions. From this perspective, I argued that the qualitative differentiations of duration provide a potential reflexivity which exceeds the constraints of discursive intelligibility, but are nonetheless

denied efficacy as soon as consciousness reverts to the homogenous and externalised differentiations of language. In Chapter Three, I then explored the idea that socio-historic norms form individual bodies by constraining its tendency towards habitual actions. This sedimentation of gender exceeds the exclusionary logic of discourse precisely because it takes place through a dynamic of action rather than representation. In turn, I argued that the conscious representation of gender exceeds the discursive framework of intelligibility because it is drawn from individual processes of memory.

As an attempt to refocus the possibilities of analysing performativity, all of these experiential excesses revolve around the idea that the temporal processes of action are central to the way a gendered performance or representation unfolds. The body's different relational tensions produce varying complexities of repetition and identification because consciousness narrows or expands in relation to the indeterminacy of action. In order to provide a more diverse sense of how indeterminacy is reflexively experienced I have thus added to Bergson's model of psycho-physical actions an image of emotion as an anticipatory motivational tendency. In particular, I have argued that emotions intensify relationality in response to subversion, and therefore complicate the resulting processes of identification.

So far, my analysis of this understanding of performativity has been primarily concerned with negotiating the theoretical complexities involved in adapting Bergson and Butler's respective frameworks to each other. As a result, I have yet to provide a direct account of the practical implications

of using Bergson as an alternative way to understand performativity. In this concluding chapter, then, I will draw out a more comprehensive explanation of what this model can reveal about the immediate processes of performativity and subversion. More specifically, having critiqued Butler's view of the subject as a discursive position, I will contrast my psycho-physical understanding of performativity to Butler's various theorisations of the psyche. Via these engagements, I will respond more concretely to the general political problems of gender regulation and the possibilities of transformation.

In section one I will again respond to the way Butler theorises the past. I will focus on the relation between law and psychic repression which her work stipulates, arguing that this produces a generalised image of both which cannot account for the diverse ways in which gender norms can be repeated and subverted. In contrast, I will show how the model of different tensions of memory which Bergson offers enables a more dynamic view of how the social sedimentation of gender convention is psychically experienced.

In section two I will expand upon the complexities of this model, using Bergson to develop an image of embodied gender recognition as an immediate responsive process. As a direct rejoinder to Butler, this section will address her use of Hegelian recognition to assert the inherent ambivalence of gendered self-knowledge. I will argue that subversion rarely produces radical experiences of such ambivalence because the body's tension towards action rapidly appeals to complex processes of memory which restore coherence and abate instability.

Finally, in section three I will explore the way emotions guide responses to subversion, and influence memory in different ways. This analysis will reconsider Butler's notion of melancholic gender investment and identification. I will offer an image of separation anxiety as an alternative way to think about melancholia, but also consider other states such as fear, anger, and the apperception of duration as alternative modes of gender investment.

Memory and Law.

Butler, in my view, rightly argues that 'the assumption of "sex" is constrained from the start' (1993: 12) by the productive power of laws, prohibitions and taboos. What is at stake in my critical re-working is the manner in which these laws produce and sustain their effects on an everyday basis. As I have argued, the normal lived experience of gendered acts is often performed habitually. This experience therefore approximates the regulatory borders of discourse through naturalised repetitions but is not, strictly speaking, motivated by the regulatory force of law. However, what I want to focus on in this section is the more direct psychic experience of gender by which individuals reflectively relate to its borders. Specifically, I will critique the narrow image by which Butler characterises the hegemonic psyche's relation to gender law, and offer Bergson's notion of memory as a useful alternative by which to understand the dynamics of its repetition.

The boundaries of what constitute legitimised sexed bodies and identities are, for Butler, produced by a set of injunctions and exclusions which she often generalises under the banner of law. It is important to recognise in this respect that ‘this “law” can only remain a law to the extent that it compels the differentiated citations and approximations called “feminine” and “masculine”’ (Butler 1993: 15). In other words, gender law ‘consolidates the ruse of its own force’ (15) only by the sheer accumulation of its citations. It is ‘fortified and idealized as law only to the extent that it is reiterated as law’ (14).

In this way, Butler asserts that gender hegemony gains its authority only by ‘citing the conventions of authority’ (13). In order for the normative ideals of masculinity and femininity to be legitimated as an essential truth of sexual difference, a signifying act simultaneously ‘*draws on and covers* over the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized’ (227). On the one hand, convention provides the present moment of signification with a ‘presumptive force’ (225). On the other hand, in order for a gender ideal to take on a ‘naturalized effect’ (10) a signifying event must dissimulate its status as part of a ‘citational legacy’ (225).

This formulation is designed to show that law has no authority or lasting resilience outside of the repetitions which naturalise and conceal its constructions, and to locate a possibility of resistance within this instability. From Butler’s perspective of analysis, the repetition of law is ‘not performed *by* a subject’ (95) because the process of repetition is itself what ‘constitutes the temporal condition for the subject’ (95). A vital part of her project is thus the denial of any kind of intentionality which is assumed

to be autonomous from the effects of discourse. Nonetheless, the fragile relation between the presumptive force of law and the dissimulation of its construction facilitates the possibility of an 'agency as a reiterative of rearticulatory practice' (15). If gender norms simply fail to be repeated then, in principle, 'gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions' (10).

My concern here is not with the idea of an agency which is 'immanent to power' (15), conceived as a failure to repeat rather than an autonomous act. Rather, what can be seen as problematic is that Butler's insistence on conceiving individuals in terms of reiterative subject positions ignores the active psychic element involved in on-going processes of intelligibility. In this respect, what I will reconsider in this section is the way in which the past, as the authoritative 'invocation of convention' (225), enters into processes of repetition. For the main part, what Butler herself means by convention is the 'binding power' (225) which the sedimentation of the past confers on the present in order to produce the tacit acceptance and concealment of law as an essential truth of gender. However, my point is that experiencing something as conventional also requires an *individual* act of memory to 'grasp the past in the present' (Bergson 2005a: 90), and therefore to connect previous occasions of gender performance to the present moment of signification.

Butler does gesture towards the psychic representation of the past, but her concern is not really to understand processes of memory as such. Rather, it is to affirm that the repetition of gender conceals its status as a historically produced and sedimented norm. In this context, the past is

conceived as 'the accumulation and congealing' (Butler 1993: 245) of reiterative practices but, perhaps even more so, as 'domains of the repressed, forgotten, and the irrecoverably foreclosed' (245). Because, in Butler's analysis of discursive structures, 'that which is refused construction [is] as crucial to its definition as that which is included' (245), this centrality of the excluded is, in effect, translated into the central mechanism of memory. Thus, sedimentation is understood to be 'a repetition of what cannot be recollected, of the [...] haunting spectre of the subjects deconstitution' (244), and 'an "act" is always a provisional failure of memory' (244) in the sense that it must conceal its construction.

In this way, the psychological dimension of a citation is reduced to an entirely negative process which represents memory as a process that simply mirrors the exclusionary structures of discourse. Taking Butler's logic to the extreme, it is as if an individual's past consists of nothing but the sedimentation of an exclusionary act – one which must be continually repressed, and which continually haunts the present. What this obscures is not simply the fact that an individual's experience, and therefore their reserve of memory, is much more diverse than such a structural understanding admits. More importantly, it omits a consideration of the functional dynamics of memory by which the past actively informs a present moment of gender representation.

As such, Butler does not acknowledge that the expectations of convention do not emerge in the same way when, for instance, they are conceived in relation to different kinds of memories. Indeed, Bergson's work posits 'we can discover thousands of [...] integral yet diverse

repetitions' (2005a: 241) of our past, each of which might reconstitute the expectations of convention in a different way. Memory needs reconsidering in relation to performativity, then, because the psychic representation of gender is never simply a verbatim repetition of discourse. It therefore suggests a fundamentally variable resource for experiencing the effects of law, and for enacting judgements of legitimacy on gendered acts.

On this note, Alexandre Lefebvre has recently used Bergson's notion of memory to produce a theory of judgement by which to analyse procedural law. While his perspective does not encompass Butler's sense of discourse as productive of the subject, nor the dissimulation necessary to secure its naturalising effect, it is useful here in establishing relations between law and memory which Butler excludes.

Lefebvre argues that 'rules of law have a double existence' (145). On the one hand, 'they fill and are found in [...] books, the corpus of legal rules' (145). On the other hand, these written rules of law are not simply mechanically applied to individual cases. Rather:

for a rule of law to be embodied in a state of affairs [...] something else must happen: an act of memory. Someone – whether a litigant, a lawyer, a judge, or someone else – must connect that raw event [of criminality] to law; only that can initiate the use of the actual, written texts (145).

Adapting this image of law to Butler's framework we can say that the rules of gender can be found in actual laws such as, for example, those which denote the legality of marriage or of sexual acts. However, they also exist more diffusely in the general 'domain of language and kinship' (Butler 1993: 7) which set the boundaries of gendered life. This discursive domain does not only act as the 'network of authorisation and punishment' (225) from which judgements of legitimacy are made, but constitutes the very terms of intelligibility by which gender comes into being. There is therefore no 'raw event' (Lefebvre: 145) of gender which is subsequently interpreted by law, as is the case with Lefebvre's model. Law, for Butler, is always already at work in the very possibility of social interaction, determining how we are 'constituted as socially viable beings' (2004: 2).

Nonetheless, an act of memory is still necessary for the discursive domain of law to be represented in consciousness as a meaningful reality which persists in people's lives. Meaning, in other words, is not simply embedded in the relational structures of signifying practices and social structures. It requires the present moment to sustain an on-going relation to processes of memory which actively contextualises gender performances with the rule that structures them as a signifying event.

The important point here is that, in memory, 'the past of law is virtual' (Lefebvre: 144). Memory does not simply store discursive structures as discrete, ready-made conceptions, but preserves the whole of the past in an interpenetrating state. As I discussed in my previous chapter, this means that memory is capable of 'distinct degrees of tension

or of vitality' (Bergson 2005a: 170) in which the past is re-arranged and fragmented.

By this logic, the 'rules of law exist at various virtual tensions' (Lefebvre: 159) and, from a psychological perspective, appear to be structured differently on each and every one of those virtual tensions. Moreover, the support a signifying event gains from the past is not simply that of remembering the law, but consists in a whole work of elaboration and contextualisation by which memory selectively associates the present act with different regions of past experience. Recognising the "law" that masculinity is only performed by male bodies and femininity is only performed by female bodies is, in this way, never simply a matter of repeating the discursive structures of that law. It involves an evocation of images which affirm those associations, but which also interpret law differently depending on the specific type of memories which are actualised.

From this perspective the double existence of law refers, on the one hand, to the 'reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains' (Butler 1993: 2). This existence regulates the 'matrix of gender relations' (7) on a socio-historic level because it constitutes the 'enabling cultural condition' (7) of socially shared processes of signification. On the other hand, the psychological act of conceiving this matrix can, in principle, draw the meaning of law from different virtual potentials. Law can, for instance, 'take a more common form when memory shrinks most, more personal when it widens' (Bergson 2005a: 169), so that any specific repetition implicates the self in the

exclusionary norms of gender in different ways. In addition, because associations which are grouped 'together on one plane may be separated or allocated to different regions on another' (Al-Saji 2005: 225), the memory content by which the past supports the present may vary radically from one act of signification to the next.

What Butler's exclusive attention to the actual structures of discourse misses is precisely that there is no simple and uniform invocation of law and its conventions. Her conflation of memory with discourse implies that there is a single sedimented preservation that provides a continual source of psychic motivation for the repetition of law. Although this psychic sedimentation is unstable insofar as it also internalises 'an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation' (Butler 1993: 3), my point is that mental concepts of law are not sedimented at all. The important ordering principles of law – the conferred authority of convention and the structuring of an object outside to discourse – are recreated anew with each signification.

They are recreated, that is, at different tensions, and with different inflections of meaning, which redistribute both the psychic representation of acceptable gender borders and the authoritative force of convention which fortifies their presumptive truth. For example, the regulatory force of gender norms may appear less strict if a memory inflects the present moment of signification with specific images which exceed the norm in some way. In turn, the same result may occur if a memory of having being personally excluded inclines a hegemonic subject towards a sympathetic

identification with what Butler would otherwise call an abject subject position. However, a narrower plane of consciousness may only produce generalised images of normative gender performances which, pace Butler, will confer naturalising presumptions upon the present moment of signification.

The point is, at any given tension both the meaning content and the normative authority of gender changes because the past inflects the present in different ways. It thus provides different resources for processes of interpretation and judgement. Part of my argument here, then, is that it is the variable dynamics of memory, as much as it is the 'constitutive instabilities' (Butler 1993: 10) of discourse itself, which means that gender law constitutes a 'revisable criteria of intelligibility' (14). The way convention subsists within a contemporary citation occurs differently according to the tension by which memory inflects its authority as meaningful, and, in this way, Bergson's notion of memory 'can account for *both* the conservative and the creative capacities of judgement' (Lefebvre: 142).³⁵

³⁵ I have previously discussed how Gaston Bachelard has criticised Bergson's general concept of duration for conceiving consciousness in terms of continuity instead of dialectical opposition. However, it is worth re-framing this critique in the terms of memory at stake in this section. If, in this way, we centre the issue not on the nature of duration itself, but on how we 'grasp the mind in its essential act of judgement' (Bachelard: 33), a more precise view of some of the issues at stake in Bergson's concept of memory can be grasped.

First of all, there is the valid question of 'whether Bergsonism has given [a] rightful place to psychological negativism, coercion, and inhibition' (29) within processes of thought. In Bergson's texts there is, in particular, little sense of how the psychological or social dynamics of coercion might be explained. Even in *The Two Sources*, where he describes regulatory structures, the submission to law is described primarily in terms of willing acquiescence. In this sense, then, Bachelard's critique has its merits in drawing attention to violent and conflicting aspects of social and psychic life.

Nonetheless, Bergson's texts are not alien to the ideas of dis-continuity and the comparative nature of judgement. In the case of forming general ideas, for instance, 'dissociation is what we begin with' (Bergson 2005a: 165), and this primary act of dissociation has an inhibitory effect of memory. In turn, Bachelard would surely approve

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I will discuss the dynamics of these creative potentials and normative tendencies in my following sections, thinking them through as an immediate process of responsiveness. What I want to briefly elaborate on here is the way this model of the psyche offers a different understanding of how discourse constrains the self, and how processes of repression develop in contingent situations.

For Bergson, 'memory is a function of the future [which is] called up and actualized to help us act' (Lefebvre: 153). We 'remember only as much as we need to, as much as the situation demands' (163), and it is ultimately the body's relationality that 'determines at which tension [laws] will be sought' (159). Part of what this means is that the determination of a tension 'has nothing to do with a selection made between options' (161). It is a spontaneous response to the moment of action, and this suggests for

of the contention that 'an idea [...] is the more distinct the better it is isolated and differentiated from all the others' (Bergson 2007: 180). At any rate, while this is not the kind of negativism and inhibition Bachelard has in mind, the important point is that Bergson's model of memory can have important things to say about the process of dialectical exchanges.

If, along with Bachelard, we say that 'all judgements [...] are essentially negative judgements' (32), and that 'knowledge [is] essentially a polemic' (32), we have described the ostensible characteristics of judgement. If, for instance, someone presents us with an idea we disagree with we are, of course, immediately caught in a polemical dialectic of negation and conflict. However, explaining 'the power of conviction' (32) in terms of the 'the negating powers of the mind' (18) is not enough to explain the actual psychic processes involved in producing an argument. We still have to explain what prompted one negation rather than another, and how the details of specific arguments emerge into consciousness and change over the course of an argument.

What Bergson's model of memory provides in this respect is a basis for understanding *how meaning is contingently produced* throughout the course of a dialectic exchange. This is to say, his work implies that a negative judgement is, in the first place, dependent on the progresses of an internal selective process by which memory produces meaning. As I will discuss in my next section, this is important in relation to gender in order to show how negation and opposition develop in response to subversion, and is formed in different ways on different tensions of memory.

Lefebvre 'a nonvoluntaristic concept of choice' (161) and a '*theory of judgement without decision*' (161).

Lefebvre's argument is not only that the potentiality of memory is radically situated and constrained by the immediate state of the body, but that there is no 'externality' (141) between the moment of action and the memory which sheds light on it. There is no externality, that is, which would freely allow an individual to 'deliberate on which level [of memory] to call' (Lefebvre: 141). Such radical deliberation would imply that they could transparently adjudicate on how the past informs the present from a neutral, self-determined stand point within that present, but this is not the case. The "choosing" self is always already deliberating *from* a specific tension of memory; one which already delimits the possibilities of conceiving gender law, and therefore of enacting judgements on the intelligibility of gender. Moreover, in the context of gendered social relations, memory is always in some sense responding involuntarily to pressures of action which are beyond control.

From this perspective, the gender self emerges from conditions of responsiveness which can never be fully mastered, but a difference must be noted here in respect to Butler's own image of non-voluntaristic intentionality. What Butler refers to is the repetition of 'a discourse which precedes and enables [the] "I"' (1993: 225), and therefore 'forms in language the constituting trajectory of [an individual's] will' (225). Gender is, in this way, not voluntaristic within Butler's framework because intentionality is confined in advance by socio-historical limits.

While I am not opposing this view of discursive constraint, what I am drawing from Lefebvre and Bergson is slightly different. The self does not choose its tensions of memory because, it could be said, the self is contingently re-created on each different tension. It is derived from associations between the past and present which are called upon and delimited by the contingent moment of action. My non-voluntary image of choice thus refers to limitations to the autonomy by which individuals can influence the spontaneous psycho-physical processes by which law is *variably and contingently re-conceived*, and through which self-identity is formed.

Part of this limit is, of course, the actual structures of discourse. In order to facilitate communication, the mental concepts of law must be translated into shared structures of language, without which they would not be socially intelligible. Thus, while the virtual potential of memory can, in principle, radically reform *an individual's* contingent image of gender, discursive practices still inhibit this potential on a social level. Indeed, during the movement of actualisation, the meaning of memories will tend to 'receive powerful assistance [...] from the word, which will [...] furnish [the psychic] representation with a frame in which it can fit' (Bergson 2002: 55) and, as such, constrain the social efficacy of individual processes of memory.

My formulation of gender law as psychically virtual, then, does not impose a libertarian view on Butler's ideas of discursive regulation. It suggests that there are many more psychic states of hegemony and ways to interpret the borders of discourse than Butler accounts for, but it does

not contradict the idea that 'agency [is] conditioned by those very regimes of discourse' (Butler 1993: 15). The importance of this variable image of gender representation is, instead, to show how the efficacy of subversive repetition is dependent on influencing the psychic malleability of law in the right way, and in my following sections I will reflect on some of the different possible impacts subversion can have. My final remarks here will further prepare for these discussions by re-evaluating Butler's rather monomorphic views on the dynamics of dissimulation and repression.

In a present moment of signification, 'certain situations call up not merely different recollections' (Lefebvre: 162). They 'precipitate us into different processes of memory altogether' (162). In situations which tend to circulate the repetition of habits, the call to action 'overwhelmingly solicits the lowest planes of memory' (Lefebvre: 164). It therefore precipitates individuals into representations which naturally tend to conceal the regulatory structures of gender, but only because they are more or less unreflective repetitions of past behaviours. In contrast, when the body becomes less disposed towards an immediate action, particularly in response to a subversive repetition, the resulting indeterminacy means that the psychic representations of law become more unstable.

As consciousness expands, an individual's reflexive relation to gender regulation thus becomes less easy to conceal. Indeed, while this indeterminate responsiveness potentially enables their relation to gender convention to become fluid enough to effect re-signification, the spontaneous production of memory images may also cause conflicts of identification. For instance, I argued above that memory can lessen the

presumptive force of law by contextualising the present with images which exceed the norm. Nonetheless, I must also stress that the spontaneous leap into such denaturalising excesses may, in order to facilitate their translation into the distinct borders of discursive intelligibility, undergo concealment during the movement of their actualisation. In such cases, we are certainly faced with a psychic repression, but one derived from a contingent relation between the present moment of action and the specific tension of memory by which the past is re-arranged.

In any act of conscious representation 'knowledge [...] is the effect of a sudden dissociation' (Bergson 2007: 137). Consciousness spontaneously contracts and expands in response to the present moment and selects, 'from the immensely vast field of our virtual knowledge, [...] in order to make it into actual knowledge, everything which concerns our action upon things' (137). This dissociation, therefore, implies that gender representation inherently involves psychic acts of repression in which whole regions of the past are inhibited from consciousness at any moment. However, this is not first and foremost the laboured repression of a 'haunting spectre' (Butler 1993: 244) that is sedimented in the unconscious but which constantly threatens to return and de-constitute the subject. While this kind of instability exists insofar as rigid gender identities struggle to conceal the instabilities of gender relationality, *this struggle is not stored in the past*, but produced in response to the present.

My point is that different tensions of memory facilitate different acts of dissociation. They therefore produce different psychic relations to the exclusions and instabilities of discourse, only some of which function

through the kind of haunting repressions which Butler describes. For Butler, on the other hand, such repression forms the decisive characteristic of a psyche in which *memory internalises an object and excluded outside* as its most basic function.

As a working model for understanding the lived changes which a psyche undergoes in response to subversion, Butler's perspective conveys only a generalised relation to law. It is a relation which is sharply polarised between a full scale repression and a dissolution of the psyche that occurs when the repressed is exposed. This perspective, then, not only loses sight of the far less extreme relations which most heterosexual subjects have to the transgression of gender law, it also makes it difficult to see how this kind of complex can develop into a productive response to subversion. The idea of 'a thousand [...] diverse repetitions' (Bergson 2005a: 241) of the past, on the other hand, enables an equally diverse image of psychic relations to law; one in which hegemonic subjects repeat gender norms in multiple ways, and have multiple possible responses to subversion.

In conclusion, this model continues to say that 'a contemporary "act" emerges in the context of a chain of binding conventions' (Butler 1993: 225). However, the way these binding conventions are 'fortified and idealised as law' (14) *within the psychic representation of gender* are contingent upon the variable dynamics of memory which actively enable the past to contextualise the present moment.

Law, in this sense, is unstable not only because its 'reiterative labor' (10) must continually conceal the constitutive excesses which threaten its

coherence, and because this is 'a repudiation whose consequences it cannot fully control' (3). Its authoritative force is also permeable because, in memory, law has only a virtual existence. It thus carries the inherent possibility of recognising the conventions and judging the expectations of gender differently. In the following section I will apply Bergson's psycho-physical process of memory more directly to an analysis of the immediate process of recognition, and to the persistent stability of gender norms. In section three I will then turn to an analysis of less stable processes of identification and the disruptive effects of subversion.

Embodied Recognition.

As a concept, performativity originally revolved around the idea that gender identity and recognition is a regulated '*effect* of discursive practices' (Butler 2008: 24), and it is this aspect of Butler's work which has been my primary object of analysis. In this section, however, I will discuss my critique in relation to the notion of Hegelian recognition which she increasingly turns to in her later work, and which asserts the 'ontological primacy of relationality itself' (2004: 150). Here, it is not only that 'the terms which make up one's own gender are, from the start, outside oneself' (1), given by structures of discourse which historically pre-exist any individual. In addition, Butler articulates a decentred notion of the self which, equally, is 'beyond itself from the start' (150), but which points towards a 'perennial and irresolvable aspect of human psychic life' (147).

In this framework, 'whatever consciousness is, whatever the self is, [it] will find itself only through a reflection of itself in another' (147). This means for Butler that a vulnerable, dependent and ambivalent relation towards the other is a fundamental and on-going dynamic of consciousness. The self is 'never [...] free of the Other' (148), and this relationality is constitutive of what Butler calls an 'ek-static' (14) self who is 'necessarily outside itself, not self-identical' (148).

This ek-static self, therefore, undermines the normative assumptions of subject positions, and the 'conceit of autonomous self-determination' (149) which they enforce. Insofar as the other presents the 'possibility of both securing and undermining self-knowledge' (148), this dynamic of recognition suggests a shifting polarity between ambiguity and the conceit of self-certainty. That is, the self's relationality continually plunges identity into ambivalence, but this ambivalence can also be seen to drive violent relations to otherness which aim to 'shore up what it knows [and to] expunge what threatens it with not-knowing' (35).

As I noted in Chapter One, my critical perspective on this stage of Butler's work is not that her image of a decentred ontology lacks coherence or insight. Indeed, Butler's polarity between the conceit of self-determination and ambivalence ultimately emphasises the important ethical imperative of a social responsibility which 'lives with its unknowingness about the Other' (35). Nonetheless, if this polarity is considered purely in terms of the immediate responsiveness of a hegemonic subject, it can be seen to draw focus away from other dynamics of the self which are important within the processes of

performativity and subversion. That is, it excludes other factors which are involved in the dynamics of relationality, but which cannot be readily characterised in Butler's terms of a self who 'must pass through self-loss' (147) in order to be itself.

My concern in this section is that Butler does not attend to the manner in which recognition is 'the concrete process by which we grasp the past in the present' (Bergson 2005a: 90), and that such acts of recognition are embodied processes which bring familiarity to the present in order to aid action. Broadly speaking, my aim in incorporating this perspective into the dynamics of performativity is to explore the idea that gender relationality is not unstable in precisely the way Butler contends. More specifically, I will re-describe the immediate processes by which recognition unfolds as a movement from relatively stable gender repetition, into a process of unstable identifications, and back again to the normative conceits of identity.

In my Bergsonian model, the process by which bodies are recognised as gendered can take place through an inattentive motor recognition, but also through an attentive recognition which develops through a more spontaneous and variable relation between the body and memory. As a re-examination of relationality, it thus discloses a set of processes which are different to the polarity of decentred ambivalence and illusory autonomy which characterises Butler's model of recognition. It thereby provides an alternative way to explore the stability and instability of process of gender identification and investment.

The primary interaction between self and other suggested by Bergson's framework unfolds in relation to action rather than the ideal of self-knowledge. The body's tension towards action is, of course, involved in contingently producing meaning and self-knowledge insofar as it grounds processes of memory. However, my point is that the *disruption of action* does not necessarily result in a crisis of ambivalence. This is to say that while Butler argues that the self is haunted by its ek-static ambivalence – just as it is haunted by the constituent instabilities of discourse – I will examine the extent to which a subversive repetition can actually utilise this ambivalence effectively. In short, I will explore Butler's aim to 'disrupt what has become settled knowledge and knowable reality' (Butler 2004: 27) in terms of psycho-physical responsiveness rather than the ek-static structure of self-knowledge.

In my previous chapter I argued that living bodies are not autonomous entities because their contingent existence is constituted by the material movements which act upon it. A living body, in this sense, is not the self-contained origin of its own relation to the world. It 'borrows its physical properties from the relations which it maintains with all others' (Bergson 2005a: 24), and is therefore determined by a kind of decentred relationality of responsiveness.

This suggests a different dynamic of relationality to Butler's 'ek-static notion of the self' (2004: 148) because it refers to the sensory-motor dynamics of the body rather than psychic processes of self-conscious awareness. Although we can say that the body is ontologically decentred, part of its nature is also to selectively discern its environment according to

its needs of action. Bodies 'seize form their surroundings that which attracts them, that which interests them practically, [...] simply because the rest of their surroundings takes no hold upon them' (Bergson 2005a: 159, 160). From an experiential perspective, they thus diminish the 'decentering effects that [...] relationality entails' (Butler 2004: 151) by constraining the way the other emerges as an object in which the self can be reflected.

As the body performs actions it adopts itself as a distinct centre of its relational environment and, through the formation of motor habits, develops naturalised attitudes towards the world which constrain its tendencies of recognition. In respect to gender, I want to argue that this means relationality is rarely experienced as ambivalent because, prior to the conscious representation of self and other, there is 'an *instantaneous* recognition, of which the body is capable by itself' (Bergson 2005a: 92). Within any given situation the initial contact we have with our environment is through our bodies; and insofar as motor recognition 'goes straight to the resemblance' (158) which can be found in the bodies of others, it brings stability to relationality. This selective discernment extracts points of similarity from a broader realm of difference and, in effect, 'cares little for [the] individual differences' (158) which may destabilise relationality.³⁶

³⁶ Bruno Latour describes a process of bodily discernment which depicts an ever increasing capacity to differentiate stimuli rather than a tendency to perceive only similarity, and in this sense runs in the opposite direction to Bergson's framework. Nonetheless, there are compatible alignments in the way Latour understands the body which makes his work relatable to Bergson. What I want to draw out in these respects are the points where Latour's perspective becomes applicable to the sensory-motor conception of gender recognition I have focussed on.

Using the example of becoming a "nose" – that is, someone in the perfume industry who is adept at distinguishing aromas – Latour presents an image of how the body can be '*acquired*' (207) through 'a progressive enterprise' (207). In short, training to become a "nose" requires the use of an 'odour kit' (206) which is made up of 'sharply distinct pure fragrances' that are 'arranged in such a way that one can go from sharpest to the smallest contrasts' (206). Over the course of 'a week-long session' (206), the

Habit, of course, does have a fundamental relation to the external world insofar as is the stimulus of other bodies which both provoke its reactions and sustain its actions. In effect, this means that the stability of the self is dependent upon the body's relational congruence with other bodies. Indeed, as a basis of normative repetition, the instability of habit lies precisely in its reliance on other bodies mutually accommodating and circulating its expectations. We might still agree, then, that the self is 'ambiguously installed outside itself' (Butler 2004: 150).

trainees learn to become increasingly sensitive to the contrasts between these fragrances. In effect, the session has '*taught* them to be affected' (207; my italics), so that their bodies come to inhabit a 'richly differentiated' (207) world where, before, there was only uniformity. Indeed, during the course of the training process, a "nose" becomes 'someone able to discriminate more and more subtle differences and [to be able] tell them apart from one another, even when they are masked by or mixed with others' (207).

The important point for my concerns is the insight Latour provides into the body's capacity to register the world in new ways; and therefore the potential to develop an increased sensitivity to gendered stimuli. In contrast to Bergson's understanding of motor recognition – which discovers similarity through a suppression of difference – we must also acknowledge the ability to endlessly refine our bodily experience of the world and our capacity to be influenced by and recognise stimuli in more and more subtle and differentiated ways. In other words, while the 'utilitarian origin of our perception' (Bergson 2005a: 158) tends to favour uniformity and resemblance insofar as familiarity facilitates economical modes of action, this is not the body's only potential of recognition.

While a depiction of sedimented tendencies of the body and sociality needs to be a fundamental part of an embodied account of performativity in order to account for the dynamics of regulation, it must ultimately also include the potential for the body to expand beyond regulatory tendencies. Latour's framework, then, is one possible way this may be achieved. With this in mind, it can be said that what makes Latour's model relatable to Bergson's is the association of learning to become affected with an articulation of the world in terms of new attitudes and acts.

Bergson's habit 'goes straight to the resemblance [and] cares little for individual differences' (158). As such, it produces the same action in response to relatively diverse stimuli. Similarly, before the training session '*different odours elicited the same behaviour*' (Latour: 210). The subjects were thus inarticulate in the sense that individual differences were not recognised, and therefore 'produced the same general undifferentiated effect' (207). Singular aromas were experienced by the trainees 'without making them act, [...] rendering them attentive [or] arousing them in precise ways' (207). After the session, however, 'it is not in vain that odours are different' (207): 'the odours [...] make the trainees do something different every time – instead of eliciting always the same crude behaviour' (207).

Equally, then, my point is that the capacity to articulate the body's relation to the world in terms of increasingly differentiated recognitions and responses might potentially be incorporated into the embodied dynamics of gender. What would need to be examined in this respect is the way '*hitherto unregistrable differences*' (209) become part of the body's naturalised tendencies of recognition. This, in effect, would recuperate diversity into familiarity – but not in order to homogenise that difference. Rather, the body's processes of selective discernment would be proliferated to include a broader range of gendered stimuli and actions.

Nonetheless, my point is that there is *no ambivalent otherness in the moment of habitual performance*. The decentring effects of this relational dependency are withheld from experience so long as the process of recognition is immediately transformed into an action, and therefore remains inattentive.

This tendency of perception to selectively discern and isolate only aspects of established familiarity also transfers to the conscious representation of the gendered self and other. By Bergson's account, 'the characteristic phenomena of intellectual recognition are first prepared and then determined [by the body]' (2005a: 116). In my context, this means that when we actively interpret our relation to a gendered other the potential ambivalence and psychic uncertainty of this interaction is radically diminished so long as the body maintains a stable relation towards its potential actions.

Once we have taken up a bodily disposition 'we jump at once into a certain class of abstract ideas' (Bergson 2007: 167), to a certain plane of consciousness, and construct meaningful images according to the 'intellectual tone' (167) of this plane. While Bergson's point here emphasises the possibility of transparent communication, my own reinterpretation suggests a tendency to appropriate the excesses and contradictions presented by otherness into the mental concepts enabled by that plane of consciousness. In effect, the reflection of the self, by which 'the Other [...] secures that self's existence' (Butler 2004: 149), will be biased towards a specific way of making the other reflect the self.

This can, of course, be understood as another way of explaining the conceit of self-identity. However, insofar as it is precisely an alternative way of characterising the appropriation of the other, it conveys different aspects of how psychic processes unfold. In Bergson's model, processes of consciousness are not predicated on a primary desire to know the self as such. Rather, we 'aim at knowing [to find out] what kind of action, step or attitude [an object] should suggest to us' (Bergson 2002: 177). Memory aids the process of recognition by offering associative images which constitute the conceptual content of consciousness and, in principle, this operation allows into consciousness 'just enough idea [...] to be able to lend useful aid to the present action' (Bergson 2005a: 163). Knowledge of self and other, therefore, overcomes the instabilities inherent in relationality insofar as the projected ideas make sense of our possible actions.

As I suggested in my previous section, memory-images will tend to converge upon the ready-made structures of language. The containment of ambivalence will, in this way, also 'receive powerful assistance' (Bergson 2002: 55) from the constituting effects of discourse. However, the point I want to emphasise is that the appropriation of the other into constrained and normative acts of recognition is supported primarily by the translation of mental images into a coherent action.

As a rethinking of the way self-knowledge changes in response to immediate social interactions, this perspective focusses on the active production and use of meaning rather than the impossibility of knowing which concerns Butler. These psycho-physical processes – by which

memory projects images into an object of recognition – cannot suitably be characterised by a decentred, dialectical movement in which self-knowledge is ‘divided and spanned’ (Butler 2004: 148) by its ‘enthralment with the Other’ (149). Rather, it premises a ‘centrifugal’ (Bergson 2005a: 130) movement in which memory flows towards the object of recognition, and attempts to synthesise the past with the present. As a unilateral process, the flow of memory itself is thus never lost in ‘the external status of [its] reflection’ (Butler 2004: 147). It is simply drawn towards consciousness or inhibited.

Nonetheless, insofar as it is the object of action which calls upon or inhibits memory, the stability and instability of gender representation is still vulnerable to the relational responsiveness of the other. The difference between my model and Butler’s is, in this respect, the degree which instability leads to ambivalence, and the specific way meaning changes in response to subversion.

As I have discussed in my previous chapters, all ‘action is an encroachment on the future’ (Bergson 2007: 5), and it is the experience of the future which determines both an individual’s experiential sense of instability and the efficacy of memory to enable the stable production of meaning. Part of what it means to recognise or to be familiar with something is to ‘sketch out the movements which adapt themselves to it’ (Bergson 2005a: 93, 94), and therefore to project an expectation into the future. Conversely, part of what it means to be unfamiliar with an environment is that ‘there is nothing in one [body] attitude that foretells of future attitudes’ (93). In this sense, the body not only prepares the content

of consciousness but, as its expectations lean over into the future, it also grounds a primary mode of investing in the immediate dynamics of sociality.

In the lived experience of habit, the conscious feeling of nascent movements provides a sense of continuity and consonance between the present moment and the immediate future. It thereby enables a sense of 'individual and social well-being' (Bergson 1935: 39). This perspective has implications for understanding how subversive repetitions affect both the conscious representation of gender norms and the relationality between self and other. This is because, thought of in terms of a hegemonic subject's immediate responsiveness, subversion disrupts the comfortable expectations of action as much as it does the coherence of discursive structures. In particular, this is to say that the instability of gendered relationality is initially – that is, prior to conscious representation of subversion – experienced as uncertainty in respect to the moment of action.

The importance of this is that the psychic process of identification becomes, and remains, unstable insofar as nascent actions cannot be resolved into an accomplished act. While memory responds to this indeterminacy of the immediate future by evoking different regions of the past, and thereby changing the way self and other are represented, its underlying aim is to foretell possible actions. In Butler's terms, on the other hand, the efficacy of subversion is premised only on disrupting the *ideal* of self-knowledge.

The binary norms of sexual difference provide an 'epistemological and ontological anchor' (Butler 2004: 35) for the relational dynamics of recognition in Butler's model. This means, for her, that when the intelligibility of this anchor is subverted it enables 'moments of productive undecidability' (142). It thus forces 'the norms of "sex" into a potentially productive crisis' (Butler 1993: 10). However, given the primacy of action in constituting the associative content of meaning and the investment in gender, my aim is to reconsider the efficacy of subversion to enable such responses.

Attentive Recognition as an Appropriation of Subversion:

In the following section I will focus on how productive the effects of subversion may or may not actually be when a hegemonic subject's responsiveness is thought of in terms of emotions, such as anger or anxiety, which affect the way meaning is produced differently. What I want to concentrate on here is the way memory restores the loss of coherence by leaping into a succession of different tensions, by which it pre-empts the crisis of identification which subversion aims for. This is possible because 'memory, capable, by reason of its elasticity, of expanding more and more, reflects upon the object a growing number of suggested images' (Bergson 2005a: 104, 105) *until* the gender norm can be re-affirmed. The elasticity of memory thus allows hegemonic identifications to quickly adapt to the disruption of 'settled knowledge and knowable reality'

(Butler 2004: 27) simply by forming a more complex mental representation of gender.

What, perhaps, makes this re-appropriation a complex and unpredictable process is the continued influence of the subversion on the potential for action. Insofar as the relational dynamics of the body work in conjunction with memory, the successful actualisation of *any* new concept is dependent on the ability of its meanings to enable action. It is not only that memory aids action by presenting possibilities of recognition, but that 'memories, as they become actual, [...] tend to *urge* the body towards action' (Bergson 2005a: 130; my italics). In my context here, then, this means that a psychic representation can only appropriate subversions when the virtual actions it prompts can be translated into familiarised social expectations. Insofar as memory does not restore the experience of continuity between present and immediate future, the attempt to actualise a stable image of gender remains on-going.

If, in this way, the immediate psychic response to subversion fails to bring forward a suitable association then, I want to argue, something like Bergson's notion of attentive recognition takes place. In general, what I mean here is simply that when action remains indeterminate the process of interpreting gender is forced to become more self-reflective and deliberative, and thus more susceptible to 'the decentering effects that [...] relationality entails' (Butler 2004: 151). That said, what is more directly at stake is the way this deliberation is constrained within a specific dynamic of psycho-physical relationality. The emphasis I want to draw out in this

respect is the analogy that 'attentive recognition is a kind of *circuit*' (Bergson 2005a: 116).

A 'reflective perception' (104), Bergson writes, 'is a *circuit*, in which all the elements, including the perceived object itself, hold each other in a state of mutual tension' (104). In other words, the object is held in tension by the body's nascent actions, which allows memory to be focused in a determined direction. This, in turn, means that the interpretive processes of memory are also held in tension with the object of recognition. Thus, reflection is 'effected by a series of attempts at synthesis' (102) by which memory launches 'various analogous images' (102) towards the object. However, because each of the elements is in a circuit of mutual tension, changes in one dimension affect the system as a whole.

What I first want to convey through this mutual tension is a specific manner by which the social conditions in which a psychic response takes place exercise a measure of influence on its final outcome. Because the actualisation of memory is held in tension by the scene of subversion, its re-interpretive potential cannot freely appropriate the object of recognition. Its meanings must be foreshadowed in a potential act which may, in turn, be inhibited by the on-going dynamics of relationality.

Although, as a phase in undermining the movement of actualisation, we might conceive this inhibition in terms of ambivalence and 'unknowingness about the Other' (Butler 2004: 35), two issues prevent this mutual tension from being properly analysed as ek-static relationality. Firstly, the other does not constitute a wholly ek-static influence because, in the psycho-physical process of recognition,

'*dissociation* is what we begin with' (Bergson 2005a: 165). Attentive recognition is therefore always enacting some kind of selective process of exclusion and discernment upon the other. Secondly, although the influence of the other can disrupt the meanings produced by attentive recognition, memory nonetheless continues to abate the effects of ambivalence by projecting virtual images of knowledge into the object of recognition.

If we take a specific example of gender undecidability, in which it 'becomes difficult to say whether the sexuality of a transgendered person is homosexual or heterosexual' (Butler 2004: 142), then it can be argued that such ambiguity fundamentally subverts the hegemonic categories of gender. A normative response to this undecidability might simply be to declare transgendered sexuality homosexual, where homosexuality is a punitive slur which carries the weight of illegitimacy. In such cases, the dismissive attitude towards subversion is enabled by a narrow circuit of attention in which gender norms are re-asserted through a generalised resemblance between the present moment and conventional expectations. The other is thus familiarised through a simple representation of law which overcomes the instabilities of relationality by asserting the illegitimacy of the subversion. Coherent action is restored insofar as this interpretive meaning can be projected into the object of recognition.

However, if the social situation disenables such a resolution, indeterminacy persists. For instance, if the situation of subversion demands a more justifiable response, through argumentation for instance, then the psycho-physical state of gender representation cannot remain

stable. Indeed, the very participation of an active antagonist, who resists the appropriative meanings of a response, denies the circuit of attention a stable object of recognition. Attention thus passes into 'states of higher concentration' (Bergson 2005a: 104), and these higher states create 'so many new circuits which envelop the first and have nothing in common between them but the perceived object' (104).

This is to say that each circuit constitutes new conceptual representations of the subversion which memory 'launches in the direction of the new perception' (102). In each circuit different aspects of the present situation are either discerned or diminished, and so each broaches the imposed incoherence of gender through a different set of associations and familiarities. Each presents a different possibility for acting within the on-going relational situation because they are drawn from different arrangements of the past, and respond to different aspects of the subversion. Ultimately, then, these different formations of memory work to adapt new categorisations of law which attempt to eradicate undecidability and incoherence, whether by forming the basis for a complex argument or simply self-evident justification. However, while they begin to enable hegemonic subjects to re-affirm a knowable reality, they still do not necessarily have the effect of entirely assimilating subversions.

In some circuits, memory may produce images which are more or less identical to the present situation, simply allowing 'other details that are already known [...] to project themselves' (101). In the example above these details might include selective recollections of the way transgender has been previously represented, or of the way normative sexuality is

usually regulated. Such images may function to prevent 'unknowingness' (Butler 2004: 39) from developing into a radical experience of ambivalence, but do not necessarily reconstruct the categorisations of law in a way which forecloses upon the undecidability.

Alternatively, other circuits may produce associations with the original moment that are, in Bergson's words, 'only more or less distantly akin it' (103). Perhaps a loose association is invoked between transgender and debates concerning gay marriage which, in turn, categorises transgender through complex arguments revolving round the legitimacy of gender. Perhaps a specific memory of an individual's gendered past is recalled, and thereby enables an affirmation of their heterosexuality that simply displaces the effects of undecidability and renders the imposition of the subversion null. In such cases, the recognition draws into it a greater complexity and variability of context, but is therefore perhaps less likely to form the basis of a coherent rationale that can withstand scrutiny from a resistant polemic.

At any rate, when an appropriative image cannot immediately be found recognition becomes, in Andrew Papanicolaou's words, 'a sort of evolving template' (114). While gender identification 'simplifies or complicates itself according to the level on which [memory] chooses to go to work' (Bergson 2005a: 105), the important point is that a countless number of such levels may suggest themselves to consciousness. The psychic response to subversion thus keeps on evolving, its images remaining to a large extent virtual, until some combination of those images can be transformed into a resolute action.

Part of what I want to emphasise in this respect is, over and above any radical experience of incoherence, the *inevitability* of memory producing meaning. Indeed, my point is that the gendered self only becomes truly unstable during the specific circumstances of anxiety which I will discuss in my next section. More commonly, I would suggest that hegemonic identity and recognition only becomes unstable in the sense that it necessitates an on-going struggle to sufficiently categorise an indeterminate realm of subversion.

When associations produce complex virtual identifications, but are confounded by the disruptive influence of relationality, this is not because the self undergoes an internal crisis. The virtual images are not 'nonthematisable' (Butler 1993: 39) in the sense that they threaten the self with dissolution, and the psyche does not necessarily undergo a struggle to repress them. They remain virtual simply because they fail to circumvent the constraints of action and representation conditioned by the object of recognition. In other words, within the process by which memory is drawn towards an object of recognition there is a continuous transformation of nebulous images into nascent motor actions, and finally into a real movement. Memory must pass through this inhibitory route in order to verify the efficacy of its meanings because, in general, only those images which are capable of preparing an actual movement can be actualised.

Aside from the idea that this relational tension with the object of action forms a relatively indifferent act of repression, a further vital detail must be clarified here. It is not just the virtual images which evolve, but the

nascent actions which discern different aspects of the object and, finally, the actual relational tension which inhibits or facilitates the actualisation of memory.

As the circuit of attention develops, memory and its projected motor actions, as it were, 'careen the one behind the other' (Bergson 2005a: 103), testing each other for their compatibility until a befitting image can be found. During the evolution of this reciprocal process each makes concessions to the other, so that a compromise is inevitably achieved. In effect, this process works to form a body attitude which, eventually, will facilitate a mental image capable of developing into an action. Therefore, as a result of the on-going interaction between the different elements of the circuit, the original relational resistance to actualisation is gradually reformed.

To put this a different way: as the circuit of attention ranges between different tensions of memory, and returns to the object, 'the original draft of the "object" is modified' (Papanicolaou: 114). Having been modified, the object of recognition is then able to 'accommodate other memories that are congruent with its modified version' (114) but were not congruent with the original perception. In this way, the resistant object of subversion gradually yields to the appropriation of memory because the act of discerning it as a realm of potential action is transformed. The psycho-physical response transfers the issue of subversion into a more intelligible problem, whereby it becomes easier to restore familiarity.

SEEKING as an appropriative response to subversion:

In closing, before I move onto an analysis of more complex responses to subversion I want to suggest one way in which the circuits of meaning can appropriate the object of recognition even more readily. I have argued that a large part of the investment in gender norms is based on the expectations of a familiar environment in which to act, and it is this drive to re-familiarise action which characterises my above analysis of subversion. However I want to briefly add a further source of investment which, in response to subversion, can develop during the spontaneous production of gendered meaning I have just described. This investment is derived from the SEEKING system of emotion which I introduced in Chapter Three.

As I explained, this emotion is a motivational invigorator that 'contributes to many distinct aspects of our active engagement with the world' (Panksepp 1998: 145), and in my following section I will reflect upon its general influence in everyday social interactions. In the context of ineffective subversions at stake here, I want to invoke its more specific involvement in 'the impulse [...] to extract meaning from our various circumstances' (145). My primary point, then, is that because it plays a part in the search for meaning this emotion can be spontaneously invoked by the tensions and processes involved in responding to subversion.

As an excitatory impulse, SEEKING produces experiential characteristics unlike those described above. Firstly, it engenders a form of anticipation which should be differentiated from that which is provided

by habit. It is not an expectation of familiarity, and of a comfortable sense of coherence between the present and the prefigured future which, in turn, forms a 'pleasure of well-being' (Bergson 1935: 39). Rather, the 'pleasant energy' (Panksepp 1998: 15) of SEEKING is a kind of stimulated wanting affect which anticipates by its nature as a feeling state. That is, rather than being the *expectancy of a past familiarity*, the feeling is sustained by, and sustains, an on-going urge towards an indeterminate future which holds *the expectancy of a promise yet to come*.

In this way, once the indeterminacy of action and intelligibility has initiated the SEEKING system, the processes of memory are motivated by a positive expectancy of discovering an apt meaning by which to respond to subversion. Secondly, then, insofar as the SEEKING system, to put this in Panksepp's words, '*drives and energises the search for higher meaning*' (145), then the psycho-physical dynamics of the circuit of attention changes.

On the one hand, the relational other is, to some degree, deprived of its influence as a disruptive force which interrupts the moment of actualisation. This is because the motor attitude of SEEKING, as it were, liberates the tension towards action from the need for familiarity. On the other hand, because the processes of memory are energised by pleasant expectancies, the rationalisation and categorisation of gender becomes a source of exhilarated enjoyment rather than a means to resolve indeterminacy and ambivalence.

When 'memories, as they become actual, [...] tend to urge the body towards action' (Bergson 2005a: 130), the motivational force of the

emotion supports and facilitates the process of actualisation more readily than the motor projections of habit. Insofar as the invigorated feelings of SEEKING orientate the self within its moment of action, there is less need for the circuit of attention to be translated into familiarised social expectations. The virtual actions suggested by memory are thus less prone to be disrupted by the actions of other bodies because SEEKING does not need to accommodate their relational tensions in the way motor recognition does. The body allows greater caprice to the processes of memory because it is less concerned with holding a specific object in attention than it is energising an attitude of exploration and stimulating a more autogenetic search for meaning.

Moreover, the pleasant energy of SEEKING not only provides a motivation for knowing gender, but is its own self-stimulating rationale for the validity of such knowledge. It provides an energised sense of self-assurance for the ideal of self-determination and the projective process of assimilating difference. Indeed, the invigorated expectations of this emotion 'may be a major source of "conformational bias", the tendency to selectively seek evidence for our hypotheses' (Panksepp 1998: 145). They provide a certain pre-emptive investment in the contingent associations and discernments of memory which affirms their cogency.

In conclusion, my underlining point in this section is that Butler's more recent images of the self and consciousness do not supply the necessary framework to examine the dimensions of subversion which are posited in her earlier work. The idea that 'the self invariably loses itself in the Other' (Butler 2004: 149) conveys a sense that there can be no stable

point of reference for self-determination. However, in simply asserting the fundamental instability of the self, Butler demonstrates only a monochromatic spectrum of psychic life which is polarised between the conceit of autonomy and ambivalence. It therefore does not demonstrate how the passages from one to the other involve differentiable processes which vary the force of relationality and the development of self-knowledge.

I have argued that a more pertinent object of analysis are the psycho-physical actions by which memory, in response to subversion, produces the conceptual content of consciousness and restores the coherence of action. This provides a more diverse way to diagnose how, through 'a series of attempts at synthesis' (Bergson 2005a: 102), memory may first fail but ultimately succeeds to appropriate subversions through spontaneous gender representations. What remains to be analysed in respect to subversion is a more differentiated and intensive view of how relationality unfolds, and which can provide greater insight into the potential for transformative responses.

The Emotional Dynamics of Responding to Subversion.

Broadly speaking, my formulation of subversion is underlined by the idea that gender investment is contingent upon the way the future is anticipated, and particularly the way the indeterminacy of action is experienced emotionally. In relation to this principle, this section will re-

introduce Panksepp's emotions of FEAR, RAGE, and PANIC which I outlined in Chapter Three, and the formulation of Bergson's concept of aspiration as an experiential openness towards the future which I developed in Chapter Two. This will allow me to reflect upon a range of potential responses by which hegemonic subjects relate to the instabilities of gender norms, and in which subversion has a more disruptive impact than the one I conveyed in my previous section.

As a practical intervention in Butler's work, part of my point is that the experiential context of subversion is vital to its transformative potential. As I discussed in my previous sections, Butler designates only very narrow parameters to the psychic life of gendered subjects. Her specific contentions are that exposing the conceits of gender relationality plunges the self into ambivalence, and that hegemonic identification inherently 'creates the valence of "abjection" [...] as a threatening spectre' (Butler 1993: 3). She thus leaves little room to consider how the impact of subversion can provoke various types of psychic response, each of which contextualises it differently by virtue of the reflexive experience it produces.

In the context of this section, what is particularly at stake in this respect is Butler's psychoanalytic theory of gender melancholy. This perspective makes the claim that 'rigid gender boundaries invariably work to conceal the loss of an original [homosexual] love that, unacknowledged, fails to be resolved' (Butler 2008: 86). It thus places the dynamics of repudiation and abjection within an inaugural moment that originates an individual's fundamental investment in gender. The gendered ego is

thought to be nothing other than ‘the precipitate of abandoned object-relations’ (Butler 2004: 146) which preserves repudiated identifications as a source of unconscious motivation. The nature of identification, as an on-going psychic process, becomes such that the only possible experience of an effective subversion is an uninhabitable identification which exposes unresolved relations to lost objects.

My Bergsonian model suggests that hegemonic investments in norms are not sedimented in the psyche. Rather, the psychic representation of gender always occurs on contingent planes of consciousness, which *reform the past* in response to the present moment and therefore recreate an individual’s relation to law and otherness. This means that the psychic economy of abjection and repression does not follow strictly from the actual structures of law, but is created anew with each different tension of memory.

Different planes of consciousness involve a greater or lesser complexity in the movement from nebulous images into the actualisation of distinct representations. Each plane, therefore, requires and develops through different types of psychic repression, some of which may haunt the self internally in response to subversion but many of which do not. Indeed, what I will explore below is how a model of gender investment based on contingent emotional responses can maintain images of melancholy and ambivalence which echo Butler’s models, while demonstrating other possibilities which produce very different psychic economies.

Freeing the psychic identification with gender from Butler's model of unconscious investment means that the disruptive potential of subversion can be considered in relation to a more variable range of responses, which allow a greater or lesser efficacy of its de-naturalising effects. As with my analysis in section two, the basic psychic response to the disruption of habit is for memory to form a circuit with the object of subversion, and to launch a series of images towards it that help to 'understand the present and anticipate the future' (Bergson 2007: 141). However, insofar as emotional states of responsiveness cause the indeterminacy of action to be experienced through different types of intensive anticipation, the impact of subversion may orientate the dynamics of memory in different ways.

Like habit, emotions lean into the future and project nascent actions. However, as sensory-motor body attitudes, they are not a set of organised actions which cohere to a definite object domain. Rather, they are generalised motor tensions which guide spontaneous action. Each emotion produces a stereotyped tension towards action, but nonetheless involves 'an invitation to act, with at the same time leave to wait and even do nothing' (Bergson 2005a: 17, 18). This means that consciousness of the emotional tension expands during the moment of indeterminacy, allowing greater spontaneity of response. It also means that the emotional state intensifies with sustained indeterminacy.

Thought of from a more phenomenological perspective, each emotion constitutes a temporal reflexivity which dwells on the past and anticipates the future *through a feeling*. The urgency of feeling thus affects the circuit of memory by inflecting the object of indeterminate action with

an intensive importance which, in turn, facilitates different kinds of associations. That is, it creates an object of attraction for memory which is different to the discernments of projected habits or imitative movements. This, then, can have diverse effects on both the virtual regions of the past which are called upon and the moments of inhibition which allow their actualisation. At any rate, whatever the manner in which emotion complicates the relational dynamics of attention, it heightens the intensity by which the indeterminacy of action calls upon memory to produce gender representations.

Each emotion which I will discuss responds to different ways in which the temporality of action is disrupted and, depending on the specific circumstances, forms different responsive relations to the norm. For instance, my most central aim will be to demonstrate that PANIC causes a leap into radically different tensions of memory than RAGE. While the former can produce melancholic identifications and repressions, the latter enacts a highly volatile and unproductive economy of abjection.

Ultimately, this suggests a need to consider the experiential context and effect of subversion as part of its transformative strategy. Rather than simply negating or exposing the conceits of gender on the level of discursive intelligibility, subversion should take into account how the recipient's emotional tension towards action will facilitate more or less efficacious responses. With this in mind, I will conclude the section by returning to the idea that ambivalence is not the only means of transforming an individual's relation to gender norms, and that subversion may have more expansive effects if it is able to produce aspiration.

Emotions of Anticipatory Regulation:

I want to begin with a re-consideration of the 'tacit, collective agreement to perform [...] discrete and polar genders' (Butler 2008: 190). The first point I will make regards the manner by which the emotion of FEAR, as a 'generalised apprehensive tension' (Panksepp 1998: 212), is involved in concealing the inconsistencies of gender norms. I will then examine the SEEKING emotion as a source of investment in the general realm of social interaction which is enabled by gender norms. Ultimately, my point is that neither of these states involve complex melancholic identifications, but are nonetheless prevalent dynamics in the preservation of gender hierarchy. They should therefore be considered in thinking through the transformative potential of subversion.

As a collective agreement, part of the idea of performativity is that gender norms are repeated because of 'the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them' (Butler 2008: 190). The fear of such punishment must, in this sense, play some part in maintaining gender norms; specifically, by motivating and sustaining the complicity of hegemonic subjects. What I want to particularly draw out in this respect is a brief image of how fear may sometimes sustain an unspoken acceptance of gender hierarchy even when individuals recognise the illegitimacy of such structures.

In relation to the de-naturalising effects of subversion, for instance, we might consider a situation in which a subversive repetition does indeed

compel an individual to re-think gender norms, but in which others respond to the same subversion with reactive attitudes. If such is the case, then the regulatory force of such attitudes may be turned towards the individual who receives the subversion productively, opening up that individual to punitive devices such as ridicule or ostracism.

What I am pointing towards here is the way an anticipatory fear of such consequences motivates reluctance to openly question gender prejudices. Simply put, the 'anticipatory anxiety' (Panksepp 1998: 212) involved in experiencing apprehension 'beckons one to escape situations that intensify the anxiety' (212). Indeed, as the feeling state of fear intensifies it invokes an 'increasingly precipitous flight response' (213), so that the impulse towards complicity becomes more intense in the proximity of situations which actually necessitate change.

What is important here is that this anxiety does not stem from a 'dreaded identification' (Butler 1993: 3) with an abject other, but from a more mundane form of intimidation. It involves a repudiation, but one which takes place on a conscious and self-reflexive level rather than one in which an unconscious identification must remain repressed in order for the self to be thematically coherent.

My reason for addressing this kind of complicity is it that suggests a need to facilitate and nurture productive relations to gender rather than solely producing de-naturalising effects. In effect, I am asserting that a certain manner in which gender hegemony persists comes from an adaptive response to the anticipated social repercussions of regulatory dialogue. This responsiveness promotes a passivity which allows

exclusionary attitudes to remain unchallenged *from within certain hegemonic communities*. As such, an important lynch-pin of transformation concerns simply destabilising the regulatory force of such discursive practices, as opposed to Butler's primary aim of de-naturalising the very coherence of gendered selves. For instance, subversive repetitions which parody the overt behaviours of punitive regulation might have the broad social impact of dissipating the banal power they have in producing FEAR, and thus allow more inclusive attitudes to develop.

In contrast to this apprehensive mode of complicity, I have argued that gender conformity is more generally maintained through the 'pleasure of well-being' (Bergson 1935: 39) experienced through the gentle repetition of habits. What I want to add to this sense of willing acquiescence is an image of the SEEKING system as a further source of emotional investment in the socially accepted norms of gender.

In my previous section I suggested that the SEEKING system can drive responses to subversion by invigorating the search for meaning, and I will return to this issue again later. What I want to emphasise here is a more commonplace social mediation by which the 'pleasant energy' (Panksepp 1998: 150) of this emotion is involved more generally in the 'impulse to become actively engaged with the world' (145). Specifically, I want to suggest that the vivacity of this emotion augments the investment in the inattentive repetition and acceptance of gender by combining the pleasure of familiarity with a dimension of stimulated social interest.

From my embodied perspective, the accumulated circulation of habitual acts means that gender norms are often repeated inattentively,

and provide a pervasive medium of social interaction. As an emotion which, in Panksepp's words, is active whenever we have 'a feeling that something very interesting or exciting is going on' (149), SEEKING must therefore inevitably take gendered characteristics as an object of attraction.

In other words, the sheer pervasiveness of gender in our everyday lives means that many of our emotional interests are driven towards incentivised activities which are gender differentiated. For instance, we might consider gender stereotyped activities such as the feminised excitement of shopping for clothes or the masculinised atmospheres involved in anticipatory build-ups to a sporting event. Insofar as the sense of interest which drives activities like these comes from an 'invigorated feeling of anticipation' (145), then this emotion helps to develop and sustain an investment in the gender associations and differentiations which characterise them as cultural domains.

Indeed, Panksepp explicitly notes how the arousal of SEEKING 'spontaneously constructs causal "insights" from the perception of correlated events' (161), and thus helps 'yield a consensual understanding of [...] a "reality" that most of the social group accepts' (162). In short, I want to contend that because SEEKING motivates through anticipation, it tends to form associative connections between the correlated events and behaviours which provide stimuli for the emotion. Thus, we come to invest in certain gendered associations because they promise to induce invigorated expectancies. We thereby help cement the idea that there is

an inherent causal connection between gendered bodies and certain socio-historically constructed behaviours.

We can, in this way, discern one reason why ‘discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between “feminine” and “masculine” [...] are understood as expressive attributes of “male” and “female”’ (Butler 2008: 24). The arousal of SEEKING during anticipatory events such as shopping or sport promotes an illusory belief in the naturalness and necessity of the gender stereotypes that characterises those activities. It tends to enact and enforce the appearance of an exclusive causal connection between female bodies and the stereotypically feminine behaviours of shopping, and between male bodies and certain types of masculinised spectator sports.

Perhaps more important than this mode of belief, however, is the specific way SEEKING augments the expectancies involved in gender performances. Whereas the pleasure of habit is tied to the gentle satisfaction of an expectation, the anticipations of the SEEKING system are categorically *not* linked to ‘the consummatory phase of behavior’ (Panksepp 1998: 147). That is, the expectancies this emotion produces involve only an immanent intensity of wanting, and are not related to the feelings which might be involved in actually attaining the wanted object. This means that while the invigorated anticipations of SEEKING are *enabled* by the circulation of various gendered domains – so that gender repetition is a necessity *for* those expectancies – the actual incentive is sustained by the *continued stimulation of a promised reward* rather than the repetition itself.

It is not, in other words, the actual moment of repeating the norm which constitutes this type of investment. The enjoyment which is taken from each repetition lies precisely in the on-going promises which linger in the future. As such, this investment in gender dissipates when anticipated rewards such as finding a new outfit or winning a sporting event are not immanent, but tends to increase in relation to expectancies, such as wedding dresses or cup finals, which are more valued. The force and intensity of this mode of attachment is thus capable of fluctuating according to the excitatory influences available in any specific environment, and is very much contingent to the moment of social interaction.

RAGE as an Uncompromised Abjection:

Part of what the excitatory investments of SEEKING means is that when a subversive practice is enacted within the midst of a particularly fervent social situation it is not just the habituated familiarity of gender which is disrupted. It also arrests an invigorated emotional expectation which, in comparison to habit, instils in the recipient a potentially much stronger intensity of investment. It thereby increases an individual's sensitivity and vulnerability to the subversion.

Part of the relevance of this is that while the de-familiarisation of gender recognition can be considered an inherent aim of subversion, the interruption of highly affective states of expectancy is an avoidable effect which has potentially counter-productive consequences. Indeed, by

Panksepp's account, the 'rapid suppression of activity within the SEEKING system [...] should *unconditionally* promote the arousal of the RAGE system' (191; my italics).

In short, the disruption of vigorous emotional expectations is, by way of an initially autonomic physiological response, likely to produce feelings of frustration. As a sensory-motor response, subversion would be experienced purely and simply as an obstructing stimuli which, as it were, restricts the freedom of the body's expectant movements. Insofar as the activation of the RAGE circuit is an inherent response to such bodily restrictions, then, any resulting aggression aimed towards the object of subversion is primarily compelled by the force of the emotion rather than a psychic relation to the incoherence of discursive intelligibility.

As the emotional response of RAGE calls up memory-images in order to psychically represent gender, the psyche no doubt leaps into tensions of law and convention relevant to the present moment of subversion. As such, aggression is likely to be directed towards the 'domain of object beings' (Butler 1993: 3) which 'circumscribe the [discursive] domain of the subject' (3). The emotions of angry and frustrated aggression may, in this way, exacerbate the abjection which is socio-historically pre-established by those structures. However, the psychic economy of abjection does not, in this specific case, originate in unsettled dynamics of an internalised prohibition and repudiation. The specific force and quality of abjection is not, that is, initiated by 'an anxious and rigid belief that a sense of world and a sense of self will be radically

undermined' (Butler 2004: 34), but simply by the compelling force of the sensory-motor state.

What I am concerned to emphasise here is a sense of 'internal pressure' (Panksepp 1998: 191) which affirms the externalisation of otherness, but is not bound up with a psychic conflict which represses the other as a 'threatening spectre' (Butler 1993: 3). As a distinctive force of externalisation, RAGE aims to aggressively dominate the field of action. It thus motivates relational tendencies such as scorn and degradation which fiercely differentiate self and other, and which can therefore be readily nourished by the exclusionary structures of discourse. Nonetheless, insofar as memory reproduces mental images of an abject other which reflect discursive prohibitions, they are not selected in a way which reveals their constitutive instabilities. The images are drawn from regions of the past which are contingently created in order to clarify an already tangible and well defined emotional border. Their actualised representations, therefore, are elicited by an unambiguous tension towards action which fully and effectively inhibits ambivalent and spectral identifications.

In effect, the sensory-motor impulse and emotional feelings of RAGE operate independently of discursive intelligibility, so that psychic representations of gender do not proceed from a need to consolidate the coherence of the norm. This means that subversions which provoke this emotional response directly do not facilitate a 'troubling return' (Butler 1993: 23) of the kind of repressed conflicts and internal instabilities which Butler designates as the necessity of hegemonic psychic life. Rather than

opening up the psyche to the inconsistencies of gender, they only work to re-affirm rigid boundaries.

The important issue in this respect is that aggressive responsiveness must be avoided because they re-enforce the exclusionary structures of gender norms without coming close to destabilising them. They therefore have entirely counter-productive effects. Indeed, 'aggression will increase in proportion to the level of frustration' (Panksepp 1998: 191), so that the more forceful and insistent the subversion is the more rigid gender boundaries will become. This perspective thus suggests a need to contextualise the moment in which subversion takes place in such a way that the tendency towards RAGE responses is reduced, hence enabling more receptive responses. For example, I would certainly not recommend subverting the heteronormativity of marriage during an actual wedding ceremony, where invigorated SEEKING investments would be particularly high.

Media such as film or television are useful in this context because they provide a way to influence the emotional context of subversion through narrative. As a brief illustration of this we might consider the film *Billy Elliot*, in which the eponymous character shuns the masculinised hobby of boxing and takes up a comparatively feminised career as a ballet dancer. In the film, Billy's father, Jackie, is initially enraged by the revelation, and it is possible to read this response as a sudden dissipation of Jackie's expectancies of Billy. When Jackie later comes to support Billy, we can equally read this change in terms of his SEEKING attachments becoming re-invested in ballet. The main point I want to make, however,

concerns the way the specific subversions at stake within the film are experienced by the viewer. As a text which draws us into identifications with the characters, we do not experience the relational dynamics of gender through the same tensions towards action that we experience in everyday life. In effect, our sensory-motor relation to the film is guided by its narrative movement, so that our identification with gender is simulated through different forms of organisation than it would be in everyday life. Our experience of subversion can therefore be influenced and cultivated by the context in which it develops. Situations which, in directly experienced social situations, may lead to the sudden suppression of SEEKING can be experienced in more receptive ways.

At any rate, the final analysis here is that while Butler implicitly assumes that subversive de-naturalisation will, by its very nature, productively de-stabilise the psyche of hegemonic subjects, the possibility of actually producing such instability is a more delicate matter than she considers. As I have argued, Butler psychoanalyses the *discursive instabilities* of the subject, and concludes that the gendered psyche inherently assumes the structure of a 'melancholic identification' (Butler 1997a: 133). That is, all hegemonic identification requires a repudiation of the desires and identifications which are foreclosed by gender law. What Butler argues, more radically, is that because their loss has not been mourned they haunt the self as unconscious identifications. The abject and repudiated other thus persists as an internal instability of the hegemonic psyche, and this melancholic ambivalence constitutes a vulnerability of gender ideals to sustain their rigid structures.

Butler herself wants to use the vulnerability of the subject's 'self-grounding presumptions' (1993: 3) as 'a critical resource in the struggle to rearticulate the very terms of symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility' (3). However, because the *emotional force* of abjection is not necessarily a defence against the spectral effects of unconscious identifications, drawing focus to a repudiated domain of abjection through subversion may only exacerbate those abjections. My contention is that the psychic conflict of melancholic ambivalence only arises under specific experiential conditions. It is not an inherent and on-going unconscious structure of hegemonic identification, but a contingent process which develops in relation to the emotion of separation anxiety designated by Panksepp's PANIC system. What I will now examine, therefore, is how this contingent experience develops in response to subversion.

PANIC as Melancholic Identification:

Aside from the inattentive familiarities of habit and the heightened expectancies of the SEEKING system, subversion can also disrupt an individual's means of social bonding. In other words, disrupting the coherence of masculinity and femininity is not simply a matter of undermining an abstract conceptual framework. It may also unsettle and confuse the intimacy of real relations which are enabled by gender norms, and which thereby provide a source of emotional dependency. For instance, insofar as gender boundaries form the bedrock of marriages and familial relations, as well as broader social relations which involve close

bonding rituals and experiences, effectively subverting them may upset the feelings of social acceptance and re-assurance achieved through them. In such events, a subversive act may trigger the PANIC emotion which 'mediates such negative feelings as loneliness and grief' (Panksepp 1998: 212).

Thought of from a broad perspective, there might be many ways in which separation anxiety is involved in the performance of gender, and I will discuss below how the 'behaviors and feelings of separation distress' (262) might become involved in impulses to transform the hegemony of gender norms. However, the main issue here is analysing the specific way in which the contingent activation of the PANIC system produces a complex process of melancholic identification.

As a bodily source of feelings of loss and grief, PANIC constitutes a primary component of melancholia but not the essential characteristic which makes it into a psychic complex. Strictly speaking, melancholia is 'the suppressed and ambivalent alternative to mourning' (Butler 2004: 159), and arises when a loss *cannot be grieved*. What I want to consider in this respect is a process in which subversion sets in motion the psycho-physical processes of separation anxiety, but in which the associative memory-images drawn out by the tension of anxiety cannot be consciously represented.

To the extent that identifying as masculine 'requires repudiating the feminine' (Butler 1997a: 137), a whole array of relational dynamics and behavioural characteristics are prohibited from this identification. As such, they remain unincorporated into the habituated performances of

masculinity and, to varying degrees, are disavowed as being part of the on-going dynamics of more spontaneous, indeterminate, or private aspects of gendered life. Particularly relevant to the context here is the feminisation of feelings of love and tenderness which are, to some extent, inherent to the formation of all personal relationships. Yet, insofar as such feelings are indeed feminised, love and tenderness remain repudiated modes of attachment for many cases of masculinity.

Butler's ideas on psychoanalytical origins and repudiated homosexual desires notwithstanding, then, she is quite right to emphasise the importance of forms of love which cannot be avowed in constituting the social dynamics of gender. Indeed, an objective of subversive repetition might be to parody the shortcomings and expose the inconsistencies of a rigid masculinity which, as a hierarchical and hyperbolic ideal, denies the primary importance of love and disavows the sensitive vulnerabilities involved in loving attachments.

Using such repudiations as 'a critical resource' (Butler 1993: 3) *may potentially* expose uncomfortable points of disjunction between the ideal of masculinity and the reality. Nonetheless, because melancholia is not a fundamental structure of the psyche, but a contingent emotional process, such subversions may only disrupt the coherence of masculinity as a *conceptual representation*. Rather than producing a radical crisis of identification, this may prompt a psycho-physical response which, as with my discussion in section two, can easily adapt to the subversion and disavow its intended incoherence.

For subversions to expose and reproduce the effects of discursive injunctions as a melancholia which 'erodes the operations of language' (Butler 1997a: 143), specific experiential conditions must be met. That is, I want to suggest, the response *must* be bound up with a disruption of the intimacy and complexity of concrete social bonds. Rather than simply disrupting the conceptual regularities of masculinity and femininity, they must produce a state of PANIC which complicates the tendency to re-appropriate the subversion.

This might be enabled simply by parodying the vulnerable points of identification, such as the prohibition on masculine tenderness, in a way which inadvertently echoes the complexity of a past experience. For instance, a subversion which parodies the masculine discomfort with tenderness may invoke a spontaneous leap towards memory-images in which similar gender dynamics have caused an unresolved rift in a personal relationship. In this light, I want to premise a situation in which the initial leap produces virtual images of love and loss which, in order to begin facilitating their actualisation, initiates the actual bodily tension and emotional feelings of PANIC.

While the state of PANIC draws these images towards the surface of conscious representation, what can begin to make this a specifically melancholic process is the relational tension involved in the psycho-physical act of attention. An obvious effect of separation anxiety is that it compels individuals towards interactions which alleviate the emotion. However, as I have been discussing, such actions may not be congruent with the accepted domain of masculinity. If, as with my analysis of FEAR

above, the immediate social environment remains one of hegemonic appropriation, then the emotional tension of separation anxiety will be unlikely to discover a direct object of attachment. The relational dynamics of the present moment, therefore, impedes the action tendencies of separation anxiety and interrupts the actualisation of memory.

Indeed, insofar as the broad social response to subversion remains one of masculine disavowal, the dynamics of relationality will continue to inhibit the identifications suggested by PANIC. This is, at least in part, because the body attitudes which facilitate action will tend to be those of habituated motor recognition. The only images which can form distinct representations of gender will, therefore, be those which facilitate the normative masculine performances that are habituated and accepted within that particular environment. Nonetheless, while habituated relational dynamics initially tend to diminish the psycho-physical tendencies of PANIC, my point is that it does not necessarily enact a complete suppression of them.

Depending on the intensity of the initial response, anxiety continues to influence the appropriative tendency of the recognition circuit. It produces a complication in the hegemonic process of responding to subversion whereby both PANIC and habit project nascent actions during the moment of indeterminacy. Both therefore preside over the direction in which memory progresses. Thought of in this way, what I want to specifically convey is a sense of how the circuit of attention undergoes a much more complex and urgent process than the one I discussed in section two. The bodily relationality which prevents the actualisation of a

distinct representation does not, in this case of masculine melancholia, stem simply from a resistant other who inhibits memory by disrupting normative actions. Rather, the conflict arises more directly in the motor tendencies of the recipient himself.

While the involuntary aim of memory is to restore action by supplementing the present moment with past experience, action is here implicated in two different directions. The attraction of the present, which marks out the general direction of 'what it is important to know to understand the present and anticipate the future' (Bergson 2007: 141), is directed by a dual and conflicting influence. It is as a result of this dynamic, I want to argue, that gender norms can produce complex melancholic performances which, pace Butler, are motivated by a dynamic of love and loss that cannot be avowed within the bounds of the performance.

Separation anxiety 'tends to motivate thoughts about the lost object' (Panksepp 1998: 212). However, such thoughts are subject to the relational tensions of habit and discursive injunctions, both of which, in effect, 'demand [...] that those losses *not* be avowed, and *not* be grieved' (Butler 1997a: 135). Thus, as the circuit of memory continues to reproduce new tensions, each forming associations of varying complexity, each more or less akin to a complex of repudiated tenderness and loss which formed the initial response, those nebulous associations *must* remain virtual images. They cannot form a plane of consciousness which is useful in relation to the present moment of hegemonic action because they suggest identifications which transgress from the norm.

For instance, in one circuit explicit memories of a gender related disagreement may be recalled which, at the time, were an unsettling and discordant moment in a relationship. Only, now, due to the call of separation anxiety, the images may be selected in a way which opens up the masculine position to the other's side of the argument. They therefore affirm the intentions of the subversion because they implicate the self in identifications with femininity. Alternatively, another circuit may *begin* to 'compel a reconsideration of the *place* and stability of the masculine and feminine' (Butler 2008: 189) because they recall possible actions in the past which might have strengthened social intimacies, but were regrettably not taken. Others may produce more general memories of grief or loss which trouble the borders of the self simply because such vulnerability is emasculating. Others still might revolve around the more specific repudiations which structure the dialogue of masculine bonding, such as those which designate even platonic love as a "gay" or "girlish" sentiment. These virtual images will then form an ambivalent relation towards the way 'a masculine gender is formed from the refusal to grieve the masculine as a possibility of love' (Butler 1993: 235), albeit by a different route and in a different way than Butler suggests.

In any case, these nebulous associations are drawn out by an impulse to regain an immediate sense of social attachment, but cannot be translated into distinct images. They are inhibited in the final moment of actualisation because the ambivalent identifications they promote cannot be avowed within the discursive framework of intelligibility and legitimacy, or acted within a normative relational environment. However, I want to

argue that a fully melancholic complex only emerges here to the extent that these virtual images cannot be effectively concealed. Rather than simply repudiating feelings of love and loss through an inhibitive process, therefore, consciousness actually begins to be 'haunted by the love it cannot grieve' (Butler 1997a: 138).

Insofar as the images suggested by memory aim to resolve anxiety, they force themselves upon consciousness in proportion to the urgency of the emotional feeling. Insofar as they fail to be actualised, and the representational images which *can* be actualised do not resolve anxiety, the emotion state not only persists but grows in intensity. This is to say that the feeling of anxiety escalates with continued indeterminacy. It thus builds a pressure on the self in which the relational attitude of motor recognition, as well as the constraints of language, becomes increasingly less effective in inhibiting repudiated identifications.

Unlike with my example of RAGE, we have here the dimensions of an on-going psychic complex in which 'a sense of self [*is*] radically undermined' (Butler 2004: 34). The associative images and emotional pressure of anxiety effect a conflict with the repudiations of normative representation which insistently draws the self towards 'uninhabitable' (Butler 1993: 3) zones of meaning, and perhaps even threaten the self with 'psychotic dissolution' (243). At the very least it is likely to have erosive effects on the borders of that self's masculinity.

In this context, then, subversion becomes truly effective in the way Butler intends. It produces the kind of 'inassimilable remainder' (Butler 1997a: 29) which she accredits to the unconscious in general, and causes

the repudiations of regulatory structures to have ‘consequences it cannot fully control’ (Butler 1993: 3). However, because this is not necessarily the end effect of the process, but a stage in a complex response, it may not finally be the productive crisis subversive practices hope for.³⁷

As I discussed in section two, circuits of attention evolve. As they do so, the elements involved make concessions and compromises which, as it were, change the course of recognition. In the context here, I want to suggest that if the kind of melancholic conflict I am discussing reaches a dangerous impasse the circuit begins to evolve in a different manner. It necessitates a complex psychic repression which no longer simply inhibits specific tensions of memory from becoming actualised. Rather, in order to facilitate actualisation it transforms and displaces the subject matter of their imagery into active figures of abjection.

For instance, if the direction of memory continues to implicate a masculine identity in un-avowable feminine traits, then these nebulous images may be brought into consciousness by an act of repression which projects those traits onto a figure of animosity. What the complex repression does in this case is allow the nebulous images to be actualised on a plane of consciousness in which the implicating aspects of those

³⁷ It is important to re-iterate that the internal conflict I am discussing is *formed in response to the present moment*. It does not, that is, ‘restage [...] primary scenarios’ (Butler 1997a: 10) which are internalised in a Freudian unconscious during infancy. While the discursive injunctions at stake here are historically sedimented and socially pervasive, they are usually repeated habitually. An individual’s psychic relation to them is, therefore, generally passive rather than conflicted.

Gender melancholy, in this sense, is not a psychic complex inherent to normative signification; it is not a ‘*sedimentation* of objects loved and lost’ (133; my italics) which can be, as it were, dug up in order to unsettle normative identities. It is a struggle borne in the present moment of anxiety – one which *rearticulates* the past as an ambivalent and melancholic internalisation of regulatory power. As such, the troubling effects of melancholy are contingently created, and are just as likely to bring forth defensive responses which strengthen the regulatory force of repudiation than they are to weaken it.

images are displaced from the individual and placed onto someone else. In other words, a *virtual* melancholic conflict between masculinity and femininity – which is internal to the individual's psychic process of anxiety – becomes refigured as an *actual* conflict between himself and a specific object of abjection. The repression of troubling images is thus effected by a projection of the repudiated, and now reviled, aspects of femininity onto an actual person who embodies those characteristics. Following this, the aim of thought will be to *vigorously* 'elaborate the difference between him and her' (Butler 1997a: 137), and to 'discover and install proof of that difference' (137). Anxiety is then resolved by re-discovering, in the gender differentiations of identification, a form of social comfort which re-establishes the individual's sense of place.

The point is that while Butler rightly argues that such gender differentiation is already fundamental to discourse, the way these differentiations are actively lived as a psychic and emotional economy can take a decidedly unproductive turn during contingent melancholic processes. What, in habitual processes of recognition was a passive repudiation, can become a forceful and determined abjection if a process of separation anxiety is resolved badly.

In short, the dynamic of separation anxiety provides a definite means to trouble hegemonic identification, but the internal conflict it causes is only effective as a process of de-naturalisation insofar as it produces an impulse to re-articulate gender. If such self-conflict leads to an active abjection it may still be quite problematic as a means of social transformation.

The outcome of a PANIC response to subversion depends on the immediate moment of relational action. If, for instance, the social context of the subversion is not particularly normative then the relational dynamics of the ensuing memory circuits may allow subverted images of gender to emerge more freely into conscious representations. In such cases, the feelings of loss and the correlative longing for social bonds can potentially provoke responses which motivate an impulse to re-negotiate discursive borders and relations to otherness. Indeed, if we extrapolate upon Panksepp's suggestion that the kind of 'emotional bonds' (1998: 262) enabled by the PANIC system can also 'help explain the sources of human empathy [and] altruism' (262), provoking such responses may yield radically transformative processes. Rather than producing an ambivalence which must be repressed, separation anxiety might facilitate powerful empathic insights into how the hierarchical borders of gender affect other people.

Perhaps equally important in this context is Panksepp's assertion that anxiety can have an 'excitatory influence' (53) on SEEKING. If the social conditions of subversion allow the emergence of empathy, then the troubling effects of de-naturalisation would not be the psychotic dissolution of hegemonic positions. It would be an attitude which is 'willing [...] to allow [gender] to become something other than what it is traditionally assumed to be' (Butler 2004: 35). The dynamic effect of anxiety might, in this case, elicit an emotional resolve for more inclusive gendered meanings. As an amalgamative blend of PANIC and SEEKING, it would provoke the feeling of a kind of uneasy yearning which, in Butler's words,

would 'embrace the destruction and rearticulation of [gender] in the name of a more capricious [...] world' (35).

The Emotional Dynamics of Effective Re-Signification:

Following this last point, I should re-emphasise that because SEEKING is a 'motivationally generalized' (Panksepp 1998: 155) emotional impulse it does not have any intrinsic social bias or normative intent. Thus, while I argued above that it plays a role in the naturalisation of gender, and I argued in section two that it plays a role in assuring the self-presence of meaning during the appropriation of subversion, it can also potentially be utilised productively in the process of re-signification. As with the example I used earlier of Billy Elliot's father, for instance, anticipatory expectancies can be used to re-invest an individual's relation to gender boundaries.

In this respect, I want to suggest that a credible aim of subversion might be to inspire SEEKING directly in order to fully utilise its pleasant energy. What is at stake in this idea is the contention that not all subversion needs to have an antagonistic impact which aims to disturb the very mental stability of the self. Indeed, I have argued that Butler's idea of using the threatening disruption of dreaded identifications and ambivalence as a resource for re-articulating gender presents a very narrow possibility of transformation. If the fundamental aim of subversion is to denaturalise gender in a way which allows its discrete borders to be re-signified, a more effective resource might be to invigorate SEEKING.

Such emotional responses would facilitate more receptive and incentivised attitudes to the 'disorganisation and disaggregation' (Butler 2008: 185) of gender.

As responses to subversion, the tendencies of PANIC and SEEKING are definitely preferable to that of RAGE. However, I want to conclude here, firstly, by suggesting a specific practical limitation to their transformative potential. I will then return to the idea of aspiration as a different kind of transformative process.

As sensory-motor processes, feeling states, and focal guides for attention alike, FEAR, RAGE, SEEKING and PANIC are adaptive emotions which have definite objectives. Each is a tension at work on our wills which directs the indeterminacy of action along a specific anticipatory path and, as it does so, drives the associative processes of memory in a certain direction. As such, even the progressive potential of empathy remains tied to the production of a distinct object domain. Therefore, insofar as it manifests as a conceptual representation, 'sympathy involves a substitution [...] that may well be a colonization of the other's position as one's own' (Butler 1993: 118).

Empathy, in this way, ultimately becomes appropriative when its sensibilities as a feeling state are translated into the realm of identification. Indeed, more generally, this kind of appropriation is for Butler 'the cost of articulating a coherent identity-position' (113) in the name of political transformation. Not only does it attempt to 'attribute a false uniformity' (116) to diverse attitudes and needs, but it can lead to the regulatory 'policing of identity' (117). This kind of tendency, then, would also be a

danger when SEEKING motivates political transformation. The conformational bias its emotional impetus produces would perhaps tend protagonists towards closed identity-positions and attitudes.

In contrast to the adaptive emotions which I have focussed on, which constitute relatively closed tensions towards action, Bergson envisions a different kind of emotion in *The Two Sources*. It is a creative emotion of aspiration in which, as I have re-described it, the future is experienced as open-ended because the present moment is experienced through the direct apperception of duration. This source of emotion 'does not yield to the attraction of an object' (Bergson 1935: 27). Rather, it moves within the on-going growth of duration.

This process has generalizable effects which, in Chapter Two, I argued can be important in relation to gender regulation. Primarily, the apperception of the self is attained from the qualitative differentiations that characterise the underlying durational movement of consciousness. In this movement there is a 'mutual [...] interconnexion and organisation of elements' (Bergson 1971: 101) which is 'inexpressible' (129) in the terms of language, but nonetheless intelligible as a deep-seated experience. The coherence of the self, therefore, and its relation to others, no longer revolves around familiarity and stable positions of identity. It can be derived from a process of change in which moments of experience 'dissolve into and permeate one another without precise outline' (132).

In such moments, the motivating source of action is no longer derived from ready-made or adaptive tendencies, but from the 'inner causality' (219) of this qualitative movement of duration. The tension

towards action grows spontaneously in an open-ended relation to the immediate future. This openness then facilitates a 'faculty of adapting and re-adapting oneself to circumstances, in firmness combined with suppleness (Bergson 1935: 195) rather than in brittleness combined with vulnerability. Finally, because such fluidity of experience reveals gender norms to be false resting places, there is a subtle impact on the eventual representation of gender whereby the deep apperception of the self 'vitalises [...] the intellectual elements with which it is destined to unite' (34).

In everyday life, this kind of differentiation and emotional impetus is usually constrained because the body fixes the psyche on a specific expectation of action. It is therefore inherently difficult to attain. Nonetheless, what I convey here is a brief speculation on how artistic media might be utilised to produce aspiration as a strategy of transformation.

A broad characteristic of experiencing most media of art or entertainment is that, as a sensory-motor experience, the body can be highly active in terms of stimulus but is not called upon to act. It thus produces nascent actions which are, as it were, relaxed because they do not need to be translated into actual responses. In this way, consciousness is potentially allowed to expand more freely than in the direct social experience of gender.

Film and television, in particular, can take advantage of this sensory-motor engagement through various different strategies, potentially producing responses in the viewer which echo the various tensions of

action I have used to describe the underlying dynamics of gender investment. Thus, while this is only one of many diverse theoretical perspectives which can be used to interpret visual media, I would like to speculate on how an understanding of such sensory-motor tensions can be used to enrich and elucidate subversion theory. Specifically, I want to focus on the potential of film and television to produce kinaesthetic identifications with characters in order to invoke a range of diverse experiential responses. For example, at one end of the scale, kinaesthetic identifications allow adaptive emotional responses to intensify because they cannot be abated through the direct actions of the viewer. Less prominently, at the other end of the scale, directors such as Andrei Tarkovsky produce prolonged visual imagery which, because of their diminished narrative direction, can potentially draw attention to the on-going growth of duration and facilitate much more variable and undetermined psychic responses.

Films exploring gender regulation, particularly those such as *Boys Don't Cry* or *The Crying Game* which contain provocative scenes of ambivalence and undecidability, often intend to invoke adaptive emotional responses such as fear, anxiety and anger in order to convey the plight of exclusion. In this respect, I do not intend to be critical of the ability of such strategies to simulate identifications with gendered others that would not be readily possible in everyday life, and therefore to promote acceptance of difference and outrage at their abuse. Moreover, it should be said again that my reading of these films in terms of adaptive emotional responses is only one possible theoretical interpretation of how gendered films produce

meaning. It is thus not intended to be a comprehensive perspective on the films, nor of a viewer's potential experience of them, but only a way to gather insight into the nature of subversion.

In that specific context, then, the tendency of gender orientated films to produce provocative emotional situations means that the subversions effected in such scenes are more likely to be experienced in a way which eliminates the possibility of aspiration. More generally, it could be argued that the positions of such scenes within the narrative movement of the film also tend to abate the effects of ambivalence and undecidability, which it would be Butler's concern to prolong.

For instance, in *The Crying Game*, Fergus's heterosexually orientated attraction to Dil is subverted by the revelation, for Fergus and the viewer, of Dil's male genitals. Fergus's response of revulsion then provides a definite direction for the motor response of the viewer which detracts from the moment of ambivalence. Alternatively, the sustained ambivalence of sex and sexuality in *Boys Don't Cry* is, in the end, domesticated into a much more comprehensible image of gender. When the pre-operative female-to-male Brandon, identifying as a boy, orchestrates a heterosexual relationship with Lana, but through the use of prosthetics which Lana is at first unaware of and then disavows, the experiential dynamics of the unfolding plot is extremely hard to conceive within a normative gender framework. However, textual and emotional clarity is achieved through the brutal rape of Brandon, which not only initiates an entirely un-ambivalent emotional climax to Brandon's plight, but definitively positions Brandon as a woman. Indeed, 'the film, caving in,

wants to return him [...] to a “true” feminine identity which “comes to terms” with his anatomy’ (Butler 2004: 143). At any rate, the point is that the planes of consciousness invoked by the end of these films are initiated primarily by adaptive emotions which draw us into definite positions towards gender regulation. As such, they prevent states of motor tension which would facilitate more creative responses to the themes they convey.

An episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Season 5, Episode 17, entitled “The Outcast,” can provide an initial insight into how a film might produce such creative responses. In this episode, the crew encounter an androgynous race of people, the J’naii, who are described as being both male and female simultaneously. Having introduced the J’naii as a people who constitute an entirely different experience of sexual differentiation, there is a brief conversation in which characters from each race reflect on the impossibility of comprehending their differences. It thus gestures towards the premise of an ‘acceptance of the limits of knowability in oneself and others’ (Butler 2001b: 34).

Similarly to the examples above, this sense of unknowability is quickly over-shadowed. Specifically, there is an outpouring of dialogue in which various characters attempt to define meaningful distinctions between the binary sexes. This, in turn, tends to provoke the same search for gender categorisation in the viewer, and it initiates SEEKING as an emotional investment in the episode’s theme of gender difference and prejudice. My speculative question is: what if a greater textual focus had been placed on creating a sense of how the J’naii’s reality is unknowable?

For one thing, the displacement of issues of gender onto an analogous but fabricated context would allow sexual difference to be organised differently without directly aggravating naturalised preconceptions. It would thus simulate an experience of disaggregated borders of masculinity and femininity without provoking the adaptive responses which are likely to follow such de-naturalisation in real social conditions. If, in addition, these images were cultivated specifically to promote undecidability, purposely attempting to withhold the need for adequate definition, the withdrawal of narrative coherence might facilitate more creative interactions with the text. Rather than initiating SEEKING as a drive towards meaning, or RAGE, FEAR and PANIC as means of simulating an identification with an excluded other, the sensory-motor relation to the text becomes more open.

The Next Generation is certainly not the format for such experimental cultivations of psycho-physical responses to visual and conceptual imagery. However, the underlining point here is, firstly, simply that surreal images can simulate identifications and experiences in a different way to direct representations of gender regulation. Insofar as they provide no ground to expect what their immediate future will be, and no sensory provocation which demands such anticipation, they can dissipate the practical tensions of the body. Psychic processes are therefore less inclined towards practical knowledge, and the selective discernment and diminishment of projected motor acts are less inclined to isolate a distinct object domain.

Secondly, my point is that texts do not necessarily have to confirm a position on such images to create an ethical relation to difference, especially when such images would re-affirm a distinct objective. Finding coherence from the movement of duration, the gendered self can suspend the borders of identity and manage its relations through qualitative differentiations which implicate the self in the other creatively. Thus, when the immediate past and present is experienced through an apperception of qualitative differentiations, and when the experience of the immediate future is released from the constraints of expectation and anticipation, undecidability can be its own productive force. Memory no longer produces images with the aim of foretelling future attitudes and categorically knowing the present, but is called forth by an immanent perception of inexplicable change. The process through which mental concepts are eventually created becomes a much more variable process, facilitating freer process of association which are less inhibited in the moment of actualisation.

In effect, such creative emotional and psychic tendencies are only a momentary transitional experience. This is because the necessities of action inevitably return consciousness to the production of a distinct object domain. What I want to emphasise is simply that 'risking the *incoherence* of identity' (Butler 1993: 113) does not necessarily imply an ambivalent dissolution of the self. There are other means of self-coherence than that of distinct identities, and other means of experiencing indeterminacy and undecidability than that of ambivalence or conflict.

Butler's ethical imperative – that we 'learn to live in the anxiety [of unknowingness towards the other]' (Butler 2004: 35) – might, therefore, be fruitfully supplemented by the less heavy hearted imperative that we learn to withhold adaptive responsiveness. Aspiration, in this way, can be cultivated as a potential response to subversion in which 'something other than a simple assimilation into prevailing norms' (Butler 2004: 27) can take place, but without risking melancholic or aggressive dynamics of identity.

Indeed, my prominent point in this section is that the nature of subversion runs the risk of producing adaptive emotional responses, and that it is important to understand these responses in order to utilise subversion as a transformative strategy. In *Gender Trouble* Butler asks the question: 'What performance where will [...] compel a radical rethinking of the psychological preconceptions of gender identity and sexuality?' (2008: 189). However, what she primarily has in mind here is the conditions by which a subversive repetition, as a signifying event, stands out as irreducible to the thematic coherence of gender discourse. I have, then, attempted a different kind of answer to this question which focusses on how the "what" and the "where" of subversion provoke different emotions which provide varying degrees of resistance or receptiveness.

What unifies my analysis of these different emotions is the idea that knowledge is contingent upon action, so that the potential for a radical rethinking of gender is different for each emotion. Because neither the experienced force of a subversion nor response of memory is concerned with self-knowledge, the dynamics of identification are driven by the

sensory-motor response and the feeling states which accompany them rather than the incoherence of meaning.

In short, in order to disrupt the preconceptions of gender effectively, it is necessary to provoke the proper emotional force which impels a change in attitude. While the apprehension of FEAR may prevent progressive responses, the initiation of SEEKING may facilitate a drive for new gender formations only to re-affirm self-determination and exclusion. While RAGE and PANIC may both exacerbate abjection, the former aggravates and exaggerates exclusionary and externalising tendencies without hope for transformation. The latter, on the other hand, is a much more unstable, and perhaps transformative, process because its contingent dynamics are derived from an internal conflict which can unfold in different directions. It should be noted in this respect, then, that my own analysis of melancholy is very much preliminary.

In closing, all of these dynamic responses should be considered as part of a complex relationality through which gender sociality revolves. Along with the deeper tendencies of duration and the inattentive tendencies of habit, they form a vital part of understanding how the instability of gender unfolds, and how it can be worked productively into a more inclusive re-signification of regulatory power.

Conclusion.

What I have attempted in this chapter is a preliminary re-evaluation of the way hegemonic gender identification develops during performative

acts and subversive repetitions. Thought of specifically from the perspective of a psycho-physical process, I have reflected upon the way the immanent dimensions of gender identity are anchored in the temporal dynamics of responsiveness. The intelligibility of regulatory law and convention can thus be seen as a variable process which is contingent upon the relational experience of the present and the apperception of the immediate future.

This perspective shifts the focus of analysis away from the discursive matrix, as an 'enabling cultural condition' (Butler 1993: 7) for gender identity which constrains in advance the possibilities of agency. It also deviates from Butler's concern with how *discourse itself* is a 'revisable criteria of intelligibility' (14). It focusses instead on how individual relations to discourse are revisable because they are determined by the immediate social dimensions of bodily relationality and the processes of memory which respond to the present moment of action.

I have argued, then, that the conscious representation of gender law has a certain fluidity which allows its repetitions to develop in much more diverse ways than Butler's model suggests. On the one hand, the elasticity of memory allows hegemonic identifications to quickly adapt to the subversion of 'settled knowledge and knowable reality' (Butler 2004: 27). From this perspective, I have questioned the way the efficacy of subversion is presented in Butler's texts, particularly insofar as it is based only on exposing the inconsistencies of discourse and the ambivalent dependencies of relationality. On the other hand, however, insofar as my model reconfigures the way the past is sedimented in the present, the

elasticity of memory also provides the possibility of individuals transforming their relation to gender norms.

What is broadly at stake here is the idea that, in order to actually denaturalise the psychic representation of gender, subversion must instigate the proper change in the dynamics of memory necessary to recognise gender undecidability. It cannot rely on simply exposing the 'constitutive instabilities' (Butler 1993: 10) of discourse, and presume that this will inherently throw gender norms into a 'productive crisis' (10). It must effectively provoke a tension of memory which allows the recipient to comprehend the intentions of the subversion, and therefore question the validity of gender norms.

Such a 'radical rethinking' (Butler 2008: 189) is dependent on the tension towards action by which the recipient experiences subversion, and particularly on avoiding adaptive emotional responses to indeterminacy which promote unreceptive responses. In order to *begin* exploring such responses thus I have drawn upon Panksepp's emotions of SEEKING, FEAR, RAGE and PANIC, and Bergson's notion of aspiration. I have then depicted several different experientially contextualised subversions which have varying degrees of efficacy or unreceptiveness.

While I consider these to be prominent tendencies or potential ways to produce transformation, my reflections here are not intended as a comprehensive insight into psychic and emotional relations to gender. Rather, they provide some general parameters for thinking about the lived experience of performativity.

CONCLUSION

From a broad perspective this thesis has contributed to debates regarding how to determine the body's role in subjective experience. In particular, my research began with a concern about the shortage of productive ways to theorise the body in relation to language. My most general aim in this respect has been to provide a framework that can facilitate a dialogue between biology and cultural theory, and I have used Butler's theory of gender performativity primarily as a case study to demonstrate the benefits of such dialogues.

Significantly, then, my recourse to the body has been limited to elucidating a highly specific set of problems, which have, in turn, been driven by my own critical response to Butler's work. This is to say, firstly, that my use of Bergson's psycho-physical framework, and Panksepp's neurological theory of emotion, is not intended to provide a comprehensive image of how the body can, and should, be understood. Secondly, Butler's understanding of discourse is by no means the only way to characterise the role of language in subjective experience and, therefore, the body's relationship to language.

In short, following Butler's own framework of exclusionary subject positions, I have focussed on the rather narrow realm of experiential dimensions which address the benefits and limitations of her model. There are, of course, many other theoretical paradigms for understanding the body, just as there are other ways to use and interpret the work of

Bergson and Panksepp, and other ways to define the nature of gender and language. I will therefore touch upon such alternative possibilities below in order to discuss the parameters of my thesis within a broader context. At any rate, given the important political focus of Butler's work, I present this thesis as part of a necessary area of analysis which explores the body's role in circulating and transforming the regulatory norms of gender signification.

I have argued that these historically sedimented norms work upon individual bodies, in part, by forming habits. From an early age, the persistent repetition of gendered stimuli sets up mechanisms in the brain which result in 'organizing together movements and perceptions' (Bergson 2005a: 94). Thus, habits of motor recognition are formed which work upon the body's tendency to selectively discern its environment. The prevailing norms of masculinity and femininity become sedimented into a general disposition of perception which 'cares little for individual differences' (158), and towards a disposition towards inattentive action which continues to naturalise historically produced arrangements of gender hegemony.

As a theoretical model, this reconstruction of performativity sets up the issues of repetition, instability and subversion in a more nuanced way. Pace Butler, gender norms are repeated collectively through the mutual sustainment and validation of sedimented expectations, but can be strategically subverted by inconsistent and parodic performances. However, because the naturalisation of a habit does not internalise the discursive structures of prohibition as a mode of attachment, the

experiential instabilities of gender can be viewed in a more variable way than Butler's theory of melancholia allows.

The investment in gender is grounded primarily in the familiarity by which motor recognition orientates action, and the expectations this familiarity projects into the future. This means that the authoritative force of gender hegemony is not given purely by the 'reiterative power of discourse' (Butler 1993: 2). Structures of law have a virtual existence in the memory of each individual, and its normative meanings vary according to the way memory responds to the present moment of action. An individual's psychic economy of gender investment and differentiation is therefore contingent to the body's response to indeterminacy. It re-distributes the meaning effects of the gendered self and their repudiated other in a different way according to this response. Responses to subversion can, therefore, be seen to unfold in multiple ways depending on the emotional experience of indeterminacy which it produces.

Thought of in this way, Bergson's framework of the psycho-physical tensions of action, consciousness and memory provides a unique type of insight into unstable processes of gender identification. Nonetheless, as I suggested above, my sensory-motor perspective is not intended to be comprehensive of the body's involvement in the experience of gender norms and their instability. While I have presented the tensions of habit, SEEKING, RAGE, PANIC, FEAR and aspiration as principle tendencies involved in the politics of re-signification, the processes of performativity and subversion are by no means exhausted by my thesis.

On the one hand, within the actual framework of my text, there is much room for development and need for clarification. In particular, there has been little chance to explore in depth how the idea of different 'planes of consciousness' (Bergson 2005a: 241) can re-construct a psychology of identification which responds to the body's varying tensions. Further reflections on this issue might include a more rigorous examination of how identification develops as an on-going process; both as a relation between individual processes of memory and the shared structures of discourse, and as a relation between psychological processes of repression and the conscious production of meaning. On the other hand, different theoretical perspectives on the body may have brought to light aspects of gender experience which have been excluded from my model, but could elucidate important factors of gender naturalisation and relational instability. It is thus useful to discuss some of these possibilities in order to contrast them to my own framework.

The Intricacies of Affective Relations:

One alternate possibility for approaching the body might have been to draw upon the emerging field of affect theory, which is largely inspired by Deleuze but often cites Bergson as one of its influences. For instance, Brian Massumi (2002), Dorothea Olkowski (2000, 2002), and Luciana Parisi (2004) have each, in their various ways, used Bergson to invoke heterogeneous images of the body which aim to disrupt the ideal of normative, self-present bodies. As such, their frameworks provide a

different way of using Bergson and, more generally, a different way to understand the body as a social and a biological phenomenon.

Affect theory is extremely diverse, and therefore difficult to categorise succinctly. However, it is possible to discern a prominent tendency which distinguishes it from my own reference to emotional experience. While emotion can be understood as 'a subjective content [that is] owned and recognised' (Massumi: 28), affect tends to denote a realm of changing force-relations and receptivity which is 'unassimilable to any *particular*, functionally anchored perspective' (35). In other words, affect theory aims to explore certain aspects of the body's relational affective capacities which take place in excess of consciousness and of any fully tangible experience of the body.

As a cursory note on the explanatory possibilities of affect, I simply want to draw out a limitation of my own approach. There are, no doubt, other ways in which we are influenced by the relational experience of other bodies than my own model of habitual and emotional tensions towards action is able to accommodate. What affect theory might have been able to show in this respect is some of the experiences of gender relationality and instability which, as it were, take place on a different stratum of experience.

For example, I argued in Chapter Three that the gender discernments of habit are not an absolute and deterministic process. All bodies exceed the norm in some way, but motor recognition helps sustain the appearance of discrete and pervasive gender norms because it tends to diminish the impression of stimuli which does not quite conform to those

ideals. Nonetheless, the inconsistencies of gender performances may still persist as vague, nebulous perceptions on the fringe of consciousness. As such, many of our everyday encounters with otherness are not forceful enough to interrupt the outward activities of habit, but may still influence the body and self in subtle and indirect ways.

My point is, then, that theorising the body's affective capacities may offer a method to explore the way peripheral experiences of gender modify the dynamics of power. While I have focussed on emotional responses to sudden and abrasive experiences of difference, affect theory might consider the way less perceptible forms of receptivity influence a subject's relation to the borders of gender. They may, for instance, produce slow accretions which are less tangible than adaptive feeling states, but still influence gender investment in profound ways.

In contrast, experiences such as being in a crowd of gendered bodies, or negotiating a complex social dynamic, might outstrip my model in a different way. Such events often involve an ambiguous multiplicity of stimuli and force-relations which, therefore, act upon the body in ways which are too overwhelming to articulate into a meaningful narrative of subjective experience. They may, in turn, produce affects which are too chaotic and implacable to be characterised in terms of my model of adaptive emotional responses. In this context, the theorisation of affect can provide a means to traverse a more complex image of the body's relational dynamics than I have described. Indeed, it might facilitate a more radical re-interpretation of 'the ontological primacy of relationality' (Butler 2004: 150): one in which the body does not simply dissipate the

effects of its dependency through its motor discernments, but is always in some way 'ambiguously installed outside itself' (Butler 2004: 150) through its affective capacities.

Despite the broader possibilities for exploring the inter-dependency, heterogeneity and instability of the body, reflecting upon the subtle modulations and unassimilable characteristics of affect is perhaps unnecessary to my specific project. For instance, my use of emotion to define a tangible realm of action tendencies and overt behavioural characteristics covers the most important affective dimensions of Butler's work, which are aggression and anxiety.

Moreover, there is a tendency for theorists of affect to sweep aside the issues of language and regulation, and invoke a radical 'reinterpretation of "everything" concerning the relations between subject and discourse' (Olkowski 2000: 81). It thus propagates a 'new approach to body politics [...] that moves beyond the critical impasse of the politics of representation' (Parisi: 45) but, in doing so, creates its own limitations in understanding the political dimensions of the body. Thought of specifically in relation to Butler, it fails to consider how the body itself has normalising tendencies which are formed in relation to the politics of representation.

Images of the Lived Body:

Another different direction my engagement with the body might have taken is that of the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty who, as I explained in Chapter Three, condemns Bergson for reproducing an

objective image of the body. As I argued there, Bergson evades this charge in the sense that his work also requires a direct apperception of the body's lived tensions and attitudes. However, what I want to signpost here are some dynamics of sexual differentiation which are accessible specifically through a phenomenological approach to the lived body.

In an early article on Merleau-Ponty, Butler herself has noted that his philosophy of the body 'offers certain significant arguments against naturalistic accounts of sexuality' (1989b: 85). Merleau-Ponty, she writes, 'rejects any account of sexuality which relies on causal factors' (88). He conveys, instead, the possibility of investigating sexuality in terms of a 'shared domain of the flesh' (97) which has no necessary form except for that of an opening out onto a concrete situation of intimacy.

Sexuality, in other words, should not be thought of as an autonomous biological function or essence. There is, rather, a 'sexual drama' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 193) in which the biological drive 'has internal links with the whole active and cognitive being' (182) and, therefore, with both an individual's whole past and their 'momentum of existence towards others, [and] towards the future' (191). Perhaps more profoundly, sexuality is a 'form of original intentionality' (182) which dramatises our 'consonance with the world' (192). For example, the sensuous allurements of the other – what Merleau-Ponty calls a 'sexual physiognomy' (180) – is bound up in a relation of reciprocal responsiveness and elicitation with the carnal impulses and gestures of the desiring body. As part of a concrete situation, then, neither self nor

other have self-present or isolatable desires. They form an 'ambiguous setting of [...] inter-communication' (193).

From this perspective, phenomenology opens up reflections on the body to the sensuous and sensual intensities of attraction and sexual tactility, and thus extends far beyond Bergson's sensory-motor framework. In particular, the image of a sexual drama suggests to Butler a profound malleability and openness which, potentially, allows a fully historicised account of sexuality. Thus, rather than confining the embodied elements of performativity to habits of motor recognition, even phenomena as seemingly "natural" as tactile sensations can begin to be examined in terms of historically constituted variables. Feelings of pleasure and desire only arise within concrete situations which, as a form of being-in-the-world, exceed the ideal of autonomous individuals. Sexuality is thus performative in the sense that the concrete situation is always constituted and constrained within a historical moment.

Ultimately, despite its overt leanings towards a historicised lived body, Merleau-Ponty's text itself does not fulfil the criterion of what this means for Butler. Indeed, Butler argues that his work can in fact be viewed as 'an expression of sexual ideology' (93): it tacitly prioritises a naturalised masculine sexuality which is, in turn, 'reduced to the erotics of the gaze' (93). This is to say, on the one hand, that the embodied subject of the sexual drama he describes is, by default, only a male body. On the other hand, Butler suggests that 'the female body is seemingly [...] always already a fixed essence rather than an open existence' (94).

While this may be a harsh reading, it rightly emphasises the danger that using direct experience as a basis of knowledge may result in affirming the dissimulated power formations of which that experience is a part. Yet, Iris Young has to some extent addressed this concern by explicitly examining the socio-historical conditions which produce a differentiated phenomenology of the female body. Her appropriation of Merleau-Ponty is informative in this respect, but not only because it demonstrates how recourse to direct phenomenal experience can *expose* the hierarchical experience of the lived body. It also further suggests some of the broader dynamics of embodiment involved in gender performativity.

Like Butler, Young picks up on the idea that, 'insofar as I have a body, I may be reduced to the status of an object beneath the gaze of another person' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 193). This is, for Merleau-Ponty, part of the ambiguity of having a body. It is an aspect of embodiment which inhibits the achievement of consonance and which, as both Butler and Young observe, women have been traditionally been made more susceptible to. However, while Butler accuses Merleau-Ponty of implicitly reifying the subjection of women to the status of object, Young actually explores how this subjection works from a phenomenological perspective. In doing so, she provides an insight into the possibilities of analysing the phenomenal experience of regulation which, again, is not readily accessible through Bergson.

The stereotype that, generally speaking, women 'are not as open with their bodies as men' (Young 2004a: 262) is, Young argues, not the manifestation of an irreducible biological difference. It is traceable to the

socio-historical conditions of a 'patriarchal society which defines woman as object, as mere body' (270). In effect, Young argues that the historical structures and conditions of gender relations 'delimit the typical *situation* of being a woman' (261); but rather than deconstructing those regulatory conditions, as is the case with Butler's method, she provides insights into how they are lived.

Reflecting on her own phenomenal experience, Young witnesses how, from an early age, girls are encouraged to conform to ideals of 'feminine bodily comportment' (270). In part, this means learning to actively 'hamper her movements' (270), and developing a 'bodily timidity' (270) in which 'she takes herself to be fragile and immobile' (270). Moreover, 'the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere object' (270) intensifies this kind of actively restrictive bodily comportment because it forces women to take up a self-conscious distance from their actions. The effect of these regulatory situations is that 'feminine bodily existence is an inhibited intentionality' (266) which often 'severs the connection between aim and enactment' (266), and therefore disrupts the consonance of being-in-the-world.

Revisiting her initial essay twenty years later, Young concedes that 'a great deal has changed' (2004b: 286). She observes that her own daughter has a much freer relation to her body's intentionality, and cites greater sporting opportunities for women and changes in 'acceptable norms of male street behavior' (286) as sources of this liberation of female embodiment. As such, the lesson to be learned is not that Young's original reflections 'might seem antiquated' (286). It is the demonstration that, as

the socio-historic regulations of masculinity and femininity changes, so does the lived phenomenal experience of people's bodies.

The point I want to make here in regards to my own framework is that the kind of experiences at stake in Young's subject matter cannot be fully characterised by Bergson's psycho-physical model. At a stretch, the transformation from the hampered movements of a more restrictive femininity to the freer bodily comportment facilitated by sport and less intrusive forms of masculinity might be understood in terms of the development of new motor habits. However, on its own, this perspective does not convey the experience of living through a situation of constraint, nor that of feeling the body as a medium of unfettered intentionality. Indeed, what Young's politicised image of intentionality brings to light is a broader sense of how different positions along the regulatory borders of gender are lived as a phenomenal experience of the body.

Within such a perspective, the habituation of a body style is not simply the sedimentation of an inattentive process of repetition. It is a 'power of dilating our being-in-the-world' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 166). The body, for Merleau-Ponty, is 'essentially an expressive space' (169), and breathes significance into phenomena through its capacity to form a 'harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between intention and performance' (167). Habit, thought of as a 'form of this fundamental power' (169), can thus be understood as a potentiality of response that extends this expressive dimension of the body and forms new harmonies with the world.

As a means of unison and unanimity, the consonance of this expressive body must be understood as part of 'what makes my own life [liveable and] what makes, or ought to make, the lives of others bearable' (Butler 2004: 17). Whether we are concerned with women under patriarchal conditions or homosexual and transgendered individuals placed within heteronormative situations, this sense of unity between life and world is disrupted by the intrusive gaze of hegemonic expectations at certain junctures of their lives. Phenomenology can, from this perspective, offer insights into the multiple experiences and struggles involved in the embodiment of gender hierarchies, and therefore derive a potentially much more expansive view of performativity than my own perspective.

In closing, Merleau-Ponty's work on the body provides a diverse range of ways to explore the dynamics of performativity as an embodied event. It can reveal the intimate dimensions of pleasure and sensuous perception as historically contingent modes of experience. It can also produce clarity of understanding into the kind of experiences undergone by those who feel their bodies to be restricted by the norm, and thus point towards imperatives and strategies to expand such subject positions which would not be apparent through Bergson's methods. Nonetheless, while phenomenology has these benefits, this kind of approach to embodiment does not translate particularly well into the issues I will discuss below concerning complex processes of identification and responses to subversion.

The Discursive Matrix and the Production of Meaning:

The examples of affect and phenomenology above do not just contextualise the limitations of my Bergsonian model of the body within a broader domain of contemporary research. They suggest just a few different directions in which Butler's theory of performativity might be problematized or expanded.

As a 'reiteration of [...] a set of norms' (Butler 1993: 12), performativity encompasses a broad domain of relevant subject matter which ranges from the analysis of discursive structures, to the lived attachments and instabilities of hegemonic subjects, to the frustrations and suffering of those excluded. Each of these, in turn, can be studied through various methodological approaches, and can be seen to have multiple aspects and interconnections. In the final analysis, the innumerability of these possibilities makes it 'difficult to say precisely what performativity is' (Butler 2008: xv). While I might have included a phenomenological account of the body's 'melodic unity' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: 67), or an image of affect to explore how the body, like self-recognition, is 'always other to itself' (Butler 2004: 149), each would have brought the formulation of performativity into focus in a different way. It is thus informative in this respect to re-assess how my own account diverges from Butler's.

As would be the case with any integration of the lived experiences or processes of the body, I have shifted the centre of attention from the idea of performativity as the '*reiterative power of discourse* to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains' (Butler 1993: 2; my italics).

However, as much as possible, I have attempted to maintain Butler's political focus on the ideal of masculinity and femininity as regulated and exclusionary subject positions. My explanation of repetition and identification as a psycho-physical process is not, in this sense, a purposeful attempt to by-pass Butler's characterisation of discourse and to offer a more volitional account of language. Rather, it has aimed to re-examine the issue of how normative attachments to gender develop within the actual temporal dynamics of sociality.

Thinking through the embodiment of a gender norm as a habituated act, I have examined the basis of repetition as the movement of a lived process rather than as a signifying effect of the body's surface; but this habituated act of repetition is still 'a kind of "citing" of the law' (Butler 1993: 108). In turn, the psychic process by which an individual consciously represents self and other can be seen as a variable process insofar as it develops in relation to the body's different responses to indeterminacy. Yet, the dynamics of aspiration aside, the possibilities of new psychic categorisations of law I have described are in essence only nuances of the pre-existing 'grammar that governs the availability of persons in language' (Butler 2008: xxvi).

Primarily, these possibilities denote the way different tensions of memory can inflect the meaning and regulatory expectations of gender through more or less personal or generalised images. Individual acts of identification can thus interpret the acceptable borders of gender differently depending on the images available within these tensions. In effect, though, these interpretations are still re-citations of an established

realm of intelligibility, and continue to circulate within a regulated domain of power formations. Even aspiration, as process which does indeed enable radically different forms of differentiation, remains constrained by the constituting effects of discourse insofar as it can only be articulated through language.

The intention of this model is to provide a more focussed demonstration of how individual conceptions of law are susceptible to transformation. Psychic processes of intelligibility are not radically outside the 'nexus of power and knowledge' (Butler 2004: 216), but they do show how the effects of power can circulate differently depending upon the way memory reproduces knowledge. As an attempt to address the dynamics of discourse, however, this psycho-physical insight into performativity has some disadvantages which are worth noting.

On the one hand, it detracts from the idea of regulatory discourse *as a condition of possibility and legitimacy granted to some but not others*. In my analysis, Butler's concern with the restrictions placed on the intelligibility of gender has been considered only from the point of view of hegemonic subjects. For instance, the image of abject subjects who are dependent on structures of intelligibility that 'make life unliveable' (Butler 2004: 4) for them has certainly been pushed to the periphery of my concerns. Therefore, something of the urgency, pathos and ethical responsibility which resonates in Butler's work is lost in my translation of performativity.

On the other hand, re-imagining gendered acts and processes of identification as a dynamic of psycho-physical tensions hinders a more

sustained attention to how discursive practices are structured. In truth, 'the rule-governed discourses' (Butler 2008: 198) which constitute the intelligible assertion of a gendered self are not formed in the manner of a simple, uniform exclusionary border. They are a highly complex matrix in which 'discourses present themselves in the plural' (198) and, by the fact of this plurality, produce the possibility of 'instituting unpredictable and inadvertent convergences' (198).

In other words, the singular image of a gender law – which I have focussed on to demonstrate how that law appears differently according to the psychic act which represents it – is something of a misnomer. As a socio-historical phenomena, the spatial and temporal operations of gender discourse stretch across multiple organisations, authorities and ritual performances. There are, to name but a few instances of such operations: religious narratives which morally oppose same-sex marriage; conflicting genetic, hormonal and anatomical categorisations of sexual difference; marketing campaigns propagating ideals of a perfect body or lifestyle; traditional kinship practices, such as the different male and female roles in child rearing. Each of these discourses can be understood as 'part of a regulatory practice which produces the bodies it governs' (Butler 1993: 1), but each creates and reiterates subject positions through its own vocabulary and its own grammar. Each has its own institutional apparatus of production and its own history, but nonetheless co-exists with the others within a broad socio-political domain of gender.

Butler's contention here is that the multiplicity of their co-existence occasions necessary points of disjunction. Moral oppositions to same-sex

marriage and hormonal definitions of sex, for example, may both authorise normative positions of identification. However, because the institutional basis of their authority – that is, religion and science – has a long history of conflict, the truth effects of each practice may be unsettled by the other. The inadvertent or strategic convergences of such regulatory practices can thus produce a ‘variety of incoherent configurations’ (Butler 2008: 199) which, through purely discursive routes, contest the naturalised status of subject positions.

What I ultimately want to stress in this respect is that the structural dynamics and implications of these disjunctions can only be marginally revealed by my psycho-physical account of how meaning is produced. My model can show how an individual responds to the incommensurability of two discourses by undergoing different types of psychological and emotional processes, each of which reform the incommensurability in different ways. However, what this perspective excludes is the way the different grammars and institutional authorities of discursive practices converge upon each other by way of their own constitutive structures and operations.

The matrix of gender discourses indicates spatial and temporal dynamics which are full of fragile interplays and discontinuities. Different domains can operate separately or in collusion at some junctures, yet still bring competing authorities into tension at others. Their reiteration may function smoothly at some points, but at others we may find that the ‘reproducibility of [their] conditions is not secure’ (Butler 2004: 27). It is thus ‘necessary to track the way in which [each domain] meets its

breaking point, the moments of its discontinuities, and the sites where it fails to constitute the intelligibility it promises' (216).

Although these discontinuities and failures will certainly provoke psychological and emotional reactions such as rationalisation, melancholy or anger, tracking them is not a matter of understanding how these reactions unfold. Indeed, a psychological account of meaning provides no way to map the actual complex of convergent arrangements of discourse and power from a more panoramic perspective. Such a project requires analysing discourse precisely *as a network of convergences and limits* which operates everywhere, without centre, and demonstrates instabilities and repercussions that are much broader than any individual experience.

More generally, my model of intelligibility does not encompass Butler's sense of how the circulation of signifying effects is impossible to control. While an individual subject can recognise and re-interpret how the borders of a discourse are structured through a variable process of actualising memory images, 'the subject does not exercise sovereign power over what it says' (Butler 1997b: 34). In other words, their actual *use* of discourse to communicate a point of identification outruns the meanings they give to it because the intelligibility of speech 'neither begins nor ends with the subject who speaks' (34). For example, Butler cites 'the queer appropriation of "queer" and, in the United States, the rap appropriation of racist discourse' (2004: 223) as instances in which the ramification of a signifying practice outruns its normative usage and becomes re-signified.

At any rate, tracking the convergences and implications of discursive practices should be considered a vital part of expanding Butler's project; and recourse to the body or psyche is unnecessary to such deconstructive purposes. The venture to explore the lived, embodied and psychological dimension of performativity only becomes necessary in order to undertake more thorough examinations of how experience is constituted *in relation to* regulatory practices. When faced with issues such as how investments in the norm persist despite the incongruent convergences of discursive borders, or how exactly such borders relate to the events of both gender harmony and instability, or how such relational experience unfolds as a bodily process, Butler's primary focus on the 'reiterative power of discourse' (1993: 2) quickly shows its limitations. It is thus beneficial to alternate the methodology which brings performativity into focus and to expand the kind of subject matter which is open to analysis.

In particular, I have argued that the issue of gender investment and identification requires different methods of analysis. This is the case both in relation to Butler's discursive account of the subject and her Hegelian and psychoanalytical models of the psyche and is, I have further argued, necessary for exploring the possible conditions of re-signification in greater depth. This is to say, while a psycho-physical model of meaning and identification does not illuminate the way the matrix of discursive practices converge and change, neither does the deconstruction of discourse account for the necessary transformation of hegemonic gender attachments.

If social transformation entails 'a radical rearticulation of the symbolic horizon' (Butler 1993: 23), then part of facilitating change is subverting the historicity and coherence of gender hegemony. For Butler, the point is that practices of parodic or appropriative repetition can denaturalise the constructed hierarchies of gender discourses, so that new configurations of gender can proliferate and the possibilities of legitimate identifications can be expanded. Such tactics of subversion are effective, then, insofar as they allow normative signifying practices to 'become rattled, display their instability, and become open to resignification' (Butler 2004: 28).

However, thinking through social transformation as a process of re-citation presents the dynamics of change *only* from the perspective of the socio-historic matrix of discursive practices. It does not explore how the force of re-articulation is experienced by individuals, who either accept or refuse the re-signifying intentions of subversion to varying degrees.

While re-signifying the term "queer" as a celebratory rather than derogatory phrase can be a rallying point from which previously abject subjects gain a sense of legitimacy, it only becomes fully effective as social transformation insofar as that positive representation of homosexuality becomes part of hegemonic signifying practices. This, in turn, can only occur insofar as the de-naturalising effect it has on normative gender expectations can impact productively on the responsive investments of individual hegemonic subjects.

As an immediate social dynamic, subversion is thus not only a matter of appropriating the normative language of discourse and

discovering its breaking-points. It is also a matter of negotiating the variable possibilities of response by which individuals adapt to these appropriations and breaking-points, and form diverse processes of identification that are contingent and unique to each response.

In short, understanding the efficacy of subversion as a strategy requires an equally diverse image of the psychic processes of identification which, specifically, can account for both its failures and successes. For all of Butler's poignancy in conveying the positions of those excluded from coherent or liveable subject positions her portrayal of the psychic life of hegemonic subjects is, in this respect, detrimentally reductive to her own project. Her image of gender melancholy implicates the heterosexual psyche in a necessary repudiation and abjection of the other. It takes the most violent interpretation of an exclusionary subject position as the basis of everyday hegemonic identification, and does not account for the multiple ways in which the borders of gender can be experienced. Similarly, her Hegelian model of recognition provides an image of the psyche polarised between the conceit of autonomy and a crisis of ambivalence, leaving little room for a more diverse account of identification.

While my use of Bergson's psycho-physical model is certainly not the only possible way to address the need for a more thorough account of gender investment and identification, it provides an inroad towards such ends which contributes relevant insights into performativity. The framework of inattentive acts of habit as a basis of sedimented expectations, and of the emotional tensions which arise in response to subversion, facilitates a

more nuanced way to conceive the nature of gender investment. The psychology of different planes of consciousness, which reform the way the past inflects and authorises individual representations of discourse, specifies a more diverse way to theorise how identification unfolds. Finally, the understanding of duration, as a potential of 'psychical life unfolding beneath the symbols which conceal it' (Bergson 1960: 4), demonstrates one possible resource for changing the way hegemonic subjects conceive the normative borders of gender. While this potential for aspiration cannot free the gendered self from the constituting effects of discourse, it nonetheless 'vitalises [...] the intellectual elements with which it is destined to unite' (Bergson 1935: 34) in a way which dissipates tendencies towards exclusion.

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